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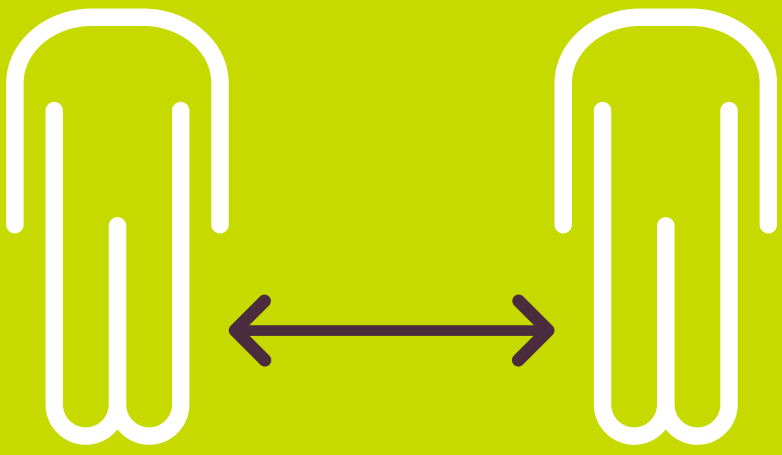
# THE NEW COMMON



How the **COVID-19** Pandemic is Transforming Society

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Emile Aarts • Hein Fleuren
Margriet Sitskoorn • Ton Wilthagen
Editors

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# Foreword

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than ever people have been looking to science for solutions to the numerous complex problems the world is suddenly facing. The most urgent issue now seems to be finding a vaccine that will free humankind from the immediate threat of the COVID-19 virus, but other solutions concerning economic, climate, and all kinds of societal issues have presented themselves with almost equally great urgency. Economic issues refer to the vitality of various kinds of enterprises and the related employment problems, and they mingle with climate-related issues concerning tourism and global traveling but also relating to commuting and household and industrial energy use. Social issues concern the organization of health care and, staying closer to home, the nature and organization of education and research. Tilburg University's motto "Understanding Society" seems to be more relevant than ever, given that we are a university specialized in the field of the social and behavioral sciences and, therefore, fully equipped to shed our light on many of the phenomena society is facing. It gives me great pleasure that dozens of our scientific staff have put their bright minds together to better understand several of the COVID-19 related problems and suggest concrete solutions. The book "The New Common" is a collection of their contributions.

The contributions help to gain a better understanding, to solve a number of societal problems, and, by doing this, to realize the university's motto. The book covers the full range of views and approaches from understanding to advancing society. Some of the chapters reflect on the meaning of pandemics in relation to the history and culture of humankind, thus unraveling the mythical nature of the COVID-19 crisis by increasing our understanding. Other chapters propose validated solutions to the problem of handling certain

aspects of the crisis in relation to elderly care or to the desired behavioral change of adolescents. The COVID-19 crisis has forced universities to transform from physical education to online education at an unprecedented speed. The book also provides contributions reflecting on the future of education, presenting first insights and solutions to problems encountered in online education and online exam proctoring. To conclude, I can safely say that Tilburg University has embarked on a journey to move away from the "old common" to discover a "new common," however insecure and whimsical this journey may be. I hope the book will provide a challenge to its readers and invite them to respond and take the discussion to the next level in an effort to better understand and advance society.

Former Rector Magnificus Tilburg University Klaas Sijtsma
Tilburg, the Netherlands

# Foreword

At the time of publication of this book, the coronavirus has been disrupting our society for almost 6 months. And, although we are not yet sure what the social and economic consequences of the coronavirus will be, we already see a significant impact on society. In my work as a policy-maker, I observe how the measures taken to combat the virus affect the daily lives of people in the domains of the economy, the labor market, health care, education, mobility, and leisure.

As long as the coronavirus rears its head, life will be completely different compared to a few months ago. Our society will not be the same in the years to come. And maybe it will never be the same again: "the new normal" is a concept you hear a lot about now. Or, as the editors of this book put it, a new common is ahead of us. What does this crisis mean for society, now and in the future? What should society be like? What is needed to restore the economy and keep the social fabric intact, also at the grassroots level? How do we offer the different generations hope for work, income, and security and prevent generation gaps from widening? How do we prevent vulnerable groups in particular from falling victim to the coronavirus crisis?

Although the situation is of great concern, I also see enormous resilience, flexibility, and creativity among citizens. People are changing their ways. I see fantastic initiatives and inventive solutions, for example, setting up the social distancing society and economy. In helping people in vulnerable positions, more work is done based on trust, people's living environment becomes central again, more customization is possible, and there is more cooperation between different parties, based on solidarity and new connectivity. The coronavirus makes differences in our society visible, but also brings many people closer together.

Currently, at the local level of a municipality, we are working hard on understanding what this virus means for our society, on repairing and limiting the damage, on getting society and communities back on track. We do this together with a wide range of stakeholders, including institutes for higher education, such as Tilburg University. This crisis, in which both health and the economy are affected, is unprecedented. But... Even from this unprecedented crisis, new opportunities arise. Emily Dickens wrote, "Not knowing when the [new] dawn will come, I open every door."

Opportunities for a more beautiful, better, and more inclusive society. Let us seize these opportunities to emerge better and stronger. When thinking about the "new" normal, I would like to plead for a "new" society. A society, indeed with a new common, that opens itself up to everyone. A society that embodies the principles of equality, accessibility, and connectedness. The feeling that someone is looking after you, no matter what the situation. After all, participating always starts with being important. To be taken seriously. This is what I learned in my current job.

Especially now, it is more important than ever, if we aim for inclusion, that we make every effort to offer everyone perspective, especially for those for whom "participation" is not self-evident. This requires strengthening the control over one's own life. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to rely on one's own responsibility and on the resilience and solidarity of society. This makes it possible to apply more differentiation and customization, so that specific circumstances can be better accommodated. Tailor-made approaches are more relevant now than ever.

To advance this "new" society, knowledge and innovation are needed, as well as a joint effort by people themselves, social organizations, education, and governments at all levels. Together we can explore, formulate, implement, and hold on to the agenda of this "new" society. That should be our common focus and ambition. That is the focus and ambition I share with the authors of this book. Together we are stronger!

Alderwoman Tilburg Municipality Esmah Lahlah
Responsible for Labor Participation, Social and
Economic Security, and Global Awareness
Tilburg, the Netherlands

# Preface

In 1951, the city of Tilburg was national news for weeks because it was hit by a highly contagious smallpox epidemic, the last one in the Netherlands. People who were potentially infected had to be quarantined and the city was sealed off. There is no reference to this profound episode in the historiography of Tilburg University. This will be different for the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

After it slowly became clear what was going on at the beginning of March 2020, the lectures at the university continued for a short time. However, mid-March, the government announced an "intelligent" lockdown and the universities in the Netherlands had to close immediately and almost all staff started working from home. With enormous efforts of our lecturers and support staff, "off-line" education was replaced by online lectures and examinations, a very far-reaching development but also an acceleration of the digitalization process that was already taking place.

As committed scientists, we quickly developed a healthy curiosity about the ensuing effects of the coronavirus crisis. At Tilburg University, we are constantly debating the positioning of the academy between Understanding Society and Advancing Society, i.e., from critically reflexive to ideologically constructive or even more simply: from insight into current values and mechanisms to new constructs. In that light, the discussion turned to the possible transformation in society from an "old common" to a "new common," and soon the idea was born to work out the various insights in a book.

Within 2 weeks, we found about 50 colleagues willing to give their brief and concise visions on this theme and to contribute to a collection entitled "The New Common." And this amidst their busy schedules. Thanks to pleasant teamwork, the book was ready in just over 3 months, and we are proud to

be able to present it to the reader. What we especially like is the temporary character of the book. A year ago, the content would have been seen as pure fiction; in a year from now, the content will probably be outdated.

Our New Common project, of which this book is the first product, has a focus on and is dedicated to help develop, where deemed necessary and desirable, a new common, by contributing our knowledge, conducting research, creating impact in co-creation with societal stakeholders, and engaging in education and discussions with peers and with students. This book addresses the question of the possible development of the new common and its characteristics from a broad scope of viewpoints, including wide range and smaller range issues and stressing both opportunities and threats along the way to the new common. Fifty scientists, who are all connected to Tilburg University, present their scientific views on the topic in a grand total of 31 chapters. They discuss the issue from their respective fields of scientific interest and expertise including (international) law, behavioral science, humanities, artificial intelligence, economics, theology, and management. All these disciplines together constitute the profile of Tilburg University in its capacity and role of a university that sets out to advance society.

We wish you a lot of reading pleasure, constructive thoughts, new initiatives, and some confusion.

Tilburg, Netherlands
July 30, 2020

Emile Aarts
Hein Fleuren
Margriet Sitskoorn
Ton Wilthagen

# How to Read This Book

This book contains 31 chapters by enthusiastic researchers who are all, without exception, involved in their own scientific research into the COVID-19 pandemic, including the consequences it has on education.

The chapters are not categorized but, maybe unexpectedly, listed in alphabetical order of the first author; we as editors have given this a lot of thought. We decided not to introduce a structure in the order or presentation of the main titles because we believe that any conceivable structure would not do justice to the versatility of the different main titles and the structure that might be important to you. After all, the chapters have countless criteria for ranking them, and our choice would just be one of those and might not be suitable for you as an individual reader.

We would like to invite you to decide for yourself how to read the book. The chapters are all stand-alone, and you can start wherever you want and choose the order, in any way. The chapters will all have a meaning within a structure of your own choice.

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and its unforeseeable impact on society make this book a snapshot at the time it was finalized in mid-August 2020.

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# 1

# The Dawn of a New Common

Emile Aarts, Hein Fleuren, Margriet Sitskoorn, and Ton Wilthagen

Thursday, February 27, 2020. Dutch National television is broadcasting a special information program on the COVID-19 virus that has hit several countries, also in Europe, after the initial outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan. So far, no patients have been registered in the Netherlands. It is 09:20 pm and the program has been running for exactly 50 min. The main guest is Minister of Health, Welfare, and Sport Bruno Bruins. After a short video about the virus, the program host Rob Trip suddenly says: "Mr. Bruins, you are being handed a note!" The minister speaks up: It has just been confirmed that a patient with the coronavirus has been identified in the Netherlands.

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Allegedly, it concerns a man who is placed in isolation in the Elisabeth-Tweesteden hospital in Tilburg.

This is where the story of our book starts. The hospital mentioned by the minister is hardly a kilometer away from our university, Tilburg University. Things now start to develop quickly. During several weeks, the region of Tilburg becomes the "Corona Capital" of the Netherlands in terms of the number of people infected. On March 18, Minister Bruno Bruins collapses due to exhaustion during a debate in the Government's House of Representatives. The following day, he resigns and soon after is temporarily replaced by a politician of a party that is not part of the current political coalition. Two days earlier, the country had gone into a lockdown after a historical speech of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

## It Turns Out to Be a Pandemic and Quite Scary

At the time of writing, July 1, 2020, the official number of persons positively tested with COVID-19 in the Netherlands amounted to 50,147; 11,871 persons infected by the virus had been admitted to a hospital; and 6105 persons had died. It started as a local breakout in the city of Wuhan in China in December last year and developed overwhelmingly rapidly into a worldwide disaster. Unlike the SARS epidemic in 2003, COVID-19 spreads around the world at an unprecedented pace, and on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared it a pandemic. By July 15, 2020, people in some 190 countries around the world were affected, almost ten million people were infected and about half a million persons died.

The common view to fight the coronavirus crisis is to bring the so-called reproduction rate R (the average number of people who will contract a contagious disease from one person with that disease) below 1. This can be achieved with a vaccine, but we do not have one yet. We stimulate science and the pharmaceutical industry to give their utmost effort to find one. In the meantime, we have to maintain social distancing, and this has a major impact on our society. Worldwide, countries have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways, but quarantines and lockdowns have become general response measures taken by authorities at various levels: local, regional, and national. It is this type of measure that is impacting our society in all its dimensions. Many believe, for example, that this will put an end to globalization for a long time. Massive transportation of persons and goods will be reduced substantially. Education will change. National governments, and

consequently the role of nationalism, might regain significance, and unemployment and poverty numbers will rise.

Paolo Giordano (2020) was one of the first to describe the effects of social isolation in his essay Nel Contagioi. He was also one of the first to share the concerns that frightened him with a broader audience through his touching report of what he experienced during his personal quarantine. He came to the conclusion that the worldwide spread of the virus shows that our society has become truly global over the past decades, with all its drawbacks. He stresses that the coronavirus crisis affects the entire world and that the only way to prevail is to come up with a collaborative approach starting at the level of our individual lives ranging up to the level of our planet as a global organism.

Clearly, COVID-19 is not the first pandemic that has hit humankind. Our memory of pandemics, however, is not well developed because we did not experience firsthand what happened in earlier times and do not learn easily from descriptions and therefore fail to profit from the lessons that could be drawn from earlier pandemics. In her riveting book, the journalist Laura Spinney (2018) explains how the Spanish Flue of 1918 has dramatically changed the world while it is one of the most widely denied global events of the past century costing more lives than both world wars together. As an explanation, she argues that we do not like the thought of people dying in a terrible way through suffocation and without reason or sensemaking.

Other than during World War I and II, there are no clear and obvious opponents. The coronavirus acts as an invisible assassinator and equalizer and anyone can become a victim. Consequently, after the crisis is over, we are all survivors. Admittedly, we all understand how it started in December 2019, but the way it will end is unclear and that is what people find hard to deal with. We resort to science to explain to us what is happening, to tell us which of the many scenarios will most likely develop and what to do and what not to do, but we feel uncertain and disoriented. Science turns out to be imperfect as virologists and epidemiologists produce conflicting theories and statements, or some of us, including political leaders, just do not like the implications of their advice and go into denial. Whom should we believe in trying to find a way out?

At the same time, states take over control and leadership. Kleinfeld (2020) analyses the worldwide difference between the approaches the various countries take to handle and fight the crisis. There are more or less authoritarian states that seem to be successful in their approach, such as China, Singapore, and South Korea. On the other hand, there are the democratic states but they also show different levels of success in their approaches. The USA, Brazil, and the UK fail as their measures are inadequate and late; Italy ran into problems very early and was overwhelmingly impacted by the virus whereas Germany

and New Zeeland clearly seem to be successful. This brings us to the central observation that not only the type of government determines whether the approach is successful, but also the trust citizens put in their governments and the measures taken.

As we write down these words, the world is expecting one of the deepest social and economic recessions in modern history. Apparently, an ecological crisis has turned into a health crisis, which, in turn, has transformed into a socioeconomic crisis. And again, as the Dutch writer Geert Mak (2020) argues with an imaginary student of history in the year 2069, we did not see it coming in the Global North being used to our seemingly smooth and undisturbed way of living.

## Replacing an "Old Common" With a "New Common"

In this introduction, we hypothesize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as an intervention that affects society as we knew it. As the contributions in this volume will show, this intervention may further worsen the current state of affairs, accentuating its flaws and deficiencies, or possibly lead to a new and better situation. Currently, many people are concerned about the future. The introduction of lockdowns and social distancing measures makes people feeling depressed and sometimes overtly resentful of the "new normal" as it is currently being referred to. In the Netherlands, the terms "1.5-m society" and "1.5-m economy" were coined, indicating the physical requirements and limitations after the initial lockdown that might remain in place for a long time, perhaps even permanently, just like wearing a mask on certain occasions. We conceptualize the pre-COVID-19 era as the "old common" and explore the possible transition to a "new common," with or without a coronavirus.

The word "common" has several meanings as an adjective and as a noun (Merriam Webster Dictionary 2020). It relates to a community at large or public work for the common good; to a place or common resource belonging to or shared by more individuals; to a familiar insight or widespread general knowledge as in common sense; to a piece of land subject to common use, such as a general public space like a public open area in a municipality.

In this volume, we use the word common in a variety of meanings as indicated above with a general emphasis on shared values and resources both in an abstract metaphorical sense as in a real-life physical sense. We happened to find an interesting interpretation of the phrase "new common" in a

description of a community space that may be booked by the residents and organizations that work in and near St James Town in Toronto. The St. James Town website (2020) explains the term New Common as follows.

> The name … was chosen to best communicate what we hope will happen in the space-people working together for the common good of everyone living in the community. This points to how The New Common is also an approach to living as a community characterized by relationship, collaboration, diversity, creativity, and empowerment.

In fact, from a sociological perspective, humans as a species always have something in common, even in a slave society occupied by masters and slaves. Therefore, when deliberating a new common, one has to give a view on the "old" common. The issue is not about having or not having a common or a society, but it is about the quality and scope of that common.

The American ecologist Garret Hardin (1968) wrote about the tragedy of the commons arguing that individuals will always try to maximize their own gains even at the cost of the common good. He already indicated a typical human feature that would later on be called short-termism, the problem of balancing the needs of both the long term and the short term. Buck Cox 1985 criticized Hardin's tragedy of the commons for its weak historical ground and rather terms that the common usage of land had been successful for many centuries. She argues that social changes and agricultural innovation, and not the behavior of the commoners, led to the demise of the commons. So Cox's remark can be interpreted as a strong belief in the positive attitude of individuals to contribute to the common good.

Hanging on to the Old Common might be understandable or even rational, depending on who you are, where you are from, and where you live. A lot of technological, economic, and educational progress has certainly been made in human history in the era defined as the Anthropocene, which started with the industrial revolution. Various books elaborate on this perspective, including the seminal ones by Norberg (2016) and by Rosling et al. (2018). The point all these authors make is that we tend to underestimate, by ignoring facts and figures, what has actually been achieved over the years and that on average we are much healthier, wealthier, and safer than at any point in history.

## How COVID-19 Challenges the Old Common

Obviously, COVID-19, and the resulting crisis, has revealed a number of shortcomings and cracks in the old common. We see the following major ones.

Firstly, our society lacks diversity and inclusion. Many groups are either under-represented or treated unequally or even discriminated against. This applies to women, people with a migrant background, disabled persons, and people with certain sexual orientations. A pandemic crisis is often seen as a great "equalizer" as everyone could fall ill. However, in practice, the burden of the consequences of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic is not equally divided and typically falls on the weaker groups as various chapters in this book will show. It operates rather selectively.

Even during the lockdown, groups of migrant workers were exposed to high risks of COVID-19 infections due to poor working conditions and the lack of options to stop working or to work from home, notwithstanding the government support to companies and workers. In the Netherlands and Germany, for example, this became painfully clear in the meat industry and slaughterhouses. Recently, after Spain had lifted large parts of the lockdown restrictions, the Ségria region near Barcelona with 200,000 inhabitants had to be closed off again due to a new outbreak in sectors with many migrant workers.

Secondly, our society appears generation biased. A sociological revolution is taking place, which already started before the corona crisis, where for the first time in history new generations do not generally have better prospects than their parents or grandparents (Putnam 2016). This applies to job security, debts, pensions, the ability to buy or rent a house, and as a consequence, the impact this all has on forming relationships and families. While the elderly were without a doubt hit hardest by COVID-19 in terms of health, morbidity, and loneliness, young people were strongly affected by the restrictions regarding going out and getting together, the lockdown of their schools and education, and the economic developments. Unemployment among young workers in temporary contracts is increasing sharply, as they are the first to be made redundant (Eurofound 2020). As a consequence, a "corona generation," "Generation C," or a cohort of "Coronials" might develop. During one of the crisis press conferences, the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte strongly encouraged the young generation to speak up.

Thirdly, our global society is weak when it comes to international solidarity. According to UNHCR, by the end of 2018, almost 70.8 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide because of persecution, conflict, violence,

or human rights violations, a record high. The most recent number on worldwide hunger shows an incredible number of 690 million people going to bed hungry every night (FAO 2020). Migrants are at the mercy of Western governments that act in an ambivalent, uncoordinated, and self-centered way. Often refugees become political playthings. In the coronavirus crisis, many countries and regions have insufficient means and too weak an infrastructure to be able to counteract the spread of the virus, especially among certain groups, including refugees. At the same time, Western countries cannot reach consensus on support measures and regulations and some try to buy up stocks of medical products and possible medicines and vaccines.

Finally, the old common is, to a high degree, humankind-centered, bluntly ignoring the wider ecological system of the planet of which we humans are part. Since the commercial introduction of the first versions of the steam engine that could transmit continuous power to a machine in 1712 by Thomas Newcomen, humankind has entered the industrial era. In the following man-dominated Anthropocene, much has been achieved, but much has also been destroyed, wasted, and irreversibly damaged. The notions of "externalities" and ecological footprints of human behavior and the global system we have created are of recent origin and still fairly weakly developed. This is why the old common is extremely vulnerable despite all the knowledge that has been generated. COVID-19 appears a case of zoonotic diseases that start out in animals and jump to humans under certain circumstances. Various virologists have stated that a virus restores an ecosystem. In other words, the COVID-19 crisis represents a "systemic" crisis, underpinned by a capitalist, neo-classical economic system where, in the analysis of the economist Mazzucato (2019), everything that fetches a price is of value, whereas in classical economics everything that had value used to get a price.

Many of these shortcomings are rooted in two major seemingly conflicting interests or values, which can be described as global versus local and collective versus individual issues, respectively. Indeed, Krastev (2020a) recently argued that the COVID-19 pandemic is different from earlier worldwide catastrophic events because of the level of globalization that has been reached anno 2020 and because of the unprecedented level of political control that several states such as China have imposed upon its citizens. In addition, Krastev points out that the crises amplify several paradoxes such as the looming interrelational conflicts between generations, the dilemmas states are faced with in their decisions to either stimulate the economy or contain the spread of the virus to secure people's health, and the tendency of the national government to control its citizens versus the fundamental right of personal freedom.

Krastev (2020b) terms his findings in the following seven lessons for which he assumes a European perspective.

1. The return of "big governments": people are inclined to rely on the government to organize a collective defense against the pandemic.
2. The increasing significance of borders: the role of the nation state becomes more important to secure national interests.
3. The growing trust in scientific expertise: people are open to trusting experts and heeding the science when their own lives are at stake.
4. The potential of using big data authoritarianism: states will use digital technology to efficiently and effectively control the movement and behavior of people to fight the crisis.
5. The message leaders have to spread: to contain the pandemic, people should drastically change their way of living, and therefore recommendations to "stay calm" and "get on with life" is the wrong message.
6. The strong impact on intergenerational dynamics as the older members of society are much more vulnerable to COVID-19 and feel threatened by millennials' visible unwillingness to change their way of living.
7. At a certain point, governments will be forced to choose between containing the spread of the pandemic at the cost of destroying the economy or tolerating a higher human cost to save the economy.

## Towards a New Common

Can we envisage a new common, particularly in these challenging times of a pandemic and major socioeconomic crisis? What will it look like and how will we get there while preserving the best of the old common? Obviously, the new common would and should be the positive mirror image of the old common. It would have to be more inclusive, more diverse, less selective, offer more leeway for the young generations, be based on the principles of precaution, leave no one behind, and acknowledge the wider ecosystem we as humankind are inseparably part of.

One optimistic belief is that we as humans will draw lessons from this enormous shock, come to our senses, and change our ways of thinking and doing, having learned our lessons well. Many commentators are not that optimistic and allude to the previous financial crisis in the years 2008–2014, where some things were changed, but many things remained unchanged. Nevertheless, the hopes are up for the scenario that the current crisis will give a strong push

to developments that were already underway, such as the efforts for an energy transition.

In general, the transition from the old to the new common can be characterized as the "Second Deep Transition," where the industrialization is considered the "First Deep Transition." Schot et al. (2020) put it as follows.

> We need a massive redirection of our systems towards a low-carbon and circular economy, based on a better balance between local and global production, new systems of peer-to-peer consumption, a sharing economy, and the development of new type of services (and commons) to replace mass production, for example, not more automobiles, but mobility as a service.

Clearly, being able to make this transition is a matter of resilience, which should not be merely understood as the capacity to "bounce back" to the original state, but also the ability to anticipate changes and, in particular, to innovate (Wilthagen and Bongers 2020).

A recently published McKinsey report (Sneader and Singhal 2020) outlines the path to the next normal beyond the coronavirus crisis in the following five phases: resolve, resilience, return, reimagination, and reform. Defining a new common is no less than a long-term process of reimagination and reform. It is not at all a slam-dunk case. Vested interests and power relations represent strong hurdles in taking the next steps.

Various philosophical, legal, and sociological approaches have tried to pin down the ideal of a community based on good values. A case in point is "communitarianism" as promoted by authors such as Etzioni (2003) that gained attention at the turn of the millennium by stating that

> Communitarianism is a social philosophy that maintains that society should articulate what is good–that such articulations are both needed and legitimate. Communitarianism is often contrasted with classical liberalism, a philosophical position that holds each individual should formulate the good on his or her own … Communitarians examine the ways shared conceptions of the good (values) are formed, transmitted, justified, and enforced.

So where should we place our bets when it comes to shaping a new common and what are the game changers? Certainly, one of the interesting solution areas can be found in the potentials of the digital transformation. More than a decade ago, Benkler (2006) asserted in his book *The Wealth of Networks* that, with the rise of the Internet and the upcoming digitalization, a new economic system based on commons becomes possible again as cheap computing

power in conjunction with global communication networks will enable people to produce valuable products through non-commercial processes of interaction: "as human beings and as social beings, rather than as market actors through the price system." Blenkler coined the term "networked *information economy*" to refer to a "system of production, distribution, and consumption of information goods characterized by decentralized individual action carried out through widely distributed, nonmarket means that do not depend on market strategies." He also introduced the term "*commons-based peer production*" for collaborative efforts based on sharing information. Current examples of commons-based peer productions are free and open source software platforms. We argue that the networked information economy will become the driver of the digital transformation in the new common. The ubiquitous availability of data in combination with the unlimited power of smart algorithms creates the possibility to drive the development of a new and unprecedented form of artificial intelligence, which will shape the new common.

The "Big Data Revolution" as described by Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013) and Kolb (2013) embodies a promise that may help us as humans to transcend our disabilities. We have severe limitations in observing gradual and longitudinal change, rather than sudden shocks. The inroads SARS and coronaviruses have been making represent an example. In addition, our capacity to consider and understand interaction effects among a huge number of variables is low, just like our speed of calculating. Watson, the IBM supercomputer, and the game computers Deep Blue and AlphaGo have made this painfully clear. Big data and smart technologies might help us to avoid the tragedy of the commons, by showing us real time, or even ex-ante, what the collective—say common—the impact is of our individual preferences and actions, rather than the dramatic ex-post evaluations that we are making now.

We rapidly develop a digital society by virtue of all the smart devices, applications, and platforms the digital technology enables. We work from home using collaborative working environments like MS Teams, Zoom, Skype, and what have you. Smart mobile apps are rolled out with tracking and tracing functionalities. Predictive analytics are used to predict local breakouts and forecast potential scenarios. Robots are currently positioned at airfields and hospitals to check people's temperatures. Wearable devices are introduced to alert workers when they get too close to each other. Social media are applied to replace face-to-face and physical contact with novel ways to share our emotions and feelings with our beloved ones but also with a larger, often anonymous crowd.

To put it in general terms, the coronavirus crisis is accelerating the digital transformation, at the level of individuals, at the level of our society, and even

at the level of our planet. Harari (2017) convincingly argues in his most recent book Homo Deus that the powers of big data and smart algorithms are currently at work and that they will shape the twenty-first century into an all-encompassing information society.

Lovelock (2019) takes the ideas of a future information society even further, alluding to the power of the digital transformation at a global systems level. He recognizes that artificial intelligence and its supreme power and knowledge carry the potential to lead us from the current Anthropocene into the new age of the "Novacene." For the time being, "cyborgs" will work side by side with us humans—a new and very uncommon common—but at a given moment, they will take over our tasks to best service our old planet's ecosystem, "keeping Earth cool to fend off the heat of the sun and safe us from the worst effects of future catastrophes." Eventually, Lovelock forecasts that the cyborg will take over the planet and leave it because life on earth is no longer possible due to the increasing heat of the evolution of the sun as a dying star.

All these ideas of a new common are compelling and frightening at the same time as the all-encompassing artificial superintelligence might not turn out to be a "blessing in device," but could merely prove to be a "devil in device" (Wilthagen and Schoots 2019). We have to ensure that the digital transformation serves our lives as long as possible by enhancing our well-being and welfare. In his seminal book, Bostrom (2014) elaborates on the dangers of this human-made superintelligence from an ethical, legal, and societal perspective in order to stimulate the debate on a human-centric artificial intelligence. An essential precondition for a new common that will turn out better than the old common, even in a society that faces severe restrictions due to the current virus or new viruses, concerns the alignment of technology and human values, resulting in "responsible AI" (Dignum 2019).

The final question for now is how to proceed from here? There is no readily available roadmap for the new common, but we might want to use the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (2020) defined by the United Nations in 2015 as a benchmark and guideline. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, hunger, water management, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. They are all interconnected, and, in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve them all by 2030. Evidently, these goals can serve the purpose of providing humankind with a meaningful pathway into the future (O'Connor 2018). The indicators connected with the SDGs should be translated into strategic program and action

perspectives for all relevant societal organizations to guarantee the possibility of a significant contribution to a new common.

The SDGs can drive change and offer a narrative and an opportunity for all to speak in one language on sustainability in the broadest sense. By following the SDGs, opportunities abound for business and capital to unlock markets that offer endless potential for profit and prosperity while at the same time working towards a sustainable future. Hoek (2018) describes how this much needed "Trillion Dollar Shift" can be achieved. Vinuesa et al. (2020) discuss the critical role of human-centric artificial intelligence in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Other non-exhaustive strategies for the pathway to a new common might include a further stress on the role of the region in the political, economic, and social governance of society ("glocalization"), taking the human measure and scale as the point of departure and recognizing that people are currently not well served by fragmented and non-integral systems. These systems ignore that a person performs different roles—being an inhabitant of a region, but also a worker, a parent, a patient, a consumer, et cetera—but is in essence indivisible (de Sousa Santos 2002).

For universities, there is a special role with respect to Goal 17 "Partnerships for the goals" as they can play an excellent role as drivers of regional innovation ecosystems connecting local governments, industry, citizens, and knowledge institutions in so-called quadruple or multi-helix configurations (Etzkowitz and Zhou 2013; Peris-Ortiz et al. 2016). We see this as a new primary function of so-called "fourth generation universities" in addition to the existing three primary functions education, scientific research, and impact creation.

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# 2

# Covid-Spiracy: Old Wine in New Barrels?

Peter Achterberg

How to make sense of the current COVID-19 crisis? While many people rely on official statements made by governments, scientific institutions, and experts for answering this question, others do not. Recently, the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad[1] reported on people who adhere to the conspirational theory that the current COVID-19 crisis is linked to the introduction of 5G technology. These people point, for example, to so-called 5G experiments in the province of Wuhan, China, where the current COVID-19 crisis started in 2019. The "covid-spiracy" theory suggests that behind the societal curtains, elites are trying to deal with the problem of overpopulation by means of introducing 5G and blaming COVID-19 for the negative side effects. On Facebook and Twitter, people are actively discussing these theories with increasing momentum. And, inspired by theories on the adverse effects of 5G, people have tried to destroy 5G technology and hinder the spread of this technology in the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, the mainstream media (MSM) have been directing their attention to this newly developing phenomenon—the Volkskrant, NRC

[1] https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2020/04/19/nana-denkt-dat-de-overheid-ons-uitdunt-met-5g-tijdens-corona-a3997217

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Handelsblad, De Telegraaf, Nieuwsuur, RTL-nieuws, and the NOS have all been reporting on people who link the current COVID-19 crisis to 5G. In many of these MSM reports, people with affinity to conspiracy theories are portrayed alongside some contextual information—fact checking the information provided by the covid spiracists or explaining their behavior. In this chapter, I analyze public reactions on Twitter to those MSM reports. Below, I first provide some background on research on conspiracy theories and then show how people perceive the covid-spiracy theory reports in the mainstream media.

## Research on Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories can come in many guises, and, to their fundamental core, they are a set of beliefs that behind the societal curtains evil, malevolent groups are indoctrinating individuals and/or governing societies (Aupers 2012). In the last decade, scholarly attention for conspiracy theories (Aupers 2012; Douglas et al. 2019; Letort 2017; Locke 2009), and public support for such theories (Oliver and Wood 2014; Stempel et al. 2007) has risen.

These recent efforts have pointed out how much certain publics of Western societies actually believe in conspiracy theories (e.g., Oliver and Wood have shown that roughly one-quarter of the USA has an affinity with such theories) and point to two major factors that underlie beliefs in conspiracy theories. The first is that people are trying to make sense of the world they live in (Butter 2014; Grenier 1992; Popper 1945). As processes of individualization, globalization, and secularization rob people of their feelings of security, it is proposed that those who feel insecure are culturally rationalizing (Campbell 2015) and are trying to find the meaning and purpose of the things that are happening (Aupers 2012; Harambam and Aupers 2017).

The second factor in explaining affinity with conspiracy theories is modern-day anti- institutionalism (Elchardus and De Keere 2013; Melley 2008). Because people no longer trust the institutional backbone of modern societies, politics, science, the media, and the judiciary system, they start relying on themselves for finding out the truth and explaining what is going on.

## The Debate on Twitter

In the wake of MSM reports on the covid-spiracy theory on Twitter, people have been speaking their minds about such reports. In the following section, I will discuss public reactions to six of those reports.[2]

Among those who do not adhere to covid-spiracy theories, reactions can be divided into two camps. The first camp ridicules those who believe in the conspiracy theories, for instance, by implying that these people's IQs need to be tested[3] and that they are mentally deranged.[4] One person mockingly asks "whether it would be worthwhile investigating the linkage between pizza Hawaii and the Coronavirus."[5] The second camp of opponents of the covid-spiracy diverge in their reactions to the MSM reporting in that some argue that the MSM are doing a great job in reporting on and debunking of conspirational thinkers[6] whilst others argue that the MSM have crossed the line in giving conspirational thinkers a platform.[7]

Conspirational thinkers' reactions can be divided into three overarching themes. The first is their expressed concern about 5G technology and COVID-19. They argue against having a source of electromagnetic radiation in their proximity and draw parallels to the "proven" negative effects of electricity pylons,[8] and they point to the danger that lies within the adaptation of 5G technology.[9] Note, however, that the focus of these arguments concerns the danger of 5G technology. Secondly, the covid-spiracy theory supporters react strongly against the MSM reports that, in their view, are making a mockery of conspirational thinkers. They argue that the MSM are "demonizing the truth" and that those who are really looking for the truth are portrayed as

[2] Reactions to these six reports were included here: (1) Telegraaf: https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/715118123/weer-incident-bij-mast-verzet-5-g-wordt-militant, (2) Telegraaf: https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/1762273884/complotdenkers-zien-verband-tussen-5-g-masten-en-corona?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=seeding-telegraaf, (3) RTLNieuws: https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/editienl/laatste-videos-editienl/video/5118871/kritische-arts-gaat-viral?fbclid=IwAR0qwJHL1U7yNDdBD516H5bmtDLluO4L5StkckTi74KS8Q2WLYaKjBJFpM4, (4) NRC Handelsblad: https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2020/04/19/nana-denkt-dat-de-overheid-ons-uitdunt-met-5g-tijdens-corona-a3997217, (5) NOS: https://nos.nl/artikel/2330065-brand-bij-vier-zendmasten-heel-sterk-vermoeden-van-brandstichting.html, and (6) Nieuwsuur: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMuMBGaHttM&feature=youtu.be

[3] https://twitter.com/terpGer/status/1252271787578097664

[4] https://twitter.com/GJPvWesten/status/1248623467580125185

[5] https://twitter.com/joyce_devivre/status/1252151070127726592

[6] https://twitter.com/Genverbrander10/status/1252007731323494400

[7] https://twitter.com/knillis/status/1252259095320637442

[8] https://twitter.com/Kaasschaaf351/status/1248688462166994944

[9] https://twitter.com/esmeraldaed/status/1248990551980027906

"nutcases"[10] and that those who merely ask questions are being attacked unjustly.[11] In addition, they complain that MSM reports are rude and too generalizing and they state that they should be "falsely accusing their own mothers."[12] Hence, it is safe to conclude that, in their eyes, the MSM are doing a particularly poor job. Thirdly and related to the foregoing, they state that the MSM are "slaves of the elite,"[13,14] fully in line with the "current dictatorship of leftist political correctness" and dependent on a "dictatorial state"[15] or on Bill Gates.[16] They argue that "in view of the growing opposition pushing the introduction of 5G could be called militant"[17] and others argue that there is just too little militancy in our country[18]—suggesting that demolishing a 5G antenna should be seen as a promising start of rising up against the elites.

## Conclusion

From my short and anecdotal discussion of responses to MSM reporting about the association between COVID-19 and 5G, it becomes clear that there are a lot of constants in the societal debates, which also thrived before the COVID-19 crisis started (Aupers 2012; Melley 2008). The first is that the MSM's attention to conspirational thinkers who link the current COVID-19 crisis to 5G does not cause these conspirational thinkers to trust the MSM more. If anything, the attention paid by the MSM seems to cause more distrust. The more attention they pay to it, as they are doing it now, the more critical people with strong affinities with conspiracy theories will become. This reflects recent scholarship that suggests that a "rational" and balanced approach to conspiracy theories can be compared to pouring water on a grease fire (Palmer 2018).

The second is the anti-institutional perspective, which not only seems to affect the covid-spiracy supporters' reactions but also the reactions of those

[10] https://twitter.com/paulrikmans/status/1259762911951683584
[11] https://twitter.com/IvoValkenburg/status/1259910435228332034
[12] https://twitter.com/VolkersBram/status/1259090705013669888
[13] Ibid.
[14] https://twitter.com/Protect_Nation/status/1260515202207973376
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[17] https://twitter.com/Verzet_Exit/status/1248732344544100358
[18] https://twitter.com/My_Name_Nobody_/status/1248842665115955201

who do not adhere to the theory. On both sides of the isle, people are critical to MSM reports, albeit for different reasons. Those with more affinity with the covid-spiracy link their rather critical view about the media to larger anti-institutionalist worldviews and see the victimization and demonization of conspirational thinkers portrayed in the MSM reports as a consequence of the media's servitude to a corrupt and dictatorial elite. This suggests that the same mechanisms that underlie affinity with other conspiracy theories are at work here too. People try to make sense of what is going on (Aupers 2012) and combine it with an almost inflammatory anti-institutionalism (Melley 2008). In this sense, this covid-spiracy theory may be nothing but a theory based on the same mechanisms. Like old wine in new barrels.

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# 3

# Do Not Pass Up the Opportunity!

Maurice Adams

A much-cited article on the website "Inside Higher ED" outlines fifteen scenarios for higher education in the coming period (Malony and Kim 2020). The continuum ranges from education completely back to normal to education completely at a distance. Full return to normal is not on the horizon; full distance education is possible but not optimal for most educational programs; and somewhere in between is quite a challenge. However, it is striking that the continuum focuses entirely on official educational activities and that there is no attention for informal educational activities: a neglect that is reflected in the current discussions about the future of our education. This chapter is about this neglect and the proposition is that the coronavirus crisis offers significant opportunities for a "new educational common" at Tilburg University in this respect.

COVID-19, a New Educational Common and the Informal Aspects of Higher Education.

This contribution develops a line of thought presented in a May 2020 report by a task force consisting of Tilburg University colleagues on the future of education at Tilburg University.

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## The Socialization Function

The Dutch educationalist Gert Biesta argues that education is not just about the transfer of knowledge and about skills training. Socialization also plays a crucial role.[1] Indeed, students should be prepared for their future professions through knowledge and skills. But they should also be initiated into values and traditions, enabling them to participate in existing and future social, cultural, and political structures.

The efforts of Dutch higher education institutions in recent months have focused mainly on knowledge transfer. Moreover, an enormous effort has been made to ensure that all exams were properly conducted. The prevention of study delays and the ambition to guarantee the quality of our diplomas played a crucial role in all of this. Now that the new academic year is approaching, it is important to think about the aforementioned socialization function of education. It is a theme that, until recently, was beyond the horizon of higher education: in the old common, we took socialization for granted all too easily. And to some extent it indeed was sort of easy: as (a) a self-evident part of regular educational processes and (b) a bycatch of a well-developed student life.

In a recent report of the Dutch Education Council—an advisory body for Dutch government—the "socialization challenge" is also addressed through this two-pronged approach (Onderwijsraad 2020). The Education Council emphasizes that although the coronavirus crisis brings students many new and unique life experiences, social distancing and distance learning are crippling the relationships and interactions that promote a profound educational experience. With reference to the above-mentioned Biesta, among others, the Council states that

> …precisely by learning with each other, by interacting with each other and with their teachers/lecturers, and by being part of a group, students develop themselves. The fact that (…) young people now meet their peers a lot less often affects them in their cognitive and socio-emotional development and the development of their brains (Onderwijsraad 2020).

While the Education Council, in the above-mentioned quote, mainly points out how the socialization aspects of education are shaped through the

[1] Biesta (2006) also identifies subjectification as a main aim of education: this refers to emancipation and freedom and the responsibility attached.

official route, it also reminds us that studying is about discussions in the coffee corner and about an active student life as well:

> It is precisely the activities of student and study associations and other extracurricular activities that contribute to social bonding, to deepening and broadening the content of their studies, to an international experience, to career and professional orientation, and to the formation of future professional networks (Onderwijsraad 2020).

Here, the Council is referring to the university as a social meeting place, outside the curriculum. And hopefully across social dividing lines too: the coronavirus crisis indeed made abundantly clear that diversity and inclusion is still a huge challenge for the weaker groups in society (Aarts et al. 2020).

## Enhancing Our Educational Profile

Group formation and social bonding are thus established within and outside the official frameworks of education. As far as I am concerned, the current situation reveals just how much we have lost sight of the extracurricular aspects of education in the past. It is, therefore, also no coincidence that the extracurricular aspect of education in the public and academic debate on the future of our education is currently almost completely out of sight. In other words, and on a positive note, there is now an opportunity to take responsibility for stimulating and facilitating the more informal socialization aspects of education.

Such an ambition could fit nicely into TEP: the Tilburg Educational Profile (Tilburg University 2017), with which Tilburg University positions itself in the educational landscape. TEP stands for an educational vision in which knowledge, skills, and character are central. Whereas knowledge transfer and skills training are self-evident in an environment of higher education, the character aspect focuses on the development of the critical, self-aware attitude of our students towards the society in which they function (Understanding Society). It is about students who are committed and socially critical, who are able to work together in various professional settings (as citizens of this world as it were), and who are able to fit into existing structures as citizens.

However, TEP focuses primarily on what we do within the official and formal frameworks of education. My proposal is, therefore, to now develop TEP through a process of extracurricular activities; you could call it the living or sticky campus: a place where students want to spend time, even if they do

not have formal education! Precisely such a living campus offers opportunities for creating an environment outside the official frameworks in which we, as a university, can live up to what it means to educate critically committed students.

Let me give some examples: it could be about better facilitating a culture of debate and discussion about the major societal challenges we are facing; it could be about better-facilitating networks in which students coach and support each other; we could develop stronger cooperation with regional or national cultural institutions (museums, music centers). Connecting and collaborating with the city of Tilburg and other Tilburg institutes of higher education should be a high priority too! It may also be about offering hands-on skills that make it possible for graduates to enter professional life effectively: language skills for all students (including Dutch language and culture for international students), digital literacy, and labor market orientation. We should also include alumni and career services in all of this. In addition, international students can be linked to teams of Dutch students for a cultural exchange and for help with planning and interaction with the university, et cetera. In any case, study and student associations must be intensively involved in all of this or even be in charge. When developing ideas it would be helpful to start mapping the existing activities via a matrix: on the one hand with respect to formal and informal, physical and digital activities, on the other hand in terms of study program, School, or university. From there, gaps can be identified, ideas developed, and structures build. In any event, because of its size and compactness, the Tilburg University campus offers unique opportunities to profile itself vis-a-vis other universities in this regard. This of course requires an investment, but character building can then really become a distinctive feature. I add that it could also result in students feeling more involved with their university, with ultimately fewer dropouts (Tinto 1993; Connolly 2016).

An important question is still lingering in the air: what to do when health risks might force us to continue functioning online in the foreseeable future? What if the campus is still a physically quiet place, like in the spring of 2020? As far as activities outside the curriculum are concerned, there is no reason why the examples I gave in a previous paragraph of this contribution cannot serve, mutatis mutandis, as inspiration here. Although suboptimal, most if not all of the examples can be realized through developing a virtual environment (Last 2020; Kappe 2020).

## Democracy and the Rule of Law

For those who now think that socialization is a sort of training in conformism[2]: that is not the point here. For me, the above relates to what constitutes the threshold of a society that is truly committed to democracy and the rule of law. Socialization is not about conformism or about ensuring that there are no tensions between people, cultures, groups, religions, or generations. On the contrary, a democracy unavoidably leads to vigorous discussion and debate and to the cacophony and false notes. It is a permanent exercise in trial and error. However, we must use these tensions positively and deal with them in a non-violent manner. Making that possible is at the heart of any democracy that is committed to the rule of law. Simply because only under that condition can we have a common future in a world that is inevitably divided. Seen in this way, socialization is a true learning experience. It is not just about the joys of reaching your aims and success in collaborating with others. It is also about experiencing that you are always dependent on others, that you cannot always get your way, and that you can be disappointed when working together, but that, in spite of these, you can still have a shared and worthwhile future.

To conclude: we have to invest in the logical next steps that will enable us to make a qualitative leap in education in the medium and long term. Socialization in the context of education, stimulated through formal but certainly also informal or extracurricular means, is an inseparable part of this. As the editors of this volume write in their introduction, the capacity to anticipate changes is of the utmost importance now (Aarts et al. 2020). Do not pass up the opportunity!

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[2] The description by the above-mentioned Biesta might suggest this: after all, according to him students need to be initiated into values and traditions, enabling them to participate in existing social, cultural, and political structures. Onderwijsraad (2020). Vooruitzien voor jongere generaties, The Hague. See also website: www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/adviezen/2020/06/09/advies-vooruitzien-voor-jonge-generaties

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# 4

# Internet Access as an Essential Social Good

Alfred Archer and Nathan Wildman

During the coronavirus crisis, educational activities and nearly all social contact with friends and family were conducted via online communication tools. Such tools can only be used effectively if an individual has suitable internet access.

Thankfully, the Netherlands is one of the EU leaders when it comes to Next Generation Access (NGA) coverage,[1] with 98% of Dutch households having access to these high-speed connections; this is well above the USA (94%) and EU (87%) averages.[2] However, this still means that nearly 344,000 individuals living in the Netherlands lack a strong internet connection.

Here, we contend that the coronavirus crisis, and especially the associated lockdown wherein individuals were strongly encouraged to not leave their homes, has made it clear that high-speed internet access is a necessary good for modern social living.

[1] Defined to include technologies like FTTH, FTTB, Cable Docsis 3.0, VDSL, or other broadband connections of at least 30 Mbps downloads.

[2] European Commission Report on Digital Economy and Social Index 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=67079 (accessed July, 01, 2020); FCC eighth Broadband Progress Report, https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/eighth-broadband-progress-report (accessed July, 01, 2020).

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## Internet Access as a Pragmatic Necessity for Other Rights

One key reason for thinking that internet access is an essential social good is because it is "pragmatically essential" for protecting, promoting, and in many cases, exercising certain human rights (Reglitz 2020: 316).

Consider the right to freedom of expression—that is, the right to "seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers" (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19, §2). Exercising this right essentially involves having a platform for putting forward one's ideas in a public sphere. Pre-crisis, this could be done via some broadly physical means, or online. The crisis, and in particular the subsequent lockdown, effectively eliminated the option of doing so physically—for public health reasons, all public discourse shifted onto the internet. In this way, internet access became necessary to effectively exercise one's right to free expression.

Similarly for the right to assembly: once we were unable to physically congregate, the only means of properly exercising this right was via online association.

More generally, suitable internet access looks like a prerequisite for engaging in political life during the coronavirus crisis. Consequently, not having suitable internet access "excludes people from the forums and platforms in which much of today's political debate takes place, and in which most of the politically relevant information is shared" (Reglitz 2020: 320). The upshot is that a properly functioning post-crisis democracy requires citizens to have viable access to the internet.

The status of internet access as an essential social good is illustrated by reports from organizations that aid refugees. The UNHCR, for instance, reports that refugees, some of the world's most vulnerable people in desperate need of life's basic needs, find internet access absolutely essential (UNHCR 2016). This is because the internet allowed them to communicate with loved ones from whom they were separated and let each other know if they were safe. As one aid worker noted, "What we are hearing is that technology [internet] is regarded by the people we are here to serve as a need as important as food or clothes" (UNHCR 2016). The UNHCR goes on to note the critical role of internet access in enabling refugees to exercise a right to education, health care, and to work via online entrepreneurship opportunities.

Recognizing the connection between internet access and the exercise of certain rights may have implications for thinking about how access is managed for certain groups. For example, prisoners in the Netherlands have limited access to the internet. This access is driven by an interest in providing entertainment and educational opportunities (Tighe 2016). If internet access

is thought of as an essential social good, however, this would give reason to revise this attitude: internet access would not be a luxury or a perk but a necessity for exercising certain rights, particularly given the physical restrictions prisoners are subject to.

## Poverty

Thinking about the nature of poverty gives us another important reason to think that internet access is an essential social good. In his discussion about taxation in The Wealth of Nations (1776), Adam Smith distinguishes between two kinds of goods: necessaries and luxuries. Notably, he claimed that necessities include not only those goods that are needed for basic survival, such as food, water, and shelter but also "whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people [...] to be without" (Smith 1776, Book V, Chap. 2, part II, article 4). That is, necessaries as those goods that people would be ashamed to be seen in public without.

Building on this, sociologists like Peter Townsend (1962) have claimed that poverty should be understood in relation to a particular society at a particular time; i.e., poverty involves lacking the resources needed to have a social life in your contemporary society.

While in Smith's society (eighteenth Century Scotland) these goods included leather shoes and linen shirts, in contemporary western societies, internet access is plausibly one such necessary: many of those without internet access are likely to be ashamed or embarrassed to admit their deprivation. Further, as noted above, during the lockdown, internet access is not only needed to appear in public without shame but is necessary to appear in public at all. More generally, if internet access is needed to have a social life in contemporary western societies, then those who cannot afford internet access should be counted as living in poverty.

## Social Deprivation

Additionally, the need for internet access to participate in social life during lockdown is itself a reason to think that internet access is an essential social good. According to philosopher Kimberley Brownlee (2013), the right not to experience social deprivation should be accepted as a human right. As social creatures, human beings need social interaction in order to have a minimally decent life. Being deprived of decent social interaction leads to lower well-being, poorer mental, and physical health, and in extreme cases, amounts to a

form of torture. For people living alone during lockdown, internet access was the only option available for social interaction and so was essential for protecting human right against social deprivation. Of course, this was (hopefully) a temporary situation. However, as more and more social interaction takes place online, those without internet access will find themselves locked out from an increasing number of social spaces. Providing internet access is needed, then, to protect people's rights against social deprivation.

## Education

Finally, unequal access to the internet also runs the risk of making existing educational inequalities worse. During periods of lockdown, the vast majority of educational activities moved online. A significant proportion of these will continue to be online for the foreseeable future. Those who lack good quality internet access will be disadvantaged by this and, unfortunately, these are often students who already face other educational disadvantages. All students must be given good quality internet access, then, to help prevent the widening of these educational inequalities. This will be especially important for as long as schools and universities continue to deliver much of their education online but will continue to be an important issue beyond this point as well.

## Conclusion

In the above, we have argued that, without suitable internet access, individuals are unable to properly exercise a number of their fundamental human rights, cannot fully participate in democratic political institutions, can (arguably) be said to be living in poverty, and are being made to suffer from social deprivation. Further, unequal access exacerbates educational inequalities. Taken together, these reasons make a strong case for thinking that internet access is an essential social good. And, as a knock-on consequence, governments have a clear responsibility to ensure that citizens have suitable access, e.g., via nationalization[3] or sufficient regulation.

[3] For example, in the UK, the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party set out plans to ensure UK-wide high-speed internet access by nationalizing BT and creating a new British Broadband public service. Labour claimed that this could 'boost productivity by £59 billion by 2025; bring half a million people back into the workforce; and boost rural economies, with an estimated 270,000 people more able to move to rural areas' (Labor Party press release November 14, 2019, https://labour.org.uk/press/british-broadband-labour-sets-out-mission-to-connect-communities-across-britain-by-delivering-free-full-fibre-broadband--for-all/, accessed on July, 27, 2020).

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# 5

# In-Work Poverty in Times of COVID-19

Sonja Bekker, Johanna Buerkert, Quirine Quirijns, and Ioana Pop

The corona crisis has an unequal impact on worker's income. Workers with unstable jobs prior to the crisis, have been affected hardest due to the loss of work and income (Börner 2020). An example is the group of workers who cannot make ends meet, despite having a job. In order to explore the impact of the coronavirus crisis on in-work poverty, it is relevant to get a better insight into how low income is defined because in the Netherlands low income and

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poverty are calculated in various ways. For this chapter, we use two indicators (Statistics Netherlands 2018a; SCP 2018). The first is the poverty threshold, indicating whether or not the income is sufficient to meet basic needs such as buying food, housing, and participating in social activities. This amounted to €1135 per month for a single person household in 2017. The second is the low-income threshold, representing stable purchasing power over time, which amounted to €1060 per month for a single person household in 2018 (Statistics Netherlands 2018b, 2019a; SCP 2018). Data shows that 7.9% of Dutch households earned below this low-income threshold. Within the group of workers, 2.4% was part of a household earning below the low-income threshold. This means that having an income from work (instead of from social security) decreases the likelihood of having a very low income (Statistics Netherlands 2019b). Using the poverty threshold, in 2017, 5.7% of the Dutch population lived in a household experiencing poverty. From this perspective, being employed also decreases the likelihood of being poor, with only 2% of employees compared to 8% of self-employed having an income below the poverty threshold (SCP 2020).

Overall, in-work poverty in the Netherlands is quite low, especially compared to the other 28 EU countries (Eurostat 2020). As a result, the problem is not always seen as significant. Still, in numbers, 125,000 employees and 95,000 self-employed lived in a poor household in 2017. Moreover, some groups of workers have a much higher chance to experience in-work poverty. In general, two factors contribute to in-work poverty: a low hourly income and a low number of working hours per week (SCP 2018, 2020).

## Flexible Workers Have a Higher Chance at In-Work Poverty

Regarding the poverty threshold, the data show that the solo self-employed people (12.6%), on-call workers (10.2%), self-employed people with personnel (8.3%), people with small part-time jobs (6.5%), and temporary agency workers (8%) have a much higher risk at in-work poverty or social exclusion than employees with a full-time open-ended employment contract (0.7%) (data 2014) (SCP 2018). Similarly, being covered by a collective labor agreement lowers the likelihood of in-work poverty.

Young people, particularly those working in the retail and hospitality sectors, are more likely to experience in-work poverty (Van Deurzen et al. 2018). Most workers in these two sectors are under the age of 30 (in retail even under the age of 25) and often only employed part-time (Statistics Netherlands 2018c; WerkNL 2018). Due to the layered Minimum Wage System in the

Netherlands (which includes lower minimum wages for youth aged below 21), young people have quite low incomes even if they work full time. For instance, a 19-year-old earning at minimum wage level in 2020 would have a gross income of €1008 per month, which is below the low-income threshold. The solo self-employed workers are especially vulnerable to the changing economy as they largely fall outside of the Dutch social security system. Besides income insecurities, this group is at a higher risk when they become ill or reach the pensionable age (Statistics Netherlands 2018c).

An important vulnerability for young people and flexible workers is that they often are the first ones to become redundant during economic crises while having built little entitlements to social security. The next section explores whether the groups mentioned in this section are indeed affected the most due to the coronavirus crisis.

## Effects of the Crisis on the Income of Vulnerable Groups

The immediate effects of the coronavirus crisis on the loss of jobs and income have not been translated into current statistics yet. However, first explorations suggest that the most vulnerable groups on the labor market have been affected the most. In March 2020, the overall number of jobs decreased by 23,000, with large job losses in the hospitality and financial services sectors although in education and health care the number of jobs is still growing (Statistics Netherlands 2020a).

Especially "flexible" jobs disappeared in March 2020: on-call jobs (–65,000), temporary agency jobs (–8000), and fixed-term jobs (–7000). Notably, people with flexible jobs in professions that could not be carried out due to the lockdown have lost their employment. Examples are sales employees in retail and waiters in bars and restaurants (Statistics Netherlands 2020b). Regarding self-employed workers, the coronavirus impact on their work may be sketched by the use of the Temporary Subsidy for Self-Employed (Tozo: Tijdelijke overbruggingsregeling zelfstandig ondernemers). Tozo has been designed by the government specially to give income support to self-employed people who lost their income due to the coronavirus crisis. By April 30, about 343,000 Tozo applications were submitted (FNV 2020). This shows that the need for it is high. In May 2020, the organization Wijzer in geldzaken also looked at income loss due to the coronavirus (Wijzer in geldzaken 2020). Based on a sample of 1219 respondents (A population representative sample of 532 combined with a sample of 687 participants from six financially vulnerable groups), the results emphasize that the effects of the coronavirus crisis

are different across groups. For instance, low-income employees with a permanent contract report either lower (22%) or more (8%) working hours. In contrast, low-income employees with a flexible contract say that they receive fewer assignments (41%) and that they work fewer hours (19%). Those who are self-employed report that they receive fewer assignments (40% of those with low incomes and 31% of those with high incomes).

This situation is reflected in the financial situation of these workers, with several groups reporting a stronger decrease of their income, in comparison to other groups of workers, i.e., those under payment employment: 62% of the low-income employees with flexible contracts, 69% of the low-income self-employed workers, and 49% of the high-income self-employed workers. It seems that the groups who already struggled to make ends meet prior to the crisis are often also the groups who are hit hardest by the loss of employment and income due to COVID-19.

## Conclusion

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic is turning from a health crisis into an economic and social crisis, the flaws in the labor market and social security have become acutely visible. In particular, the groups of workers who already had a vulnerable position on the labor market have been hit hardest by the first shocks of the crisis. This includes workers with unstable jobs and a low income prior to the crisis, such as low-income workers with flexible jobs and solo self-employed workers.

This links back to some of the main failures of the "old common": persisting inequalities and a generational divide. Young people and "flex workers" are amongst those suffering most from the current crisis in terms of financial consequences. Therefore, the crisis exacerbates the already existing weaknesses of the old common. In relations to the New Common, this means that those outside the traditional standard employment contracts must not be forgotten when reforming the labor market. Especially in the light of ongoing digital transformation, ways to secure the livelihood of all workers need to be found. The current findings show that even in modern labor markets, workers with a standard employment contract are protected best: full-time employed workers with an open-ended contract and covered by a collective labor agreement. This seemed already valid prior to the crisis and has become more urgently visible within this first phase of the pandemic. Deviating from the full-time and open-ended contract standard is a risky affair, especially for those who already have a low income to begin with. Moving towards a new and more inclusive

common would thus entail an encompassing labor market reform, ensuring that all workers—irrespective of their employment relationship, age, or profession—have an income that meets basic needs, both within and after the crisis.

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# 6

# Being a Collective Jeremiah: The Academic Responsibility to Clarify How Not All Is Well

Erik Borgman

COVID-19 has been frequently described as a great equalizer. The reality, however, is that long-standing inequities have been further exacerbated. The result is a lack of presence of a lot of stories on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on societies and people. Thus speaks the website of Voice of Witness (2020), a San Francisco based organization with a mission to advance human rights "by amplifying the voices of people impacted by injustice." They are driven by a belief in "the transformative power of the story" and by the conviction "that an understanding of crucial issues is incomplete without deep listening and learning from people who have experienced injustice firsthand."

## All Souls Matter

Recognizing that, to really understand the impact of COVID-19, we should focus on the untold and unheard stories about hidden lives means that we connect the pandemic to that other crisis that has come to the fore: systemic racism in Western culture. Following the killing of 44-year-old Georg Floyd by—now ex-police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis,

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we have seen a worldwide wave of protests, stating what should be obvious: black lives matter. The phrase not just implies that black lives should not be treated with the appalling contempt Chauvin showed by casually keeping his left hand in his trouser pocket while kneeling on Floyds neck and chocking him to death. The phrase also means black lives deserve to be fully noticed. As educationalist Parker Palmer (2016) wrote in a blog speaking from his own experience in a situation of clinical depression:

> The human soul doesn't want to be advised or fixed or saved. It simply wants to be witnessed—to be seen, heard and companioned exactly as it is. When we make that kind of deep bow to the soul of a suffering person, our respect reinforces the soul's healing resources, the only resources that can help the sufferer make it through.

At Floyd's memorial service, the congregation was silent for 8 min and 46 s, the time Chauvin had his knee on Floyd's neck. Ritually, they made space for the untold story of his life and death. It is crucial to make this space part of the public sphere.

For obvious reasons, during the COVID-19 pandemic, public attention went almost exclusively to saving lives and overcoming problems in doing so. As a result, people felt their souls were left behind in the limbo of uncertainty without accompaniment. There was some marginal room in the media for people's anxieties: losing their jobs or businesses, not being able to start college, not being allowed to visit the aging and the sick, or decently burying the death. But this is not the same as having the lived anxieties of the soul attended to (cf. Bennison 2020).

In this short chapter, I take the starting point of Voice of Witness: an understanding of any crucial issue is incomplete without deep listening and learning from people who have experienced it firsthand. We have hardly started to listen to our own stories as they resonate in our souls or even to realize that we have souls in which these stories resonate and that long to be seen, heard, and accompanied. Let alone that we have tried to hear the voices that are routinely neglected. This implies that our understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic is still hugely incomplete. First, I will explain that simply trying to move forward after the end of the lockdown is not a good idea. I will then argue that especially academic institutions have the responsibility to behave as collective Jeremiahs. We should take the risk of being mocked as "Terror is all around," like Jeremiah was (Jer. 20: 10).

## The Centrality of Hope

With the lockdown lifted, there is a strong pressure to leave behind the experiences of anxiety and uncertainty. This is in line with a dominant tendency during the lockdown. Rich countries tried to generate trust by investing huge amounts of money in loans, guarantees, and even gifts to keep small, medium-sized, and big businesses from bankruptcy. The language was that of combat: we are at war and will be victorious. Leaders of poorer countries did not have the means to buy the trust of their citizens in this manner. Their strategy usually came down to simply bragging. In both cases is could be said, in Jeremiah's words: "They have been treating the wound of my people carelessly, saying: 'Peace, peace', where there was no peace" (Jer. 6,13). For those in precarious situations, participating in the lockdown was not a realistic option. It is impossible for the homeless to stay at home! And, more broadly, for many, the choice between either depriving one's family of even the basic necessities or taking the chance of being infected with SARS-CoV-2 was obvious. As a result, in some cases, they were fined or arrested for not submitting to regulations that were unable to protect them to begin with. Their only choice left was to survive by staying hopeful.

In affluent societies, there is a strong pressure to be optimistic in order to get the economy going again and to adapt smoothly to what in this book and elsewhere is called "the new normal." This threatens the strategy of survival by staying hopeful, probably the only strategy not involving self-deception. Optimism is not the same thing as hope. In fact, it is something totally different. Vaclav Havel, then still a dissident Czech playwright, in an interview in the 1980s, clearly stated that hope is not "the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." This hope, Havel believes, gives us the strength to live and to try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as they were in Central Europe under communist occupation.

Considering himself an agnostic, Havel (1990: 181–182) uses quasi-religious language in his description of hope:

> It transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons. I feel that its deepest roots are in the transcendental, just as the roots of human responsibility are, though of course I can't—unlike Christians, for instance—say anything about the transcendental…

Hope frees the bearers of hope from the dictatorship of the possible and opens the gate for real change.

Following this line of thought, Czech psychologist, philosopher, and theologian Tomáš Halík, who worked with Havel and was converted to Roman Catholicism and clandestinely ordained a priest under communism, calls hope a crack in the supposed closeness of our reality "through which a ray of light from the future falls into the present." Halík (2009) follows into the footsteps of French poet and essayist Charles Péguy (1873–1914), who considered hope an aspect of God in which the hope of people participates. Giving hope, God shirks human categories, breaks through human expectations, appeals to people in an unprecedented way, and makes them enter the realm of what, from the dominant perspectives, is impossible.

## The Prophetic Role of Universities

In order to gain hope, according to Halík, we first have to lose our false expectations—for instance, in our current case, that we can build a human society by simply adapting to "a new normal." The latter will inevitably mean reinstalling a society "that is hurting," as Pope Francis (2016) said of our current one, a society "that is bleeding, and the price of its wounds normally ends up being paid by the most vulnerable." Hope lives in the most vulnerable and their wounds require a healing that no restoration or adaption can provide. The pressure to be optimistic implies the pressure to silence their voices because, otherwise, they would be disturbing the illusionary peace. This is, however, exactly why these voices are important. The stories of the most vulnerable express what is silenced to enable the belief that our economies, societies, and cultures are free of systemic injustices. Thus, they represent hope that these injustices will be properly addressed and our commons, new and old, will truly become our common property.

Universities, therefore, will have to resist the call to optimism in order to foster true hope. It is impossible to elaborate here on what this would entail. But let us take some advice from Ignacio Ellacuría (1930–1989), who was the rector of the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas" (UCA) in El Salvador until he was assassinated together with five fellow Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter. Following his mentor, Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri (1898–1983), Ellacuría considered humans sentient beings participating in reality. They have the responsibility to truly know their reality in order to judge in what state it is and to further the changes that announce themselves in it. This requires a university that is historical both in the sense of participating in history and of making history, in the view of Ellacuría (1975, 1982, 1989; cf. Lassalle-Klein 2014: 53–184; Hassett and Lacey (1991)).

Pope Francis recently (Francis 2017: no. 4d; cf. Francis 2013: en no. 71) envisioned a university cultivating "a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve the diversified and life-giving unity" needed to go forward.

We need the voices of protest and lament and have to be collective Jeremiahs in amplifying them. To fully know reality in its current historicity, special attention should be given to voices that are silenced and views that are disregarded; Ellacuría calls this "a preferential option for the poor." Through their place in reality, the marginalized embody the hope for a change firmly rooted in the real and reaching out towards what seems impossible and what is unimaginable as yet. Thus, they open up a possible future in which black lives self-evidently matter, threats are addressed regardless of whom is threatened, and ways are searched and found to live with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the new variants that will undoubtedly evolve, instead of constantly waging war against them. Ultimately, to be a Jeremiah in response to being chosen.

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# 7

# COVID-19 and the Secular Theodicy: On Social Distancing, the Death of God and the Book of Job

Frank Bosman and Archibald van Wieringen

In times of great distress, like in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, people look for relief from the existential threat by searching for some kind of interpretation of the crisis. Some people will look for scapegoats to put the blame on, while others will search for ways by which the crisis can also be perceived as something beneficial.

As far as the COVID-19 pandemic goes, earlier this year, media and politicians pointed towards China, where the pandemic started, or to Italy, from where the virus spread over the European continent. The Chinese and the Italians became COVID-19's scapegoats. Others even re-kindled old conspiracy theories involving Freemasons, the Vatican, and the CIA.

Since the beginning of the crisis, we have also been flooded with gurus, motivational speakers, and mindfulness coaches who stimulate us to view the new common as an unexpected but much needed "reboot" of our day-to-day life, an escape from the rat race of postmodern life, or as a spiritual detox of

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our material existence (Bezemer 2020; Cappelle 2020; Mascini 2020; van Raaij 2020).

## Classical Theodicy

Intriguingly enough, these two individuals and collective coping strategies are very familiar to those who are acquainted with the Christian philosophical and theological traditions. When confronted with the apparent paradox between the idea of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity on the one hand and the experience of everyday pain and suffering, on the other hand, Christians have sought for ways to find a satisfactory solution. This is known as theodicy. As the Roman and Christian philosopher Boethius summarized the problem: si Deus, unde malum? "If God exists, wherefrom evil?"

In monotheistic religions, the problem of evil was contextualized differently. In religions with two or more godheads, suffering could easily be attributed to one divine source while the good could be attributed to the other one.

In dualistic circles, such as those of the Manichean and the Cathars, the reality could be divided into a "good principle" and a "bad" one. In doing so, the "good" could be held separately from the "bad." In monotheist thinking, this option is impossible.

In later Christian philosophy and theology, the two most important schools of thought were the Irenaean and the Augustinian theodicies, named after Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202) and Augustine of Hippo (354–430) (Hick 1996). The Irenaean solution is to "excuse" evil and suffering by relating them to a higher and better goal. Suffering is indeed caused by God but for the benefit of humankind: to learn a truth, to grow spiritually, or to prove the persistence of one's faith. The Augustinian approach is to excuse God, redirecting the cause of suffering to humanity's free will. God will not stop human suffering, because it is our responsibility to prevent it and to cope with its consequences.

## Secular Theodicy

In our times, after the well-known proclamation of the "death of God" by Friedrich Nietzsche and many others, the question of the theodicy has, perhaps strangely at first sight, not vanished although it has been modified to fit within an atheist, secular framework (Bosman 2019: 125–149). The question now is si non Deus, unde malum? "If God does not exist, wherefrom evil?"

The world did not stop being a place of pain and suffering when its creator was declared obsolete. More strongly, in this chapter, we argue that the same theodicean hermeneutics can even be traced in society's approach and reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of us want to excuse COVID-19's perceived evil by drawing attention to its perceived benefits, such as the aforementioned spiritual detox or escape from the rate race. The evil—the pandemic—still exists and is still causing a lot of pain, suffering, and death, but its downsides are thought to outweigh its counter-benefits. We can learn something from COVID-19, we can benefit from insights obtained from the crisis, and we get the opportunity to do things radically differently—and better—in the near future.

God, on the other hand, cannot be excused from anything since we have declared God obsolete in the secular domain of our Western European societies. This creates a new problem of its own. If there is not a supernatural, divine entity who can be blamed for a pandemic, then who is to blame? This scapegoat mechanism takes its name from a text found in the Old Testament: once a year a goat is burdened with all the sins of the people of Israel and is sent into the desert, symbolically atoning for the sins of the collective (Leviticus 16).

In our times, in the case of COVID-19, multiple scapegoats have been identified, ranging from the Chinese and the Italians, to blundering governments and singing church congregations. Stigmatizing some groups of people will not help us to overcome COVID-19. From history, we know of too many examples of how the stigmatization of groups can lead to inhumane disasters.

## Deification

From a philosophical point of view, another possible risk in our present situation is the deification of protocols, or in other words, the substitution of the old transcendental God of monotheism for an immanent uncritical belief in the human possibilities of controlling our life and containing all harm threatening it. Words like "Social Distancing Society" or the "New Normal" are not only spelled in capitals because of a specific custom found in written English but also because they testify to a new belief system that is (pre) supposed to free us of the imminent danger.

If these protocols fail—and they will, in the sense that no protocol can guarantee a hundred percent success rate—we will not blame the deified protocols themselves like we do not blame God in the Augustinian theodicy, but we will blame individual (groups of) people who are not able or not willing to

obey and strictly follow all the instructions. We will not blame our new deity, but we will, once again, blame our free will.

## The Biblical Book of Job

Although the Bible does not contain the word theodicy, it does consider the question "why does evil strike innocent people?" In fact, the entire biblical Book of Job is dedicated to this question of theodicy: Job, a very righteous human being, is struck by one calamity after another—how is that possible?

Although the two theodicean hermeneutics we discussed above are present in this book, they are both rejected. Job's friends represent the first hermeneutic focusing on evil. They try to convince Job that he should learn from this evil afflicting him, that he is a sinner. A sinner against what? The friends have no idea, but Job should realize from his being struck by the evil that he is a sinner anyway. Job refuses. This implies that the Book of Job rejects the idea advocated by all of Job's friends. Job himself struggles with the second hermeneutic, focusing on God, and blames God for the evil he is experiencing. Not only does he hold God responsible for evil but he also wishes to hold God accountable for it. Therefore, Job wants to sue God.

However, the trial is not continued, not because Job's protest against evil is unjustified or because God cannot be held accountable for his own responsibilities but because Job's accusation came to the wrong shop. In the Book of Job, God does not reveal himself as the one responsible for evil, but as the one who, together with Job, is against evil and who is combating it by constructing creation amidst a chaotic environment, which is continuously prone to falling into deconstruction. And thus, the Book of Job also rejects the second hermeneutic (Schuman 2011).

## Concluding Thoughts

From the perspective of Job and of the Christian theodicy philosophies and theologies, a real theodicy answer to the COVID-19 crisis, secular or not, is neither blaming others (or the Other) nor whitewashing the pandemic by underscoring its perceived blessings in disguise. The creation of a new godhead will not save us either. Instead, the real answer is fighting the evil itself, i.e., COVID-19. The two hermeneutics, whether they are expressed in a religious or in a secular context, are counter-productive. This theological insight

could benefit our society in general and our university in particular in combating the COVID-19 crisis, respecting all human dimensions.

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# 8

# Online Proctoring Put to the Test

Colette Cuijpers

Traditionally, universities are places where students and professors physically interact. Knowledge and skills of students are generally tested in oral and written forms, on campus. In times of COVID-19, however, a new common in education is called for as students are unable to be physically present on campus. Both education and assessments need to take place at a distance. This development creates opportunities. It becomes easier and cheaper for students to participate in Bachelor's and Master's programs across the globe. Moreover, the flexibility of online education also offers opportunities for students who want to combine their studies with a job.

However, education at a distance also bears risks, such as the risk of fraud. Universities are responsible for safeguarding the quality of education, assessments, and diplomas. Only students who actually master the learning objectives should receive a diploma. Online proctoring systems can help to achieve this. Online proctoring is surveillance at a distance, for which many different systems are available. Most of these systems can be characterized by several common functionalities: detecting and disabling computer functionalities such as copy-paste and downloading, taking images off and recording both screen and student, and analyzing the gathered data to signal irregularities

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that may indicate fraud. A challenging issue is that some students oppose these systems from the perspective of privacy and data protection. In view of the key focus of this book, moving towards a new common while preserving the best of the old common, it is thus important to put online proctoring systems to the test and consider their impact on human rights.

## Privacy: The Need for a Fair Balance

The right to private life is vested in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): "Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence."[1] The second paragraph of Article 8 makes it clear that infringements of privacy can be justified if certain criteria are met. These criteria are "in accordance with the law" and "in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others." Moreover, the interference must be "necessary in a democratic society."

Universities have a legal duty to provide education, assessments, and diplomas. This is important for the economic well-being of a country and in the interest of the right to education (Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 ECHR). The crux of the privacy test is thus whether online proctoring is necessary for a democratic society. From case law, it becomes apparent that this test concerns the reasonableness of the infringement in relation to the social interest it serves (Council of Europe 2019). This is assessed on the basis of the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. Proportionality requires that the measure—online proctoring—can achieve the purposes of identification and fraud prevention. This seems to be the case in view of the functionalities of online proctoring systems. The principle of subsidiarity requires an assessment whether these aims can be achieved in a less privacy-invasive manner. This means careful consideration must be given to the types of assessment that justify online proctoring, as well as the functionalities of such a system. For many exams, alternative options are available, such as papers, oral exams, and take-home exams. Online proctoring only seems necessary for large-scale exams of great importance, consisting of multiple-choice questions and closed questions at the level of remembering and understanding (Surf 2020).

Monitoring the screen, disabling certain functionalities, or detecting second screens do impact a student's private sphere. However, these measures

[1] European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (2020).

seem necessary and justified as during an exam these functionalities are not allowed either. If restricted for the duration of the exam, there is no unjust breach of privacy. For recordings and images, I am not entirely convinced. Scanning the entire room seems unnecessary, only showing the workspace is sufficient.[2] But what about continuous monitoring: is this actually required? Are several snapshots sufficient to verify identity and detect fraud, or still images combined with a blurred video stream? To satisfy the principle of subsidiarity, and thus to create a fair balance between the need to detect fraud and the right to privacy, the least invasive settings of the system should be applied.

For fraud detection, several alternatives are available to online proctoring such as plagiarism checks and randomization of exam questions. Alternatives for verifying the identity of a student at a distance are less obvious. The only way to really check the identity of a student at a distance is visibility via a webcam, as login credentials can easily be shared. There certainly is a valid reason to check the student's identity during exams. The question that arises is whether the identity of students is sufficiently safeguarded with alternative assessment methods, such as take-home exams and papers. If this is not the case, what does this mean for the argument that it is necessary for online-proctored exams? In my opinion, this is a problem that needs to be further investigated, not only from the perspective of privacy but also from the perspective of safeguarding the quality of education.

## Lawful Processing of Personal Data

In the EU, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) contains the rules on how to process personal data. Noncompliance can lead to high fines. The main principles for processing of personal data—any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (Article 4 (1) GDPR)—can be found in Articles 5 and 6 of the GDPR.[3] Article 5 states that personal data can only be processed if several principles are taken into account: the processing is based on a specified purpose, no more data may be processed than necessary to achieve that purpose, data must be of good quality, it must be transparent why and how personal data are being processed, data must be properly secured, data subjects must be granted certain rights—such as access, rectification, and erasure—and the data controller must demonstrate that he/

[2] This was also concluded in a Dutch court case regarding online proctoring. Court Amsterdam, 11-06-2020. C/13/684665/KG ZA 20-481, ECLI: NL: RBAMS: 2020: 2917.

[3] General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2020).

she adheres to these principles, also known as the principle of accountability. Online proctoring is only possible if these principles are taken into account. Moreover, Article 6 of the GDPR requires a legitimate ground for the processing of personal data. Universities can base online proctoring on the ground "necessary to perform a public task." A Dutch court recently ruled this ground applicable as, by law, universities are required to guarantee the quality of education, assessments, and diplomas.[4] What could be relevant in relation to online proctoring is that the GDPR only allows the processing of special categories of data on the basis of consent.[5] It might very well be that such data are being processed with online proctoring. Even though the Dutch court concluded this not to be the case, the reasoning of the court is very limited and inconclusive. The court merely states no biometric data are processed in online proctoring. However, the GDPR definition of biometric data explicitly refers to facial images. These are being processed by online proctoring systems.

If this leads to the conclusion that online proctoring is only allowed on the basis of consent, a problem arises. According to the GDPR, consent needs to be freely given (Article 7 GDPR). In a hierarchical relationship—such as between university and student—consent is not freely given if no real opt-out possibility exists, meaning that the student can decline taking part in the online proctoring exam. This requires the university to offer students an assessment alternative to online proctoring—e.g., an oral exam—without there being any negative consequences for the student, such as study delay.

## Conclusion

When exams on university premises are impossible, online proctoring can be a valid alternative if compliant with the rights to privacy and data protection. From a privacy perspective, the key question concerns subsidiarity: are there other less invasive alternatives available for a specific assessment? To answer this question, both the type of assessment and the functionalities of the proctoring system are relevant to consider. From the perspective of data protection, the main question seems to be the need for consent when processing facial images for identification purposes and the problem of freely given

[4] Court Amsterdam (2020)

[5] Article 9 GDPR states "Processing of personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation shall be prohibited."

consent in hierarchical relationships. For the time being, the safest approach is online proctoring as an option. Offering an equal alternative to online proctoring—without negative implications for students who want to opt-out—meets the "freely given" requirement of consent and the principle of subsidiarity.

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# 9

# Experiences of People with an Intellectual Disability, Their Relatives, and Support Staff with COVID-19: The Value of Vital Supportive Relationships

Petri Embregts

As pointed at in the introduction of this book, COVID-19 and the resulting crisis has revealed a number of shortcomings in the old common, such as an insufficient level of diversity in society in general and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in particular. Moreover, the consequences of a crisis are not equally divided either, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent governmental measures having a major impact on people with intellectual disabilities. Since a higher proportion of people with an intellectual disability have underlying health conditions (Courtenay and Perera 2020), they are in particular vulnerable to the consequences of COVID-19 (World Health Organization 2020). Moreover, due to their cognitive impairment, they rely on relatives and care professionals for lifelong and life-wide care and support, often in group settings, which results in a higher risk of getting infected by the coronavirus (Tummers et al. 2020). In an attempt to reduce the risk of infections, various rigorous measures have come into play with the aim to protect people with an intellectual disability, their relatives, and the care professionals. These measures, such as prohibitions in receiving relatives and the closure of work and day-care activities for people with intellectual disabilities, are likely to have a significant effect on the lives of all parties

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involved. First inventories point at decreased well-being of and substantial psychological effects in people with intellectual disabilities, such as the increased risk of loneliness, agitation, and distress (Courtenay 2020) and increased mental burden amongst care professionals (Inspectie Gezondheidzorg en Jeugd 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent measures are expected to enhance the already existing feelings of lack of control for people with intellectual disabilities (Ribeiro et al. 2017), feelings of overburden and stress in relatives (Luijkx et al. 2019), and above-average sick leave and burnout amongst care professionals (Smyth et al. 2015).

## The Academic Collaborative Center Living with an Intellectual Disability

The Academic Collaborative Center Living with an Intellectual Disability (Tranzo, Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences) is a structural collaboration amongst fourteen care organizations for people with an intellectual disability throughout the Netherlands, the Dutch advocacy group for people with intellectual disabilities, and Tilburg University. In this partnership, we combine scientific knowledge with professional and experiential knowledge from services users themselves in order to contribute to the quality of long-term care. Based on information about the impact of COVID-19 on daily care we received from our partners in intellectual disability care, we started explorative qualitative studies amongst people with intellectual disabilities, their mothers, and care professionals directly following the entry into force of the so-called intelligent lockdown. In these studies, we conducted interviews once a week with all respondents for a period of 7 weeks, in which we asked them about their experiences in receiving and/or providing care and support in this period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent impact on their well-being.

## Experiences and Needs

Outcomes are under review in academic journals, though the results give us the impression various themes arose from the interviews with people with intellectual disabilities, mothers, and direct support staff. First, all participants described their fear of becoming infected with the coronavirus. Furthermore, people with intellectual disabilities reported trouble in

understanding and dealing with the new reality, in which social distancing and keeping 1.5 m distance at all times is the norm. For example, most people with intellectual disabilities wanted to stay well informed about the situation by regularly watching the news reports, but they experienced confusion and stress due to the large amount of information, the use of difficult language, and all the rules they had to remember. As one person with an intellectual disability put it: "So much has changed, there are many new rules. Because of that, I have lost a bit of my normal, everyday life. So I need to find that again. Yes, it is quite difficult at this moment to obey to all rules." A central theme in the interviews with mothers was that their lives were focused on the health and well-being of their children with intellectual disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, even more so than usually, and they all seemed to have put aside most of their aspirations and personal needs, including their need for social contacts outside the house, to meet their children's needs. Notwithstanding, the mothers felt strong and positive bonds within their families contributing positively to the situation. A significant theme in the interviews with direct support staff was their increased sense of responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic towards the vulnerable people they support. This sense of responsibility was related to both the physical and mental health of the people they support. In the words of one direct support worker: "I don't want to have it on my conscience that people with intellectual disabilities might become infected because of my actions, I would feel really bad about that." In addition, although they experienced time pressure due to the new situation, they all tried to reduce the fears and stress of the people they support, for example, by facilitating a video call between an infected person with an intellectual disability and his family. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken also seem to have positive effects on well-being. For example, mothers and direct support workers emphasized that people with intellectual disabilities experienced more rest, and, consequently, they displayed substantially fewer behavioral problems. One mother, for example, observed that her daughter's temper tantrums stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can be explained, according to the mother, by the fact that her daughter has difficulties with processing the amount of stimuli in her normal daily routine. In addition, direct support staff reported space for personal creativity and improvisation in order to meet the needs and wishes of people with an intellectual disability. They expressed the hope that this space for creativity would remain, also after the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, all participants stressed that they missed direct physical contact and the presence of people in their immediate vicinity given the very strict visitor arrangements. However, they stressed the benefits of eHealth. In

the words of a person with an intellectual disability: “Yes, of course, I prefer face-to-face contact, but that is not possible now. Therefore, as a replacement, I’m very happy I can use Skype and WhatsApp to maintain contact with my family and friends. It is not the same as face-to-face contact, but it is much better than no contact at all.”

## Supportive Relationships

Our explorative studies provide valuable insights into the experiences and needs of people with an intellectual disability, their mothers, and care professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands and relate to the key role of social supportive networks in the lives of people with an intellectual disability. Earlier research found social supportive networks of people with intellectual disabilities to be relatively small (e.g., van Asselt-Goverts et al. 2013), and families, and especially parents, often proved to be the main provider of informal support to people with an intellectual disability (e.g., Giesbers et al. 2020). Professionals also play a key role in the support of people with intellectual disabilities, which is not only the case for people with intellectual disabilities living in more segregated residential facilities but also for those receiving community-based residential support or living independently in the community. High-quality interpersonal relationships between people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and care professionals are mandatory for quality of care and support (Hermsen and Embregts 2015). Based on kindness and attentive involvement, one receives and contributes support, which is important in preventing loneliness and (mental) health problems (Bigby et al. 2009) and thus contributes to a person’s quality of life. The COVID-19 pandemic emphasizes the importance of these supportive relationships for people with an intellectual disability as their well-being depends on this, but also relatives felt that their strong family bonds played a crucial part in dealing with the changed circumstances they faced during this pandemic.

## Equal Collaboration Between Science and Practice

The major impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent measures on the lives of people with an intellectual disability, their relatives, and care professionals in general and supportive networks in particular is beyond doubt. Due to their cognitive impairment, people with an intellectual disability rely

on relatives and care professionals for lifelong and life-wide care and support. Various COVID-19 measures had profound implications for collaborations within these necessary supportive relationships, such as prohibitions in receiving visiting relatives and the closure of work and day-care activities of people with an intellectual disability. However, the current crisis boosts creativity with respect to the development and valorization of knowledge towards a new common, in which vulnerable people such as persons with an intellectual disability will be empowered in such a way that they attain full societal participation. Experiments with eHealth in the care and support for people with intellectual disabilities that have emerged during the period of so-called intelligent lockdown are promising in this respect. Although scientific research is in its early stage and further high-quality research is needed, eHealth offers opportunities to support people with (mild) intellectual disabilities in various different contexts of daily life (Oudshoorn-Smit et al. 2020), such as learning how to purchase groceries, using a video call to ask for help, or remote coaching via a Bluetooth earpiece. Questions from our partner care organizations (www.academischewerkplaatsen-vb.nl/kennisvragen-covid-19) and the explorative studies and rapid literature reviews (Embregts et al. 2020) we conducted exposed the absence of or shortcomings in scientific knowledge in areas such as eHealth in the support of people with intellectual disabilities, but also the impact of an infection outbreak on care professionals, and the impact of the long-term absence of visitors and consequent support. Partner care organizations have expressed interest in jointly examining the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and measures in clients, relatives, and care professionals and the supportive networks they constitute, and they are keen to investigate how to hold on to the positive effects in stimulating care professionals' creativity, for example. Finally, in contributing to the valorization of knowledge and contributing to the resilience of people with intellectual disabilities in this complex situation, we have published (in collaboration with the University of Glasgow) booklets with so-called easy-read information on COVID-19 and related psychological effects such as fears and trouble sleeping. Related to the role so-called "fourth generation universities" can play as drivers of regional innovation, we can contribute to knowledge creation and valorization in these challenging times based on equal collaboration between science and practice.

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# 10

# Labor Supply and Well-Being During the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Crisis in the Netherlands: Lessons from Microdata

Hans-Martin von Gaudecker and Bettina Siflinger

Like many other countries, the Netherlands shut down large parts of economic and social life in the spring of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between late March and early May, schools and childcare facilities as well as restaurants, cafes, and bars were shut down; contact-related occupations were closed; gatherings were prohibited; and employees were advised to work from home as much as possible. While these regulations represented a sharp cut in individuals' personal lives they were more relaxed in the Netherlands than in many other European countries.[1] At the same time, the Netherlands has enacted large-scale economic relief programs.

[1] Regarding these regulations, the Oxford Response Stringency Index (Hale et al. 2020) assigns the Netherlands scores between 81 and 86 for the second half of March 2020, placing it close to Germany. It is well below countries like Italy and France that enacted stricter lockdowns and above countries like the UK or the USA, which pursued less stringent policies at that point in time.

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This chapter gives an overview of how labor supply and well-being have changed in the Netherlands in the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. We show that changes in the labor market have affected different groups of people differently and we discuss reasons for these differences. In addition, we illustrate how the consequences of the lockdown have altered the well-being of Dutch workers.

## Data: The LISS Panel

To investigate the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for the Dutch population, we designed and fielded several questionnaires asking members of the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel about behaviors, beliefs, and expectations during the COVID-19 crisis. The first module was fielded between March 20 and March 31, 2020, a few days into the lockdown. Three modules followed in April, May, and June. In addition, we collected time use and consumption data to analyze how individuals had allocated time and money during the lockdown. The LISS panel is based on a probability sample of individuals registered by Statistics Netherlands; it has been running since 2007 and constitutes roughly 4000 Dutch households comprising about 7000 individuals. It is administered by CentERdata, a survey research institute affiliated with Tilburg University. For all modules fielded so far, response rates for our questionnaire were in excess of 80%, which translates into a longitudinal sample of about 5000 individuals.

## The Number of Working Hours

All over the world, social distancing measures led to an immediate increase in unemployment rates and a decrease in working hours. Studies analyzing samples of workers in the United States and the United Kingdom show that about 60% of respondents claim to have worked fewer hours. The share of workers who lost their employment (probably or definitely) due to the virus was 12% (US) and 9% (UK) (see e.g., Adams-Prassl et al. 2020b; Coibion et al. 2020; Bick and Blandin 2020). In the Netherlands, these numbers are much lower: about 27% of the respondents reported to work fewer hours, and about 3% of the respondents worked zero hours in late March 2020. While overall these numbers suggest a less severe early impact of the pandemic on labor supply, we find remarkable differences by education.

Figure 10.1 shows that the least-educated group in our sample is most likely to work zero hours. Almost 10% of the low-educated work zero hours,

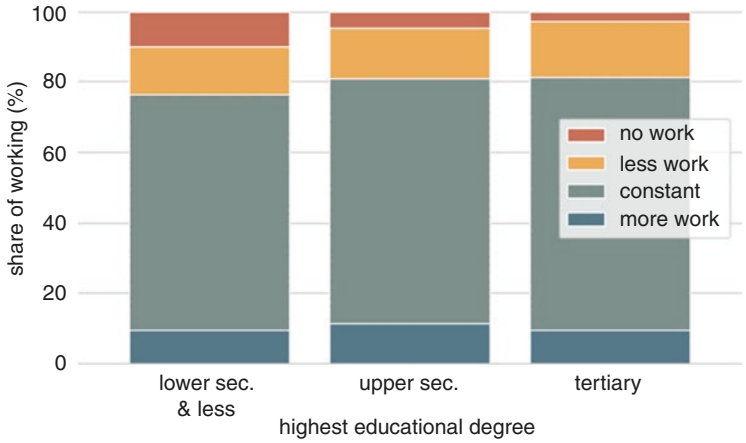


**Fig. 10.1** Share of workers with different changes in the number of working hours, by the level of education (data source: LISS)

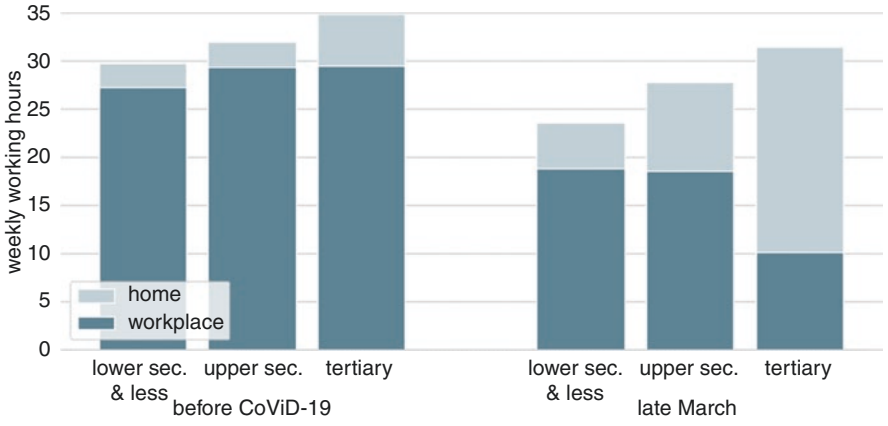


**Fig. 10.2** Working hours at the workplace and at home, by the level of education (data source: LISS)

which is twice as high as in the middle education group and almost four times higher than among those with a tertiary degree. By contrast, the share of workers with reduced hours is at around 13.5% for the least educated and rises in education. Working more hours is more prevalent among those with upper secondary education (a bit more than 11%) than in the other groups (von Gaudecker et al. 2020).

Figure 10.2 breaks down the change in total working hours by those performed at the usual workplace and at home by education. The COVID-19 pandemic strongly amplifies pre-crisis differences in shares of hours worked

from home and the total weekly working hours between low, medium, and highly educated individuals. This pattern intensifies differences in the total hours worked among education groups. While both low- and medium-educated individuals worked a bit more than 8% of their hours from home before the COVID-19 pandemic, the highly educated had a share in excess of 15%. During the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, all groups increased their home office shares. However, hours worked from home almost quadrupled among the highly educated (+16 h), while they tripled for the medium educated (+6.5 h) and not even doubled for the low educated (+2.2 h).

Investigating the reduction in working hours reveals a similar divide. Pre-crisis working hours are lowest among low educated, and highest among highly educated, with the medium educated somewhere in between (low: 29.8, medium: 32, high: 34.9 weekly hours). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic strongly magnifies this division. Low-educated workers experience the largest decrease in terms of absolute and relative working hours (–21%), medium-educated workers the second-largest decrease (–13%), while the decrease is less than 10% for highly educated workers. A logical explanation for the stronger reduction in total working hours for lower-educated individuals is that their jobs are associated with a lower flexibility to work from home. Three mechanisms come to mind. First, differences in the task compositions of the respective jobs can explain why some jobs can be done from home more easily compared to others. Second, if set-up costs are involved (e.g., laptop by the employer) and/or facilities to work from home are limited (VPN connections); employers might be forced to allow only a part of the workforce to work from home. Third, the share of essential workers ("essentiele beroepen en cruciale sectoren") rises in education (von Gaudecker et al. 2020).

## The Differences Between Men and Women

One question that naturally arises in the analysis of labor supply is whether men and women react in different ways. When analyzing women's labor supply, we find that their total working hours dropped from 30.4 to 25.5 (–17%) since the beginning of the crisis. Men worked 38.8 h on average before COVID-19 and 34.8 h afterwards (–10%). The gender difference in the decrease in hours worked is 0.87 h in absolute terms and 7% in relative terms. An additional analysis reveals that women are affected more strongly by the pandemic in both extremes: 13% worked longer hours in late March, but, at the same time, 22% reported a reduction in their working hours or do not

work at all. For men, these numbers are 7% and 17%, respectively. Put differently, less than two-thirds of the women but more than three-quarters of the men worked the same hours in late March as they did before. While very large reductions in absolute loss of hours occur mainly for men, a larger share of women faced smaller reductions.

We propose two potential explanations for the observed changes in female working hours. First, women disproportionally work in sectors and occupations that are considered "essential" and this thus raises female working hours. Our data indicate that 20% of the men and 34% of the women work in essential occupations. These are mostly concentrated in the health care and welfare sector and in education, sectors in which women make up a particularly large share of the workers (82% in health care and welfare, 63% in education). Second, mothers may work less in total during the lockdown because they have childcare responsibilities. However, our time use data do not show that this latter explanation concerns large numbers in quantitative terms—we do not find meaningful differences in total hours worked between mothers of young children and other women. However, the share of home office work does react to the presence of young children for both genders.

## Well-Being and Mental Health

Combining childcare and work is stressful. Together with the extraordinary amount of economic uncertainty, this could be a perfect storm for impairing parents' well-being and mental health. We thus turn to showing the development of mental health between November 2019 and May 2020 among the working population, zooming in on working parents with young children below. Mental health is measured using the five-item mental health inventory (MHI-5), a validated instrument for assessing mental health in adults. It ranges from 0 to 100, with higher values representing better mental health. Respondents with a value of below 60 are considered to be at risk for mental health problems. We use this cut-off to illustrate the development of mental health problems in November 2019, late March 2020, and May 2020.

Figure 10.3 shows the development of mental health problems for employed and self-employed respondents. In November 2019, 12.4% of the self-employed and 15% of the employees experienced mental health problems. Shortly after the lockdown (March 2020), the share of self-employed people with mental health problems almost doubled (24.3%), exceeding the fraction of employed people with mental health problems (20.3%). After about

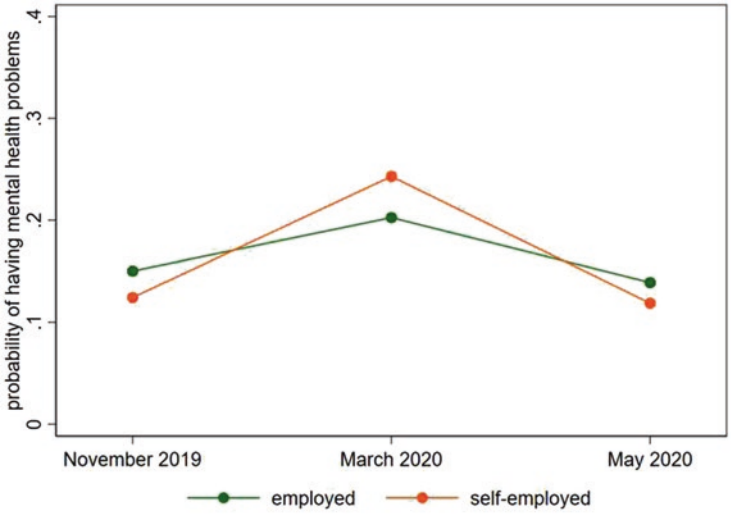


**Fig. 10.3** Mental health problems before and during the lockdown, employed and self-employed respondents (data source: LISS)

2 months into the lockdown, mental health problems reverted to pre-crisis levels for both groups of workers. The following picture is drawn in Fig. 10.3.

While the COVID-19 crisis suddenly increased economic uncertainty and stress for the working population, workers learned about their situation over the course of the crisis, and the governmental programs announced took effect. This probably led to a reduction in stress and uncertainty, such that the mental health problems decreased to pre-crisis levels in the working population overall.

As mentioned before, the closure of schools and childcare facilities forced parents to find alternative care arrangements or to take care of the children themselves while working from home. This double burden may have created an enormous amount of stress for working parents. Figure 10.4 shows the share of mental health problems among mothers and fathers who took care of their young children (below the age of 12). In November 2019, no father in our sample reported signs of mental health problems while about 19% of the mothers experienced mental health problems. These shares were significantly higher in March 2020. The share of mothers with mental health problems increased to 27%. Fathers experienced an even stronger increase in mental health problems, almost catching up with mothers (21%). Later during the crisis, mental health problems decreased for both groups. Still, the fraction of fathers and mothers with mental health problems is higher than in November 2019 (5% and 24%).

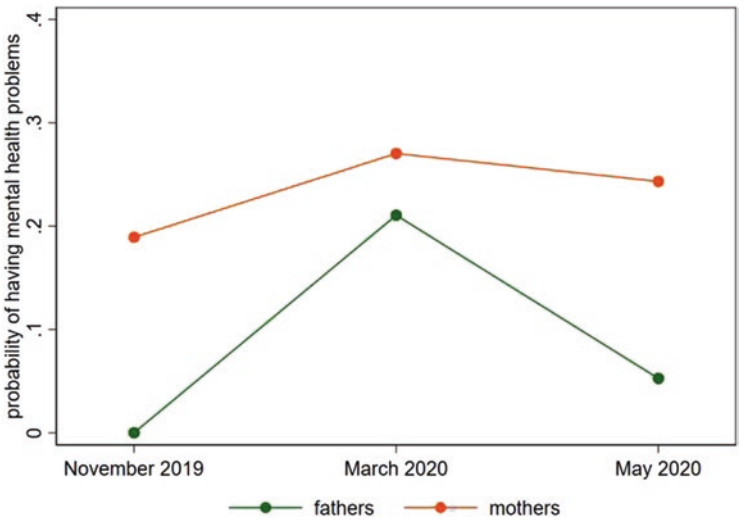


**Fig. 10.4** Mental health problems before and during the lockdown, working parents with young children (data source: LISS)

Thus, even 2 months after the lockdown was enacted parents still suffered from the double burden of working from home and taking care of their children.[2]

## Conclusion

Unlike other crises, the COVID-19 pandemic had a very sharp onset. Literally overnight, it led to dramatic shifts in the way work and childcare was organized. Using data collected at high frequency over the first weeks and months of the crisis, we have documented the huge shift towards working from home and the heterogeneity across population groups. After a huge spike in late March, the mental well-being of the overall working population reverted to pre-crisis levels in May. However, for parents with young children, mental health problems continued to be significantly more frequent than before the crisis. It will be important to track these and other developments in the months and years to come.

[2] For the USA, Adams-Prassl et al. (2020a) find negative mental health effects of the lockdown for women only.

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# 11

# The Economy, Nature, and the Meaning of Life After the Coronavirus Crisis

Paul van Geest, Carlos J. B. de Bourbon de Parme, and Sylvester Eijffinger

"Christians still regularly tell you that nature is so beautiful and testifies of God's greatness and goodness. Oh, dear people, nature is downright terrible, nature is one great suffering… What is 'very good' about a creation in which the most terrible parasites live in humans and animals…? What is 'very good' about a creation in which all organisms are terrorized by parasites, including parasites themselves?" ('t Hart 1997).[1] The words by Maarten 't Hart seem

[1] *"Nog steeds krijg je van christenen regelmatig te horen dat de natuur zo wondermooi is en getuigt van Gods grootheid en goedheid. Ach, lieve mensen, de natuur is ronduit verschrikkelijk, de natuur is één groot lijden… Wat is er 'zeer goed' aan een schepping waarin de vreselijkste parasieten in mens en dier huizen…? Wat is er 'zeer goed' aan een schepping waarin alle organismen geterroriseerd worden door parasieten, dus ook parasieten zelf?"*

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irrefutable. Now that the coronavirus causes a disease that makes us realize that life is not as malleable in everything as we wish, they would have been almost prophetic if he had added the word "viruses" after "the most terrible parasites."

Long before Maarten 't Hart, ancient philosophers refused to accept the idea that creation is only cruel and chaotic. In a sermon and in his short treatise De providentia Dei (On God's Providence), Augustine observed that a flea is perfectly articulated, a human body is a beautiful system, and everything and all have a logical place in the order of creation and the order of nature. At a time when "God" had not yet disappeared from the scientific hypotheses, they refused to believe that creation was a botch job by some disturbed god, as Gnostics thought, or that everything was a coincidence. At the same time, they observed that life in the dimensions of time and space, the saeculum, also had something very tragic: everything in it is transient, changeable, and everything eventually collapses (Augustine, de Ciuitate Dei). For Cicero and Augustine, creation and history formed a fabric (textura) in which ugly and beautiful threads accentuated each other, on the understanding that it was the task of ugly and bad threads to acknowledge the goodness and beauty of the rest all the better (Augustine, sermo 360A). Badness is, in their idea, useful and necessary to be all the more thankful for goodness.

Seen in this light, every crisis is an opportunity to continue to grow, either personally or collectively, or to come to a deeper understanding. Bearing this in mind, the question arises as to how we can learn from the present coronavirus crisis. How should society be rearranged? How should we deal with the nature of which humankind is a part?

## Towards a New Social Order

The coronavirus crisis shows how disruptive the effects of nature can be on society. The rearrangement of society will be a major challenge in the post-corona era. There are a number of visions that might be important in this rearrangement; visions that each require a certain attitude to life.

First, we see that the coronavirus crisis has given rise to discussions about the conditions that Northern European countries want to impose on the European Recovery Fund in the post-corona era. These conditions are aimed at ensuring that Southern European countries generate higher growth through structural reforms so that these countries can emerge from their national debt. As the coronavirus pandemic has been assessed as a temporary emergency, they have been formulated to provide temporary solutions. Because the need

in Southern European countries became acute and very great, the coronavirus crisis offered an opportunity for Northern European countries to become as good as the father in the New Testament parable awaiting his prodigal son, who led a profligate life, with forgiveness and open arms, much to the frustration of his faithful eldest son. The Northern European countries can be compared to the eldest son, who has always faithfully fulfilled his duties and holds it against his little brother that he has not done so. Even though the eldest son has never been short of anything, he still feels aggrieved; so aggrieved that someone who is in acute trouble—even if it is his own fault—is denied help. The parable teaches that this is understandable, but that it ultimately damages relationships. It teaches us to first show mercy and justice after that.

However, if needs are less acute, a balance between mercy and justice, between rights and duties in the long term seems more plausible. As a result of the coronavirus crisis, common bonds, which are always a form of debt sharing, are back on the agenda within the framework of a European Recovery Fund that is more focused on the long term. Both temporary and long-term measures are again part of a broader debate on the future shape of the Economic and Monetary Union. The aim is always to strike a balance between rights and obligations within a European fiscal union in the long term. A fiscal union has a structure in which a decision on structural reforms in the Eurozone is taken jointly to increase the growth potential, thereby reducing the national debt. A European fiscal policy should thus be aimed at structurally increasing Europe's growth potential. Higher growth levels make it easier to bear debt. On this path of traditional longer term structural reforms, which will still have a positive impact on growth, the quest for justice must prevail. For all parties in the Eurozone discussing the European fiscal union and a European fiscal policy, it will be important, according to us, to strive "to do right by others" first: so to seek justice, however utopian this may sound. This is where the crisis offers an opportunity to sincerely strive to do justice to each other. Putting mercy first on this path would mean reaping injustice and aggrievement.

The disruptive coronavirus crisis can be understood as the prelude to a process of creative destruction. In his magisterial Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (1942) Schumpeter argues that creative destruction, the process in which old techniques have to make way for new ones, is useful and even necessary to structurally increase productivity and, ultimately, the only source of economic growth (Schumpeter 1982). The coronavirus crisis offers unexpected opportunities for economic growth through the increase of, for example, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and robotization. Society was forced to do this because the coronavirus was not allowed to spread and real contact

was therefore undesirable. Companies should not try to save their old business models but embrace the new ones that emerge in and thanks to (sic) the coronavirus crisis. Schumpeter also argues in this context that governments would do well to stimulate these new business models in companies.

Moreover, in his idea, creative destruction leads to the need for a new social contract for the labor market because the segmentation of the labor market into flexible and permanent employees is not only socially unjust but also economically inefficient. Now the coronavirus crisis has exposed the difference between vital and non-vital institutions and professions. Suddenly, it became poignantly clear that the vital professions (care, security, and education) have shown deficits precisely in recent decades due to cuts in terms of employment and budgets. The social system in which this could happen will be subject to creative destruction if the vital institutions and professions in the post-corona era will be advantaged again. Preludes to creative destruction will also be reflected in newly formulated guarantees for the resilience of our economic and social infrastructure, in which the vital professions will be valued more highly. Although non-vital businesses and institutions should be helped with a bridge loan for their transition to the new revenue models they cannot be sustained against market forces in the long term and must ultimately accept their entrepreneurial risks. If Europe were to succeed in making positive use of the power of Schumpeter's creative destruction in the post-corona era, then the human drama of the coronavirus crisis could be a blessing in disguise.

## Nature as a Teacher

The coronavirus also shows us that our relationship with nature needs to change. What insights does the coronavirus crisis give us with regard to our relationship with the nature of which humankind is a part?

In Verde brillante. Sensibilità e intelligenzia del mondo vegetale, neurobiologist Stefano Mancuso confirmed what Darwin already suspected. Plants have amazing skills. They communicate with each other and help each other find food. They warn each other with fragrances of hostile herbivores and lure other animals to defend them. And although, according to Mancuso, deforestation and other climate-disrupting activities cause the demise of many plant species, plants will survive us: also because they account for 99% of the Earth's biomass. Humans need vegetative life. It is not the other way around. Also because humans are quantitatively insignificant (*quantitativamente ininfluenti*), Mancuso, and many with him, have for years advocated embracing a worldview that is less anthropocentric (Mancuso and Viola 2015).

Mancuso could also have substantiated this insight with an intuition from the Scripture. In Genesis, a distinction is made between *chayyah*—the life of plants—and *chayyah fakehesh*—the life of animals and humans (Gen. 1: 20, 21, 24, 30; Gen. 2: 7). Although there is a difference between the lives of plants and animals (humans), chayyah is used for both forms of life, stressing their unity in diversity. Animals and humans inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide; plants inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. But everything breathes. In the Scripture, plants, animals, and humans are seen as parts of a natural system in which everything needs one another and in which human beings are the crowning glory of creation but are not central.

Mancuso's vision has many common grounds with that of the philosophers of the Stoa, a pope and, a psychiatrist. They all help us to see a very decisive cause of the coronavirus crisis sharply. The stoics already called upon humankind to regard itself as part of a given whole, nature, and not as the culmination of an exhaustive creation. The idea of *oikeiosis* was based on the assumption that it is precisely when people live according to the laws of universal nature that they can make the greatest contribution to the preservation of this nature of all living beings in the cosmos. But the opposite is also true. As an extension of this reverse, Pope Francis, in his encyclical Laudato si', criticized the devastating effects of human activity on the balance of the planet. The passages about the release of several gases, such as methane gas and carbon dioxide, which result in the so-called greenhouse effect; about the loss of biodiversity through the destruction of tropical forests; and about the acidification of the oceans by our industries are lamentable complaints to which those of the prophet Jeremiah about the misery of his people fade away (Pope Francis 2015).

In line with the Pope, psychiatrist Damiaan Denys added to this thought by making a link between the spread of the coronavirus and the exploitation of the earth. He traces the spread of the virus back to non-compliance with hygiene regulations in a market where live and dead dogs, armadillos, and bats were offered for sale. But the main cause lies in the "unbridled appetite to travel" of the richer citizens of the world, who, at the expense of nature, claim the right to fly around the world by the millions every day. Denys does not hesitate to reduce the spread of the coronavirus to our megalomania (Denys 2020a, b). The fact that people are dying of a virus is due to that virus. There are good viruses and bad viruses in the *ordo naturae*. Those bad viruses can spread and many more people die than necessary is not a punishment from God but a consequence of the megalomania of the phenomenon humankind, who no longer knows his place in this *ordo naturae*.

As in a *pas de deux*, pope and psychiatrist expose another wrongdoing. The "haves," who travel, buy, and consume a lot, place an enormous ecological footprint on mother earth: a footprint that—if all seven billion human earthlings claimed it—would take as many as seven mother earths to meet the demand for raw materials. Long before the coronavirus erupted, Pope Francis clearly stated in his much-discussed encyclical Laudato si' that climate change, the scarcity of drinking water, and declining biodiversity are and will continue to affect the poor most. Scarcity of water means, among other things, lower crop yields for them. He considered the behavior of the rich to be intolerable, even more so, because these climate changes are also caused by the unbridled need of people in rich countries to consume. Ecology and social justice therefore have a direct link. The ecological crisis, according to the Pope, is actually rooted in a moral crisis in the hearts of people in rich countries. Those hearts are sometimes empty, and the need to consume is the result. Unfortunately, this happens too much without taking into account the consequences for the rest of the world. The coronavirus crisis is also a consequence of this moral crisis.

Psychiatrist and pope confront us with our inability to put the stoic ne quid nimis (nothing in excess) principle into practice. Stoics emphasized that people do not become happy when they have something to an extreme degree. On the temple of Apollo in Thebes it already said: Mèden agan (in nothing too much!). Moderation is a remedy against megalomania. But it is also a path to happiness. In his self-help book The Happy Life (!), Augustine writes that someone who is extremely poor knows fear because he or she is afraid of having too little food for those who need to be cared for. However, someone who is far too rich also knows a fear: the fear of losing possessions. The right measure of possession gives peace and inner balance to his notion (Augustine, De beata vita).

## Epilog

Because of the lockdown, nature has taken back part of its former place. This was for the benefit of humankind. The air quality in Hong Kong, China, the Po Valley, and in many other regions improved. Emissions of harmful substances decreased. In cities like Venice, dolphins returned and fish were seen. But the lockdown, which was self-inflicted, brought much doom to mankind. Businesses collapsed, people died alone in the hospital, without anyone being able to comfort them or even say goodbye. Would this have been the case if we had been more respectful of nature?

Entrepreneurship and initiative have brought enormous gains and poverty reduction worldwide. At the same time, it has fed immoderation and brought about the idea of limitlessness. It has often been written in recent weeks that "the virus conquered the whole world," or that "the virus had again claimed many victims." In a formal biological sense, these are corrective statements. However, by attributing human characteristics to the virus, we may be concealing the even more important second cause of the coronavirus crisis. The virus was able to spread so rapidly because globally oriented people from the wealthy part of the world developed an unbridled need to travel, and an excessive desire for meat. The effect of the latter desire is not only that humankind is increasingly encroaching on the habitat of animals but also that the rate of zoonoses, the transmittance of viruses of (wild) animals to humans, increases very rapidly. The greatest threat to humankind is caused by Western people's need to travel, operate globally, and consume unrestrainedly, and a lifestyle in which moderation is practiced is at least as adequate a medicine as a good vaccine. What we are learning the hard way is that all living beings live in the same world and that for people sharing space with everything and all is a necessary condition of life. Ultimately, an attitude of life in which people are more willing to share possessions altruistically brings about the well-being that people seek through the gathering of possessions.

Paradoxically, this altruism is not altruistic. Augustine was well aware that the pursuit of altruism would ideally result in a harmonious community. The coronavirus sharpened our awareness that life is still not as malleable and controllable as we thought after the invention of penicillin or the lightning rod. This is a learning opportunity. Knowing our dependence on an uncontrollable nature provokes feelings of fear and insecurity. At best, we do not remain trapped in these feelings, but see the world and ourselves differently. In the awareness that we are not the only ones whose "turn" it is, we become less complacent at least. In an even more favorable case, we start to worry deeply about older loved ones. In doing so, we develop empathy and compassion. And because there is a pandemic, we suddenly realize that we are connected to people whom we will never meet but whose miserable circumstances suddenly begin to affect us in such a way that we want to do something for them.

Nature releases in us the spirit of mercy. Fear of the unknown, insecurity, and the awareness of our own vulnerability can be the prelude to seeing people differently and to doing things differently. Sometimes life forces us to do this. That, actually, is "very good."

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# 12

# Litigating the Crisis: Towards a Rebalancing of the Rights of Investors Versus Public Interest?

Morag Goodwin and Phillip Paiement

This chapter reflects on the anticipated rush by private corporations to seek compensation from states for emergency measures taken to address the current health crisis. Where states have, for example, commandeered privately run health facilities, foreign corporations can claim for any negative impact on their current and future profits. This anticipated wave of state-investor litigation draws upon the web of bilateral investment treaties that span the globe and on Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms. In place of a "new normal," this short paper suggests that these threats represent an intensification of an existing trend, with the main difference being that states of the Global North are increasingly finding themselves disciplined by instruments that they created to protect their own companies abroad. If this happens, as seems likely, this crisis will add to the growing calls to rethink how we regulate the boundary between the public interest and private investors.

At the heart of this type of transnational litigation is a dispute about the relationship between notions of public and private and the definition of "public interest" that acts as a check on the freedom of action of both states and private actors. The legal basis is the system of Investor-State Dispute Settlement

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and the complex web of bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and the occasional multilateral trade treaty that constitute the rules of interaction between foreign corporations and investors and the public authorities that host the investment. The system is part of international law and is therefore governed by its general rules. The basic principle of the system is that states protect the interests of companies and investors incorporated in their state when those companies and investors act abroad, by laying down shared—bilateral—rules that prohibit discriminatory action, such as expropriation.

There are many 1000s of BITs currently in operation, most of which were drafted in the 1980s and 1990s. What gives these treaties their bite are the provisions they contain that exclude the domestic courts of the host state from any role in regulating disputes between investors and the state in favor of international arbitration. Yet while BITs are—as the name suggests—a bilateral agreement between two states, it has increasingly been recognized that they are, in practice, unbalanced, and are unfair towards states of the Global South.

In place of a guarantee of mutual interests, BITs have worsened the power imbalance upon which they are based in favor of corporate interests over the public authorities of poorer states (Peronne 2016a, b). The practice of dispute resolution guaranteed by BITs has led to a dramatic expansion of investor rights under the notion of "indirect expropriation," which covers any measures taken by governments that have a negative impact on investment (UNCTAD 2000). These claims see host governments subjected to claims by foreign firms that frequently result in huge payouts that, in turn, have an equally huge impact on the ability of developing countries to improve public welfare. As such, it has been argued, that the ISDS system promotes the rights of Western-based corporations over those of developing states (Gallacher and Shrestha 2011). This has led to calls for a moratorium on investor-state cases within the ISDS system and a re-writing of the rules of the game (Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment 2020; Kahale III 2018).

## The Current Crisis

The dramatic nature of the policy responses by governments in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic gives rise to a myriad of potential liabilities for states stemming from their obligations towards foreign investors under their international investment agreements. These liabilities concern both public health measures taken to quell the spread and health consequences of the pandemic as well as subsidiary measures taken in response to the pandemic's social and

economic consequences, including those flowing from corresponding public health restrictions. Examples of direct public health measures that may pose harmful consequences to the undertakings of foreign investors include: the nationalization of private medical care facilities; compulsory licensing for patented drugs and medical devices; the reduction or prohibition of the exportation of medical materials; requisitioning hotels to serve as health clinics or quarantine sites; and compelling manufacturers to produce medical supplies.

In addition, the following social and economic policies intended to limit the consequences of the pandemic could also impact foreign investors in a manner that would give rise to ISDS arbitration: moratoriums on toll-roads, rent payments, and utilities payments; the introduction of limitations on contractual liabilities and other creditor protections; limitations of foreign investments to protect against buyouts of distressed assets; moratoriums on bankruptcy proceedings; suspension of mortgage payments; moratoriums on utilities connection cancelations; tax relief measures to support businesses particularly affected by the pandemic; and the prohibition of companies domiciled in tax havens from receiving financial aid. In a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" manner, states might even be exposed to liability if they fail to take sufficient measures to ensure public order. Based on the concept of indirect expropriation, such governments could face claims if looting or other social unrest affects foreign investors, as was the case in Egypt during the Arab Spring when disruptions and theft from gas pipelines led Ampal-American Israel Corporation to initiate ISDS proceedings against Egypt for $535 million, a procedure which is still pending. It is quite possible to imagine ISDS claims arising both for a failure by governments to prevent a subsequent wave of infections due to a lifting of restrictions too quickly or because they failed to enforce restrictions sufficiently well; and because they implemented lockdown rules in the first place. Simply put, the complexity of policy responses to the pandemic presents countless opportunities for ISDS to arise.

Already in late March, while the pandemic was in its worst stages in Europe with thousands of deaths each day, attorneys from ArbLit in Milan were publicly contemplating the potential investment claims that may come out of the pandemic (Benedetteli et al. 2020). Since then, numerous law firms specialized in investment arbitration have been contacting potential clients in order to raise awareness about the types of claims that they may be able to pursue against states whose measures have impacted their businesses.

## Fighting Back

Despite it long being accepted by many scholars, countries, and international institutions that the ISDS system is detrimental to the interests of the Global South, the system perseveres. Previous government crises, such as Argentina's 15 year-long financial crisis of 1998–2002, or the Arab Spring—while they led to calls for reform—did not lead to change. Nor has the permanent governance crisis of many Global South states created sufficient momentum for a rebalancing of investors' rights in favor of the public interest. The system is not unchallenged, however. Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela have all withdrawn from the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) Convention this century (in 2007, 2009 and 2012, respectively) (Voon and Mitchell 2016). Other efforts to fight back include the termination of older generation BIT agreements: for example, Venezuela terminated its BIT with The Netherlands in 2008 after it was used as the basis for ICSID jurisdiction in 10 cases (Fach Gómez 2010), Bolivia has terminated 10 of its 23 BITs, and Indonesia has terminated 26 of its 71 BITs (Ranjan 2019).

However, the fight back is not limited to states of the Global South. In recent years, a number of wealthy countries have recognized that the system does not serve their interests either. In 2009, the Australian government requested the Productivity Commission—a governmental advisory body—to investigate the impact of Australia's bilateral and trade agreements on Australia's economic performance. Its 2010 report found no evidence that ISDS provisions increase foreign investor inflow and held that, in contrast, ISDS provisions represented "considerable policy and financial risks" to the Australian state. Its conclusion, that "the Australian government should seek to avoid the inclusion of investor state dispute settlement provisions in bilateral and regional trade agreements," led to a rethink of Australian trade policy (Productivity Commission 2010; Ranald 2011). Notably, the report immediately preceded a lengthy and costly ISDS claim filed by tobacco conglomerate Philip Morris's Hong Kong subsidiary against Australia for its 2011 tobacco plain packaging legislation, a dispute in which Australia ultimately prevailed, paving the way for similar legislation in developing countries.

Similarly, the Dutch government decided in 2018 to create a new BIT model treaty to serve as the basis for the renegotiation of all 79 BITs between the Dutch state and non-EU countries. The new model is designed to create a fairer balance by introducing stricter eligibility criteria for investors to be able to make claims against states. One significant change is that claims of indirect expropriation will now require "fundamental attributes of property"

to be taken, which means, for example, that fluctuations in prices as a result of government measures will no longer be claimable (Marsman 2018). These changes by the Dutch government are important, as Dutch BITs are the second most invoked by investors globally, and the old model is widely viewed as offering "the gold standard" of investor protection. This change of heart by the Dutch government is prompted by recognition of the need to rebalance the rights of investors against state interests. More importantly, it follows the realization that power shifts in the global economy entail that the Netherlands—traditionally an investment-exporting country—is now primarily a capital-importing state. For example, 36% of residential rental properties sold in the Netherlands in 2019 were purchased by foreign investors (Rachid 2019). Strict investor protection is increasingly viewed by the Dutch state as detrimental to its interests in place of protecting them (Duggal and van de Ven 2019). It is not alone amongst Northern states.

## Litigating This Crisis

Should states be faced with investment arbitration in response to their COVID-19 policy measures, they have two general pathways to defend their actions (Martinez 2010). First, they can rely on the defense of necessity as developed in customary international law. However, exceptions under necessity or emergency scenarios are not usually recognized in international investment agreements, which raises the risk that an arbitration panel will not accept such a defense. Second, they may rely on regulation in the public interest exception clauses, which are increasingly common in international investment agreements, yet fairly uncommon in older agreements. This justification, if available, would be subject to proportionality testing by an arbitration panel to determine whether measures less harmful for foreign investors would have been possible. There is a fair chance that many states could successfully defend their actions in this manner. Yet the prospect of proportionality evaluations and potential massive payouts to foreign investors for government actions in a pandemic that has taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of Europeans and North Americans is likely to be deeply unpalatable to these governments and their voters. We should not anticipate that actions by corporations in response to the pandemic could lead to the development of a "new common" amongst states—competition is, after all, the beating heart of capitalism and hence of the global economy. The most that can be hoped is that the pandemic gives powerful states the incentive to initiate reforms to the

international investment treaty system and hence continue the trend towards a rebalancing of public interest and investors' rights.

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# 13

# Plus Ça Change…? How the COVID-19 Crisis May Lead to a Revaluation of the Local

Martijn Groenleer and Daniel Bertram

## The normality of global flows - and crises

Who is to blame for the catastrophic economic and social damages (beyond the untold human suffering) that COVID-19 may cause and has already caused? While some have jumped to scapegoating one country (China) or one institution (the WHO), somewhat more sophisticated arguments point in the direction of globalization. Although the economy has been operating in cross-border production chains for centuries as part of a global division of labor, these chains have become increasingly complex and tightly linked in recent decades. As a result, the potential for failure—a chain reaction or even an "infarct"—is considerable, and crises with cross-border effects are inevitable. To some extent, such transboundary crises have become the new common (Boin 2019).

With COVID-19 unfolding its deadly and disruptive force, calls from all across the political spectrum for putting an end to globalization are becoming louder. But will the pandemic really constitute a stumbling block to the inexorable machinery of growing interconnection? We argue that, as with

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previous global crises such as the financial crisis, it is not obvious that the COVID-19 crisis will lead to a process of de-globalization, however disastrous the consequences of international cross-linking may be for economies and societies. It is much more likely that the new common will see an acceleration of the process of localization, already occurring as part of globalization in the old common.

In the 1990s, sociologist Manuel Castells (1989) spoke in this regard about the creation of a so-called "space of flows." In the network society, territories and their borders lose much of their importance. As a result of continuous innovations in information and communication technology, locations, or places, are increasingly connected. This phenomenon is mostly economic in nature, but by no means exclusively so. People also organize themselves across borders via the Internet and social media in global social movements: for entertainment, for political purposes, for spiritual themes, and indeed for all kinds of protests. Digital connectivity, therefore, seems to have largely replaced geographical proximity.

## The Enduring Importance of Place

However, it turns out time and time again: the world is not "placeless" suddenly. Even in a globalized society—in spatial terms—concrete places are still linked together. Those loci are the regions, cities, and neighborhoods where we lead our daily lives, derive our identity from, and build communities around. From its very origin, the ravaging COVID-19 crisis illustrates both the importance of the local, and how and where we live forms part of a larger, global whole. After all, the virus was likely first transmitted from animal to human in Wuhan, one of China's sprawling metropoles and an important national and international hub, from where it quickly conquered all corners of the world. Ever since, cities and urban areas appear at the epicenter of the crisis (Keil et al. 2020).

The result is localization—not so much as the antagonist to globalization, but as part of it. This holds true for both economic and social processes. The crisis has not only propelled the further rise of global players like Amazon and Google but it has also led many to appreciate the availability and indispensability of local goods and services in an unprecedented manner (Vijn 2020). Rarely have the bakery around the corner, the florist next door, and the various local mom-and-pop businesses received this much love and attention. A similar pattern is discernible for social processes. In spite of students and colleagues now being dispersed around the world, their social connections are soaring over distance—thanks to Zoom, Teams, and Hangouts & Co. Such

global connectivity has not come at the cost of local solidarity: there is an overwhelming number of genuinely heartwarming news stories of people stepping in for each other (see, e.g., Stewart 2020).

These dynamics have also impacted the sphere of governance. Even though we seem to be witnessing a return of the territorial state during the acute crisis phase, cities, and regions are only gaining weight as scale levels. Behind the scenes, powers have been shifted downwards, e.g., to the 25 mayors of the Dutch security regions (Marijnissen 2020). Beyond implementing and enforcing national measures, cities, and regions shape distinctive responses to globalized issues. The wicked problems and grand challenges of our times may primarily operate at an international level, but the consequences are felt locally, and differently. In the case of COVID-19, starting with differences in death tolls as a result of the virus but going all the way to differences in bankruptcies, unemployment rates, and social conditions. The tragic examples of Wuhan, Milan, New York, Sao Paulo, and, indeed, the Dutch province of Brabant and the German Land of Bavaria have made it clear that not only certain sectors or certain groups but also specific places are being affected unequally.

## The Need for a Differentiated Response

Hence, differentiated policy measures and regulatory responses become necessary to limit contextually specific adverse effects. A one-size-fits-all approach neglects the unique geographic trajectory of COVID-19. It may well result in a one-size-fits-none situation where central measures are insufficient to limit the spread of the virus in some places while, in other places, impose an excessive, unnecessary burden on the local population. This explains the significant variation found globally, within the countries of the European Union, and even within a small country such as the Netherlands in tackling COVID-19. In the Dutch case, the initial response occurred regionally, in the province of Brabant, where the virus made its first nationwide appearance. After increasingly centralized measures were taken by the national authorities during the most severe phases in late March and April 2020, the approach shifted to regional differentiation and local customization. Throughout the summer, Amsterdam had stricter regulations in place than other parts of the country, citing the high population density and the inflow of foreign tourists as aggravating risk factors (Muller 2020).

The Netherlands is hardly an isolated example in this regard. In Germany, the United States, Brazil, and even in France, to name just a few, the regional and local levels have exercised significant influence in the handling of the COVID-19 crisis—on occasion in direct opposition to national positions

(Der Spiegel 2020). Sometimes, this depends on institutional factors, such as differing degrees of federalism in Germany, the United States, and Brazil. In addition, local and regional bearing seems to vary in time, just like in the Netherlands: from local measures at the start to centralized restrictions as the crisis develops, and back to local responses when case numbers have somewhat declined and outbreaks can be locally monitored and controlled. But even across different political systems and across different stages in the infamous curve of infections, subnational voices are loud and their actions decisive.

The same dynamic extends beyond immediate policies to measures targeted at the virus's more mediate impacts. Whereas national governments are busy saving multinational businesses from bankruptcy, this is the time for local and regional authorities to shine as policy entrepreneurs. Urban governments in Berlin, Milan, Brussels, and elsewhere are now designating new bike lanes in reaction to decreased car traffic (Curry 2020). The Ecuadorian capital of Quito enacted new rules for the city's critical food markets to safeguard urban food security while limiting the risk of infection for the many consumers and workers (Rodríguez 2020). The city of San Francisco, like many others, is providing emergency shelters to the homeless in an effort to improve sanitary conditions and enable effective social distancing (Ho 2020).

## The Local as Part of the Global: Glocality

It was another sociologist, Roland Robertson (1995), who was one of the first to use the term "glocalization" in the mid-1990s to describe the simultaneous occurrence of processes of globalization and localization. Many developments in our economy are aimed at standardization and upscaling. At the same time, there is an increasing need to develop customized solutions and to adapt to local conditions, also socially and politically. Indeed, the term glocalization has its origins in the business world and the adaptation of standardized products and services to local needs. Think of the "McKroket," a special food product launched by the globally operating fast-food chain McDonalds to serve the Dutch affinity for the deep-fried snack.

The counterintuitive beauty of this dynamic is that the global is not so much the opposite of the local. On the contrary, what is often called the local is essentially part of the global. Globalization can thus be seen as the shrinking of the world by connecting places. In fact, we are seeing that this is accelerated. A notable example is the initiative of regional and local leaders to share knowledge and facilitate mutual policy learning during the pandemic, across national, cultural, and language borders, as in UNESCO's (2020) Global

Network of Learning Cities, the Harvard Bloomberg City Leadership Initiative (Harvard Kennedy School 2020), or the City of Amsterdam's (2020) "International Monitor". Incidentally, it is by no means fixed or predetermined what constitutes a place: the process of localization also includes the "(re)invention of place." And this is what we currently seem to be witnessing, by both citizens and those responsible for designing and implementing policy measures and regulatory responses.

Hence, glocalization links two apparently contradictory processes and emphasizes this form of complexity in contemporary society. The term can also help to interpret current processes related to the COVID-19 crisis, including in governance. The tasks faced are generic and transboundary in various respects, while locally specific and context-dependent in others. Essentially, the various local and regional responses, similar but different, are the socio-political McKrokets of a world in crisis.

## In Sum: … Plus C'est la Même Chose?

The spread of the coronavirus around the world once again confronts us with the vulnerability of a globalized economy and society. Even though globalization may have contributed to the spread of the virus, it is far from obvious that this will lead to a process of de-globalization in the longer term. At the moment, there may be a significant dip in global economic interactions, but the space of flows is likely to keep growing. In line with this, COVID-19 seems to enhance the simultaneous localization process that has been ongoing for much longer as part of a concerted attack on the authority of the territorial state. The space of places has returned, or rather it has never gone away. If anything, the struggle to grapple with the current situation could contribute to a revaluation of the local in a global context. In this sense, rather than a disruption, the new common may actually turn out to be no more (and no less) than a slightly altered, yet considerably accelerated version of the old common.

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# 14

# Perspectives on the Common: The Input of Literature

Odile Heynders

In the COVID-19 context, journalists and columnists frequently refer to literary texts in order to demonstrate that what is happening under the current circumstances has already been described by writers of fiction. The idea is that literature opens a window to the real world, that, in imagination, we can find a representation of factual events. Various historical and contemporary works of fiction, such as A Journal of the Plague Year (1722) by Daniel Defoe, The Betrothed (1827) by Alessandro Manzoni, The Plague (1947) by Albert Camus, Blindness (1995) by José Saramago, The Rumors (1996) by Hugo Claus, or Ruyan@sars.com (2006) by Hu Fayun, describe societies infected with all sorts of contagious diseases from the bubonic plague in London to AIDS in Africa. Most of these novels can be read as allegories; they demonstrate how people react to illness, social panic, and isolation. They confirm that, although times are changing, the impact of pandemics on individuals does not differ that much. All these works underline that communities can only be based on a humanist approach and solidarity. But they also describe individuals that do not always strive for the common good. The violence in the novels by Saramago and Claus is illustrative; the norms and values of

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social groups become permeated when people get weak or invalid due to a spreading disease.

The novel is a democratic space, Turkish writer Elif Shafak claims in an interview (Anjum 2019). The idea is that, in a novel, various characters and perspectives can be brought to the fore and scenarios can be worked out. In May 2020, Shafak further contends that it is in the unreliable narrative perspective of literature that something can be taught about the uncertainties and fragmentation of the current public sphere (Shafak & Piri 2020). We cannot go back to the "normal" that we lived in before the coronavirus crisis, Shafak states. We have, with the help of literature, to rethink the world we are living in.

The issue that will be discussed in this contribution is how literature indeed helps to rethink the current situation, how it gives insight, and what roles literary authors take in the ongoing debate. If we agree that the global world should be organized differently after the coronavirus crisis, what then would be the input of literature and writers? To answer this question, I will first focus on a specific literary text and subsequently on the role two writers performed lately. In conclusion, I will argue that the old and the new common should not be distinguished as separate eras but could be understood from a synchronous perspective. Literature typically affirms the interrelationship of times for which the Russian philologist M. Bakhtin (2008 [1981]) used the term contemporaneity.

## The Insight of the Novel

In many media contributions (such as columns in newspapers and television talk shows) of the last months, La Peste, translated as The Plague, was mentioned as a pivotal description of the current situation. Camus's most successful novel tells us about doctor Rieux, living in the coastal town of Oran (Algeria), who, one day in spring, finds a rat on his doorstep. Soon after, he sees the animals, dead and alive, everywhere. Local people get swellings and start to die. The phase of surprise is followed by one of panic. "Our fellow-citizens, as they now realized, had never thought that our little town might be a place particularly chosen as one where rats die in the sun and concierges perish from peculiar illnesses" (Camus 2013: 20). The city authorities order everyone to stay home, and, later, the place is completely closed off while, at night, trains bring the many dead to mass graves elsewhere. The administration refuses to take responsibility. It is up to individuals to participate in health teams and take care of the dead. The plague dominates the town for almost a year.

Camus develops several characters and shows their perspectives and opinions under the circumstances of suffering and death. Doctor Rieux, the journalist Rambert, the clerk Grand, and the writer Tarrou work, meet, and communicate together, as such providing the reader with a number of conversations, thoughts, and difficult dilemmas. How to show solidarity without playing the hero, how to resist inertia and ignorance, how to act? As Rieux explains: "This whole thing is not about heroism. It's about decency. It may seem a ridiculous idea, but the only way to fight the plague is with decency" (Camus 2013: 125).

When columnists refer to Camus's allegorical work, they mainly pay attention to the themes and the plot: the events of the spreading illness and its disquieting social consequences in the isolated city. The thematic comparisons between circumstances described in the novel and the COVID-19 reality of quarantine and social distancing are striking indeed. But what might also be taken into account when the novel is used in a reflection on today's global coronavirus crisis is the complexity of the narration: the polyphony of voices and the way in which "the narrator" is explicitly mentioned but, at the same time, disappears behind the characters. As a consequence, the narrator is someone who is there but who cannot be identified, someone who observes but does not judge. Sentences such as "once the gates were closed, they all noticed that they were in the same boat, including the narrator himself, and that they had to adjust to the fact" (Camus 2013: 53) underline that the narrating voice does not give an ultimate perspective. As if to say, that no one orchestrates the times we are in. Camus's text provides insight into how people behave under the circumstances of epidemic disease. It is not only in the theme and the plot but also in the narrative construction—in the play with the narrator position—that the reader of The Plague gets an understanding of how disturbing the quarantine of a city can be.

One of the sources of the book was the cholera epidemic of 1849, destroying many lives in Algeria. When The Plague was published in 1947, many readers interpreted the novel as a commentary on the fascist "disease" of World War II. The novel, we could argue, tells the story of a different kind of illness as well: that of a destructive, hyper-materialist, neoliberal capitalism (Vulliamy 2015). This poly-interpretability can be considered a characteristic of many canonical novels: they can function as the applied contemporary commentary in different times. Even though written almost 90 years ago, The Plague provides insight into current circumstances and ideas.

## The Role of the Author as Spokesperson

When we talk about the relevance of literature, we should not only put the light on novels, but also on other types of text and on the roles that literary writers take in the societal debate. Often, writers intervene in the public sphere as critical spokespersons who, from a position of both engagement and distance, speak out on current events (Habermas 2009; Heynders 2016). Two examples could be mentioned here.

First, Indian writer Arundhati Roy, writing in the Financial Times (April 3, 2020) about how the coronavirus threatens India. As a consequence of the lockdown, the wealthy and the middle classes enclosed themselves in gated colonies, while towns and megacities began to "extrude their working-class citizens—their migrant workers—like so much unwanted accrual" (Roy 2020). The social distancing resulted in the opposite: "physical compression on an unthinkable scale … The main roads might be empty, but the poor are sealed into cramped quarters in slums and shanties" (Roy 2020). Roy's critical voice judges India's central government, which did not take the adequate steps at the right time, not having the cash available for the emergency measures needed. Roy not only describes the negative consequences but also considers the pandemic a portal to a new future. "In the midst of this terrible despair" she writes, "the coronavirus offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality" (Roy 2020).

The second example of a literary writer intervening in the real world while commenting on the coronavirus crisis is Dutch writer Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer. From March 9 until June 27, Pfeijffer, who lives in Genova (Italy), published daily reportages in the NRC newspaper on the situation in the Italian city under coronavirus quarantine. This viral diary describes everyday life under very peculiar and depressing circumstances. Observation, detail, and reflection as the skills of the writer are combined. The daily columns do not count as the regular news but add a subjective perception to it. They provide a more meticulous and spherical description than whatever journalistic piece about Italy at the time.

Writers taking up a role as spokesperson or even activist—such as in the case of Roy—underline an existential commitment while also confirming that authorship functions in an attention framework. Operating as a public intellectual implies being visible, deploying one's cultural authority, and being able to set issues in a wider frame. Both Roy and Pfeijffer, as literary writers, address the momentous moment of COVID-19, realizing the new state of emergency.

## The Contemporaneity of Literature

The ethical demand of the new common is important in the context of globalization and digitalization. COVID-19 shapes a momentum that we cannot but take very seriously. Common implies community and communication. Therefore, it very much relates to literature since literary artifacts only exist as communication: sharing words, perceptions, and ideas. Literature functions in a community, a space in which languages, cultures, and collective memories are shared. The crucial point, then, is that in the current societal and educational infrastructures, there should be space carved out for literary thinking, for meaning creation and reflection based on a heuristic method. In academia, we are often preoccupied with quantitative methods that do not leave room for researching what is not immediately caught in clear hypotheses and aims.

The new common suggests that the old common is passé; that we can do better; that we will be more sustainable, collaborative, and participating in an all-encompassing network society. I would say that we need literary authors and fiction to help us keep our feet on the ground. What a reading of The Plague demonstrates is that the nineteenth century cholera epidemic, the author's political ideas in the 1940s, and the reader's perception in 2020 establish a smooth connection. The reading encapsulates contemporaneity, the recognition that there is a multiplicity of ways to exist within a given moment of time. In literature, we acknowledge that times and places are connected and disrupt the linear idea of the "before" and "after." Literature teaches us that the old common cannot just be replaced by the new common. The new common will only be established if we are aware of time and space and stay morally conscious of the mistakes we made, of the ideas and attitudes we had, and of the memories and traditions that we should keep in mind.

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# 15

# Shaping the Post-COVID-19 Agenda: A Call for Responsible Leadership

## How the COVID-19 Crisis Could Accelerate the Transition to a New Era for Society When Its Leaders Take Responsibility to Establish the New Common

Ronald de Jong and Mirjam van Reisen

In 1970, the late economist and Nobel Prize Winner Milton Friedman spread a doctrine that has dominated the business world ever since: that a company's solitary purpose is to increase financial value for its shareholders. Author during the height of the Cold War, Friedman tied in with the narrative that economic freedom is essential to political freedom.

Friedman died in 2006, but his mantra did not. From the beginning of the 1990s until the financial crisis in 2007, the business world increasingly witnessed a movement towards the "Anglo-American" or "neo liberal" model, based upon Friedman's doctrine. In the period after the collapse of Lehmann Brothers, leaders in the public and the private sector tried to fight the

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financials crisis by holding on to the very same measures and instruments that—arguably—caused the financial crisis in the first place. The last convulsions of Friedman's doctrine?

## The Need to Challenge Capitalism in Its Current Form

There are many symptoms indicating the end of the industrial age as we know it. We seem to begin to realize that shareholders' interests are not necessarily and not always aligned with the interests of other stakeholders and of society at large. Value creation at the expense of instead of in harmony with is increasingly seen as unacceptable and wrong. It is increasingly inescapable to conclude that applying the paradigms of the last century to welfare creation will lead to big and potentially irreversible problems such as social unrest, increasing economic inequality, extreme poverty, and climate change destruction. This, in turn, undermines the long-term relevance of "capitalism" as the dominant economic doctrine.

## The COVID-19 Crisis as Trigger

The COVID-19 crisis is a focusing event. We have suddenly landed in a new universe. Unexpectedly and in a brief moment, what is essential to our societies has been redefined. The author John Kingdon (1984) saw such moments in time as windows when new issues could enter the policy agenda. We have come to realize that vital workers (e.g., health workers, teachers, and the police) are among those that had been subject to cuts in the public sector for decades; that health and education are vital public institutions that might not be best managed by the market; that the collective is more important than the individual; and that we are all dependent upon each other and the world around us, so we all need to be well in order to be well on an individual level.

A moment in time when all existing "certainties" are up in the air should lead to a disruption of existing doctrines and paradigms. The COVID-19 crisis, with the images of sickness and death, suddenly reveals that life, dignity, and care for family and communities are values of a higher order than the value of financial gains alone. The crisis forces business leaders to rethink the purpose of their organizations. This intensifies the debate around the role of corporate enterprise vis à vis its stakeholders. Shareholder capitalism is deeply

at odds with what has become essential in the COVID-19 crisis. There is no alternative but for capitalism to reinvent its underlying paradigms and parameters and to become inclusive.

## Towards Inclusive Capitalism

Inclusive capitalism is based upon the conviction that conventional economic thinking will have to be disrupted rather than finding a justification for the enormous and increasing inequality. Value creation will have to be redefined and realized along three core dimensions: social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Business leaders will need to lead the transition to a new reality where we share everything more fairly and equally and where we live within the means of what this planet and its people have to offer. The extractive and exploitative system must make way for a new economic logic where we responsibly and purposefully lead our organizations to serve all stakeholders, where we aim to create ecological and social value alongside economic value, and where we share the latter more fairly and equally. A system change is needed, geared to protecting the commons: the common resources that we share as a society. We need to actively protect these.

This idealism is realism. Perhaps we need to rethink fossil fuel with a negative price on the market since we all know that we need to end the fossil fuel economy. Perhaps we need to rethink the provision of subsidies by the International Monetary Fund to the fossil fuel industries of 5000 million USD a year (Coady et al. 2019). Perhaps we need to rethink the state support provided to airlines because these are some of the bigger contributors to $CO_2$ pollution. And perhaps we need to rethink the tax derogation to big internet platform companies, so that we can support wealth redistribution. Companies need to become part of the solution. It is time for the public and private sectors to join forces and unite around the common purpose of assuming responsibility. The Paris Climate Treaty helps set the objectives. This includes taking accountability for assisting vulnerable people and countries and to provide sustainable solutions for the current problems that are mere symptoms of much bigger—underlying—issues.

The business world needs to orient itself to addressing the big wicked problems society is now facing by aligning their missions, visions, ambitions, and strategies to contribute to their solutions. The execution will require innovative business models. Business and performance management systems, tools, and methodologies will have to be reinvented to support a new way of defining, measuring, and managing business performance based on the three core

dimensions. The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations provide a compass for this. Instead of exclusion and polarization, Europe should focus on working with others beyond its borders, particularly with Africa, to strengthen a joint mission of international responsibility to eradicate poverty, protect the earth, and create inclusive wealth.

## Joining Forces to Create the New Common

A new generation of responsible leaders is already redefining the role of a corporation in society. In 2019, the most powerful US corporate lobby, the Business Roundtable, jettisoned the "Friedman model." The chief executives of 181 public companies pledged to care for the environment and create value for all their stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers, and society) as well as distribute the created value more equally (to be fair is to share).

We see the societal impact of COVID-19 unfolding as demonstrations for social justice grip our world. The depth of the crisis could be either an obstacle or an accelerator. This crisis is therefore a litmus test to proof that the intent of corporations to creating shared value is real. There are concerns that putting purpose before profit will fall by the wayside when economies are on the brink. However, a return to shareholder capitalism, as we know it, will be a colossal mistake and a missed opportunity to accelerate the transition to a new era, which we so desperately need.

No one can do this alone. We need governments, multi-lateral organizations, universities, non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, and small and medium-sized enterprises to join forces. Amongst all of this, the COVID-19 crisis shows that we might need governments to take a more proactive and prominent role in changing the rules that help businesses to contribute to shared value for our societies. Three points are critical to achieving this:

1. A reorientation of the role of the market as a regulator for the common good and general purpose. Inclusive capitalism needs to ensure we correct the flaws of shareholder capitalism and critically review the role of governments as regulators of critical public sectors, such as health care, energy, education, and public transportation.
2. A transition to a strong European common, in which individual countries overcome their differences and join forces as we enter this new era. European countries have a special obligation and duty in this context and "Team Europe" has a unique obligation to play a leading role in shaping

the new common and filling the void, as this is the first time in modern history that the United States is not assuming a leading role on a global scale. Traditional European values, in which businesses, governments, and citizens are stakeholders seeking to balance interests (commonly known as the Rhineland model) is much needed in this transition.

3. A conditionality of economic state support given to enterprises that ran into trouble due to COVID-19 to prevent supporting the status quo or return to the "old normal" but instead using such support to accelerate the transition to a new common guided by the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Treaty.

## A Call for Responsible Leadership

With respect to corporations, there is a growing sense that profit and purpose can no longer exist in isolation: alignment will ensure success both now and in the future. Creating shared value is a moral imperative, but it has a strong business case too. An indication is the resilience of ethical investment funds with more than half of them outperforming their benchmark in March in the earlier stages of the coronavirus pandemic and attracting inflows despite the uncertainties.

Responsible leaders are accountable for more than just the short-term individual financial results of their organizations or their short-term gains. They understand their obligation to help society protect the vulnerable. They take responsibility for the greater good in the longer term and preserve the planet for future generations. New leaders can learn from the COVID-19 crisis that there is a need to put the collective interest above the individual interest. To quote another Nobel Prize Winner, Nelson Mandela: "For to be free is (…) to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

The challenge for the leaders of today and tomorrow is to navigate the myriad of interests of the various stakeholders' responsibly. Universities have a critical contribution to make in educating the next generation of leaders to critically reflect on the pressing issues that confront us all. Tilburg University has a starring role to play in producing the responsible leaders of tomorrow, who will purposely lead the acceleration to the new common.

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# 16

# The Sciences During the New Common: A Missed Opportunity?

Maurits Kaptein

By Wednesday, July 22, 2020, the coronavirus had killed over 611,000 people and infected over 14 million globally (World Health Organization 2020). It devastated lives and will continue to do so for a long time to come; the economic consequences of the pandemic are only just starting to materialize. This makes it a challenging time to write about the new common. However, we need to start somewhere. At some point, we need to reflect on our own roles, the roles of our institutions, the importance of our economy, and the future fabric of everyday life. Here I will discuss one minor—and compared to the current crisis seemingly inconsequential—aspect of the new common: I will discuss my worry that we are on the verge of missing the opportunity to properly (re-)define the role of the sciences as we move from our old to our new common.

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## What Is Science?

Many have discussed the role of the sciences during and after the current crisis. Most scientists have been positive: the crisis has highlighted the importance of the sciences for policymaking, and the general audience is more and more relying on science to develop new solutions (Nature Methods Editorial Team 2020). However, despite this, I personally fear the current crisis is reinforcing a narrow view of the sciences that will hinder the scientific community, and our society, in going forward. To clarify, I need a definition of the sciences, or simply an answer to the question "What is science?" This is admittedly tricky. However, luckily, some of the giants of the sciences—Richard Feynman in this case—have provided an answer (Feynman 2009):

> The word is usually used to mean one of three things… Science means, sometimes, a special method of finding things out. Sometimes it means the body of knowledge arising from the things found out. It may also mean the new things you can do when you have found something out.

Starting from the final meaning, yes, the current crisis has amplified our collective belief in the use of the sciences relating to the "new things we can do." Our confidence that we will be able to develop a vaccine demonstrates this point (Yamey et al. 2020). Regarding the second meaning, the crisis has also amplified the role of the sciences in relationship to the knowledge it creates. Policymakers have en masse turned to the sciences for answers. How quickly will the virus spread? How can we stop the spread of the virus? How will the spread of the virus be affected if we open up our schools? All of these are questions that policymakers have asked scientists to answer (see, e.g., Gatto et al. 2020).

However, the first, and foremost, meaning of the word science as identified by Feynman seems not to have been reinforced during the current crises and, consequently, risks losing importance in the new common. As people turn to the sciences for answers and solutions, we run the risk of losing its value as a *special method of finding things out*.

Omission of this first-mentioned role of the sciences (a) poses a threat to the societal confidence in the sciences and (b) hinders the efficiency by which we find answers to important problems. The first consequence is easily motivated: if we pretend science has the correct answer to every question—whereas in reality it only has uncertain answers or none at all—we easily damage the confidence of society in the sciences. Currently, this scenario seems to be unfolding in the case of hydroxychloroquine (Mehra et al. 2020, now

retracted). As the answers science is providing are understandably mixed, regretfully, the heated debate regarding its efficacy leaves the general population with a diminished trust in the sciences as a whole.

The second consequence is less well understood or appreciated, even by some scientists. If we pretend the sciences have direct access to the truth, we ignore a large part of the sciences that has focused on finding out these truths to begin with. The honest answer scientists should give to many questions should be, "we don't know, but we do know how to find out." Such honesty will not only prevent a diminished trust in the sciences, it would also speed up and improve our decision-making. Allow me to illustrate.

## A Special Method of Finding Things Out

A recently fiercely debated question was "How will the spread of the virus be affected if we open up our schools?" We have settled for opening up our schools as the answer provided by the sciences was that the spread will only be affected in a limited way. The honest answer, however, is highly uncertain, as was, in this case, understood even by a large group of schoolteachers who argued against "being experimented upon." These teachers understandably did not want to be part of the informal trial of finding out the effects of opening up our schools (see, Kuiper 2020).

I say understandably here because I would side with the school teachers that they do not want to be part of an experiment. Or, more precisely, they should not want to be part of the current poorly designed experiment. The current experiment is poorly designed because we are opening up the schools in the whole country in one go, and we are simultaneously changing a myriad of other policies. Hence, no matter the outcome, we will never truly learn anything about the effects of opening up the schools as the only variable. Any observed effect could easily be attributed to other policy changes (or even simply to the passing of time). We are not really finding things out.

If we had not ignored our special methods of finding things out, we would have acted differently (see, e.g., Robbins 1952). We could easily have set up a much more controlled experiment in which some schools opened up and some did not: an experiment in which we carefully sampled these schools, and carefully administered the "treatment"; an experiment in which we carefully designed the outcome measure and monitored the effect of our intervention; by all means, simply an experiment that did not willfully ignore the "special method of finding things out."

## The Societal Value of Efficiently Finding Things Out

It is often argued that people do not want to be part of the experiment that I just described simply because they do not want to be experimented upon (ter Weijden 2020). People turn to the sciences for answers and facts, not for "ways of finding things out." However, I think this is true only because scientists fail to properly explain the value of efficiently finding things out, which, in the case of the COVID-19 policy, seems easy enough to do as, in reality, it is not just the opening of schools that we are poorly experimenting with. We are carrying out the same poorly designed experiments with a myriad of other policies. Conversely, a well-designed experiment would be greatly beneficial for all involved (see, e.g., Eckles and Kaptein 2019).

Assuming we all want to "open up" as much as possible, and further assuming that each policy change takes 1 month before its effects are known, we are currently on the following path:

- Month 1: Total lockdown. The spread halts.
- Month 2: Make 6 policy changes that ease the restrictions simultaneously. The spread seems not to pick up.
- (Hypothetical) Month 3: Make 6 additional policy changes. The spread picks up again.
- (Hypothetical) Month 4: Reverse the last 6 changes. The spread decreases again.
- (Hypothetical) Month 5: re-instantiate 4 policies. The spread does not pick up.
- (Hypothetical) Month 6 and the beginning of winter: The spread picks up, and we have no clue which policy measure had which effect. Let us go to lockdown again.

In the end, we will have spent months in semi-lockdowns, having learned very little. Alternatively, we could have been on this path:

- Month 1: Total lockdown. The spread halts.
- Month 2: We carry out carefully designed experiments with varying policies in multiple, mutually comparable regions in the Netherlands (or Europe). We end up with proper estimates of the effects of each and every policy.

- (Hypothetical) Month 3: We roll out the optimal policy according to our estimates.

This latter process saves months and brings us valuable knowledge. It safely opens up our society faster, at smaller costs. And, by the time winter hits, we would know exactly which policies to re-instate.[1]

I have no doubt that, given our ability to convince our whole society to stay indoors for months, we should be able to communicate the societal benefits of carrying out carefully designed experiments. This is especially true if we had not sold our current poorly designed experiment as the "the best decision based on the facts," but if we had initiated the general public into this all too often overlooked use of the sciences: *that of finding things out*.

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[1] Regretfully, we now (early Nov. 2020) seem to be, in the Netherlands, nearing month 4 of the hypothetical scenario above: we are on the verge of rolling back a number of restrictions as our COVID-19 case numbers are increasing and we do not really know which exact policy change has caused the uptake.

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# 17

# Growing Up in Times of COVID-19: When a Window of Opportunity is Temporarily Closed

Loes Keijsers and Anne Bülow

In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 spread across the globe and many governments took restrictive measures to prevent a further spread. Even though adolescents, here defined as youths aged 12–25 years, are not a high-risk group from an epidemiological viewpoint, school closures and social distancing measures had a tremendous impact on their daily lives. Adolescence is characterized by opportunities for personal growth, for establishing friendships that last a lifetime, for falling in love for the very first time, and for learning how to cope with stress. Simultaneously, adolescents are vulnerable for psychological problems, with approximately one out of five facing emotional problems, such as anxiety problems or depression (Kessler et al. 2005). In terms of social health, loneliness affects adolescents more than any other age group (Qualter et al. 2015). This chapter reflects on the psychological and social consequences of COVID-19 on adolescents while we are in the midst of the first wave. The aim is to provide concrete advice on how society, parents, and professionals can create optimal circumstances for promoting the growth of the next generations in a new common.

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## Attainment of Developmental Tasks

> When the body is ripe, and society requires, and the self is ready to achieve a certain task, the teachable moment has come. (Havighurst 1948)

Adolescents mature by the accomplishment of developmental tasks, by societies' predefined stepping stones (Havighurst 1948). These tasks include forming friendships and romantic relationships, achieving independence from parents, rituals of entry into adulthood (e.g., graduation), and selecting and preparing for an occupation. Society as a whole and also parents and adolescents themselves have a timetable of expectations regarding when a child should be able to accomplish these tasks (Dekovic et al. 1997). For instance, 15 year olds should be able to maintain friendships and solve a conflict on their own. Being "on schedule" provides youths with a sense of pride and meaning in life and is related to emotional well-being. Delay on the other hand, comes with a price of increased psychological problems and lower self-esteem (Seiffge-Krenke and Gelhaar 2008). Hence, even in times of a crisis, society, educators, and parents need to allow for these critical maturation tasks to be attained at the right moment.

## Social Deprivation

As any other human being, adolescents have a fundamental need to belong, that is, to form and maintain high-quality, intimate, and stable relationships with others (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Whereas adults typically rely on their romantic partners for comfort, intimacy, and understanding, close friends play this pivotal role in the lives of teens (De Goede et al. 2009). In the context of close friendships, adolescents develop a set of social skills needed to function later in life, such as keeping promises, solving conflicts, and disclosing secrets (Frijns et al. 2013). Through the exploration of sexuality and romance with age-mates adolescents, they gradually learn how to engage in intimate relationships that are pleasant and long-lasting (van de Bongardt 2019). Moreover, in the ongoing search for the self, conversations with friends help an adolescent to form a stable identity (Reis and Youniss 2004). Friendships, in sum, are not only a source of great joy in adolescents' lives, they are fundamental for learning how to cope with stress, how to maintain relationships, and form the basis for future growth and maturation.

During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, we assessed how the lockdown had affected friendships as part of the ADAPT project (Keijsers et al. 2017). Among 178 Dutch middle adolescents (age = 14.25 (SD = 1.63), 31% boys), we observed strong declines in time spent with friends, from 8 hours of face-to-face contact during weekdays before the lockdown to 2 hours after and, during weekend days, from 6.5 to 2 hours. Adolescents rapidly adapted to the new situation, as online contact with friends increased from 3 hours/day to 5.5 hours. Although this online communication may compensate for some of the negative effects of the sharp decrease in face-to-face contacts (Orben et al. 2020), it is still likely that adolescents missed important opportunities to obtain support and comfort from friends and romantic partners, in circumstances when these social resources were needed most. Social deprivation may also have affected their well-being. A rapid systematic review highlighted that 30–50% of the adolescents aged 12–24 were lonely during the COVID-19 lockdown (Loades et al. 2020). Feelings of loneliness may increase the risk of developing mental health problems especially when they last longer (Qualter et al. 2015; van Roekel et al. 2013). For this reason, scholars have warned of a steep increase in mental health problems in the upcoming period, including anxiety and depression (Golberstein et al. 2020; Loades et al. 2020).

## Independence from Parents

Parents play a pivotal role in helping adolescents to become adults who are resilient to stress and who function adaptively in society. During adolescence, families are challenged by the increasing developmental need of adolescents to decide things for themselves. Conflicts can easily emerge on topics such as tidying the bedroom, spending time on social media, or adhering to curfews. These negative interactions are in fact helpful in pushing the parent–child relationship from a hierarchically structured relationship in which the parent has the final say to a more horizontally structured relationship with the more democratic decision-making (Branje et al. 2011). Hence, developmental growth and maturation take place when parents release control and trust their children to make wise decisions on their own (Keijsers and Poulin 2013).

In the ADAPT project (Keijsers et al. 2017), we observed the opposite change pattern. During the lockdown, instead of releasing control, parents became more protective and controlling. New rules were established by parents, mostly to reinforce governmental rules of hygiene and social distancing, such as not being allowed to see friends. Parents also introduced rules to structure the lives of their children, such as doing homework and getting up in

time. Longitudinal analyses of eight repeated assessments indeed revealed a significant decrease in autonomy-supportive parenting during the lockdown (Bülow et al. 2020). As prohibition of contacts with friends and restriction of autonomy directly undermine the opportunities for growth, we anticipated a rise in conflicts and opposition (Van Petegem et al. 2017). However, this was only found for some families. Apparently, most parents manage to introduce and explain rules in a democratic way, and children find most of the novel rules legitimate. In fact, in some families, the increase in time spent together may have created opportunities to reinforce the relationship and improve communication (Keijsers et al. 2010). On the other hand, stress due to health or financial concerns may also trigger the use of a repressive parenting strategy, including guilt induction and love withdrawal (Van Der Kaap-Deeder et al. 2019). Such psychological control may impede on maturation processes and lead to internalizing problems, such as depressive feelings or anxiety, among adolescents. C'est la ton qui fait la musique when it comes to finding the balance between protection and promoting independence.

## Promoting Developmental Growth in the New Common

Adolescents are in the midst of establishing an important foundation for developmental growth and future well-being. Adolescents need friendships, independence from parents, and rituals that mark the entry to adulthood and new phases in life, such as graduation ceremonies. The COVID-19 situation has strongly affected each of these domains. One can never truly predict how an individual's life course is affected by such a temporary situational change. In general, most adolescents will probably be resilient, and negative experiences and a short-term reduction in well-being do not doom them to an adult life full of ill-being and psychosocial problems (Cicchetti and Rogosch 2002). Likewise, adolescents who are resilient during this stressful period cannot comfortable rely on a problem-free future. The longer-term impact can only be derived from rigorous future scientific studies on adolescents. However, this should not prevent society from creating optimal circumstances for growth while we are still in the midst of the crisis.

First of all, as they are vulnerable to psychological problems, it is of pivotal importance to monitor and support adolescents. The current COVID-19 situation is one of many changes for adolescents. Social distancing undermines social support of their most intimate companions, which may lead to

loneliness and decreased well-being. Accessible tools and informal and low-key professional guidance are needed to prevent psychosocial problems, such as depression (Golberstein et al. 2020). Examples include eHealth tools that challenge adolescents to cope with stress, such as our recently released Grow It! application (Hillegers et al. 2020).

Second, face-to-face contact with friends is not a luxury for adolescents; it is a developmental need. Social media is a blessing for adolescents, but it cannot compensate for the richness of learning experiences and support that face-to-face interactions provide. Third, during the lockdown measures, adolescents' potential for growth and resilience was hindered because parents had to restrict opportunities for independent decision-making. In sum, in the new common, parents, teachers, and professionals should protect adolescents only when needed and allow for autonomy, independent decision-making, and contact with their friends whenever possible. Even when society is locked down, the window of opportunity for growth needs to be open for adolescents. After all, if adults support youngster in acquiring social skills and personal resources during a formative period in life, the next generation will be better able to cope with stress and societal changes to come.

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# 18

# To Solve the Coronavirus Crisis: Click Here

Esther Keymolen

Human beings are technical beings. From the clothes we wear to the spaceships we fire into the sky, all these technologies are developed with the aim to protect ourselves, improve ourselves, and control the fickle world in which we live. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that when hit with one of the biggest health crises of the last century, all over the world, governments have turned to technology to contain this life-threatening event. Most of these proposed—or already developed—technological solutions are data-driven: contact-tracing apps to establish with whom an infected person interacted, apps to provide proof that someone is not ill and can therefore access a building or public transport, facial recognition to identify people in the street or to check whether they are effectively quarantined, etc.

Just as the turn to technology to solve this crisis does not come as a surprise, neither does the protest it has caused. Critical citizens and civil rights organizations worry about the possibility of personal data being shared with private parties, about governments ending up using the collected information against citizens, and they fear an overall loss of privacy and freedom if these applications became widely used. Overall, they suspect that what is introduced as a

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temporary instrument to counter this crisis will have long-lasting effects on society.

In the Netherlands, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health tried to calm things down by stating that they "did not suddenly pick up a new hobby and were definitely not interested in finding out individual citizens' whereabouts." Moreover, they assured that sufficient checks and balances would be implemented, applications developed and tested before the public eye in an "appaton," and—naturally—the end result would be GDPR proof.

The underlying assumption of this line of defense is that the technology itself is not a matter of big concern as long as it is properly embedded in the social, technical, and economic context. Of course, we have to make sure that sufficient democratic safeguards are set in place, oversight is taken care of, and all legal requirements are abided by; then we would be fine. Or not?

In 1980, political philosopher Langdon Winner (1980) wrote a—now—famous and foundational book chapter and article called "Do artifacts have politics?" In this work, he argues that technologies are not just neutral objects being kept in check by the socio-technical context in which they function but that they are also politically significant in their own right. In a powerful manner, technologies can transform human aspirations, Winner claims. Therefore, they deserve our specific attention. It is not sufficient to only look at the context in which a technology is embedded or to count on good intentions, as the Dutch Prime Minister seems to suggest. We should also closely analyze the political qualities of the technology itself. In other words, we have to lay bare how technologies can steer the societal arrangements of power and control as well as how they impact the interactions that take place within these arrangements.

Whereas almost half a century ago, Winner predominantly focused on the political power of large energy systems such as nuclear plants, solar panels, and flood-control dams, I found his seminal work to still be extremely useful to grasp the political challenges we face when introducing data-driven solutions in times of crisis.

## Settling Societal Issues Through Technology

By and large, Winner distinguishes two ways in which technologies can have political qualities. The first way is rather straightforward. A technology can be used to settle a certain societal problem. For instance, the COVID-19 contact-tracing app is promoted as a way to quickly inform people who might be at risk of having caught the virus. However, this is not necessarily the only goal

such an app could serve. One can also think of other uses, which are not communicated to the public but are, nevertheless, intentionally being built into the technology. It has been suggested that malicious companies could design a hidden backdoor into the app in order to collect and then monetize data. Also, theories of governments spying on their citizens or merely introducing the app to save on health costs have been voiced. These examples all presuppose a malicious actor who intentionally makes use of the design of a technology to pull the strings without people noticing. The technology, like a Trojan horse, disguises the political intervention taking place.

Some may think the idea of a malicious actor intentionally hijacking a coronavirus app is too far-fetched. For Winner, bad intentions are not a necessary condition for technologies to possess political properties. Actually, more often, technology has unintended political consequences. For instance, people might become overly confident because of the mere presence of the app and no longer strictly follow the social distancing rules. The app then ends up doing more harm than good. Or, in the long run, the app might be an enormous boost for e-health, leading care insurers to push for all kinds of new data-driven solutions, cutting back on financial compensation for face-to-face interactions. 50 years from now, historians might trace the start of their completely data-driven health care system back to the COVID-19 solutions that are now being introduced globally.

Whether or not you think this is a future worth wanting, it certainly illustrates that technologies can have far-reaching, political consequences without anyone intentionally introducing the technology with such goals in mind. Depending on one's position in society, the power to influence the course of a technological innovation, to domesticate it, avoid it, or completely hack it will differ. Especially in the first phase, when the technology is still the most moldable, decisions will be made that will materialize and become fixed in the technology itself and in the practices that it will mediate, now and in the future. Keeping this technological perseverance in mind, we should not leave it to companies, individual data scientists, or politicians only to decide on the design and functionality of such impactful data-driven solutions.

## Inherently Political Technologies

Whereas the previous examples illustrate how the design of a technology—both intentionally and unintentionally—can influence and steer power and control in society, it also becomes clear that its political impact is not inherent to the technology as such. For instance, if we acknowledge that the

digitalization of health might have negative effects on our overall health care system, we can adjust it.

Winner claims, however, that there is a second category of technologies that lacks this kind of flexibility and is actually inherently political. With that, he means that to choose for a certain technology is to also choose for a particular form of political life. In order to function properly, some technologies require a social setting to be organized in a very specific way. For instance, to choose for nuclear energy is to choose for a highly controlled and hierarchical organization as the security risks of such a technology are extremely high. Or, in the case of the contact-tracing app, to choose for an app is to choose for a public of smartphone owners. As a result, elderly people, poor people, and people who on ideological grounds refuse to have a smartphone might be overlooked and excluded, missing out on vital information or early diagnosis and treatment because all health systems become geared towards the functioning of the app.

It is also choosing for an infrastructure controlled by private companies. In order for the tracing app to function properly, it is claimed that we need to work with the decentralized Bluetooth infrastructure released by Apple and Google. At first sight, this might look like a mere technicality—if these companies enable an interoperable infrastructure, which will make the app functional; that would be great! However, it actually also entails an enormous power shift in favor of two of the most powerful tech companies in the world. For example, it would push citizens to choose for their devices if they wanted to make use of the app. It would also open the door for these companies to shape public health care policies and steer the political agenda (Sharon 2020). Even without breaching individual privacy, these companies would be able to gain valuable insights in the way communities go about their everyday lives (Veale 2020).

It is certainly not easy to detect the inherent political aspects of a technology. Indeed, because these infrastructural choices are framed as mere practical issues, in-depth democratic debate and control are lacking. In order words, to choose for this tracing app is to choose for accepting an infrastructure that is completely in the hands of two US-based tech giants who have interests and key values that do not necessarily align with those of a democratic society.

In times of crisis, it comes almost natural to policy-makers to turn to technology to help them govern a new and complex situation. However, technology is not a neutral instrument and can impose all kinds of values and restrictions on society. What we can learn from Winner is that, while we might think that we are developing technological tools to control this crisis,

we are actually building the political life of our post-corona society: the political life of our new common.

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# 19

# The Comeback of the Old Theological Narratives During the Coronavirus Crisis: A Critical Reflection

Jan Loffeld

Martin Luther had no doubt about it: diseases were a punishment from God. In espousing this view, Luther, who was one of the first people to translate the Bible from Greek into another language, stood on firm biblical grounds. For the Semitic people of the biblical world, this causal connection had been self-evident as well. Diseases, plagues, catastrophes were the consequences of the sin that people commit. Human beings themselves—Adam and Eve—introduced evil into creation, which was good in itself before, and they must bear the consequences. According to the doctrine of original sin, as it was later refined after this so-called "Fall of Man," human beings are even born into a primeval state of guilt that is propagated from generation to generation, and from which they cannot liberate themselves. For Paul, in his letter to the Romans, this notion underlay the redemption, which he envisaged as being universal: sin is all-encompassing and so is the liberation from servitude that God works in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the intuition that evil is the result of sin is the basis for the adage that adversity causes people to pray: sooner or later, human beings will be confronted with the contingency of their own lives, which, in the Christian perspective, is rooted in the fact that creation has fallen into sin. This is why the idea that adversity causes people to pray is often

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trotted out in times of crisis even though it has long been empirically disproven (Heuft 2017).

## The Nature of Redemption

The question of the nature of redemption was so important around the time of the Reformation that it sparked off a global schism. Salvation or damnation, being included among or excluded from the elect, and the distinction between "good and evil"—these have long been important questions in the history of Christianity. Religion served to bring clarity and certainty to these questions. Ultimately, what was at stake was the question how religion gives meaning to the fact that human life escapes control or manipulation, i.e., is "unavailable" and contingent.

But there are at least two things that cast doubt upon the clarity offered by religion. First of all, there is a biblical issue: Jesus tells his disciples the story of eighteen people who died when a tower collapsed upon them and then provocatively asks them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than any others?" (Lk 13: 4). Secondly, the Lisbon earthquake of the eighteenth century was the event that gave rise, historically, to the theodicy, which questioned beliefs hitherto regarded as plausible. Thousands of innocent people perished gruesomely due to a seemingly interminable city fire; only the red-light district escaped. Here, finally, the causality of a God who punishes justly, who rewards the good and damns the wicked floundered. There was empirical evidence here that the Christian causal link between the human act and historical occurrence was epistemically flawed.

## The Mystery of Evil

In modernity, this was one of the reasons for the emergence of a new theological model of thinking. Human beings have become emancipated before God, yet they remain prone to guilt, and phenomenologically, guilt has not disappeared from the world. It still requires an explanation that can also function without reference to God. Karl Rahner (1984) articulated this in his Foundations of Christian Faith as "the fact that people are always under threat from themselves." To use a classical expression: human beings, in one way or another, become wolves to themselves: if we accept the idea of God, this is because original sin is still at work in them; if we do not, it is because "radical evil" (Kant 1792) cannot be explained or eradicated even with the use of

reason. Rahner (1984) called this the "mystery of evil." Whereas previously, evil in the form of epidemics or natural catastrophe could be explained as resulting from the fact that human beings—creation in its entirety—had brought original sin upon themselves by sinning against God, now, human beings themselves, without explicit reference to God, have become the authors of punishment for wrongdoing. Other factors are personified: "Nature strikes back!" or "Climate change is the way nature takes revenge for exploitative modern life." The theodicy has been transformed into an anthropodicy: the question why people can be the cause of evil.

It is, or was, interesting to see during the coronavirus crisis how these old interpretative patterns or narratives returned as human beings were confronted with the hitherto unimagined intrusion of human vulnerability or contingency. To give just two examples: the Dutch newspaper Reformatorisch Dagblad wrote in early March 2020 that the expansion of the coronavirus threat into a true pandemic was due to "the government of God": "Christians confess that illness and health do not happen to them by coincidence. […] The coronavirus is only a secondary cause, a means in the hands of God. He sends disease like once He sent the plagues to Egypt to bring humankind to repentance."[1]

Almost at the same time, the Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff published an article entitled "The Origins of the Coronavirus." The opening words were: "From this moment on we have everything to fear, even the destruction of the human race; this would be the just price for our foolishness and barbarity." This idea is premised upon the "Gaia hypothesis" which represents "Mother Earth" as a "self-regulating superorganism, as a living being, that is able to feel, think, love and care for itself."[2] It is no longer God but the Earth who punishes. Both interpretations thus use personifications as the metaphor, and both, in equal measure, believe that the guilt lies with human beings, who receive just punishment.

The theological legitimacy of both interpretations has been and still is subject to heated debate. However, it is important to ask a different question here: does an old "grand narrative"—that is what Christianity undoubtedly is in Europe—really do itself any favors in an increasingly secularizing society by using an old "little narrative" to explain and give meaning to human life? To put it differently: does Christianity truly do justice to its fundamental mission to speak of the God of Life by advancing such interpretations?

[1] Cf. on this: https://www.rd.nl/opinie/commentaar/niet-corona-heerst-maar-god-regeert-1.1638981 (10 June 2020).

[2] Cf. on this: https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/leben/gesellschaft/der-gerechte-preis-fuer-unsere-grausamkeit/story/29234175 (10 June 2020).

This question arises from the underlying impression that the return of these old narratives, specifically in times of crisis, is primarily fed by resentment. The Indian cultural scholar Pankaj Mishra has recently pointed out in a profound analysis how strongly human actions in general, as well as developments in cultural history, spring from a feeling of resentment, i.e., the specific feeling of having been short-changed:

> An existential resentment concerning the being of other people, provoked by an intense mixture of envy and the feeling of humiliation and impotence; a resentment that is always there and is ever increasing, that is poisoning civil society and undermining political freedom, and that is currently bringing about a turn to authoritarianism and dangerous forms of chauvinism across the globe (Mishra 2017: 25).

This argument, which Mishra develops very broadly and highly plausibly, can also be applied to aspects of current religious life. For Christians, it can lead to the belief that Christianity's deepest wound in modernity is its loss of the monopoly on interpreting human life and its fate. It continues to be a challenge for Christians to truly respect the autonomy of the world, and at the same time, to believe that the world has not been abandoned to its own fate. When the old narratives are repeated, it is often forgotten how dark the image of God is (a punishing God, or a God who deistically abandons creation to its own fate) and how crude the anthropology that these old narratives convey. Moreover, the notion that adversity teaches people to pray is based upon a functional understanding of religion, which runs the risk of turning God into an idol for personal desires and needs, only to be jettisoned again when it is no longer required.

## Human Unavailability

An alternative for these resentment-based coping strategies is an understanding of Christianity as an option for interpreting the world. This option is then also presented as such in the market of worldviews. The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa (2019) has shown in his latest book Unverfügbarkeit (Unavailability) how this can be done in a way that could appeal to contemporary culture. This volume, published in 2019, directly engages those experiences of vulnerability that modern societies going through the coronavirus crisis must existentially process. Rosa regards the attempt to render the world

universally "available" through modernity as failed and argues by contrast for the "acceptance of the unavailable."

> It is perhaps no coincidence that the concept of unavailability originally derives from a theological context. Theology uses it to express a foundational element of the human relationship to the world, which continues to be of sociological and philosophical, as well as psychological interest, even if all theological or metaphysical assumptions about the essence of God (or even about whether there is any essence of God at all) are rejected. […] In my lay opinion, the core of the Jewish-Christian image of God consists entirely of a resonance-theoretical representation: even if God […] is thought as fundamentally unavailable, the relationship between God and humankind is nevertheless conceived as one of mutual accessibility-for-relatedness: […] responsivity here means […], so to speak, a hearing, attentive interrelatedness, which has a transformative power, but at the same time respects both sides' 'own voice' and ability to answer: whether resonance arises, and what its outcome is going to be remains unavailably undetermined. In my view this conception underlies the practice of prayer […] (Rosa, 67f.).

This alternative interpretation of contingency or human unavailability, which even modernity cannot wipe out, piques our theological attention specifically during the coronavirus crisis. Christianity has an option to offer: a God whose image has been liberated from the constraints of functionality and from a dark anthropology and theology; an option that can help to process human unavailability—but without any coercion and freed from universal claims (such as that the world has fallen in sin) that are, in any case, no longer plausible in secular cultures. Christian theology can reflect on what it means to see the world etsi Deus daretur ("as if there were a God"), and pastoral ministry can offer the related practice. But this must not be communicated to all people by any possible means, to avoid overwhelming their free will. It will free us from feelings of superiority (including those of a fundamentalist nature) and will possibly give rise to new pastoral creativity, which has in fact already been evident during the coronavirus crisis. Therefore, this way of dealing with human contingency can during times of crisis as well as during ordinary times, do greater justice to both Christian self-understanding and the just principles of liberty that rule modern societies than the reassertion of older, often resentment-based narratives can. It would be appropriate if this were also to become the "new common" in theological reflection and teaching.

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# 20

# Rethinking Education in a Crisis: How New Is a New Common Really?

Max Louwerse, Marie Postma, Maarten Horden, and Anton Sluijtman

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the status quo in many areas of society, including education. At all educational levels, on-site lecturing had to switch instantaneously to an online mode of instruction. This transition was so straightforward, that the argument could be made for online education to become a permanent fixture, particularly if it is more efficient, cheaper, and more effective than traditional education. Extensive meta-analyses, however, show that most online teaching practices do not lead to better educational outcomes than the on-site alternatives. Worse yet, the traditional face-to-face mode of lecturing is ineffective in the absence of personalized interactions. The proposed solutions are offered by artificial intelligence research, including

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virtual reality, intelligent tutoring systems, and serious games—solutions that have so far not been extensively implemented in practice. The current health crisis provides our educational professionals with an opportunity to rethink their teaching practices and focus on applying these promising new alternatives.

In the months during which the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected the lives of many around the globe, society at large tried to find ways to adapt to the new circumstances. One sector of society, i.e., education, transformed almost instantaneously. From 1 day to the next, the usually vibrant sites of primary, secondary, and higher education emptied, and all educational activities switched to online. While the shift to online education has been challenging in many ways, the fact that the change could be effectuated so rapidly and, in general, quite successfully raises the inevitable question whether online education should not become an integral part of the way children, students, and adults receive formal education—a new common.

One of the very few benefits of a crisis like COVID-19 is that it forces society to rethink aspects and processes that are traditionally resistant to change. Education is one such aspect. Due to the pandemic, millions of students had to be taught differently than before, and the disruption yielded the question what education actually entails. If lectures in which information is transferred can easily be offered online, is there any advantage to being an audience in a lecture hall compared to being an audience in front of a computer screen? If the difference is negligible, then the practical advantages of the new (digital) reality may outweigh any disadvantages. For example, online courses can be recorded once and used again, thereby freeing time for tailored lecturer–student interactions. Remote contact may feel less personal, yet, for the same reason, contact may be established easier by students who otherwise feel too timid to approach the lecturer after class. Since students do not need to travel to attend a lecture, participation barriers are removed for students residing at a distance from the campus. Given these advantages of online education, should online education become the new common, and if so, what is the best online education?

## The "Old" Common

Universally, physical lectures are by far the most commonly used form of knowledge transfer. As Bligh (1998) points out, despite the many research findings in educational psychology disputing the traditional teaching format and the developments in educational technology, there has been little change in the way people are taught around the globe. This is true not only for children but also for adults in the context of life-long learning. In fact, as

demonstrated by old Roman reliefs and paintings originating in the Middle Ages throughout human history, becoming educated tended to be synonymous with being lectured. Despite Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and with the digital society rapidly changing our interactions with the world and each other, the status quo of education has been remarkably resistant to change. This would be understandable if the common form of being educated were superior to any of its alternatives. That, however, is hardly the case.

Based on an extensive review of educational practices, Bligh (1998) concludes that lectures offer little promise in inspiring thought or attitude changes. In another extensive meta-study, Hattie (2015) evaluated some 1200 peer-reviewed meta-analyses on student achievement and reported 256 variables that affected student achievement positively or negatively. Unsurprisingly, student-dependent variables were the greatest source of variance in learning, and variables such as ADHD, deafness, and depression affected achievement negatively. The second most important source of variation, however, were teacher-dependent variables. As Hattie noted, most educators were themselves successful as students in the classical classroom setting and may thus belief that the setting provides optimal conditions for learning if the students apply themselves. Yet, it is the educators' awareness of how to achieve impact in a teaching situation and their willingness to change and adapt that are the most important contributing factors to the learning success of their students. According to Hattie, the question we need to ask ourselves is not "What works?" but, rather, "What works best?"

The conclusion Hattie (2015) draws is echoed in the meta-analysis of Schneider and Preckel (2017). They observed that most teaching practices may give rise to positive effect sizes with regards to learning achievement, but some have considerably larger effect sizes than others. In other words, if we are striving for excellence, not every teaching method goes. In practice, evaluating what works best may be difficult as it depends on the comparisons being made as well as on the type of education being looked at. For instance, universities are more selective than primary or high schools, so it is likely that the average university student population consists of highly motivated individuals. University students also have more experience with classical formal education. According to Schneider and Preckel's analysis, however, also for these students, there is a clear advantage of tailored interaction. Encouraging frequent class participation, stimulating questions and discussion, and asking open-ended questions tend to improve the instructional quality of courses. Ironically, the ambition to provide high-quality university education to ever-growing numbers of students has resulted in overcrowded lecture halls and a dramatic

decrease in the opportunity to interact and to stimulate questions and discussion, thus rendering the traditional mode of knowledge transfer ineffective.

## The "New" Common

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit societies across the world, on-site lectures transformed into online interactions. The transformation was necessary and seemed to work well given the unprecedented circumstances. According to Schneider and Preckel (2017), online education in general seems to be a decent substitute for on-site education. Online learning turns out to be almost as effective as learning in the classroom. If student achievement in online education is on par with on-site education, it would be wise to invest in online lectures and podcasts, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and online learning platforms not only during a COVID-19 crisis but also beyond.

However, studies focusing on the comparison between online and face-to-face courses come to a different conclusion. Xu and Jaggars (2014) analyzed the data from half a million courses taken by over 40,000 community and technical college students and found lower overall grades in the online sections of the same course compared to the face-to-face sections. Moreover, males, younger students, black students, and students with lower grade point averages yielded the strongest declines, suggesting a performance gap between online and face-to-face modes of interaction. An extensive analysis of MOOCs by Reich and Ruipérez-Valiente (2019) used the data from MIT and Harvard MOOCs, including 565 course iterations from 261 different courses, with 12.67 million registrations. The dropout rate was 96% on average over a period of 5 years. Of course, it can be argued that completion rates are not the goal. It may be the case that enrolled students are merely curious and then drop out. That in itself would be an interesting finding, but Reich and Ruipérez-Valiente (2019) noted that course completion remained relatively low even among students who pay for courses, and, interestingly, they observed similar differences across types of students as Xu and Jaggars (2014). Arguably, the negative effects of online teaching could partly be alleviated if online education is combined with on-site education in blended learning, but this step would only be successful if we can avoid the problem of large classrooms and little personalized student–lecturer interaction in the first place.

## AI in Education

If there were no alternatives to the two scenarios described above, we might be justified in concluding that the traditional mode of lecturing, while not ideal, is the best we can do. Yet the alternatives are there, and their effects on student achievement are promising. In particular, games in virtual reality and interactive virtual reality simulations of real-world processes have a positive impact on student performance that is considerably higher than online education (Hattie 2015; Schneider and Preckel 2017). A meta-analysis of studies on the effectiveness of virtual reality-based instruction on students' learning outcomes in K-12 and higher education showed that games, simulations, and virtual worlds were all effective in improving learning gains. Even though it is true that these technologies involve starting costs in software development, computer hardware, and instructional time, the scalability of the solutions is likely to outweigh the investments needed.

What could a new common in education consist of? Louwerse et al. (2020) argue that immersive education could consist of virtual reality in which the content of education is brought closer to the learner and vice versa. It could consist of serious games that allow for bringing together excitement and learning, for instance by exploring past times through the (virtual) eyes of those who lived during those times. It could consist of intelligent tutoring systems that provide personalized education 24/7, for instance by a computer having a conversation with a student in natural language (Graesser et al. 2004). It could consist of utilizing learner analytics, by measuring student progress, not after the educational process but during the process itself, intervening when intervention is most needed.

Tilburg University has been involved in a number of projects that investigate innovative educational technologies. For instance, on campus, the DAF Technology Lab offers a Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE) system that provides immersive education to students. In one of the experiments we conducted, we investigated learning gains in a neuroscience class presented in virtual reality, whereby students were asked in the CAVE system to link brain structures to their labels, their functions, and the brain locations. The findings demonstrated that students yielded higher learning gains in the virtual reality environment than in traditional educational settings, such as textbook learning. This experiment was conducted using both a college subject pool population and a group of students in a cognitive science course that involved a neuroscience class (de Back et al. 2020). In addition, the research

in the DAF Technology Lab has shown how to measure neurophysiological data that cue learning in students (Tinga et al. 2019).

In another project, we collaborate with the non-profit organization SpaceBuzz to create ambassadors of planet Earth. The result of the collaboration is an innovative educational program aimed at introducing primary school education to the subjects of science and technology in the context of sustainability in a way that is playful and easy to learn. The program has been developed in line with the career path of a real astronaut. It consists of a pre-flight astronaut training, involving a variety of activities and lessons in the classroom that prepare children for their journey into space. After the children pass the pre-flight astronaut training, a 15-m long rocket arrives at the school to virtually launch the children into orbit. When the children sit down in the rocket and put the virtual reality headsets on, their chairs move hydraulically and the rocket is launched into space under the guidance of a virtual reality embodiment of an actual astronaut. Finally, in a post-flight training at the children's school, the children give press conferences to friends and family and tell them about their experiences in space. An experiment with some 200 children from elementary schools has shown that learning gains ensued from the SpaceBuzz virtual reality experience and could be predicted through neurophysiology, specifically eye gaze (van Limpt-Broers et al. 2020).

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit all aspects of society, including education. It has also provided us with an opportunity to rethink education, if not during the crisis itself, at least beyond the crisis. Extensive analyses in the educational psychology literature have shown that traditional forms of education are only effective if combined with small-scale, interactive, and tailored modes of instruction that are hardly achievable in the current educational landscape. Online education as such does not provide a viable alternative. In our view, the solution lies in the implementation of innovative solutions, such as those developed by our team at Tilburg University, in the DAF Technology Lab, and by SpaceBuzz. These educational solutions offer exciting new avenues of investigating what a new common really should consist of.

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# 21

# Involve Residents to Ensure Person-Centered Nursing Home Care During Crises Like the COVID-19 Outbreak

Katrien Luijkx, Meriam Janssen, Annerieke Stoop, Leonieke van Boekel, and Marjolein Verbiest

In the Netherlands, nursing homes provide residential and long-term complex care to older adults with impairments in different health domains. The life expectancy of nursing home residents is rather limited in general. For a few decades now, autonomy, well-being, and quality of life are increasingly being recognized as important in nursing home care, and the exclusive focus on enhancing safety, health, and longevity is no longer dominant. Although a medical perspective is still present in nursing homes because many residents need some form of medical care, the person-centered care (PCC) model is gradually being adopted in nursing home practice (Koren 2010). PCC aims to facilitate residents in living the life they desire and in being recognized as unique individuals with their own histories, life goals, and preferences (McCormack 2001). The various voices of residents need to be heard, and tailored care is essential but challenging for professional caregivers because of different individuals living in a group. Therefore, nursing homes struggle to bring PCC into practice although they embrace the idea.

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## Nursing Home Lockdown

Nursing homes have been hit hard by COVID-19. Registration data show that, in the period from March 18 until May 13, 38% of the suspicions of COVID-19 infections in nursing homes were confirmed. The risk of death was three times higher for residents with confirmed COVID-19 infections compared to residents who tested negative. Male residents with a confirmed COVID-19 infection had a two times higher risk of death compared to female residents. Dementia, kidney failure, and Parkinson also increased the risk of death (Van Loon et al. 2020).

Worldwide restrictive measures, including social distancing, have been taken to protect public health and to flatten the curve. Medical insights, mathematical modeling, and opinions of the public and experts led the Dutch government to decide to close nursing homes on March 19 for everyone except professional caregivers providing essential care on a daily basis. From one day to the next, nursing home residents were no longer allowed to meet their loved ones and were sometimes even expected to spend their days in their own rooms or apartments. The high prevalence of poor physical health in nursing home residents dominated this decision without taking into consideration the psychosocial impact of such measures. It is still unknown to what extent the voices of individual residents or their loved ones have been taken into account in decisions with such a large impact.

## Social Relationships

Social relationships are a basic human need (Maslow et al. 1970). Unsatisfied social needs negatively impact both physical and mental health (e.g., Cacioppo et al. 2003) while satisfied social needs positively impact physical and mental health as well as well-being (e.g., Golden et al. 2009). Involvement of family members in nursing home care improves the well-being and quality of life of both residents and their loved ones (Janssen et al. 2011). Moreover, also for nursing home residents and their spouses, love, intimacy, and sexuality are fundamentally important aspects in their lives (Roelofs et al. 2017, 2019). To enhance person-centered nursing home care, it is essential to involve family members as well. It is important to involve both residents, and their family members to find out the preferences and needs of the residents. Therefore, nursing homes stimulate and facilitate family participation.

During the lockdown of nursing homes, staff and family members acknowledged the importance of social relationships. They searched for and found creative solutions for residents to talk to and be in contact with their loved ones while preventing physical contact. Examples are video calling facilitated by staff, welcoming visitors in specially designed spaces using Perspex to enable the eye to eye contact, and using a phone to listen to each other's voices. Furthermore, aerial work platforms were placed to enable loved ones to see each other's faces.

In contrast to community-dwelling older adults, nursing home residents and their loved ones did no longer have any autonomy in weighing the risk of a COVID-19 infection against the importance of fulfilling their social needs. They were unable to decide for themselves whether they wanted to meet loved ones or not and to touch, kiss, or hug each other or not. Individual residents might have preferred to meet with their loved ones and hug them, despite the risk of a COVID-19 infection. This meant that, even in the last phase of their lives, residents, and their loved ones including spouses with whom they had long histories had no choice nor voice in this matter.

## Visiting Arrangements

On May 11, a pilot started, covering 26 nursing homes spread over the country, to test whether it was possible to allow visitors in nursing homes without causing new COVID-19 outbreaks. Visiting arrangements varied among participating nursing homes but were all in line with the restrictive measures in place at the time. In the first weeks, only one dedicated visitor for each resident was allowed to visit his or her loved one. Visiting times varied among nursing homes from 30 to 60 minutes to no time restrictions at all. Only visits by appointment were possible due to a mandatory health check (Koopmans et al. 2020).

A general study covering all 26 nursing homes and an in-depth study including five nursing homes monitored the compliance to these restrictive measures and the impact of the visiting arrangements on staff, visitors, and residents by proxy (Hamers et al. 2020; Koopmans et al. 2020).

## Loved Ones Visiting Again

As expected, the study showed that visiting arrangements are highly valued by both loved ones and staff. Loved ones are very happy to visit their spouse or parent again. Especially when a resident has hearing problems and/or dementia, a visit in person is of much more value than video calling and all other creative solutions to meet social needs. Although the use of mouth masks or being unable to meet in the private room of the resident makes the visit somewhat impersonal, family members are relieved to meet their loved ones in person because they are aware of the short life expectancy of nursing home residents in general. During the lockdown, many family members worried whether they would ever be able to meet their loved ones in person again and whether they would still recognize them. For some family members the visit was confronting due to the visible (cognitive) health deterioration of the resident during the lockdown of the nursing home (Koopmans et al. 2020).

## Residents by Proxy

Loved ones and staff were asked about the impact on residents to meet their family after a long period. Due to ethical concerns in combination with the time pressure of the monitoring studies, it was impossible to observe or interview residents themselves (Hamers et al. 2020; Koopmans et al. 2020). Based on the insights of proxies, it is evident that the lockdown of nursing homes affected the well-being of residents negatively, increased loneliness and sometimes seemed to lead to a decline in health. Residents enjoyed being reunified with their families after a long and often lonely and uncertain time and were cheerful, livelier, and more active after having been visited. They are looking forward to the next visit. For some residents with dementia, visits were rather confusing and led to sadness and agitation because they did not really recognize their loved ones anymore, got overstimulated during the visit, and were constantly looking for their loved ones after the visit. For some of these residents it was, therefore, decided to reduce or even stop the visits (Koopmans et al. 2020).

## Involve Residents and Loved Ones

To enhance PCC, it is essential to know the needs, preferences, and possibilities of nursing home residents themselves, also in times of crises like the COVID-19 outbreak. Studies that compare the perspective of nursing home residents to that of proxies, for instance, loved ones or staff members, show that these perspectives differ (e.g., Dröes et al. 2006; Gerritsen et al. 2007). This nuanced difference may affect the resident's experience of feeling heard, seen, and respected as a unique individual in the care and support he or she receives. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to study the perspectives of nursing home residents in general and on the closure of nursing homes in particular. Although it is ethically challenging and not easy to interview residents with dementia, it is possible (Roelofs et al. 2017). Nevertheless, the perspectives of nursing home residents during disasters or crises are scarcely studied (Van Boekel et al. 2020), which was also the case in the studies monitoring the Dutch visiting arrangements in nursing homes (Hamers et al. 2020; Koopmans et al. 2020).

Although nursing homes, supported by the national government, aim for adopting a person-centered approach, during the first peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, nursing home residents and their loved ones were not involved in decision making. That is a missed opportunity. We therefore call both the government and nursing homes to involve residents and their families in decision making both in general and in times of crises because it is essential to know how residents weigh the risk of a COVID-19 infection and the possible implication of them opposing social isolation. Against the background of their short life expectancy, they might prefer to meet loved ones despite the risk of a COVID-19 infection. A new outbreak of COVID-19 can be expected in the future and also within nursing homes, therefore we have to adapt to a new common. It is time to stop talking about residents and their loved ones and start talking with them. Involvement of the residents and their families in policies and daily care in the new common is necessary to maintain person-centered care in nursing homes.

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# 22

# Crisis Information Management: From Technological Potential to Societal Impact

Kenny Meesters

Every day, we make decisions, both in our personal and professional lives. Ranging from choices regarding our mode of transport to our daily grocery shopping, and from investment decisions to choices about marketing strategies. Today, we can rely on a wide range of information sources to aid us in these decision-making processes. Mobile phones, online communities, and a host of digital services give access to a wide range of information. In short, spurred on by technical developments and economic incentives, information has become a common commodity in our society (Lissenden et al. 2015).

When faced with a crisis situation, we are confronted with an unexpected and unknown situation in which quick action is needed to remedy the situation or prevent escalation to worse. For example, in these situations, scarce resources and capacities have to be allocated while the knowledge about the situation is often limited. This time pressure to act, the high level of uncertainty, and the ambiguity of actions to undertake make crisis management specifically challenging (van den Homberg et al. 2014). Information plays an important role in reducing uncertainty in a crisis. Information allows decision makers, for example, to assess the situation, evaluate alternatives, and

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coordinate efforts between different stakeholders. The phrase "information saves lives," commonly uttered in crisis responses, exemplifies this importance (Comfort et al. 2004).

Therefore, the challenge during a crisis situation is to obtain relevant, accurate, and timely information to support key stakeholders in their decision-making process (Gralla et al. 2015). While existing information is often rapidly outdated or inaccurate in these situations, the underlying information technologies enable various ways to quickly obtain information. In fact, today, there is a myriad of possibilities to manage the information available to emergency responders, information managers, and decision makers. Social media and crowd-sourcing techniques can prove a valuable source of information to understand the key issues faced; data analytics and artificial intelligence can be used to uncover trends and key events in a crisis; web platforms and repositories are used to disseminate information products (Meier 2011).

However, there is an important distinction to be made between available information and actionable information (Derczynski et al. 2018). The information, or rather possible information, generated by these tools and available to decisions makers can in fact be extensive. To utilize the potential of all this information and its supporting technologies, a better alignment is needed between information availability spurred on by new technologies and its effective use in the decision-making process. Therefore, today, the challenge is no longer the availability of the information but rather designing, structuring, and managing flows of information to support the decision-making process in a networked manner (Coyle and Meier 2009).

## COVID-19 and Information Management

During the COVID-19 outbreak and the response to this outbreak, the importance of information to support decision makers became abundantly clear. In the Netherlands, public health care agencies tracked the number of infected people, hospitals reported the capacity on a daily basis, and medical suppliers kept close track of the stocks. As the outbreak continued, the stream of information continued to grow: transport agencies reported the number of travelers, information from telecommunication services were used to track crowd movements, and financial services began reporting the economic impacts. Across the globe, similar efforts were undertaken to collect, process, and disseminate information. The United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), for example, set up dedicated sections at

their Humanitarian Data Exchange to support global monitoring, and John Hopkins University launched their Coronavirus Resource Center.

A complicating factor in this specific crisis for decision makers is the widespread and long-lasting impact of the pandemic across all facets of our societies. This also meant that the number of actors involved grew substantially, and with the addition of each actor, the information network expanded. Each actor was generating and disseminating his/her own information but also collecting information through their networks to fulfill their information needs. At the same time, an increasing number of initiatives that aim to support the information management tasks were developed and offered. These included analytics to discern trends, models to assess the effects for different interventions, or systems to monitor the situation. These developments provided decision makers and crisis response organizations with a slew of options to choose from. In a short time, the complexity of managing information grew exceptionally fast.

Managing information in general, and specifically the flow of information, has become crucial in the COVID-19 outbreak. More than obtaining the information itself, the purposeful design of information management processes and systems has become crucial (Meissner et al. 2002).

## From Potential to Impact

The COVID-19 outbreak presented new challenges to emergency responders. The multifaceted impact of the outbreak on our society over a longer period significantly increased the number of actors, decision makers, information needs, and thus information management tasks. The technical building blocks for systems to support these tasks are available, ranging from technologies for obtaining data automatically and in large quantities to systems that support processing this data into information and visualizing the results.

While technologies presented opportunities to gain access to the increased volume of information, process the information to form key insights, and enable organizations to exchange this information, the nature of the pandemic outbreak warrants a reconsideration of the information management approaches commonly used. The duration of this crisis, technological advancements, and the abundance of information facilitate and even necessitate the need for a more structural approach to information management. The challenge is no longer technical in nature or due to the absence of information but rather the effectively management of this potential to support decision makers. This is requiring organizations to consider not only the technical and

information side but also the organizational and human aspects of their organizations.

As illustrated in Fig. 22.1, leveraging the potential of information and technologies is not only a technical challenge but it also requires organizations to reconsider their procedures, capacities, and culture. It requires alignment between the organizational aspects and human factors. Specifically, regarding the COVID-19 crisis, two specific aspects are of importance due to the increased size of the information landscape:

- **Information Needs**: To manage information flows effectively, it is important to understand the information needs. Identifying the needs of the decision makers provides guidance in assessing the value of incoming information, the required categories of information, and the required quality. More importantly, determining and monitoring the information needs also enables organizations to determine if there is any information missing and to actively fill these gaps, rather than act on the available information. Using this "gap" analysis, additional sources can be identified or developed, or further information processing can be included to align the information with the decision maker's needs (Meesters and Van de Walle 2013).
- **Organization and People**: To effectively manage information and use the available technologies, the fit with the organizational processes and capacities is a key consideration. There are numerous options available to emergency responders and organization. However, selecting, effectively using, and integrating these options requires specific knowledge and capacities. It also requires organizations to adapt a different approach towards a


**Fig. 22.1** Elements for Effective Information Management (source: author)

more networked information management approach. Collaborations can be formed not only for the exchange of information but also for the required capabilities to manage it (Paulus et al. 2018).

## Information as Aid

The above developments and trends illustrate important developments and considerations for emergency responders and crisis management organizations to effectively leverage the potential of information during a crisis situation. However, decision-making during crisis information, and subsequently the need for information, does not only pertain to crisis responders, government agencies, or organizations with a public role. As in every emergency, civil society plays a critical role in the crisis response (Walter 2004). Every organization, community, and individual is making choices in these uncertain times. In fact, individual decisions made by citizens largely determine the effectiveness of the crisis response. This individual responsibility is even more important during pandemics and other public health emergencies.

It could be argued that today, and especially during the COVID-19 outbreak, information itself has become a primary need. Moreover, through technologies such as web 2.0, more and more people are actively creating and sharing digital information. Social media, for example, allow people to share first-hand experiences directly with a large community (Coyle and Meier 2009). This warrants an important change for crisis responders, government agencies, and our society in general, and requires adapting the information management principles used in crisis response organizations (Meesters et al. 2019).

Notwithstanding this potential, there are important considerations to be made in light of these developments. Especially in an emergency, those who are more vulnerable will likely have less access to critical information. The reduced online presence, in general, will also result in underrepresentation in digital sources. In contrast, those with information literacy skills, access to information technologies, and strong networks will not only have access to a larger amount of information to base their decision-making on but can also leverage their connections and social networks to obtain crucial support. The COVID-19 outbreak, in particular, has shown the importance of the ability to "stay connected" by digital means. During these crisis situations when people are most vulnerable, the digital divide increases even further (Comes et al. 2019).

## Enabling the New Common Through Information

As we move to a new common, decisions continue to be made by a wide range of actors, not in the least the our communities and their individual members. The effective transition to a new common in our society depends on the alignment and ability to make informed decisions. Therefore, we need to expand the information management landscape of crisis management. This requires the organization to reexamine their information management approach. Not only in terms of technologies employed, such as social media, and consideration of the information needs of the community members. But specifically in relation to their organizational capabilities, policies, and processes.

While careful ethical, societal, and security aspects have to be considered, the need for and value of information in the decision-making process reaches beyond the scope of emergency responders and their organizations. Through the exchange of information, communities and civic organizations can not only be informed but even empowered to effectively participate in both the response and information management processes (Piccolo et al. 2017). They can deliver valuable information to decision-makers, and vice versa their own decisions can be aligned with other stakeholders as well (Meesters et al. 2021). However, to leverage this potential, a paradigm shift is required in crisis organizations and their information management towards an inclusive and reciprocal approach.

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# 23

# Efficient Scientific Self-Correction in Times of Crisis

Michèle Nuijten

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, the scientific community was quick to respond. Within 4 months after the first reported COVID-19 case, over 13,000 papers related to COVID-19 were published in scientific journals. On top of that, over 7000 preprints (self-published PDFs) were posted online (see Fig. 23.1; Fraser et al. 2020; Fraser and Kramer 2020).

It is encouraging to see the speed with which the scientific community has responded to the pandemic. Perhaps even more encouraging is that science has played such an important role in shaping policies and interventions against COVID-19 and its consequences. If there was ever a time in which the importance of science to society was highlighted, it is now.

However, it is important to keep in mind that science is a human endeavor and, therefore, not flawless. Scientific publications, both preprints and peer-reviewed articles, can be affected by errors and bias.

Already, we have seen some high-profile cases of flawed papers in the COVID-19 literature. For example, a paper published in the prestigious journal *The Lancet* reported that the antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine could be dangerous to people with COVID-19. This finding brought an abrupt halt to multiple clinical trials in which this drug was tested as a potential treatment

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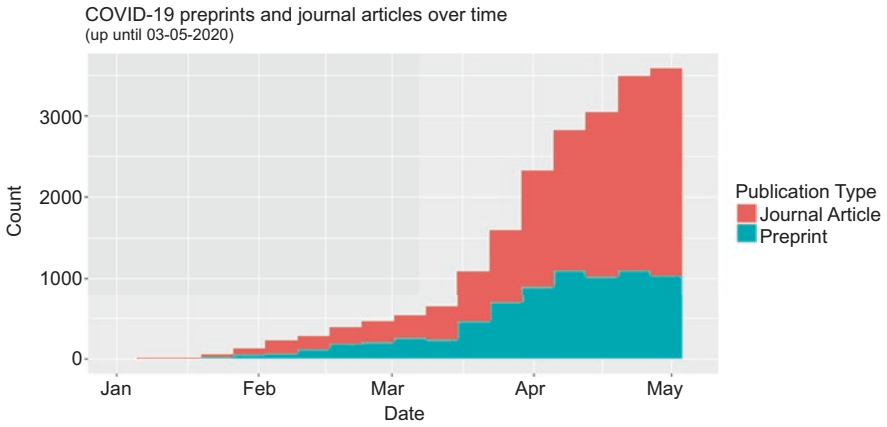


**Fig. 23.1** Number of COVID-19 preprints and journal articles over time (data source: Fraser and Kramer (2020))

of COVID-19. Almost immediately after publication, the scientific community noted that it was highly unlikely that such a large and detailed database on COVID-19 was collected in such a short time and started questioning the validity of the findings. When the authors could not verify the data, the article was retracted, along with another high-profile article by the same authors that was based on the same dataset (for more details, see e.g., Davey 2020; Ledford and Van Noorden 2020; Rabin and Gabler 2020). These retractions raised questions about the potential risks of conducting research under so much time pressure. The global crisis may have prompted researchers to cut corners in data collection and analysis in order to get their studies out there as soon as possible. Lower levels of scrutiny are never desirable but may be particularly problematic when scientific findings are communicated and sometimes even implemented before formal peer review has taken place. To quickly separate the weed from the chaff in the COVID-19 literature, we need an efficient correction mechanism.

## Scientific Self-Correction

Science is often said to be self-correcting, reflecting the idea that science is an iterative process that will lead us to "the truth" step by step by constantly updating information. Self-correction should weed out findings that turn out to be flukes or even errors. But self-correction does not happen magically

overnight. Someone has to actively correct the scientific record for scientific "self-correction" to take place (see also Vazire 2019).

The main self-correction mechanism is replication. In a replication study, researchers collect and analyze new data while closely following the methodology of the original study. If the replication study shows the same results as the original study, the results are corroborated. However, if the replication study shows different results, it may undermine the trust in the original finding. Especially if a string of replication studies keeps showing different results than the original study, the original result is eventually discarded in favor of the replications' results.

A downside of replication studies is that they can take a lot of money and time, both of which are scarce. Especially during times of crisis, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic when we need fast answers to our questions, it is important to have efficient correction mechanisms at hand.

## Reproducibility Checks as an Efficient Self-Correction Mechanism

I would like to add an additional, more efficient tool to the self-correction toolbox: analytical reproducibility checks, or simply reproducibility checks. A paper is successfully reproduced when reanalysis of the original data, following the original strategy, produces the same results as reported in the paper. Note that, as opposed to replication, reproducibility checks do not involve collecting new data. This makes reproducibility checks much quicker and cheaper than a replication.

It may seem self-evident that reanalyzing the same data following the same strategy as the original authors leads to the same results. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Not only errors in the data cleaning and typos in reporting results but also lack of clarity in describing analyses or unavailable data can all result in findings that are not reproducible (Hardwicke et al. 2018; Ioannidis et al. 2009; Nuijten et al. 2016; Stodden et al. 2018).

Reproducibility is a minimum standard for research quality (Nuijten et al. 2018; Peng 2011). If it is unclear how the data led to the reported findings, these findings cannot be substantively interpreted. The importance of reproducibility for interpretation became clear in the hydroxychloroquine case described above, where the paper was retracted because the findings were not reproducible: neither the readers nor the authors themselves were able to reproduce the reported results based on the data.

Many conclusions in the COVID-19 literature are based on statistical analyses. Think about estimates of the mortality rate, assessments of the accuracy of COVID-19 test kits, or tests whether a treatment is effective by comparing means in experimental and control conditions. In such cases, reproducibility checks may be an efficient tool to quickly verify reported results.

## Detecting Reproducibility Problems

Reproducibility checks can be done at different effort and complexity levels. A reproducibility check could consist of an in-depth reanalysis of the original data, but some reproducibility problems can be spotted without access to raw data. The latter are so-called "statistical reporting inconsistencies" that can be detected in the paper itself. Such an inconsistency arises when the numbers belonging to a set do not match.

Consider the following fictional example. Say that a paper states that "7% of the patients with Covid-19 died in hospital (5/100)." Purely based on the reported results, it can be concluded that the numbers are not internally consistent: 5 out of 100 patients is 5%, not 7%. At this point, it is unclear which of the reported numbers is incorrect. What is clear, however, is that the result in its current form is not reproducible and, therefore, not reliable: even without reanalyzing the underlying data, we can conclude that it is impossible to arrive at this combination of numbers.

Reporting inconsistencies can occur in a wide variety of statistics. For example, the reported accuracy of a test kit should be consistent with the reported true positive, true negative, false positive, and false negative rates. Similarly, the reported total sample size should match subgroup sizes, odds ratios should match raw frequencies, reported *p*-values of statistical hypothesis tests should match their test statistics and degrees of freedom, etcetera.

Screening a paper for reporting inconsistencies is an efficient way to detect reproducibility problems: it can be done quickly and you have immediate, objective feedback about the trustworthiness of a particular result. A next step could be a full reanalysis of the original data to see if the same numbers can be reproduced. Such a reanalysis could possibly be extended by sensitivity analyses: do the results still hold up under different (justifiable) analytical choices? For example, what happens to the effect when one extreme observation is removed? Or when the analysis is redone without an arbitrary covariate?

I would argue that if any of the steps above do not hold, the result is not robust. Either it is unclear how the data led to the reported results—in which case the results cannot be meaningfully interpreted—or the results only hold

under a highly specific set of analytical choices. In such cases, we may not need to perform a replication study in a new sample to determine whether or not to trust the study.

## Closing Remarks

Especially in COVID-19 research, where new scientific findings are sometimes immediately implemented, we need quick ways to determine whether the reported findings are trustworthy. Relying on "traditional" scientific self-correction in the form of replication studies in new samples may not be sufficient: replication takes a lot of time and—maybe more importantly—if the results in the original study are erroneous, it is not possible to meaningfully compare them to the replication results. Systematic reproducibility checks could be an efficient way to spot errors and speed up scientific self-correction in the COVID-19 literature.

The current pandemic provides an incentive to reassess the way science progresses. It highlights the risks of "rushed" science and emphasizes the need for efficient robustness checks. But efficient robustness checks are not only relevant in times of crisis: society progresses faster than ever and science needs to work hard to keep up. We can take this opportunity to develop new habits in the way we conduct science by systematically assessing the reproducibility of results, screening papers for reporting inconsistencies, reanalyzing data, and performing sensitivity checks. Additionally, we can use this logic not only to assess, but also to improve the robustness of our results by fully reporting our statistical results, sharing our data and analysis scripts, and reporting results of alternative analysis strategies.

By recognizing the importance of the link between the data and the reported results—the importance of reproducibility—we can improve scientific self-correction and scientific progress in times of crisis and beyond.

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# 24

# Fortified Nudges? Protecting the Vulnerable in a Post-COVID Society

Robin Pierce

The eagerly awaited transition back into a functioning and vibrant society presents numerous challenges, not the least of which is how to protect the vulnerable. As society emerges from the "crisis" phase and the lockdown is lifted, it remains unclear to what extent it should be left to the vulnerable to protect themselves.

The elderly, the infirm, and those with existing health conditions are particularly susceptible to tragic outcomes from the coronavirus. To be vulnerable to a severe impact of COVID-19 turns the disease into a pervasively lurking death threat. Yet, to suggest that the vulnerable spend their lives in retreat in order to significantly minimize the risk is problematic in multiple ways. As policy-makers craft the way forward, the question must be asked whether an appeal to the goodwill and voluntary cooperation of people, along with the slow evolution of social norms, is an adequate approach to protecting the vulnerable. Already, some lockdown measures are showing signs of durability, likely to last beyond the crisis needs. For example, avoidance of rush hours, tech-facilitated remote meetings, and working from home have all demonstrated a degree of success sufficient to question whether the "old common" continues to be necessary or is even preferable. For not only can these

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measures be cost-saving, climate-friendly, and more efficient, they also act against the spread of the virus.

But even as the "new common" way of doing things is embraced, some of the "old common" is likely to return, both as a matter of practicality and of preference. Leaving our homes to enjoy the theater, a dinner on the town, or a trip to the library are likely to have few satisfying substitutes. But what about the vulnerable among us? What is the nature of societal responsibility to protect the vulnerable in the post-COVID society, and what kinds of approaches will lead to an optimal balance of rights, liberties, and interests that do not place the vulnerable at undue risk of a life-threatening disease? This short essay offers Fineman's notion of "inevitable dependency" as a basis for society's obligation to create protective measures that do more to ensure the safety of the vulnerable compared to those that rely heavily on the goodwill of individuals. Measures that balance the two fundamental interests of protection of life and protection of freedom should lead us in creative directions that support goodwill with meaningful action. This essay proposes "the fortified nudge" as a step in this direction.

## Inevitable Dependency

Political philosopher Martha Fineman offers the concept of inevitable dependency as a feature of what it is to be human in society. Essentially, the term refers to the fact that all members of society will experience a period of dependency that will make them vulnerable in ways that the rest of society is not (Fineman 2017). This dependency, she argues, is inevitable. Though very few of us may navigate through life with minimal dependence and vulnerability, as human beings, we will all experience it.

In the post-COVID society, there will be the familiar vulnerabilities of frailty, disease, social and economic disadvantage, and so on, but there will be new forms of vulnerability occasioned by COVID-19 and its processes—how it spreads, the long-term effects, and how it impacts those afflicted with it. In many cases, the existing or pre-COVID vulnerabilities provide fertile ground for severe disease impact. However, COVID-19 creates new categories of vulnerability by its impact on the body. These can include damage to heart tissue (Wang et al. 2020) or lungs (Wilson 2020; Spagnolo et al. 2020) or exploiting weaknesses brought about by diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other comorbidities. In America, COVID-19 has exacted a particularly heavy toll on African-Americans (Price-Haywood et al. 2020). Some countries have noted a particularly harsh impact on persons with dementia (Yao et al. 2020),

including those living at home. For persons having one or more of these vulnerabilities, the consequences of contracting the coronavirus could be fatal. How we protect the COVID-vulnerable in a post-COVID society will be a critical feature of a successful transition.

There are many challenges in knowing when and how to re-open, not the least of which is what will constitute sufficiently protective measures such that it will not unnecessarily cost lives. This is a matter of policy. What will it take to support our return to living as a connected and vibrant larger social community and what should be the responsibility of the state and the larger society? While voluntary acts are welcome, expecting the COVID-vulnerable to rely on the goodwill of others when their lives may be at stake seems unreasonable. Something more reliable and predictable is necessary.

## Insufficiency of Voluntary Measures

While nudges can be justified in a post-COVID society, such essentially voluntary measures are unlikely to be sufficient to minimize the risk to the COVID-vulnerable when the majority of people in that society no longer perceive a serious threat. The incentive to maintain social distancing behaviors is likely to diminish when such awkward behaviors no longer serve immediate interests. Nevertheless, while the most serious threat has passed for most people in society, the vulnerable remain at the mercy of this lurking decimator. Some who fall into this category have become resigned to a life in retreat, some for the remainder of their lives. Society owes more to these individuals than an offer "to pick up something at the store or pharmacy." A life in isolation due to heightened risk that disproportionately falls to the lot of the vulnerable is unfair. In a post-COVID society, inevitable dependency, here perhaps best articulated as inevitable vulnerability, requires more than mere encouragement to behave responsibly to protect those at heightened risk. Rather, inevitable vulnerability would suggest a new form of self-interest that expands immediate self-interest, is more personal than "enlightened self-interest" (in which one sees the benefit to oneself in benefitting others) and casts the actors as responsible stewards investing in their own futures as well as those of the vulnerable. Moreover, the failure to do so would result in a profoundly marginalized status for the COVID-vulnerable as their ability to participate in the life of society would be substantially diminished. Most Western societies have crossed this terrain with mandatory accommodations for persons with disabilities. However, unlike persons with disabilities, the COVID-vulnerable are merely at risk, not disadvantaged in any manifest

sense. They can go shopping, visit the library, and get to and from work with no special assistance. What differs for them from the majority in a post-COVID society is the level of risk and the likely consequences should that risk materialize. Thus, the harm is actually speculative, although grave. It is the gravity of this harm that justifies measures beyond voluntary action.

## Fortified Nudges

A fortified nudge would appear as one of many variations of the nudge, a concept introduced by Thaler and Sunstein in 2005 (Thaler and Sunstein 2009). It refers to state action that uses insights from behavioral economics to influence behavior such that people act in their own self-interest but also preserves choice. A classic example is placing fruit and vegetables in front of the pizza in the cafeteria. The choice is preserved, but patrons have been nudged to choose the healthier option. This strategy could be used to influence people to behave in ways that are less likely to spread the virus. We see this in the use of sidewalk distance bubbles, design artifacts indicating where people should stand to minimize contagion. A fortified nudge would take this design artifact a step further such that standing closer than the recommended 1.5 m is quite difficult. This is moving toward Lessig's regulatory tool of "code" or "architecture," in which the environment is designed in such a way that choice is largely or completely eliminated (Lessig 2003). There are many challenges to architecture, including legitimacy because often the compulsory behavior is being mandated by private parties and the required action is in their interests. By contrast, a fortified nudge would maintain the essential qualities of a nudge, performed by the state in the best interests of the people whose behavior is being influenced, but the fortified nudge, while preserving choice, takes a stronger hand in the steering of behavior. Thus, social distancing measures authorized by the state would also make another choice more difficult in some way. If proven effective, these measures might include the physical reduction of capacity on public transportation or browsing alternatives in the library that do not require touching. Thus making a trip to the library an enjoyable activity for the COVID-vulnerable, who would not have to risk their lives to do so.

The point is that if the COVID-vulnerable is to have a chance to flourish and participate in the life of society, measures need to be sufficiently robust to consistently and reliably reduce the risk to this segment of the population. Goodwill and voluntary efforts can go a long way, but the consistency of such

measures is essential to transitioning to a fair, inclusive, and well-functioning society.

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# 25

# Can AI Help to Avert the Environmental Great Filter?

Eric Postma and Marie Postma

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our lives is still evident on a daily basis, there is a much larger disaster looming in our future. We are faced with massive evidence that civilization is threatened by a climate disaster, and drastic measures are needed to avoid a point of no return. Will humankind succeed in adopting the necessary measures in time? Some scientists view the possibility of the environmental "Great Filter"—an event that eventually wipes out any instance of intelligent life, including our own—as inevitable (Webb 2002). In the 1950s, the physicist Enrico Fermi, during a lunch with his colleague, famously raised the question "Where are they?" addressing the apparent lack of extraterrestrial intelligent life in a galaxy where the formation of planets is common. For sure, it is a disconcerting idea that the answer to Fermi's paradox, namely that a Great Filter prevents an expanding lasting life (Hanson 1998), may apply to our own technological society in a not so distant future.

In this essay, we explore the potential of present-day AI systems to mitigate the apparent human inability to respond timely and adequately to the imminent peril threatening the existence of our civilization. We will argue that contrary to focusing on the widespread concerns of AI superseding humanity,

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the role of AI in climate change solutions needs to be prioritized and appreciated. To illustrate the potential of AI, we first contemplate the suboptimal human response to the nonlinear dynamics of the COVID-19 crisis. Subsequently, we generalize our observations to the climate crisis.

## The COVID-19 Crisis

Similar to the climate crisis, the potential dangers of the coronavirus were known in Europe and the US ahead of the pandemic. Yet, despite the forewarning evidence collected in Wuhan, China, the governmental response in most Western countries was insufficient and overdue. In the famous documentary An Inconvenient Truth, Al Gore used the apt metaphor of a frog in a pot of slowly heated water. Gradually raising the temperature of the water until boiling point leaves the frog inactive until it dies from the heat. At any point, the frog could have jumped out of the pot but it ignores the accumulating evidence.[1] What the frog fails to acknowledge is the nonlinear dynamics of the boiling event in relation to its ability to save itself, thereby shutting its eyes to the fact that, at some critical point, small changes in temperature parameters will have irrecoverable effects.

The nonlinear dynamics of various events is beautifully captured in the classic model in physics, called the percolation model. The model can be exemplified in the scenario of a forest fire; see Fig. 25.1. Consider a forest in which the trees are positioned at a fixed distance from each other. When the inter-tree distance is large and one tree burns, the other trees remain unaffected. Now imagine a knob (called a parameter in most models) that we can turn to adjust the inter-tree distance. If we turn the knob to a very low inter-tree distance (say, less than 1.5 m), a single burning tree will cause a fire that will devastate the entire forest. The graph shown below sketches the universal pattern witnessed in percolation models. The vertical axis represents the proportion of surviving trees, the horizontal axis the knob position where the inter-tree distance increases by moving to the right along the axis (numbers in arbitrary units). At the value of 5, a so-called "phase transition" occurs. The macroscopic behavior transforms from a disaster into a non-hazardous local fire. Note that the slope of the S-shaped function depends, amongst others, on the size of the forest: for very large forests, the slope becomes much steeper

[1] For your information, the metaphor is based on an incorrect assumption (Fallows 2006). According to biologists, a frog that is gradually heated in a pot will actually jump out on time, thereby apparently demonstrating a better survival instinct than the human species.

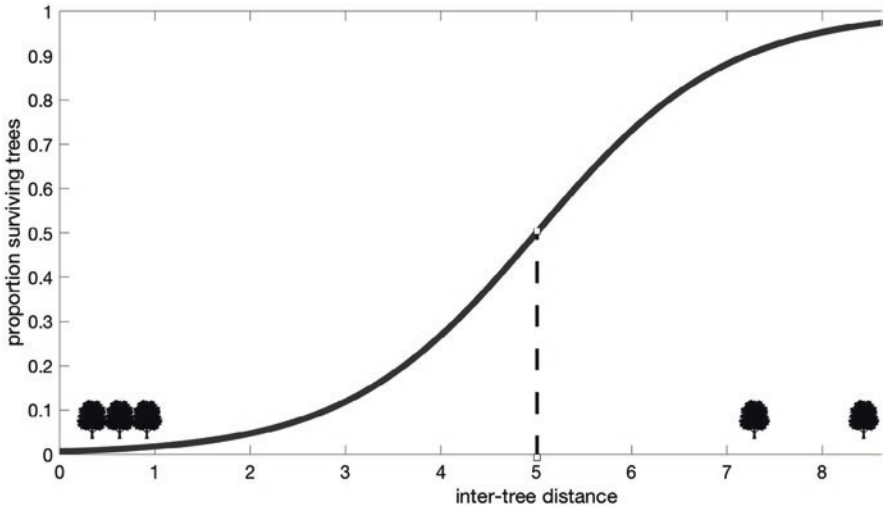


**Fig. 25.1** Scenario of a forest fire (source: authors)

and the phase transition would be very sudden. A very small change in inter-tree distance can then determine the fate of the forest.

Physicists rely on simple models, such as the percolation model because these often exhibit universality. In fact, it is easy to see how the model can be applied to a virus spreading in the human population, with a small change in social distancing measures resulting in either halting or accelerating the pandemic. Unfortunately, our high-school mathematics curriculum is mainly focused on linear relationships: small changes in a parameter value induce small changes in the output value. Consequently, we often lack intuition for nonlinear behaviors (May 1976) and implicitly assume that small changes have small effects.

In the case of pandemics, the expectation of a linear growth may lead to a dangerous underestimation of the speed with which the disease can spread in a population. According to Zacks and Franconeri (2020), even when confronted with nonlinear simulations, people will find the nonlinearity counter-intuitive and have the tendency to extrapolate a straight growth line. The importance of integrating reliable data with appropriate models (Alamo et al. 2020) is demonstrated by the analysis of the response of the Dutch Government to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dutch national newspaper NRC Handelsblad (NRC 2020) described how a microbiologist from the city of Breda, Jan Kluytmans, initiated the introduction of an intelligent lockdown. On March 22, 2020, Kluytmans used a British epidemiological model from the internet to compute the number of infected persons, given the 18

COVID-19 fatalities in the province of North-Brabant. Whereas the RIVM estimate for March 22 was 1413 COVID-19 infections, the computation performed by Kluytmans resulted in a much larger number: at least 42,000 infections two-and-half weeks prior to March 22. With so many infections two-and-half weeks prior to March 22, the number of infections should be certainly higher than the RIVM estimate of 1413. Kluytmans's intervention may have averted a disaster in the Netherlands; in terms of the percolation model, we may have been near the phase transition point.

## The Climate Crisis and Hybrid Intelligence

The climate crisis is comparable to the COVID-19 crisis, albeit at a more moderate timescale. Our civilization as we know it is unsustainable. Unprecedented increases in global temperature and pollution levels represent warning signals that we are aware of, yet a collective action at the governmental level has been slow, insufficient, and mired by short-term political gains. AI is not a panacea for climate change, but it can positively influence and guide the transition towards a sustainable society.

First and foremost, AI algorithms can be used to improve the predictions of climate models (Huntington et al. 2019). By solving discrepancies in the outputs of currently employed models, such as the Earth System Model (ESM), and by refining their estimates, climate adaptation planning can be improved. In addition, AI algorithms can facilitate the measurement of environmental factors. An example of how this can be done is an AI algorithm we recently developed to quantify automatically floating plastic waste using video cameras on bridges (van Lieshout et al. 2020).

A second major target is the transformation of the information context into a sustainable one while avoiding the anti-democratic pitfalls of persuasive computing, i.e., the use of technology to steer an individual course of action (Helbing et al. 2017; Postma 2019). In her recent paper "Should AI be Designed to Save Us from Ourselves?," Lahsen (2020) states that "[o]nly rethinking and redesign of the principles and technologies that generate information contexts within which public decisions are made can positively engender the future we will get" (p. 66). Innovations in AI should focus on facilitating the creation of such information contexts in order to overcome the human tendency to forage information that leads to the desirable conclusion rather than an undesirable belief (Kruglanski et al. 2020). Ironically, AI algorithms are currently used on a massive scale by technology companies to create information contexts that may cater to prior beliefs yet lack long-term

viability. The challenge is to counter this trend with AI technologies specifically designed to support the transition to a sustainable society. One example of how this can be done is provided by Rolnick et al. (2019) who present an impressive overview of ways in which AI and machine learning can tackle climate change. An important tool for individual action is the use of AI to provide individuals with instantaneous feedback about their carbon footprint. Such personalized feedback shapes our decisions about modes of transport, types of diets, and purchases. Realizing AI-supported personalized feedback systems coupled to financial incentives (motivation) has the potential to facilitate behavior change.

## How to Avoid the Entropic Abyss: A Case for Hybrid Intelligence

Despite the clear wins that the use of sophisticated AI models can deliver in our struggle to avoid the planetary entropic abyss, it is important to remember that, while AI systems based on machine learning are very good at making predictions, they lack common sense reasoning. For instance, if there were a sudden surge in hospitalizations due to an extremely cold weather period, any human expert would understand that this may confound the COVID-19 prediction model. On the other hand, AI models may overcome the limited information-processing capacity of humans by taking into account all relevant data. Clearly, at the current stage of AI research, the best of both worlds is the combination of human and machine intelligence, so-called "hybrid intelligence."

Hybrid intelligence aims at expanding human intelligence instead of replacing it. It offers the best of both worlds by combining the general intelligence of humans with the narrow task-specific intelligence of AI. The development of hybrid intelligence requires the knowledge of experts who understand both humans and machines, including their strengths and weaknesses. The unique Tilburg University research and education program Cognitive Science and AI represent a hotspot of such interdisciplinary talent. In the end, whether the age of Anthropocene will lead to collapse or to the metaphorical frog being rescued will depend on our society making—or being nudged to make—that decision. It is highly unlikely that the new common can be achieved without the help of AI technology that understands and supplements human cognition and motivation.

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# 26

# Values and Principles as Cornerstones of a Renewed Normal

Corien Prins

The effects of the outbreak of the coronavirus on our health, our economy, and our societies are being seen and felt around the planet. In countless ways, our society and familiar customs are being disrupted and challenged. In this light, we frequently hear that we are simply going to have to learn to live with this "new normal" and a socially distanced economy. But given a vaccine now becomes available: What are the changes that remain in place and to what extent will our society have reinvented itself?

## To Roll Back Crisis Solutions

Aside from the fact that, once the vaccine is broadly available, some of today's emergency measures will no longer be necessary, we should also acknowledge that certain measures cannot remain in place indefinitely, among others, due to their invasiveness. For example, digital technology has proven to be a powerful tool in both tackling the spread of the coronavirus and allowing countless societal processes to continue. However, some of its current applications are at odds with the principles of the law and with fundamental

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rights. Consider, for instance, concerns regarding the protection of privacy in relation to digital monitoring of citizens' behavior (such as tracking apps; the use of data about restaurant reservations for coronavirus monitoring, etc.). But equally, the benefits of some of these new digital ways of working (greater efficiency, reduced costs, etc.) should not be allowed to lead, insidiously, to a society in which certain groups in our society are (even more) disadvantaged in socio-economic terms. After all, a good laptop and internet connection are not available to every family. And not everyone is able to keep pace with the sudden digital transformation of so many key societal processes. Similarly, there are concerns regarding the continued focus on the use of digital learning environments in higher education. The current crisis has meant that our education system has become even more dependent on a few very large tech companies (mainly based in the US). In providing their services, these commercial companies are able to collect user data from students and researchers, which can be used to offer personalized marketing and services. In essence, digitalization in higher education increasingly also means the privatization of tasks that have traditionally belonged to the public domain. What does the continuing digitalization of education mean for the public values that our system of education is meant to serve? Now that we are taking careful steps towards a relaxation of the measures, it is a good time to discuss the desirable intensity of the use of digital applications. Everything had to be done in a hurry in the initial phase. In the period ahead, there will be more time for reflection, and the question lies before us: what kind of balance between physical and digital—between offline and online—are we looking for? Digitalization has a lot to offer, but at the same time, it can change or diminish things fundamentally to such an extent that we need to ask ourselves if those changes are indeed desirable. A debate is vital, particularly now it has become clear that some changes must not be embraced permanently and even come with the necessary risks attached (Sheikh and Prins 2020).

The need for a public debate on the responsible use of digital technology and the relevant values associated with that is just one illustration of the fact that the current crisis and its aftermath are pushing many new challenges and questions onto the agenda. In this short contribution, I would like to frame two such questions in particular. From a legal point of view, what would the equivalent be of the socially distanced economy? And secondly, from the point of view of the law and the rule of law, which considerations do we need to focus on if we are to reinvent our society?

## Socially Distanced: A Metaphor for a Renewed Legal System

The initial response to the first question—the equivalent of the socially distanced economy—probably centers on the numerous legal provisions that have been affected by the crisis and, in addition, the provisions that have been implemented to cope with the (effects of the) crisis. These include things like emergency decrees, rules regarding economic support measures, the relaxation of certain rules in the field of competition or healthcare, and the interpretation of certain notions in contract law, such as that of unforeseen circumstances. It has been necessary to review these aspects of the law in order to soften the impact of the crisis or to share the pain more equitably or because they were preventing action being taken to manage the situation effectively. At the same time, of course, some new legal measures have been introduced too, including rules to prevent unscrupulous individuals from profiting from others' misfortunes by charging excessive prices for certain products.[1]

However, hopefully, the legal equivalent of social distancing means more than just a few technical changes to the application of the law or the more flexible application of existing legislation and legal concepts. After all, social distancing is essentially all about protecting the most vulnerable in our society and ensuring solidarity. This means that we need to look at the architecture of the law from a new perspective. This implies that we aim to take it one step further than merely the legal measures that we take at this very moment to deal with the crisis. After all, does the fact that countless aspects of the law have had to be overridden or amended not make it painfully clear that our legal system is inadequately equipped to support or sometimes even prioritize the most vulnerable? Does it not show that the weakest and most vulnerable in our society have been neglected and forgotten to some extent when it comes to the law? There are plenty of examples of this in my field of expertise—law and technology. At the global level, for example, extremely restricted use is made of the compulsory license in patent law even though two billion people in the world still have no access to affordable basic medication (Durisch and Gajardo 2018). And, incidentally, this does not only happen in the African continent but in the Western world too. For example, the political prioritization of international trade treaties has meant that a country like Canada, which had actively been using compulsory licenses to import generic

[1] For example, the new legal regime in Ontario: https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200098.

medicines, was obliged to abandon the use of this instrument. The prices of medicines in that country rose sharply as a result ('t Hoen 2009).

This is just one example of what can be seen as a much more generalized trend. Years of beating the drum for "self-reliance" and "competition" have also affected the structures and reflexes of our system of law. The discipline of the market and the dominance of each individual's responsibility for his/her own life (and also, therefore, for any misfortune that comes his/her way in life)—all combined with an emphasis on the most efficient possible use of capacity, capital, and technology—have colored the way in which we apply the law as well as the law itself. Although almost every field of the law has provisions in place to ensure that the public interest cannot be ignored completely, the legal provisions that serve to underscore public values and embody fundamental norms often belong in the category of "exceptions" to the general provisions of the law, rather than fundamental principles.

## Values and Principles Underlying the Renewed Normal

A crisis such as the one we are currently witnessing means that, in many areas of society, we are forced to rethink established patterns and familiar arrangements. This includes the arrangements that we, as a society, have made in the form of the law. The results of this rethink will become tangible in the months and years to come in the form of numerous new or amended laws, court rulings, and agreements between parties. Various areas of law will be redesigned, ranging from social security for self-employed persons to better control over the supply of medical equipment.

But let us, above all, make sure that the legacy of this crisis goes beyond just these areas. The coronavirus is forcing us to confront our own vulnerability as human beings. And this ought to make us reconsider the way in which we distribute or redistribute wealth and promote solidarity within our societies: pensions, insurance, housing, health care, and education must be the main areas that we focus on. After all, this is how we create a strong middle class on which every robust democracy is built. But the new panorama that is opening up before us must also extend to countless "minor" arrangements that our legal system currently provides for, from civil liability to special tax arrangements for multinational companies. Above all, let us make sure that social distancing serves as a reminder of the role of the law in promoting solidarity

with other people and the acceptance of measures that are designed primarily in the interests of other people.

Sustainable change will require an appreciation of both new and traditional ways of working and living together and the ways in which we interact socially and economically. The sum of all these changes will result in what could be referred to as "the renewed normal." For it is important to realize that, in this new reality, certain principles and underlying values in our democratic society will need to be preserved as well. In other words, emergency solutions and their short-term benefits (increased efficiency, reduced costs, etc.) should not be allowed to lead (insidiously) to practices that are actually at odds with the principles on which our society is based. Hence, it is crucial that we reflect on the values in our democracy that must be saved from being washed away in the tide of the current crisis.

This brings me to summarize and formulate a crucial issue for the agenda of academic and political thought and discussion. Clearly the above shows that the numerous challenges we face in light of the coronavirus crisis definitely includes the challenge of reflecting on which values and principles our reinvented society and renewed normal should be based.

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# 27

# A New Democratic Norm(al)? Political Legitimacy Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

Tim Reeskens and Quita Muis

With "patient zero" diagnosed at Tilburg's ETZ hospital, the province of Noord-Brabant has been the bedrock to implement far-reaching non-pharmaceutical interventions to prevent COVID-19 from spreading across the Netherlands. The government response to COVID-19 was a self-proclaimed "intelligent lockdown," which provided Dutch residents with relative freedom by allowing them to go outside but to do so responsibly (RIVM 2020). However, measures taken to "flatten the curve," as advised by RIVM health experts, have unavoidably constrained some civil liberties too. The effectiveness of these interventions crucially depends on the public support not just for the measures but also for the political system implementing them. The aim of this contribution is to provide insights into how political legitimacy has changed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic by analyzing novel longitudinal panel data as part of the European Values Study.[1]

In this, the Netherlands is an interesting case as it is conceived of as a liberal democracy characterized by strong democratic appraisal (see Fig. 27.1; EVS

[1] We would like to thank Loek Halman, Ruud Luijkx, Inge Sieben and Leen Vandecasteele for valuable comments on this contribution, as well as Giovanni Borghesan for producing the post-stratification weights.

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**Fig. 27.1** Perceptions of democratic governance across Europe, 2017 (source: European Values Study 2017 + own calculation)

2020); furthermore, political institutions receive widespread public support (Bovens and Wille 2008). Political legitimacy[2] combines these two aspects (Easton 1965; Norris 2011), namely expectations from the government (i.e., more democratic versus more authoritarian governance) together with support for their functioning. When populations have strong demands from the government, but the latter are unable to fulfill them, a "deficit" arises (Norris 2011). This deficit might ultimately jeopardize the successful implementation of required non-pharmaceutical interventions.

At a more theoretical level, these public expectations from the government align with what is referred to as "diffuse system support." This term represents a generalized attachment to the core values and principles of a political system (Norris 2011: 22), such as the separation of powers, freedom, self-determination, and moral autonomy (Dahl 1989). Evaluations of government functioning are also named "specific system support," expressed by the popularity of and trust in, for example, incumbent prime ministers, party leaders, and political parties (Norris 2011: 21). Scholarship suggests that explanations for diffuse and specific support are largely different (Mishler and Rose 2001).

[2] We understand "political legitimacy" from a Weberian perspective as it describes it by "the basis of every system of authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige" (Weber 1964: 382).

Diffuse support is thought to be rather stable because the attachment to more or less democratic values is understood to result from socialization at a young age (Inglehart 1977, 1997). Older generations were raised in insecure contexts, making them prioritize safety and stability while younger generations grow up in relative security, facilitating attachment to values such as individual freedom and autonomy. Psychological insights (Maslow 1943), however, suggest that in moments of crisis, when insecurity prevails, a short-term value change can occur. In such circumstances, people decrease their focus on civil liberties, thereby demanding stronger leadership (Boin and 't Hart 2003; Inglehart 1997).

By contrast, specific support often fluctuates as it depends on the functioning of incumbent political actors, which is usually based on a rational assessment of their performance, economic outcomes, and individual well-being (Norris 2011). In case of an existential threat, such rational evaluations make room for more emotional responses, such as the "rally round the flag effect" (Mueller 1973). Hence, political support is expected to increase during the crisis COVID-19 poses, regardless of the measures taken by the government.

## Analytical Strategy

To assess changes in diffuse and specific political support, we analyzed unique, representative panel data of the Dutch population as part of the European Values Study (EVS 2020) and fielded as part of the LISS Panel.[3] Data were collected at two different time points: before (2017) and amidst (May 2020) the COVID-19 pandemic. For the initial data collection, 2053 respondents are interviewed, of which the majority ($N$ = 1288) participated in 2017 and in the follow-up survey designed to capture the influence of the current pandemic. In this follow-up, several questions from the Main Questionnaire were repeated. Here, we are interested in people's attitude towards having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections (1 = very bad; 4 = very good) as measure for diffuse support; trust in government (1 = none at all; 4 = a great deal) is used as an indicator for specific support. These items are supplemented with unique questions measuring the perceived individual consequences of the coronavirus crisis; for this contribution, we include the item measuring salience of COVID-19, namely the extent to

[3] The LISS Panel consists of approx. 7500 individuals, drawn from the population register based on a true probability sample, hence representative of the Dutch population. Each month, panel members are asked to respond to questionnaires. For more information, see http://www.lissdata.nl.

which people are generally concerned about the coronavirus crisis (1 = not at all; 5 = to a large extent). We also include time-invariant characteristics like age, gender, and education. After excluding respondents without information, 973 respondents remain.

To assess individual changes in diffuse and specific system support, we calculated a difference score by subtracting respondents' answers in 2017 from their answers in 2020 (Allison 1990). We performed one-sample *t*-tests and regression analyses to arrive at the results described below. Post-stratification weights were applied.[4]

## Results

Figure 27.2 displays the overtime changes in diffuse and specific political support. For diffuse system support, we see an increase in the desire for a strong leader during the pandemic: the mean changed significantly from 2.07 in 2017 to 2.16 in 2020 ($p < 0.01$). For specific system support, we observe a significant increase in trust in government from 2.42 in 2017 to 2.61 in 2020

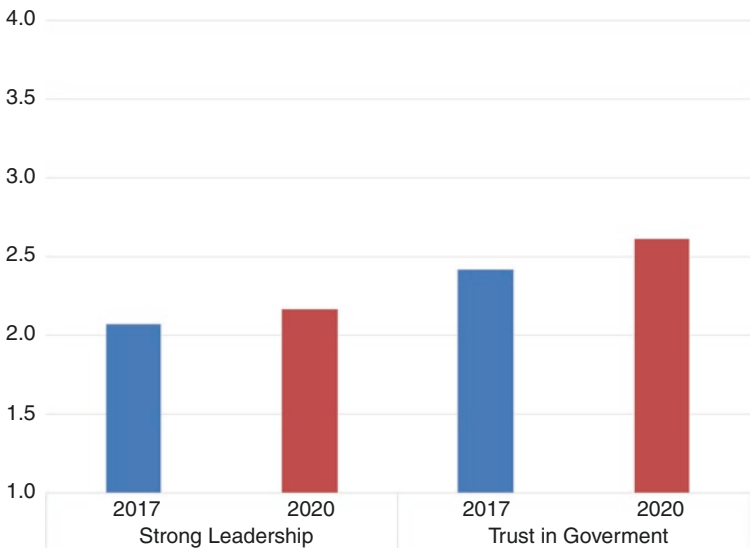


**Fig. 27.2** Change in political system support, 2017–2020 (source: European Values Study Netherlands 2017, 2020 + own calculations. Post-stratification weights are applied)

[4] Due to word count limitations, we are not able to present more detailed information on the data, variables, and analyses. Please contact the first author in case of any questions.

($p < 0.001$). Together, the findings confirm our expectations that in times of crisis, people long for strong leadership instead of more democracy. At the same time, they evaluate the performance of political institutions more positively, which leads to more political legitimacy.

To explain these shifts, we find that the salience of the corona crisis does not lead to a demand for stronger leadership. However, those who are concerned about the crisis do indicate more trust in the Dutch government. While generation and gender turn out to be unrelated to diffuse system support, education does have an effect. Especially the lower educated increasingly prefer a strong leader. In addition, the higher educated have indicated more support for the government amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Combined, although we observe some differences in the increase in diffuse and specific system support, political legitimacy has largely increased in society as a whole (Table 27.1).

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have demonstrated how the Dutch government has gained political legitimacy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic through decreased democratic aspirations and, simultaneously, increased trust in government. These findings confirm the idea that, in times of crisis, people find comfort in strong leadership, thereby turning to illiberal tendencies, and that their

**Table 27.1 Changes in diffuse and specific political support regressed on relevant covariates, Netherlands 2017–2020 (Source: European Values Study Netherlands 2017, 2020)**

| | Support for strong leader | Trust in government |
|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 1.650*** (0.157) | 1.147*** (0.117) |
| Salience of COVID-19 | 0.017 (0.031) | 0.056* (0.023) |
| Generation (Ref: Great Gen) | | |
| – Baby boom | –0.107 (0.081) | –0.079 (0.059) |
| – Generation X | –0.112 (0.088) | –0.091 (0.064) |
| – Millennials | –0.106 (0.089) | –0.010 (0.065) |
| Levels of education | –0.090*** (0.015) | 0.029** (0.011) |
| Gender (Ref: Man) | | |
| – Woman | 0.056 (0.052) | 0.028 (0.038) |
| 2017 level | –0.579*** (0.028) | –0.502*** (0.028) |
| $R^2$ | 0.334 | 0.266 |

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. Entries represent parameter estimates from two OLS regressions, with standard errors between brackets. Post-stratification weights are applied

rational evaluation of the government is, at least temporarily, replaced by a more emotionally driven "rally" effect. The fact that this is present in large sections of society indicates a specific and unique period effect.

The implementation of non-pharmaceutical interventions, and particularly the intelligent lockdown, required political legitimacy, and this appeared to have been successful. However, existing research already indicates that such shifts in political support in response to crisis situations are often temporary. Hence, it is important for national governments to be aware of the fact that the political legitimacy they have been enjoying can vanish sooner rather than later. Combined, although some authors have recently expressed optimism that the implementation of non-pharmaceutical interventions to contain the coronavirus has rejuvenated democracies (see Bol et al. 2020), our understanding is that such expectations of widespread political legitimacy in the new common are rather grim.

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# 28

# Balancing Public Health and Economic Interests Whilst Creating New Opportunities for Labor Migrants

Conny Rijken

The COVID-19 pandemic unveils structural weaknesses and vulnerabilities in societal structures that we have become to take as ordinary parts of our society. This especially holds true for such structures in the labor market in general (see Chap. 5 by Bekker) and especially for labor migrants, the focus of this chapter. Over the past decades, rigorous scholarly work contemplated the precarious working conditions of migration workers due to labor market flexibilizations and avoidance of labor laws that have, in turn, received limited political attention and little willingness of industries and corporations to change these practices (Costello and Freedland 2014; Anderson and Ruhs 2010; Rijken and de Lange 2020). The COVID-19 crisis not only augmented these situations of precariousness but also enlarged the awareness of the dependency of developed countries on migrant workers and, in some countries, led to a positive response by way of regularization of the migratory status of migrant workers, e.g., in Italy. Interestingly, risks of COVID-19 outbreaks among migrant workers exposed working and living conditions that were known but neglected for too long. Apparently, the COVID-19 crisis has revealed that a public health risk generated more impact than academic and grounded research on work and living conditions of migrant workers and the work of organizations fighting for migrant workers' rights. In the remainder

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of this chapter, I will first address how COVID-19 has impacted the position of migrant workers before discussing opportunities created for migrant workers and the way forward.

## The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Workers

According to the Migration DATA portal, one out of five workers in Northern America and Western and Middle European countries is a migrant worker. Sectors in which they are working, for instance, are agriculture, domestic work, cleaning services, distribution centers, and personal care workers. Migrants make important contributions in addressing the pandemic but are at the same time exposed to higher risks of contracting the virus (Fasini and Mazza 2020). Due to various reasons, labor migrants, especially those at the low end of the labor market, are among the first to be affected. They are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the measures taken to tackle it.

Working remotely and from home has been part of the lockdown in many countries. Since, immigrants are less likely to work in jobs that can be performed remotely and, consequently, were either exposed to an increased risk of being infected by the virus or suffered from loss of income if they discontinued working (Borjas and Cassidy 2020). Migrant workers often work for temporary work agencies and those with short-term contracts or working for such agencies were among the first to lose their jobs. They were often excluded from national COVID-19 policy responses such as compensation for loss of income, un-employment benefits, or social security (ILO 2020). In cases in which residency is linked to employment, this not only led to job loss but the loss of residency as well, putting migrant workers into undocumented or irregular status as travel restrictions and lack of spare funds to pay for traveling home prevented them from returning to their home countries. This equally occurred when visa or work permits expired during the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, travel restrictions prevented migrant workers from taking up employment abroad even if they had already signed a contract or had made expenses to a recruitment agency or facilitator, for instance. Information on COVID-19 measures is often only available online and not in a language migrant workers understand, making these measures less accessible for them. Finally, living conditions in crowded housing pose a particular risk to the spread of COVID-19 among migrant workers. They are often accommodated in abhorrent conditions with multiple persons in a room, making it impossible to keep the required distance to prevent infections. Accommodation

provided by their employers or by a temporary work agency for whom they work creates multiple dependencies. Migrant workers who refused to share a room with a person whom they did not know got fired because of refusing. Thus, migrant workers are excluded by host societies, which is one of the shortcomings of the old common revealed by the COVID-19 crisis as identified by the editors of this book in Chap. 1 of The New Common.

## Responses on the Position of Migrant Workers

Paradoxically, sectors in which migrant workers work are characterized by unskilled labor that is looked down upon. However, during the coronavirus crisis, the work of migrant workers have been labeled as "essential jobs" (Fasini and Mazza 2020). Countries with a high dependency on migrant workers in these sectors came to realize the importance of these workers. Although they are praised for their work during the coronavirus crisis this has not led to an improvement of their working and living conditions or to more job security and higher wages.

Indeed, in many Western European countries, they were needed in seasonal agriculture to harvest the products. Confronted with the closing of borders, governments were faced with the ethical question to balance health concerns and economic losses, with the position of the migrant worker as the object to this dilemma. The economic argument prevailed; regardless of the travel bans, Italy flew in farmworkers from Morocco, and Germany flew in some 80,000 seasonal workers from Eastern Europe amid the corona crisis (Pettrachin 2020). The risks for the migrant workers seemed to be of subordinate importance. While it is well known that migrant workers are accommodated in crowded collective facilities, are collectively transported in vans to and from the workplace, and work in close proximity, these factors did not ring any alarm bells. Only when a new outbreak of COVID-19 emerged in the meat processing industry in Germany and the Netherlands, attention was paid to their living and working conditions. However, the concerns were not about the well-being of the migrant workers but about of the risk of the spread of the coronavirus, again demonstrating an assessment of the situation that balances health concerns with economic losses and indeed, a reflection of Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin 1968).

Despite the neglect of the position of migrant workers and mostly due to economic goals, the coronavirus crisis generated some positive responses that ameliorated the position of migrant workers. Italy provides such an example where the situation of undocumented migrant workers received the attention

that led to an overall improvement—albeit on a temporary basis. After realizing that, during the lockdown and with borders closed, Italian farmers are highly dependent on undocumented migrant workers for harvesting, the migration skeptical Italian government adopted a law to temporarily regularize the status of up to 200,000 undocumented migrant workers to prevent the collapse of the agricultural sector. This exemplifies the balancing of public health and economic concerns with a recognition of the important role of migrant workers and an acknowledgment of the precarity of their situation. However, by June 15 2020, 32,000 applications were received primarily from domestic workers and caregivers (91%) and, surprisingly, not that many from farmworkers due to strict conditions and dependency on their employers to apply for regularization. Another positive approach is the regularization of migrants with pending immigration applications in Portugal, including access to health care and social services during the pandemic. Other examples of reckoning and improving the situation of migrant workers are the extension of migrant working visas or amnesties to alleviate constraints faced by migrant workers and their families in some destination countries, e.g., Belgium, Lebanon, Morocco, South Africa, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates (ILO Policy Brief, April 2020).

## Revamping the Debate Post-Corona

These practices are part of a wider debate, not only in the EU but more broadly in migration destination countries, which is based on the paradox between, on the one hand, migration skepticism resulting in strict migration policies and a lack of legal migration pathways and, on the other hand, the demand for cheap labor of corporations to maximize profit at the expense of labor laws and humane living conditions. In the EU, the debate evolves around the balance between free movement and decent labor standards (Anderson and Ruhs 2010; Bogoeski 2020). The systemic and structural manifestation of the position of migrant workers points at a societal acceptance of different treatment that ties in with the current Black Lives Matter movement against discrimination of black people and those with a colored skin or migratory background, who often work in the same, low-skilled, low-paid sectors. The time seems to have arrived to have a broader discussion on inclusive societies and to curb latent forms of discrimination. This momentum should be used to regain attention for migrant workers in precarious work situations and to reconsider fundamental—social, legal, and economic—structures in our society that facilitate such situations. One thing we

have learned from this crisis is that such a process gains wider attention if the economic and business argument could be integrated into this debate. Let us not lose this momentum and strive for a more inclusive society and curb inequality as encouraged by the sustainable development goals.

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# 29

# Is COVID-19 a Crime? A Criminological Perspective

Toine Spapens

Is COVID-19 a crime? The answer to that question seems relatively straightforward. Although the virus may be viewed as a "villain," we cannot treat it as a criminal. However, how the virus impacts societies and government responses to the crisis raises serious criminological questions. In this chapter, I briefly address three. I will start by looking at the effects of COVID-19 and particularly the lockdowns on criminal activities. My second question is whether we should rethink our response to crimes that may facilitate future pandemics, particularly wildlife trafficking. Finally, I will discuss some examples of systemic inequalities, which affect the impact of the virus on societies. Given the current state of affairs, I will raise questions and ideas for future research, rather than provide clear-cut answers.

## The Effects of COVID-19 on Criminal Activities

It is an interesting question how COVID-19 affected the behavior of criminals. At the beginning of the crisis, it was clear that some were quick to seize the opportunity to fraudulently offer products such as hand gels, facemasks, and other protective equipment of questionable quality, which were

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sometimes not delivered at all. However, as governments stepped up production, such opportunities rapidly diminished. The lockdowns imposed in many countries also had a noticeable effect on crime. For several weeks, figures on shoplifting, burglaries, and other street crimes decreased to almost zero. From a theoretical perspective, this is understood by applying the routine activities theory, which predicts that crime occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of capable guardians converge in time and space (Cohen and Felson 1979). The lockdowns probably affected all parameters. There were fewer targets, guardianship increased, whereas convergence settings decreased. Furthermore, criminals are human too, and on average not very healthy (Odgers et al. 2007), and we may hypothesize that this caused them to avoid the risks of catching the virus. On the other hand, several countries such as the United Kingdom have reported a substantial increase in intimate partner violence (Townsend 2020). Here, unfortunately, the lockdowns resulted in "motivated offenders" and "suitable targets" being in each other's vicinity more often than usual.

The effect of lockdowns on more complex organized crimes is less clear. Opportunism was visible in the shape of the Italian mafia offering loans to small entrepreneurs who were hit by a lack of customers, but essentially this type of "philanthropy" was probably built on the loan sharking activities the mafia has traditionally been involved in (D'Angelo and Musumeci 2016). So far, Dutch drug producers and traffickers seem hardly affected by COVID-19. Perhaps ecstasy is less in demand because of the canceled festival season and the ongoing restrictions on nightlife, but little has changed in the market for cocaine, according to preliminary enforcement agencies' information (EMCDDA and Europol 2020). Governments' efforts to continue international trade and transport meant business as usual for traffickers, judging from recent seizures of cocaine shipments in Dutch ports. Small-scale distribution to customers was not affected either particularly because Dutch criminals increasingly ship drugs in postal packages. Although means of production for synthetic drugs seem to be less easy to obtain, large synthetic drugs producers usually buy large amounts of precursor chemicals when on offer and stockpile what they do not need immediately (Spapens 2016; KLPD 2012) Assuming that they still hold reserves, short- term effects on production seem unlikely.

A question that has worried authorities is whether criminals who lost their illegal income have shifted to other "markets" and to cybercrime in particular. Here, opportunities are assumed to have increased because more people are working online from home. Indeed, the numbers of cyberattacks reported to the police rose, but the question remains whether this can be explained by

increased efforts of existing cybercriminals or because others have switched to online crimes. Criminological research does show that those involved in complex crimes tend to specialize rather than multitask (Spapens 2017). Skills are more important than one might think, as are mindsets. Those involved in relatively simple property crimes are usually looking for easy money and immediate satisfaction of needs but often lack patience for crimes that require more time to render a profit (Spapens 2017).

If we may draw a general conclusion from the observations above, it is clear that the period in which measures were imposed on people's freedom is yet too short to cause substantial changes in criminals' behavior.

## Rethinking Our Response to Crimes That May Facilitate Future Pandemics, Particularly Wildlife Trafficking

Whilst epidemiologists have been warning us for the risk of a pandemic for many years, "green" criminologists have also expressed worries in connection to wildlife trafficking. Even if animal trade is legal and meets regulatory requirements, it brings live animals and animal products into close proximity with people engaged in commerce and consumption/use, whether as food, pets, medicinal ingredients, or for other purposes (Broad 2020). That is not to say that illegal activity presents no added risks. Poor transport conditions, avoidance of quarantine controls on import, or black-market trade outside regulated markets and retail outlets where health inspections may be focused certainly presents incremental concerns (Broad 2020).

In the past decades, illegal trade in endangered wildlife has developed into one of the most important types of environmental crime. The trade in live animals mostly concerns protected birds and reptiles. Although Asia and China, in particular, are the most important destinations for trafficked wildlife, demand for exotic animals remains high also in the United States and Europe (Van Uhm 2016). The Netherlands, for instance, is a major hub for the trade in exotic birds (Van Uhm and Spapens 2018).

Apart from its detrimental effects on endangered species' survival as well as on local ecosystems, there is also a substantial risk that living animals carry viruses and diseases. However, until COVID-19, the problem was primarily perceived as economic because diseases could spread to production animals (Van Uhm and Spapens 2018). Countries apply extensive sanitary rules when it comes to wild animals, but traffickers logically circumvent health checks.

The trade in wildlife is as such not illegal but regulated as a normal economic activity. Consequently, first-line enforcement falls upon administrative agencies, which usually have limited powers of investigation whereas maximum prison sentences and financial penalties are often low (Elliott 2009; Spapens 2014).

The question is, therefore, whether we should now drastically rethink our approach to wildlife trafficking. The trade in wildlife is currently regulated in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES focuses on protecting endangered species against overexploitation and the risk of extinction but does not specifically address the risk of diseases. Furthermore, it leaves many legal and practical loopholes that criminals may exploit. Of course, a purely repressive approach will not suffice: it is far more important to develop interventions that help to change our socially constructed appreciation of the value of scarce wildlife.

## Systemic Inequalities and the Impact of COVID-19

There is extensive literature on how crime and other problems affect vulnerable groups in particular, and COVID-19 is no exception. Critical or "radical" criminologists focus, on the one hand, on systemic drivers of such inequalities and, on the other hand, look at the roles of corporate and government actors. Contrary to mainstream criminologists, they have also argued that the object of study of criminology should not be limited to behavior included in penal codes. Indeed, a wide range of damaging behavior is not criminalized at all, for example, tax avoidance and unregulated fishing. Therefore, the focus should also be on "blameworthy harm," structural inequalities, and on "crimes of the powerful," particularly by corporate and governmental actors.

Relevance of societal inequalities in the context of COVID-19 can easily be illustrated. For example, countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom report far more casualties amongst ethnic minorities, particularly amongst socially and economically deprived groups (Price-Haywood et al. 2020; Barr et al. 2020). In the Netherlands, the effects of inequality are visible in the labor market. For example, the virus has disproportionally hit Eastern European migrant workers in the meat sector. Conditions at the workplace, housing, and transport increase risks, for example, because rules of social distancing cannot be met (Winkel 2020). Another worrying sign is that COVID-19 generally appears to have a heavier impact in areas where pollution problems are higher. In the Netherlands, this possibly applies to parts of North-Brabant and Limburg with a high-density bio-industry and the

resulting environmental problems. Earlier, these areas were also struck more severely with Q-fever (Lucassen 2020). Although establishing specific causal effects would require extensive research, consensus is that where large numbers of humans and non-human animals—either wildlife or production animals—live in close proximity, the risk increases that zoonotic diseases develop and spread (Broad 2020).

From a criminological point of view, the efforts of governments to reduce the harmful impact of COVID-19 on societies are equally important. This encompasses a wide range of issues, which I can mention only briefly. To begin with, negligence may be considered as causing blameworthy harm. It may also offer criminals opportunities to step into the vacuum left by legitimate authorities, for example, in Rio de Janeiro's favelas where drug gangs imposed a lockdown to protect inhabitants since President Bolsonaro did not take the virus seriously (Schipani and Harris 2020). Second, it raises classic questions. To what extent are governments allowed, for instance, to rein in civil liberties to prevent harm by applying instruments of mass surveillance or otherwise? What is the lesser harm: people dying of COVID-19 or economic damage?

Whether COVID-19 will be a flashpoint leading to shifts in criminal markets; rethinking how we relate to non-human animals and wildlife, or even restructuring some of the structural flaws of the "treadmill of production" that characterizes our dominant economic system and shapes our societies remains an open question.

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# 30

# There Is an App for That: Technological Solutionism as COVID-19 Policy in the Global North

Linnet Taylor

The COVID-19 pandemic took high-income countries entirely by surprise. Despite funding pandemic preparedness programs in Asia for more than 20 years, donor countries had not experienced an uncontrolled pandemic since HIV in the 1980s. When Ebola, Zika, SARS, and MERS threatened, countries outside the immediate geographic neighborhood or income level of those diseases' places of origin were left largely untouched. This led many northern countries not to take seriously the emergence of the novel coronavirus in 2019 as the existential threat it turned out to be. In contrast to the swift, comprehensive response of South-East Asian countries, authorities in Europe and the United States assumed this coronavirus would behave like its predecessors SARS and MERS, which made their hosts seriously ill and sent them home, reducing their ability to infect others. Instead, the new virus presented itself with a very different epidemiology, hiding mostly unseen amongst the young and active while they infected those around them and ravaging the elderly and sick wherever it spread.

What happened next around the world was both harrowing and illuminating. Lacking protective material resources, the human capacity for contact tracing, or understanding of the disease, policymakers in higher-income

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countries turned to technology for a miracle. The technology sector responded with history's most extensive hackathon, illuminating the mutual shaping of technology and public health policy. The most striking feature of the technological response to the pandemic has been the degree of solutionism (Morozov 2013) driving it—the belief that complex problems can be solved by technological intervention alone.

## The Solutionist Approach to the Pandemic

The driving example of solutionism during the first wave of the pandemic was the claim by a group of public health information specialists (Ferretti et al. 2020), that contact-tracing apps were the only way to stop the disease once it had spread out of control. The idea that an app could solve the pandemic was too attractive to ignore, and the policy take-up in higher-income countries was immediate and universal. Existing tracking technologies were repurposed for the pandemic response as vendors took the opportunity of the newly created market to increase the visibility of their products. However, the apps developed soon demonstrated fundamental problems: they were vulnerable to false positives, where people would potentially receive many messages per day from their phone telling them to isolate based on contacts that may not, in fact, have been likely to infect them. Conversely, the apps would also miss many occasions when brief contact did in fact have a high likelihood of resulting in infection—they would be more likely to flag a 10-min conversation with a coronavirus sufferer where both parties were wearing masks than an event where someone was directly sneezed on in a queue or a supermarket aisle.

These problems are compounded by the false negative rate of coronavirus tests (Kucirka et al. 2020). They are further exacerbated by the frequency of asymptomatic infection, where in up to 80% of cases individuals themselves remain unaware they are infectious (Day 2020). In addition to the problem of inaccurate information, apps were not imagined by their advocates as support to human contact tracers, who were instead excluded from the proposed measures almost entirely. Despite evidence from Asian countries that people would only self-isolate based on governmental requests to do so, conveyed by human contact tracers (Bloomberg 2020), most high-income countries decided not to invest in training human contact tracers during the first months of 2020. In the Netherlands, the main infectious disease liaison for the public health authorities, Sjaak de Gouw, played down the value of human contact

tracing, calling it pointless while arguing against even testing people for the disease (an essential addition to contact tracing), saying, at the height of the first wave in April 2020: "what is the rationale behind the strategy of extensive testing? You do not prevent infections that way" (NRC 2020a).[1]

With these beliefs driving public health policy advice in the EU, it would have been wise to question the value of an app as the main approach to combating the pandemic. For an app to receive valid information on whether people were infected, testing would have to be both available on demand and accurate enough that people would trust that information rather than facing continual automated demands for quarantine. Moreover, even if an automated system functioned perfectly, the rate of asymptomatic disease meant it would be provided with inadequate data at best (Babones 2020).

Why, then, was the focus so heavily on apps at a time when the remedy appeared to be material resources, behavior change, and building human capacity? Stafford Beer, in his work on organizational cybernetics (Beer 2004), advocated that, in order to analyze a technological system, we should ask what we observe it actually doing in the world, rather than what it is intended to do. If we apply this logic to the case of coronavirus apps in the Netherlands and other EU countries, success on several levels could be observed during the early months of 2020. First, the app development process fulfilled a psychological need for something constructive to do, providing both a goal and a clear deliverable for government and the technical community, at a time when efforts to combat the pandemic were failing and an economy-destroying lockdown was becoming the only option. Second, the process achieved a political function by distracting attention from governmental failures and the resulting death toll (NRC 2020b). Third, they fulfilled a rhetorical function by supporting the public health authorities' narrative that testing and human contact tracing, which were not possible given the lack of material and trained human resources, were also not necessary (NRC 2020a). However, contact-tracing apps have not, at least so far, fulfilled the need to actually trace the contacts of people infected with COVID-19. As of July 2020, no country has been able to demonstrate that contact-tracing apps can work either in terms of adoption or effective isolation of the infected (Bloomberg 2020).

The app phase of the pandemic response also served a market-building function by orienting at least some of the policy response and public attention away from complex problems of technology provision (ventilators, mask manufacturing capacity, and other material resources) toward the simpler

[1] Wat is de rationale achter de strategie van het vele testen? Besmettingen voorkom je er niet mee.

problem of repurposing existing population surveillance infrastructures. Along with the apps, over the first months of the pandemic, many solutionist projects were proposed including systems to detect coronavirus infection from voices (Futurism 2020), detecting infection clusters from sewage analysis using technology originally developed for detecting illegal drug labs (Peccia et al. 2020), and a barrage of biometric systems repurposed from immigration and crowd surveillance toward remote temperature sensing (CSO Online 2020). Some of these efforts are more scientifically credible than others, but all have one feature in common: they do not constitute prevention. Solutionism thrives on desperation, and the coronavirus has, in most of the world, provided a welcoming policy environment for it.

## Lessons of Solutionism

There are higher-level lessons to be drawn from these proposals for pandemic technologies, perhaps most importantly that allowing the market to be the sole driver of technology development will result in technology that primarily serves the market rather than the needs of the public. However, the most relevant lessons for the ongoing effort to combat the pandemic are more immediate. In parallel with the European and US responses to the pandemic, a different set of strategies adopted by South-East Asian countries exists. These, ironically, were based substantially on guidance from institutions founded and funded in the Global North such as the WHO, philanthropies, and universities. They involved early response, immediate travel restrictions, intensive testing and contact tracing, and enforced quarantine where cases were found. Where these measures were taken, both infections and deaths remained strikingly low (BBC 2020; Science 2020). Despite a lack of material and technological resources, at the time of writing in July 2020, Vietnam has reported no COVID-19 deaths, and despite being both dense city-states and international travel hubs, Hong Kong has reported just seven deaths, and Singapore 26 (Worldometer 2020). Meanwhile in the Global North, the problem is already being reframed as technology acceptance and convincing people apps will work (e.g., Metova 2020; Stanford news 2020) although policy attention is, at the time of writing in summer 2020, finally reorienting toward material and human responses to the emergency.

Perhaps the most important lesson we can take with us into the "new normal" of the pandemic from observing technological solutionism in the Global North is this: technology is important to pandemic response, but it must support rather than lead. The practical lessons of the pandemic are ones the North

already knew, because it was busy teaching them in the South: the state of the art on how to combat a pandemic is to test, trace, and isolate, and to do this exhaustively and accurately. Yet rather than apply this knowledge, governments turned out to be more ready to listen to Northern innovators than to the public health experts, often internationally funded, in Southern pandemic-affected countries. The response shows that the North has not acquired the necessary capacity for pandemic response, namely flexibility, a focus on the most vulnerable, and human capacity supported by the digital rather than the other way around. Instead, we seem to have trained hard in believing our own rhetoric on technological innovation and the power of the market as solutions to truly existential challenges.

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# 31

# Fast Forward Science: Risks and Benefits in the Rapid Science of COVID-19

Jelte Wicherts

Since the onset of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic in late 2019, the scientific literature on the SARS-COV-2 virus and the disease COVID-19 has a growth rate that resembles the growth in confirmed COVID-19 cases that continue to make media headlines all across the globe. Figure 31.1 displays the number of publications listed in the scholarly publication platform PubMed that can be found with the string "COVID-19 OR SARS-COV-2" for all 26 weeks representing the first half of 2020. It shows that biomedical coronavirus research started slowly but increased to hundreds of articles per week—not unlike the spread of the virus itself. At the time of writing in mid-2020, around 2500 publications per week appear in PubMed on COVID-19 or SARS-COV-2. The curve appears to be flattening but we need to keep in mind the delay in posting of records in PubMed. The actual scientific literature on the coronavirus is even bigger because PubMed is restricted to biomedical outlets and does not cover the many other scientific fields that help us better understand and deal with the pandemic. This new biomedical literature has emerged at an unprecedented pace and highlights the commitment of thousands of researchers all over the globe to understand the virus and its

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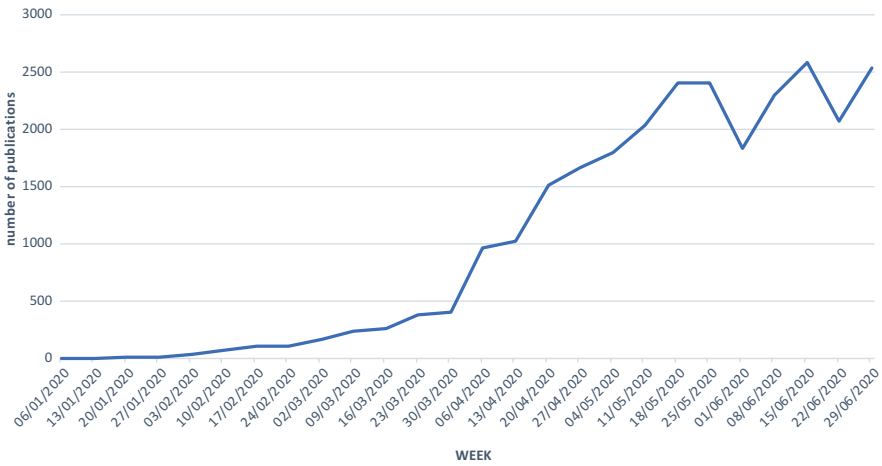


**Fig. 31.1** Growth of the COVID-19/SARS-COV2 literature in the first half of 2020 in PubMed (source: author)

spread, to develop a vaccine, to find treatments for those afflicted, and to ultimately end the pandemic suffering.

Will the scientific community be able to end the suffering caused by the pandemic? Can we trust the insights from the rapidly emerging scientific literature on the coronavirus to implement wide-ranging social, economic, and health policies and vaccination programs? To answer these questions, I here relate the rapid science on the coronavirus pandemic to regular biomedical science and the meta-scientific insights on it. I focus my attention on peer reviews, open access, retractions, open data, and registration of studies. I end with an optimistic conclusion.

## Rapid Peer Review

The vast pace in publishing in the literature on the coronavirus reflects the speed of setting up studies, conducting the research, analyzing outcomes, writing up results, and the peer review process that seeks to independently check the quality of the work. With respect to the latter, we know that the typical review process at biomedical journals takes 3–4 months. For the early articles reporting coronavirus research, the median publication lag was 11 days (Kun 2020). This begs the question of how well reviewers are able to critically assess the quality of the work under such intense time pressure.

## Open Access

One way to deal with limitations of the closed system of pre-publication peer review is to increase the number of critical readers by publishing work without any restrictions under open access. In the first half of 2020, the coronavirus literature included 27,373 publications in PubMed. In the same period, the literatures on cancer and cardiovascular diseases—the leading causes of death in the Western world—included 95,527 and 30,728 publications, respectively. Two-thirds of the coronavirus publications (18,715 or 68%) are publicly available under open access. These percentages are markedly lower in cancer research (42,775 or 45%) and cardiovascular research (12,892 or 42%). Open access improves the dissemination of results and increases the number of potential post-publication reviewers by the thousands. In this sense, the biomedical literature on the coronavirus is more open than ever.

## Errors and Retractions

A main corrective mechanism of science is to avoid the publication of sloppy research through peer review. But if sloppy research gets published after having passed peer review anyway, we can only hope that attentive readers scrutinize the publication and correct the record by publishing critiques or by corresponding to the editor that something in the original publication does not smell right. In that case, the editor might choose to retract the publication altogether. In that respect, retractions might reflect the self-corrective mechanism of a field. Interestingly, the retraction rate of coronavirus publications is markedly higher than that in the wider literature (Yeo-Teh and Tang 2020). Surely, any retraction highlights a problem but also indicates that readers took action to correct the literature.

## Open Data

Trust in scientific findings can be enhanced by sharing the data underlying studies, allowing others to scrutinize the results through reanalyzes. Open data also allows many more researchers to work with the data. In the open science era, we see an enormous growth in open data sets and open resources. This is not different for coronavirus research anno 2020; in their review of open data resources relating to the coronavirus, Alamo et al. (2020) listed no

fewer than 152 links to websites housing open data or data resources that can be used to study the coronavirus. Surely, even today, there are still influential studies being published that fail to share data, but such obscurity will increasingly become obsolete if funders, researchers, editors, and publishers really want to present the best research that can withstand any scrutiny. Open science strengthens truth finding.

## Registrations

An earmark of methodological rigor that helps avoid selective publication of results based on their outcomes (publication bias) and counters many other biases in the analysis and reporting of research results is the registration of studies prior to data collection. Most randomized clinical trials are nowadays registered via platforms such as clinicaltrials.gov, if only because major medical journals would simply not consider publishing an unregistered trial. A quick and easy search on Clinicaltrials.gov indicates that, in the first 6 months of 2020, no fewer than 2250 studies on the coronavirus have been registered. Many of these studies represent randomized controlled trials that test the efficacy of drugs to treat COVID-19 patients and early phase trials to study the working and safety of the much-desired vaccines that could end the pandemic. Figure 31.2 indicates the number of COVID-19 or SARS-COV-2 studies newly registered per week in this period. By comparison, there were 3355 new registrations for cancer research and 1974 for cardiovascular

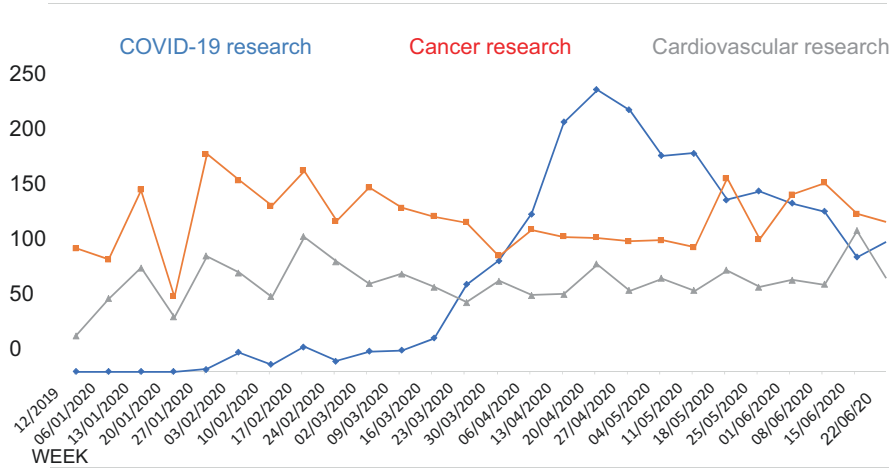


**Fig. 31.2** Registered studies clinicaltrials.gov (source: author)

research in the same period. In other words, COVID-19 has become one of the main targets of biomedical science in a matter of 2 months! Over 100 studies are being registered per week on this platform, and the current 2000 studies are mostly still running.

## Light at the End of the Tunnel

Almost everyone in the world has been affected by social distancing policies due to the coronavirus pandemic, and a lot of people have suffered or passed away due to COVID-19. Many more will unfortunately perish because of it. But the graphs in Figs. 31.1 and 31.2 provide hope that the scientific community will beat the virus. This will not be an easy process. Scientific progress has never been a linear path up the mountain of knowledge. Scientific progress as we have seen it so many times in our history involved many dead ends, false positive findings, overhyped claims, dishonest science, wasted resources, biased analyses, fierce debates, erroneous methods, sloppy science, and the occasional major breakthrough. At the current rate, the literature on the coronavirus grows with over 350 publications per day. Many of these publications will later prove to be useless or flat out wrong. COVID-19 is an entirely new disease and hence research on it is expected to be noisy. It would be unrealistic to expect the emerging field to offer instantaneous results that are valid. Instead, we should expect the majority of findings to be false, biased, ignored, and later corrected by better designed and more rigorous studies. But we do not need all results of all studies to be definitive. We do not need 100% accuracy or 150 different vaccines for the same virus.

As long as scientists work transparently, sharing their work, data, and research plans online, and as long as scientists are overwhelmingly interested in the truth, science will go ahead and progress will be made. There is no way of telling when to expect the needed breakthroughs. Science is certainly not functioning optimally and could surely become more efficient. But science anno 2020 is bigger, faster, and more transparent than it ever was. The rapid science of COVID-19 and SARS-COV-2 is not perfect, but it offers hope and ultimately a solution to the coronavirus crisis. We might even expect the movement towards more rapid, open, self-corrective, and meticulous research to persist after the crisis to create a science that is more resistant to false claims and better equipped to promote global health and well-being.

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# Afterword

Wim van de Donk

Now that my full-time return to Tilburg University is approaching, it feels kind of special to be asked by the editors to write a few concluding words in this intriguing book. Factually, a final word that I would like to see as a small prelude to my renewed involvement in education and research at our university, building on its identity and profile and elaborating on answering the penetrating questions posed by the coronavirus pandemic in science and society. Or even better: the task of ensuring that the right questions are asked.

"Never put a good crisis to waste," Winston Churchill allegedly once said, and it seems quite appropriate to apply that wisdom to the current crisis as well because, with all the misery, there is also an opportunity for innovation, for experimentation, and for learning at many operational and fundamental levels. Seizing opportunities will be necessary because it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has put additional stress on our sometimes already insecure society. Let me use a quote from Gramsci from his prison journals to indicate the situation: "*Die Zeiten, in denen das Alte noch nicht sterben kann, und das Neue noch nicht werden kan, sind die Zeiten der Monste."*[1] The SARS CoV-2 virus is such a monster that makes pre-existing tensions more clearly visible or further increases them.

[1] The times when the old cannot die and the new cannot yet be born are the times of monsters.

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The crisis disrupted and mirrored. As a society, we are being fiercely tested on many fronts. In my current responsibility, I have experienced on a daily basis how much improvisation and learning is needed in dealing with the crisis. On the one hand, this is due to the unprecedented dimensions that the global spread of the virus assumed. However, when we talk about the COVID-19 pandemic, it is certainly also due to the way in which the outbreak of the pandemic was fought. This is itself the cause of unprecedented forms of disruption in the social and economic domain. There are, so to speak, all kinds of adverse side effects of the sometimes hastily chosen approaches.

Some people rightly questioned whether we had sufficient regard for values such as proportionality and balance and whether the cure was not worse than the ailment. Difficult questions that will require a lot of scientifically based evaluation research. After all, in a crisis characterized by so many elements of uncertainty, so called "wicked problems" quickly emerge that usually cannot be solved with the routines and protocols prescribed in the classic crisis response manuals.

As can be seen in this book as well, it is evident that the initially dominant virologists and epidemiologists have been joined by researchers from numerous other scientific disciplines. Economists, theologians, anthropologists, psychologists, communication scientists, ethicists, and lawyers, for example, have also come forward. I consider that a very good development: the most dangerous thing that can happen to us is monodisciplinary tunnel vision. Traditional domain conflicts are of no use here. Multidisciplinary working and thinking seems essential to me, especially in the next phases of the crisis. Of course, the multiplicity of insights fuels the debate. But, on balance, that seems fine to me. After all, just like the virus, the problem we have to tackle is mutating. Several curves are going to demand our attention. The virus problem is mutating into a social problem: what has become more and more conspicuous in recent weeks about "the problem" of "the coronavirus crisis" is that, just like the virus we want to combat, it is mutating and changing in an erratic way.

The image of the virus that we have come to know as a creepy globe with many spikes attached to everything that is vulnerable and dear to us is also useful for this purpose. We are not nearly there yet.

Initially, of course, the fight was primarily aimed at public health. By the way, there was an impressive performance in the world of hospitals as the scaling up of intensive care capacity was a huge achievement, not to mention in the world of nursing homes and other, somewhat less mediumistic areas of care. There was great performance and improvisation here too. We started

talking about "vital professions"; such a crisis is always good for realizing, once again, what is really of value.

Of course, this improvisation and learning is not limited to the world of health care and crisis management. The world of education and research was also confronted with the need to suddenly adapt to circumstances. Homage! … here too for all employees and, of course, for the students as well, but especially for those who wanted to contribute to this collection of essays. After a number of exceptionally intensive months in which Tilburg University's lecturers and researchers had already been asked to put in a great deal of extra effort, allowing research and education to continue as best they could, despite everything, from a sometimes improvised home base with sometimes slightly uncomfortable digital resources. And a similar compliment can be made about this book. The editors managed to seduce some 50 colleagues, in the middle of their hard working times, to reflect on the crisis in a contribution to this collection. By the way, I understand very well that they did not need to be asked twice: this global, and for our generations, unprecedented outbreak of a virus inspires passionate researchers to ask numerous questions, including very fundamental ones. Existential questions, even. We as a society, as humanity, are tested in a way that was explored here and there mainly in some abstract scenarios. For they did exist: the explorations, the predictions, the scripts, the exercises, the reports. Moreover, there were earlier outbreaks as well, but at a distance from us in Western society, and at a distance—apparently—from our imagination. Above all, this imagination will stimulate and enable good and relevant research that will help us to attach importance to the many questions that exist and are yet to come in the inquisitive community of lecturers, researchers, and students that the university is and must be.

The new common will be special, that is for sure. We will have to move from a restrictive strategy to a more enabling one, and one that challenges us to put the economic and social dimensions, more so than was possible in the early stages of the crisis, on the agenda in a profound way. If the COVID-19 crisis does indeed have characteristics of a systemic crisis, this calls for inspirational perspectives on the reorganization of our society, which in recent decades may have subsided a little too much into, at times, benign pragmatism. I estimate that the renewed forms of spirit, occasionally inflamed and inspired by all the misery, can make an important contribution to this task. Now that the COVID-19 crisis has further and more radically exposed and exacerbated existing social, ecological, cultural, and economic tensions, a fundamental reconsideration of the mainly neoliberal and somewhat meagre dichotomy with which society was conceived purely as a market or state is no superfluous luxury. In recent months, people have turned out to be much

more than just "citizens" and "consumers." They also turned out to be relational beings who use all kinds of voluntary association and interconnectedness to make the best of it together in spite of everything.

The lack of physical closeness increased the awareness of the great significance of interconnectedness. I am curious how the contributions to The New Common help us and inspire us to give shape to it, including in our university's own community. I am looking forward to contributing to this.

Wim van de Donk,

King's Commissioner in the province of North Brabant.