THE UNESCO
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A Whole New World, Reimagined by Women

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THE UNESCO Courier

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Editorial

More egalitarian? More respectful of the planet? Dominated by new technologies? The world that emerges from the health crisis will bear the scars of this unprecedented collective experience – the near-universal lockdown imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. But will it really be different? And if so, in what way? Much has already been said on the subject. For months, specialists across the globe have held forth in the media, providing a wide range of opinions. What they have had in common, for the most part, is that they are men.

As nurses, caregivers or teachers, women have been on the front line in the fight against the pandemic. They have been hit hard by the social and economic crises, confronted with domestic violence amplified by the lockdowns – yet their views have not been heard enough.

In this issue, *the UNESCO Courier* gives women a voice. Political scientists, journalists, sociologists, researchers, writers, and teachers have drawn the contours of the post-pandemic era – whether it is the future of museums, changes in schools, the rise of disinformation, or the challenges of scientific research.

These are all subjects that resonate at the heart of UNESCO's mandate, and around which the Organization has rallied during the crisis – providing global data on the situation of schools, defending open science, disseminating content to counter disinformation, and supporting education systems and cultural industries.

This issue paints a sobering picture of our times – highlights the fault-lines exposed by the health crisis, and shows the magnitude of the challenges ahead. It also underlines the potential for scientific, cultural and educational co-operation that this unprecedented event has revealed. If the reflections, the desire for change, and the movements of mutual aid that have emerged are not short-lived, the world really could become a more united, more sustainable and more egalitarian place.

Agnès Bardon

WIDE ANGLE

A Whole New World, Reimagined by Women

Francesca Palumbo, a nurse at the intensive care unit of the San Salvatore Hospital in Pesaro, Italy, photographed in March 2000, after a gruelling twelve-hour shift.

© Alberto Giuliani (@alberto_giuliani)

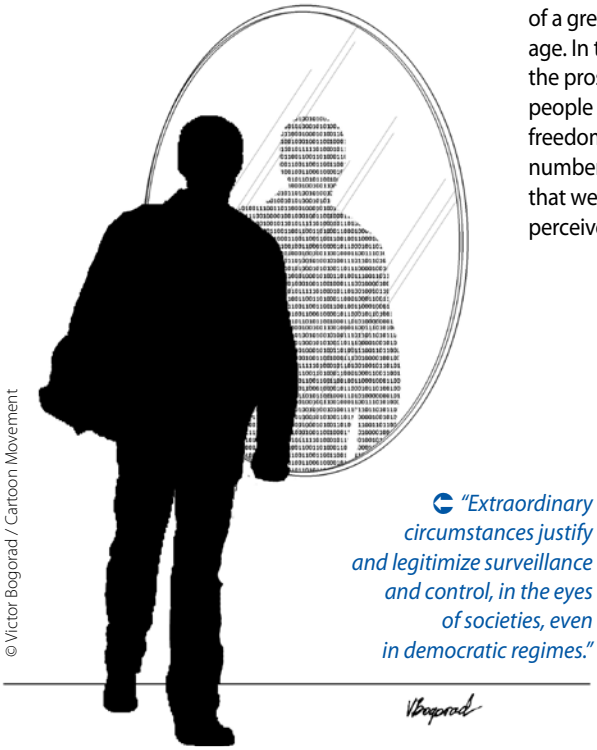
What the pandemic says about us

The higher value placed on human life, the rise of the influence of health services, the medicalization of our lives, the extension of state power – these phenomena did not arise from the crisis caused by the pandemic, but were revealed by it.

Ekaterina Schulmann

Associate professor at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (MSSES), and Associate Fellow, Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.

While it is too early to discuss the consequences of the pandemic, we can already see trends emerging that did not arise from the crisis, but which the crisis has made salient. Societies, governance systems, businesses and citizens can only react with the tools they had before the emergency. As it is often said, generals are always fighting the last war. From this perspective, we are all generals, individually and collectively.



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"Extraordinary circumstances justify and legitimize surveillance and control, in the eyes of societies, even in democratic regimes."

What the recent global health crisis has revealed is that governments can no longer afford to allow an epidemic to spread. If they want to ensure their political survival, they must show they are doing everything possible to preserve human life.

In the past, the emergence and spread of a disease like COVID-19 would have been considered inevitable. However, in view of our current ethical requirements, this is no longer possible – because of the higher value placed on human life.

The primacy of human life

In the twentieth century, citizens could accept having their freedoms restricted in the name of high ideals or superior goals – victory over the enemy, the construction of a great work or the promise of a golden age. In the twenty-first century, it is not the prospect of a bright future that leads people to accept a curtailing of their freedoms, but the desire to avoid a large number of casualties. Today, the constraints that we are under – and which many perceive as a sign of increased state violence – are in fact the corollary of our need for security.

Life has become so precious that no government in the world can afford a loss of life that society considers preventable. Moreover, it should be noted that states – whether democratic or authoritarian – have taken measures that are quite similar in terms of restrictions on freedoms.

They have, however, adopted very different strategies to support the economy, shattered by the shock of the epidemic and lockdown. The modern economy is based on services, and not on the exploitation of resources. It is therefore rational to preserve people – producers and consumers of services – even if it may seem unprofitable in the short term, from a strictly economic point of view.

During this crisis, humanist culture has revealed that it is ready to make concessions on freedom in the name of public health. The increase in life expectancy, medical progress, the cult of healthy living and the narcissistic valorization of social networks have favoured this phenomenon.

> "The constraints that we are under, are in fact the corollary of our need for security"

© Juan Manuel Castro Prieto / Agence VU

"This common tragedy has united humanity around a shared cause."

The medicalization of everyday life

The imperative of "security", a notion to be understood as both "survival" and the "preservation of health", has resulted in the medicalization of our daily lives. This does not refer only to the circulation of medical expressions and practices in our lives. Tomorrow, it could well extend to political processes and governance – if the international community were to decide, for example, that the fight against diseases requires the same level of co-ordination as the fight against terrorism.

Medical knowledge – and with it, the pseudoscientific representations that flourish, particularly online – has invaded everyday language and entered our daily lives. Soon, no one will be surprised by the presence of temperature-measuring devices in public places, in the same way that we have become accustomed to metal detectors. Soon, we will hardly remember the time when consulting a doctor was a matter of free will. Perhaps tomorrow, people with fevers will be placed under house arrest, as we have just been.

The medicalization of everyday life also means an increased role for the health services, including in the political field. This process can be observed at the state level, but also at the global level. The political importance of the World Health Organization (WHO) is measured not only by the number of countries that implement its epidemiological recommendations, but also by the harshness of the political resistance to these recommendations.

The resumption of international trade, air transport and travel will necessitate the development of a new set of global health rules and regulations, in the near future. The supranational body responsible for formulating these recommendations and monitoring their implementation, if it is created, will become an important player in international relations.

Common experience

While the world has suddenly closed in on itself, it has never been more connected. This common tragedy has united humanity around a shared cause. Such a communion of destiny may not have occurred since the race for the atom bomb – with the difference that today, citizens are much more involved in world events.

It is at these pivotal moments that alliances that will shape the world of tomorrow are forged – as was the case after the two world wars that shook the twentieth century. Who will be the winners? Who could be the new members of an Anti-Virus Security Council? It is too soon to say.

What is certain, though, is that the industrialized countries will have to assume greater responsibility for addressing the shortcomings of the health systems of poorer countries. Otherwise the efforts made to combat a pandemic will be in vain. The benefits of drastic measures such as lockdowns will be negated if a new outbreak occurs in a country that is unable to contain an epidemic.

We have just lived through a common experience – one that was lived and shared by a very large number of people at the same time. It is similar to what happened when the Twin Towers collapsed in New York, nearly twenty years ago.

The 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States marked a turning point. After that date, extensive powers were granted to security services around the globe, and the surveillance of citizens was intensified. Practices such as the installation of cameras in public places, the use of facial recognition software and wiretapping systems became widespread after the attacks. Our daily lives – especially our air travel, with its series of controls that we now consider normal – have also been altered.

More surveillance, less freedom

During this crisis, certain states have taken advantage of the coronavirus epidemic to legally expand their powers of surveillance and use of citizen data. We see thus, how extraordinary circumstances justify and legitimize surveillance and control, in the eyes of societies. The same applies to democratic regimes. The epidemic threatens to erode privacy even further. In democracies at least, counterbalancing powers exist to limit this intrusion into our data. This is not the case in autocratic regimes.

> "It is at these pivotal moments that alliances that will shape the world of tomorrow are forged"

The threat is all the more real in times of an epidemic, when everything favours the power of the state – starting with the economic crisis generated by the health crisis, which makes public companies and institutions almost the only solvent employers. The crisis also strengthens the welfare state, which acts as a safety net – perhaps turning workers into recipients of a universal income tomorrow.

Invisible work

While the world was in lockdown, millions of people realized that working remotely, in all its forms, is more beneficial to the employer than to the employee. Thanks to this new organization of work, the costs of heating, maintenance, rent, and even equipment, were now borne by the employee.

Moreover, the boundaries between working time and personal time, between workspace and living space, tend to become blurred. Such a trend undermines the hard-won rights acquired by social and trade-union movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It brings us back – albeit at a new technical level – to an earlier situation, when relations between employees and employers were poorly regulated, work was often carried out at home, and paid for on a piecework basis.

During this unprecedented lockdown period, employees also found themselves obliged to take on service functions normally performed by others – such as childcare, care of the elderly, cooking or other domestic tasks. The pandemic has highlighted this invisible and unpaid service labour – sometimes referred to as a "second GDP"– that is usually performed by women. The crisis may provide an opportunity to discuss the need to pay for these forms of invisible work.

It is always in the wake of major disasters that the international relations system has been reorganized. The First World War gave birth to the League of Nations, the Second World War, to the United Nations. On the basis of a common experience, humanity united and designed for itself new instruments, new mechanisms of governance. New institutions could emerge from the current crisis.

Unlike other past tragedies that pitted humankind against each other, the pandemic confronts us with only a virus. So, we have no one to hate. In the face of this crisis, we have no other choice but to show solidarity.

© Magali Lambert / Agence VU

"The pandemic has highlighted the invisible and unpaid service labour that is usually performed by women." Photo from the series At home, *March 2020.*

The pandemic:
Mirroring our fragilities

Social inequalities, gender violence, poor housing, failing health systems – the health crisis has exposed the fractures that divide our societies. To change the world, we will have to address challenges that we have not been able to face up to so far.

Kalpana Sharma

Independent journalist, columnist and author, based in Mumbai. *The Silence and the Storm: Narratives of violence against women in India* is her most recent book.

When you can spot the speck of a fishing boat on the horizon with your naked eye, you know that something has changed. The usual suffocating brown cloud has lifted. The air is clear. And the sky is a blue that you have forgotten.

The world *has* changed in 2020. A new coronavirus has literally knocked the air out of the world. Each day brings greater uncertainty, more news of death and infection, and increasing anxiety about jobs and the economy as we battle a disease that has no cure – yet.

Nothing can prepare you for the unexpected. But if there is one lesson to be learned, it is that those countries that invested in affordable and accessible health care are today best equipped to deal with an unexpected health crisis.

Given the nature of this new virus – contagious, deadly and swift – one would have expected nations, and people within nations, to come together to fight it. Instead, tragically, we have watched how COVID-19 has laid bare the existing fault-lines in all our societies.

> "The world has changed in 2020"

© Anindito Mukherjee

The announcement of a lockdown in India resulted in a mass exodus of migrant workers from the cities to their villages. New Delhi, March 2020.

Fault-lines exposed

At a time when a virus is not choosy about who it infects, our societies continue to discriminate against their own people on the basis of age-old entrenched attitudes towards the 'other' – be it people from another religion or another race. A pandemic cannot erase hate and prejudice; tragically, it tends to exacerbate them.

Another fault-line exposed is inequality. We can watch what the French economist Thomas Piketty terms "the violence of inequality" playing out in this crisis. Those at the bottom, without a safety net, are also the very people now struggling to stay afloat during this global pandemic.

In India, this "violence of inequality" has played out in a heartbreakingly vivid manner in the spring of 2020, as a nation of 1.3 billion people was locked down to stem the spread of COVID-19. Thousands of men and women – left adrift in cities where they had migrated, looking for work and sustenance – lost their jobs when the economy ground to a halt. With no money or safety net, they were left with no alternative but to set out on foot, walking hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes in the countryside.

They trudged in the heat, with little food and water. Some survived, but many died on the way. The images of this exodus of rural migrants are testimony to how

unjust patterns of economic development elevated their suffering in the event of such an emergency.

The third fault-line that runs through every society, but jumps out at times of crisis, is that of gender. Women are "locked down" with their abusers, with few avenues of escape. Yet this phenomenon is not getting the attention it deserves. Could it be because this gross violation of the rights of millions of women across the world occurs even in so-called "normal" times?

> "There is little to indicate that things will not return to the old, profligate ways of living"

Urban poverty

In many countries, COVID-19 has struck hardest in urban areas. The disease has spread rapidly among the urban poor, who live in congested, often unhygienic, conditions. The chances of the people living in such conditions surviving this pandemic are slim – given the poor public health facilities, especially in most poorer countries.

These people literally hold up our cities – the conservancy workers, those in the service industry, in construction, in small-scale industries, domestic help, caregivers, and many more. Most of them are poorly paid and live in dense urban poor settlements, where there is no running water and inadequate to non-existent sanitation.

In such settlements, the spread of COVID-19 cannot be controlled by way of physical distancing – because the urban poor have no space to escape each other. The lack of running water makes hygiene measures such as frequent hand-washing and disinfecting surfaces impossible.

A man who was unable to return to his village observes the Ramadan fast, outside his shuttered shop in Old Delhi.

© Anindito Mukherjee

© Anindito Mukherjee

Connaught Place, the commercial centre at the heart of New Delhi, is deserted on Day 1 of India's lockdown.

Affordable housing has rarely been a priority in our cities. The consequence is what we are witnessing today. The overwhelming number of new infections have occurred in some of the most densely-packed and poorer parts of cities – whether in Mumbai or in New York.

A whiff of good news

And finally, coming back to clean air in our cities. The *Global Energy Review 2020*, the flagship report of the International Energy Agency (IEA) released in April, noted a record annual decline in carbon emissions of almost eight per cent this year. This is good news. Except that it is a fortunate fallout of an unfortunate crisis, and not the result of addressing the very real dangers of climate change.

COVID-19 has changed many things, yet changed nothing. But once this crisis passes, there is little to indicate that things will not return to the old, profligate ways of living. We have seen little evidence of any concrete plans to permanently reorder our cities, for instance, so that the poor can live with dignity, or where eco-friendly public transport is prioritized.

There are many challenges ahead, starting with the fundamental overhaul of our health-care systems. Countries, and states and provinces within countries, that have come out well in this crisis are those that have invested in quality public health.

The second is addressing the embedded inequities in our societies. Even the best systems fail in an unequal society. This is a long-term project, for sure, and cannot be addressed overnight. Irrespective of whether we live in countries with strong or weak economies, if there is systemic inequality, it will manifest during crises – by killing those who are already impaired and vulnerable.

"The world has enough resources for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed," Mahatma Gandhi once said. Yet, it is greed that has fuelled our economies – as borders and boundaries have lost relevance in the global fervour to satiate consumerist appetites. It has also threatened the future of the planet, as natural resources are devoured, never to be replaced.

COVID-19 has compelled us to slow down. But as and when we succeed in overcoming this particular crisis, will we witness a new world order? Will we recognize the precarious existence of millions among us? Will we hear the voices of the women, and the most vulnerable, once the noise of business-as-usual begins?

There are no easy answers. But we can, and must, ask. And, perhaps, hope.

Rethinking museums for the future

With new constraints on welcoming visitors, the Queens Museum in New York City – like many other institutions around the world – is reflecting on how best to redefine our ties to art and culture. The museum's team is working on an inclusive model that places artists, educators and residents at the heart of its activities, as it seeks to reinvent itself.

Sally Tallant

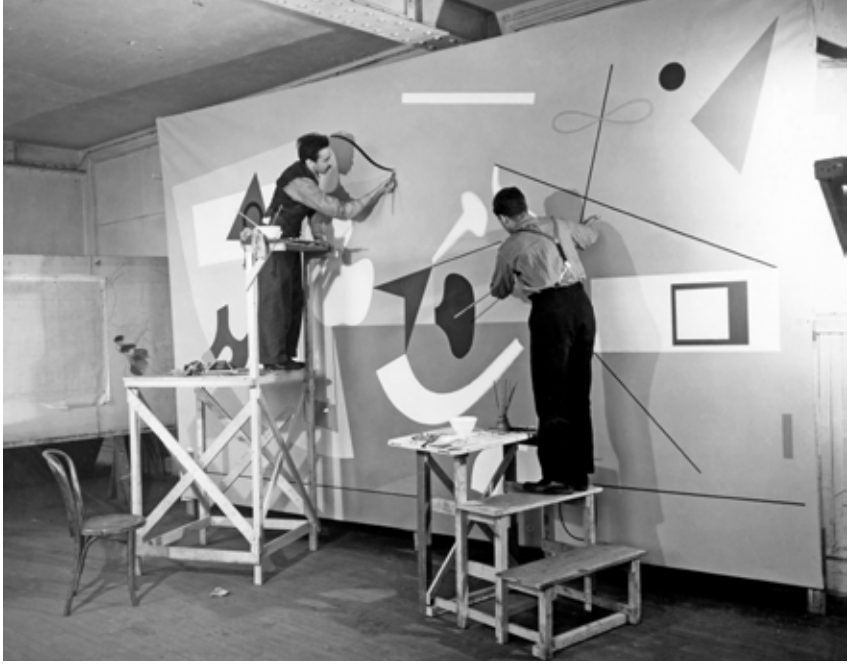
President and Executive Director, Queens Museum, New York.

Across the globe, museums have been closed due to the impact of COVID-19. This has meant that these institutions have had to learn quickly how to operate remotely and to remain relevant and visible while their buildings remain out of bounds. The role of culture and museums in our society is already going through rapid change. Digital content is now essential for maintaining audiences confined to their homes. The challenges of adapting to reduced visitor numbers, social distancing in the museum, and ensuring staff and public safety mean that the experience of culture has radically changed. These unpredictable times necessitate quick decision-making at all levels.

Globally, cultural leaders are working together to share information and knowledge at this time and there is a real sense of community, support and collaboration in spite of the challenges we are each facing. In New York, there have been regular meetings of small groups and much larger coalitions. Over 200 people from cultural organizations met daily to gather and share information and lobby together.

Detail from Maintenance Art, *a sculptural installation by Mierle Laderman Ukeles at the Queens Museum, 2017, in which the artist highlights the role of essential workers who maintain indispensable urban systems.*

© Hai Zhang / Courtesy of the Queens Museum



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➲ *The painter Ilya Bolotowsky (left) and John Joslyn, his assistant, working on a mural for the Hall of Medical Sciences at the 1939 New York World's Fair.*

We are finding innovative ways to keep our institutions afloat and to inspire our communities locally and globally.

A need to change models

Until there is a complete recovery, museums with large endowments and collections to draw from will be in a better position than small ones, that rely on contributions from supporters, who themselves will likely experience deep losses. All museums will be analysing their income streams. Large museums that depend on tourism and admission fees, will need to change their models. Small museums will have the advantage; we are nimble, used to working with small budgets and more attuned to the needs of our neighbours and communities.

As we navigate the challenges of a dramatically altered world due to COVID-19, we are thinking about the future of the Museum. Queens, the city's most diverse borough, where the museum is located, was at the epicentre of the pandemic in New York. Its neighbourhoods have been among the most vulnerable in the five boroughs. They include many of our essential workers – they drive cabs, stock supermarkets, make and deliver food, and work in the gig economy. Often, their jobs do not offer health insurance, benefits or employment protection. Many are undocumented immigrants and do not have the luxury of staying home and not working.

There has been a systemic political failure to provide equitable resources and health care, and this has led to the development of a society that lacks empathy, care and respect for people and for diversity. Working-class communities in our neighbourhoods are suffering disproportionately.

> "We will need to recover, reconnect, repair, heal"

Now we are living with a palpable precarity. We are faced with many questions: how will we make our way back to the Museum? What will it mean for people to gather once again in public places? What measures will we need to take to make our spaces safe – for our staff and for the public? Together with my colleagues in Queens, we are working with the community to understand what is relevant and what is needed. We will need to recover, reconnect, repair, heal; we will need to learn together how we can generate productive and joyful spaces, while responding to the care and practical needs of our communities.

Showcasing existing collections

The history of the Queens Museum, and its location, can provide a guide to understanding how we might create a relevant model of a Museum for the future, and develop strategies to support artists, educators and our communities. The collection of over 13,000 objects enables us to tell stories that will help us to inform our future, using the fragments of the past. We will invite artists, curators and the public to agitate and activate its content to make exhibitions and displays.

Founded in 1972, the Museum is located in the New York City Building, which was built to house the New York City Pavilion at the 1939-1940 World's Fair. The Fair was planned during the Great Depression (1929-1939) and intended as an uplifting project for the public and for the economy. The theme, *The World of Tomorrow*, emphasized this optimism and hope for the future. From 1946 to 1950, the building housed the General Assembly of the newly-formed United Nations until the site of the UN's current home in Manhattan became available.

Many important decisions were taken there, including the establishment of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). By way of honouring this history, we are developing a Children's Museum, which is inspired by the history of recreation and play in the surrounding park and in the building, which was also once used as an ice rink.

The strategies of the past – of employing artists to work together with communities and in organizations – can provide us with inspiration for how we might once again assert culture and the arts as an essential industry, and central to society and its recovery. We will need new financial models and new tax initiatives to aid recovery.

Writers, designers, architects, invited to contribute

For the 1939 World's Fair, many projects were produced through President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal work-relief programmes, which created employment, including artistic production in the wake of the Great Depression. Artists were paid to create work for government buildings, community centres and institutions through various programmes, which created employment for thousands of artists over the years. These initiatives and histories continue to inform generations of artists and organizers in the US.

Today, we face the prospect of mass unemployment and an economic recession, a growing refugee crisis, as well as living in the midst of a global health crisis. We will need to develop an understanding of how we can live and work with a constantly shifting world and how we can together face collective grief – grief for the loss of loved ones, loss of habitat due to the climate emergency, and grief for the loss of a way of living.

So, what have we learnt, what does it mean to reimagine a museum and what tools do we need to be able to create relevant and useful organizations? At the Queens Museum, we will embrace the uncertainty of this moment and trust that artists, writers, designers, poets and architects can help us to remake the Museum. We are developing a model of a museum that puts artists, educators and organizers at its centre. We will work in coalition with cultural, educational and community partners locally and create the conditions to support the production of work, ideas and collaboration. We will employ artists from our communities and will provide studio space, support, resources, technical support and mentors to create intergenerational and international conversations. We will reimagine how the Museum can operate and focus on production on-site, and in our neighbourhoods.

Education is at the heart of our work and we will continue to develop digital content and will broadcast from the Museum as well as convene and create much-needed moments of connection and intimacy. We will be hyper-local and international in our reach.

Connecting through art

Queens is multicultural in its traditions, and over 160 languages are spoken in the borough. This diversity will be reflected in the art that is produced and education and social practice that takes place. At the same time, the dissemination of what is produced, and descriptions of what takes place in the borough, will be communicated digitally to a global audience – both in places that reflect the backgrounds of the Queens communities, and in dialogue with other culturally diverse neighbourhoods and cities around the world.

"The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty; not knowing what comes next," wrote the American author Ursula K. Le Guin in her 1969 science-fiction novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Are we living in the dystopian future we feared and that was described so eloquently by Le Guin? I hope that we can find our way back to our communities. I hope that we can recover and reimagine our cultural spaces and once again create and connect through art and culture. I hope that this experience has shown us how we can overcome distance and find new ways to communicate, collaborate and build proximity and community.

I know that museums and culture have an important role to play in the healing and recovery that we will all need in the coming months and years, and look forward to us finding our place together with our communities – in Queens and elsewhere.

> "The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty…"

Creative industries: Increasing resilience

The cultural and creative sectors have been among the hardest hit by the pandemic. Museums were particularly affected, with nearly ninety per cent – or more than 85,000 institutions – forced to close their doors (UNESCO, May 2020) for varying lengths of time during the COVID-19 crisis.

Deprived of their public, these institutions are facing sharp declines in revenue. The professions linked to museums, their operation and the extent of their influence, could be seriously impacted as a result. A survey conducted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in mid-May on International Museum Day estimates that nearly thirteen per cent of the world's museums may never be in a position to reopen.

The crisis has also revealed major cultural and digital disparities. The digital divide, already significant between countries and regions, has been exacerbated by the crisis. In Africa and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – which account for only 1.5 per cent of the total number of museums worldwide – only five per cent of museums were able to offer alternative online content to audiences during the lockdown period, according to UNESCO.

In response to this cultural and social crisis, UNESCO launched the ResiliArt movement in April 2020, to highlight the considerable impact of lockdown measures on the culture sector. Its aim is to mobilize professionals from the cultural industry and other stakeholders to increase the resilience and sustainability of creative industries and cultural institutions.

As part of this movement, UNESCO Member States have placed among their priorities, the adoption of measures and policies to support and promote the diversity of cultural expressions – such as capacity-building, social protection for museum staff, digitization and inventorying of collections, and the development of online content.

This international mobilization has made it possible to initiate dialogues to inform countries on the development of policies, and financial mechanisms to help creative individuals and communities overcome the crisis. The discussions have highlighted the means available to the public and private sectors to preserve cultural ecosystems and explore paths to recovery.

By the end of May, over fifty ResiliArt debates had already been organized in more than thirty countries – with the participation of artists and cultural professionals from all the world's regions.

Education: An opportunity to reinvent teaching

More than 1.5 billion students – or ninety per cent of the world's student population – have been affected by temporary closures of schools and universities in 2020 due to the health crisis, according to UNESCO. Educational institutions have been forced, almost overnight, to switch to remote learning platforms and devise alternative teaching methods.

Poornima Luthra

Educator at the Copenhagen Business School, and founder and chief consultant of TalentED Consultancy ApS, a training and consultancy firm based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

With over a third of the global population under some form of lockdown due to COVID-19, the health crisis has caused an unprecedented disruption in education. From kindergarten to university, schools worldwide have been temporarily closed, forcing educators to find alternative teaching methods. This situation is likely to leave a lasting footprint.

"We will feel the effects of COVID-19 on students globally until a vaccine is widely available, at the very least," says Amy Valentine, executive director of Future of School, an American public charity that supports the growth of innovative school models. "The way systems and individual districts have responded to this crisis will have a ripple effect on students as they advance, ready or not, to new grade levels."

The negative impact on the mental health of students being away from the social interaction and routines that a school environment provides, is of prime concern. Even the technology- saturated generations of Z (children born in the years 1996 to 2015) and Alpha (children born after 2015) have been craving social interaction and physical experiences away from their devices. This has been perhaps the biggest challenge for educators to address through online platforms. "Human contact is important when it comes to education, especially for teens," a high school teacher in Singapore said. "Most students would definitely rather go to school, to feel included in a community, where there is more structure to their learning."

With stringent social-distancing requirements in place, it will likely be a while before social interaction levels return to pre-COVID-19 times.The impact of this on today's generations of learners may be felt for years to come. "Once schools reopen and a sense of normalcy prevails, the job of educators will be tough – to bring students up to speed, plug gaps in learning and provide greater social and emotional support to students who require it," Sarita Somaya, a primary teacher at an international school in Singapore, explained.

For many children around the world, schools provide their one main meal of the day. The closures have forced these children to seek out alternative options, often unsuccessfully. Gayathri Tirthapura, co-founder trustee of the Tejasvita Trust – an organization based in Bengaluru, which provides education to underserved communities in south India – explains that "families are struggling to have three meals a day, and are depending on private donors and relief packages announced by the government."

© UNICEF / Frank Dejongh

Seven-year-old Nelly studies on her tablet at home in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 2020. Educational videos produced by UNICEF and the country's Ministry of Education are also broadcast on national television.

Diplomas received by robots

Yet, in spite of the grim scenario, educational institutions around the world are finding creative and innovative ways to address the challenges posed by COVID-19 – from holding university graduations with robot avatars replacing students in Japan, to using social-distancing hats in China. Educators have also had to get creative about designing content to deliver academic lessons in an engaging way across the digital platforms available.

To address the lack of social interaction, counsellors in some schools have created themed activities to engage students – some educators have even organized virtual picnics with their classes. In rural schools, teachers have had to think of different ways to engage with students – often via text messages to parents' mobile devices and phone calls. Where children do not have access to even a pencil at home – let alone a computer – teachers have had to think on their feet to find new ways of teaching them.

© UNICEF / Ali Haj Suleiman

Nine-year-old Maria follows a pre-recorded lesson via WhatsApp on her father's smartphone at a camp for internally displaced people in Kili, north of Idlib, Syrian Arab Republic.

In countries including the United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand, concerted efforts have been made to ensure that disadvantaged children are provided laptops, tablet computers and mobile hotspots. In India, the team at Gurushala, a learning portal which provides digital education for teachers and content for students, explain that "access to education has never been easy for India's children from disadvantaged groups. With mobile and internet penetration growing by the day, there is a sudden spotlight on technology".

> "There is the chance that COVID-19 will be disruptive in a positive way"

The end of group activity?

What does this health crisis mean for education in the long run? "Primary classrooms have become more clinical

A global coalition, so learning never stops

The situation is unprecedented: schools in over 190 countries around the world closed their doors overnight, to contain the pandemic. By mid-April, 1.57 billion children and young people – ninety per cent of the world's school population – were out of school. This education crisis has disproportionately affected vulnerable and disadvantaged students, for whom school also plays a key role in terms of nutrition, health, and even emotional support.

To ensure educational continuity during the health crisis, UNESCO launched the Global Education Coalition on 26 March 2020. Its objective is to pool the resources of international partners, civil society, and private sector partners, to help countries develop equitable distance learning solutions. While endeavouring to ensure that responses are co-ordinated and meet the specific needs of different countries, the coalition will also work to facilitate the return of students to school when they reopen.

About a hundred United Nations agencies, international philanthropic, non-profit, and media organizations, and private enterprises have joined the initiative. They include Microsoft, Google, Weidong, KPMG, Khan Academy, and the BBC World Service. Mobile phone operators like Orange and Vodafone have also partnered with the coalition, to provide increased connectivity and free access to online educational content.

While the proportion of young people without internet access at home is under fifteen per cent in Western Europe and North America, it is as high as eighty per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. Although mobile phones today allow learners to access information, connect with their teachers and each other, about 56 million students live in areas with no mobile networks – around half of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

UNESCO's work in the coalition has included the global monitoring of national and localized school closures and the numbers of students affected. It has also set up weekly webinars for education ministry officials on the educational response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

– where students can't share, use shared resources or work in huddles, excited over a science experiment. I hope I'm mistaken, but will this be the end of group work and rotations? Will we go back to classrooms with the teacher lecturing at the front and students sitting in their seats all day?" Taryn Hansen, a primary school teacher in Perth, Western Australia, where schools reopened in late April, wondered.

Sankalp Chaturvedi, an associate professor at Imperial College Business School, London, believes that "in the long term, higher education will still be done in the classrooms. People will be more comfortable with online education as an alternative, which was not as evident or effective before the lockdown."

"There is the chance that COVID-19 will be disruptive in a positive way," Sandy Mackenzie, director of the Copenhagen International School, predicts. This may lead "schools to discard what was obsolete, to employ technology effectively and to ensure that educators are developing the skills that new generations need for the decades to come."

Reduced inequalities in education

The use of digital technology implies widespread access to it. The pandemic has highlighted the inequality in both the quality and accessibility to education globally, and the digital divide that exists, even in developed nations. With only sixty per cent of the global population being online prior to the pandemic, governments, publishers, technology providers and network operators have had to work together to enable educators to provide asynchronous and synchronous education online to as many students globally as possible.

One programme that does this is the Learning Passport, a digital remote learning platform, originally developed for displaced and refugee children by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with Microsoft. Due to start as a pilot programme in 2020 – with children in Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Ukraine being the first to experience it – the project has rapidly expanded its reach to include schools affected by closures worldwide. Now all countries with a curriculum capable of being taught online have access to the programme's content through online books, videos and additional support for parents of children with learning disabilities.

> "Even technology-saturated generations of children have been craving social interaction"

© UNICEF / Yuyuan Ma

Xiaoyu, a high school student in Beijing, follows an online learning programme at home on an educational platform set up by the government. Her mother, seen in the background, also works remotely, February 2020.

To achieve Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the next decade, we will, hopefully, see more public and private institutions come together to make our educational systems more resilient, inclusive and equitable for all.

Rethinking the role of the educator

The new remote learning environment has meant that educators have had to think creatively about content and the best possible ways to teach online. This provides the catalyst for rethinking the role of the educator, while adding value to what is taught.

This experience has also shown us that there is potential for flexibility in how education is delivered – creating alternatives to more traditional educational formats and structures. Educators and parents have observed that some of their students or children are flourishing in the new context. This could lead to the development of more sophisticated remote learning, or blended learning options for students who prefer such an educational experience.

This crisis has resulted in a digital disruption, but also underlined the need to rethink what future generations are taught. This has been driven more recently by research from the World Economic Forum (and other organizations) on skills required by the future workforce. These future skills include higher cognitive skills of entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and social and emotional intelligence skills – such as resilience, adaptability and having a growth mindset.

To solve some of the world's most pressing global challenges in the future, education will need to focus on the development of these skills.

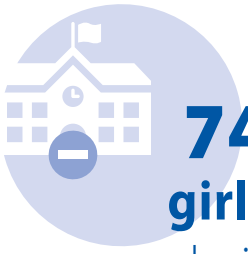
Redefining what education will look like for future generations in a post-COVID-19 world will require the combined efforts of the various stakeholders. They will have to think hard and honestly about the issues involved, and then take the necessary actions to address them.

"Women are the unsung heroes of this crisis"

The health crisis, and the subsequent widespread lockdowns worldwide, have led to a surge in violence against women. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, warns that women's rights could be diminished as a result of the pandemic.

Interview by Laetitia Kaci

UNESCO



743 million
girls out of school
during the pandemic

(UNESCO, April 2020)

School closures increase drop-out rates that disproportionately affect adolescent girls, reinforcing gender disparities in education.

● ***In March 2020, you warned of an increase in gender inequality due to the health crisis. Why is this pandemic particularly detrimental to women?***

There is no crisis that is gender neutral, and this one is no different. Often, the crisis accentuates the inequalities between men and women that already exist.

Women have experienced great hardships due to this pandemic. Many of them work on the front line and have been directly exposed to the virus. They have also been hit hard by its economic and social consequences. The interruption of activity due to the crisis has led to greater economic hardship for women, who generally work in more precarious and lower-paid jobs than men. Many of them have lost their means of livelihood.

Additionally, many women depend on social services, which have become less accessible during this period. Those who did not have access to social support in the first place, are even worse hit.

● ***The pandemic has brought to the forefront crucial professions – such as nurses, teachers, cashiers – in which women are over-represented. Could this crisis change the way we perceive these workers?***

Women are the real heroes of this crisis, even if they are not recognized as such. But curiously, there seems to be a lack of awareness that women are actually shouldering the response to this crisis. Even if they are saving lives, they remain unsung heroes. I hope that this perception will change. That is why we have to keep talking about the role they play – put their efforts front and centre, so no one can escape it.

● ***What can women bring to crisis management?***

Women are viewed by our societies as the main carers, whether paid or unpaid. But they also know how to go beyond thinking of this as a purely health-related crisis to be managed. Because women know how to multitask, they are perhaps better placed to understand that in a situation like this, we are dealing with several factors – such as economic, social, health and food security. They have a better understanding of intersectionality because they experience it on a daily basis. So they are already hardwired to deal with crises like these.

● ***In a statement in April 2020, you referred to the shadow pandemic of increased violence against women. What impact have the lockdowns had on the situation of women?***

In that statement, I said that helplines and shelters for victims of domestic violence around the world have

Up to **25%**
increase in **violence**
against girls and **women**

(United Nations, April 2020)

Based on data from countries with reporting systems. In some countries, reported cases have doubled.

© UN Women / Elma Okic

reported an increase in calls for help. The confinement has exacerbated tensions and increased the isolation of women with abusive partners, while cutting them off from the services that are best able to help them. This particular context has made reporting abuse even more complicated, due to limitations on women's and girls' access to phones and helplines, and disrupted public services like police, justice and social services.

In some countries, where services to protect victims of domestic violence are not considered essential services, women have been deprived of all help, while they remain locked in their homes with their abusers. This has made it even more difficult for women to cope with the violence.

> "The confinement has exacerbated tensions and increased the isolation of women"

Is there a risk that women's rights are being diminished?

Definitely, women's rights have taken a step back – they are even grinding to a halt in some cases. We must not allow this to happen.

70% women **exposed to the virus** in **health systems**

As women make up the majority of health-care workers (WHO, 2019), **they are on the front line in the fight against COVID-19, and are at greater risk of being infected.**

This year, 2020, is a big year for women. It marks the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (on Women, Peace and Security). We must push on all the plans that we have, and get ready for when it is possible to be more active. But we have to stay on top of that agenda and we cannot shelve it. It is as important for women to achieve their rights as it is to survive COVID-19. These two battles [for women's rights and against the disease] have to be fought together. And we have to win them both.

● ***How can we ensure that women's rights are not victims of this crisis?***

In the economy, for instance, we have to make sure that the stimulus packages [offered by governments in different

countries] target women very clearly, and that they work for the women in the informal sector. These are some of the rights that we will have to continue to fight for. The fight against gender-based violence will not end after the crisis. We must remain vigilant and aim to flatten the curve of violence against women.

We must also encourage women to take up positions of leadership in the response to the pandemic in the fight against the virus – especially in countries where they are under-represented in the health sector and beyond – and call for fairer representation in certain sectors. This is where our efforts must be focused.

It is also necessary to encourage the development of distance education, while ensuring that it is not accompanied by a widening of the digital divide. Communities do not always have access to technology, and even where there is technology, there is still a gender digital divide. We have to continue to make that fight a reality. We have to make sure that girls in poor communities do not miss out on education when education moves to digital platforms.

I hope that UNESCO, UN Women, the Broadband Commission, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and ministries of education can work together to ensure that a broadband infrastructure is established in rural schools and communities in informal settlements – so that everyone, everywhere, has access to education.

47 million women **deprived** of **modern contraceptives**

(UNFPA, April 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the overburdening of health systems and the closure of social service institutions, including family planning facilities on which these women depend.

740 million women **at risk of poverty**

The economic crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affects the 740 million women working in the informal sector (ILO, January 2019).

© UN Women / Ryan Brown

Christine Banlog (centre), carries large sacks of produce up the crowded stairs to the Sandaga market in Douala, Cameroon. The 64-year-old has worked as a market woman for twenty-two years.

Latin America:

Towards a new social pact

Declining incomes, school drop-outs, the growth of informal work, and steep rises in unemployment. The social consequences of the health crisis for the inhabitants of the Latin America and the Caribbean region have been massive. The author calls for the establishment of a fairer and more supportive social system to avoid a deepening of inequalities.

Karina Batthyány

Executive Secretary of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) and Professor of Sociology, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay.

The coronavirus pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the lives of people in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The repercussions are particularly severe for low-income households. The health emergency declared in response to COVID-19 completely disrupted everyday life, like in most countries around the world.

The magnitude of the crisis in the region has reopened debates on the role of the state, politics in general, and public policies in particular. While some predict the end of humanity, others argue that nothing will change. What is certain, though, is that we are in a phase of transition – our societies, in some aspects, will undergo reconfigurations in the short and medium term.

Forecasts by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) predict a 5.3 per cent fall in regional gross domestic product (GDP) by 2020 – the worst recession in the region in the last 100 years. Unemployment is also projected to rise by 12 million, in an area where fifty-three per cent of jobs are in the informal economy. This is particularly serious, given that few countries in the region offer unemployment benefits. In 2019, only Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Uruguay had unemployment insurance for workers in the formal sector.

The poorest are hardest hit

Given the economic and social inequalities in the region, the consequences of unemployment will disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable layers of the middle-income population. Women will also be impacted more severely.

The crisis is also likely to result in an increase in informal jobs, as poorer families are forced to send their children to work, in order to survive. This will lead to an increase in child labour. Poverty is projected to increase by 3.5 percentage points, while extreme poverty is set to grow by 2.3 percentage points (ECLAC, 2020).

The collapse of health systems in many countries also emphasizes the need to move towards the consolidation of a universal health system – that guarantees quality and has the necessary resources to cope in times of crises. It should also take a comprehensive approach to health, accounting for the socio-economic situation of people and their quality of life.

The current economic model has generated inequalities and a high concentration of wealth. And in the absence of a universal welfare state, access to social benefits remains a privilege in the region. This was already a major problem before the pandemic, but it is now a question of survival. It is therefore essential, in the medium term, to rethink economic, social and labour policies, and to promote decent work and the universal fulfilment of social rights.

© Nadège Mazars / Covid Times Project

Red flags appear at windows in working-class neighbourhoods in Bogota, Colombia, signalling to the government that families do not have enough to eat, April 2020.

A basic income

The current context opens the way for a debate on the need for a minimum basic income in the region. This should be based on the premise that access to essential goods is a necessary condition for the existence of a democratic citizenship, which guarantees the dignity of all. The LAC is the most unequal region in the world, and this health crisis is likely to accentuate these inequalities even further.

Finally, it is important to analyse the impact of the health emergency on gender inequalities. A central dimension of this is in the area of care – of children and the elderly – which can be seen as an expression of the division of labour between the sexes.

While lockdowns have proven to be effective to combat COVID-19, they have disrupted the dynamics of employment, domestic life and the way we care for children and the elderly. Workers in the informal sector, women and children have been especially affected. The containment has had a disproportionate effect on women's lives, as they are mostly responsible for domestic and care work – tasks that contribute to the sustenance of households, and have historically enabled the world to function.

© Maud Veith

A street vendor in Lima, Peru, hawking ceviche, a local seafood dish marinated in lime juice and served cold, 2016.

> "The current economic model has generated inequalities and a high concentration of wealth"

Cities put to the test

Cities have been particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus has spread rapidly through densely populated areas, they have had to find ways to tackle the social, economic, and health crises stemming from the outbreak.

Among the cities that have stood out most for their efforts in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups, are those belonging to the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR). The urban platform against racism and discrimination, launched by UNESCO, gathers more than 500 cities around the world.

Since its inception in 2004, ICCAR has been involved in policy development, capacity building and awareness-raising activities. It advocates global solidarity to promote inclusive urban development free of all forms of discrimination. In the wake of the pandemic, ICCAR member cities have committed to sharing their responses with all other cities in the network – to learn from each other and provide a wide array of policy options to address the crisis.

In Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, and one of the members of the Coalition of African Cities against Racism and Discrimination, health-related information was disseminated through communities via their ward councillors, interreligious councils, associations for disabled persons, market chairpersons, youth leaders and tribal leaders. All of them have received continuous sensitization training on COVID-19 responses.

As one of the members of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, the Canadian municipality of Wood Buffalo set up a Vulnerable Persons Registry for individuals and communities to provide regular check-ins, information and referrals, and mental health support. City staff who could not work from home were redeployed as "Isolation Angels" – providing food hampers and activity kits to those in self-isolation. Lastly, a curbside support centre was established, with phones and laptops for vulnerable populations to register for Red Cross and other support.

In Turkey, Kadıköy (a district of Istanbul), a member of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR), established a Corona Crisis Desk, to support the elderly and those living alone. Hundreds of hot meals were prepared every day by famous chefs in the city's canteen and then distributed by its staff to those in need.

> “Women account for half the region’s informal workers”

© Valentina Cortese Lastra

A girl participating in a performance by women of all ages in Chile, in a protest to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November 2019.

Women more vulnerable

According to figures from the International Labour Organization (ILO), 126 million women work in the informal sector in the LAC. That accounts for about half of the region’s female population. Informal work is synonymous with job insecurity, low incomes, and a lack of basic protection mechanisms, particularly in a crisis like the current one.

The levels of informal employment are extremely high in many countries in the region. In Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, eighty-three per cent of women have informal jobs with no social security cover or protection under labour laws. Nearly forty per cent of working women in the LAC are employed in the retail, catering, hotel and domestic sectors. These are the most affected and the least protected jobs in the context of the current crisis.

As a result, a large proportion of Latin American women have lost their incomes in these difficult times, making their situation even more precarious. This could further widen the economic gap between women and men. For every 100 men living in extreme poverty in Latin America today, there are 132 women.

A new “social pact”

The lockdowns in the region have also resulted in an escalation of gender-based violence. We know that even in “normal” times, financial insecurity and social instability contribute to domestic violence. Social distancing and stay-at-home messaging was promoted under the premise that the home is a safe place for people to shield from the pandemic. But this was not the case for many women and children.

Faced with these challenges, there is a need to ultimately build a new “social pact” – based on the recognition of solidarity and interdependence as fundamental values for the establishment of a fairer social system in the LAC. This crisis has highlighted the consequences of the commodification of public and common resources on our lives. The pandemic has clearly demonstrated that states are not dead yet, and that they have a central role to play in the implementation of policies that are capable of effectively transforming everyday lives.

These public policies must address the continually-deferred challenge of building universal systems of protection. They should be focused on people rather than the market, and put life and health care at the centre. To meet this challenge, the state – and especially the social state – has a major role to play, as does the need for greater regional and international collaboration and co-operation.

The health crisis:

Fertile ground for disinformation

Disinformation and conspiracy theories have proliferated on social media during the pandemic. Black tea, neem leaves and pepper soup have been touted as miracle cures for COVID-19, in Africa and elsewhere. To combat this infodemic, digital platforms must be made more accountable, fake news tracked and called out, and media literacy developed.

Diomma Dramé

Journalist and health researcher at the French-language website of Africa Check, based in Dakar, Senegal. The non-profit is Africa's first independent fact-checking organization.

COVID-19, an unknown disease till 2020, has caused an unprecedented global health crisis. Many questions about this new virus still remain unanswered by scientists – including the nature of immunity of those who have been infected, the seasonality of the virus, and its capacity to mutate. Our lack of knowledge about this disease and its evolution have fuelled a thirst for information, in Africa and elsewhere. It has also led to the proliferation of rumours, fake news and disinformation – with social media networks serving as sounding-boards.

The French-language office of Africa Check has been working to combat disinformation since the beginning of the outbreak. Using specialists and researchers to fact-check and verify stories, the Dakar-based website has published around fifty articles relating to COVID-19.

In the absence of effective treatments for the disease, articles and messages about purported miracle cures have proliferated. Following research and claims by a French physician and infectious diseases specialist, Didier Raoult, on the use of hydroxychloroquine as a cure for COVID-19, information spread through WhatsApp and Twitter in several West African countries that the leaves of the neem tree contained chloroquine. This sparked a mad rush for these leaves. However, the quinine derivative does not come from a plant, but is obtained through chemical synthesis. Similarly, black tea, pepper soup, vitamin C, and garlic have been put forward on social media as foods that help prevent or cure the disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) has refuted these claims.

Conspiracy theories

At the same time, the epidemic has led to the dissemination of images and videos that have been manipulated or taken out of context. Some of these have alleged, for example, that vaccination campaigns could be forced, and are actually designed to spread the virus. Others seek to spread discrimination, targeting Chinese nationals in particular. A video showing the burning of a building containing shops in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State in Nigeria, was wrongly portrayed as a reprisal against its Chinese owner. But a tweet from

Fighting the infodemic

Faced with the flood of rumours and disinformation on the internet and social media networks during the pandemic, journalists have had to work twice as hard as usual to counter inaccurate or misleading news. All the more so now, since forty-two per cent of the more than 178 million tweets on Twitter linked to COVID-19 were produced by robots, and forty per cent were considered "unreliable", according to a study by Italy's Bruno Kessler Foundation.

To improve access to information, UNESCO has created the Resource Centre of Responses to COVID-19, a clearing house for selected verified information on the health crisis. Its purpose is to provide advice to combat misinformation, encourage the sharing of experiences and best practices, and foster North-South and South-South co-operation.

The Organization has also made available several handbooks to support journalists on the front line in the fight against disinformation.

In partnership with the Innovation for Policy Foundation (i4Policy), UNESCO has also launched the #DontGoViral online campaign. Based primarily on the mobilization of artists and cultural entrepreneurs in Africa, the initiative is designed to inform communities about COVID-19 by giving them access to free, open-licence content in different African languages.

the Oyo State government clarified that the building was in fact owned by a Nigerian, and eighty per cent of those employed there were Nigerian.

In a spurious attempt to explain the emergence of the pandemic and its spread, stories of a Western conspiracy against Africa have been circulated by internet users across the continent. This was done, in particular, by hijacking the words of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, who warned in an interview with Radio France Internationale (RFI) on 27 March 2020 that COVID-19 could kill millions in Africa if immediate action was not taken. The theory of a vaccine funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to control African populations also spread like wildfire. This information is not only blatantly false, it is deliberately designed to mislead.

The circulation of rumours and their consequences is not specific to the coronavirus crisis. In 2014, fake news provoked resistance to the response strategy to combat the Ebola virus in some of the affected countries.

In an article, "The 'exceptionality' of Ebola and popular 'reticences' in Guinea-Conakry," published in 2015 in the journal *Anthropologie & Santé*, Sylvain Landry Faye explains that the first cases of deaths due to the virus in the same family had been interpreted as a sign of mystical punishment, or a curse brought on by committing a theft or adultery. These rumours fuelled beliefs that the disease was not real – making communities develop attitudes that rejected the response strategy put in place by the state and its partners to stem the epidemic. Other rumours portrayed Ebola Treatment Centres (ETCs) as contamination sites – places of death where bodies and organs were being trafficked.

© Falco / Cartoon Movement

> "Social media has given fake news an unprecedented impact"

Filling a void

In the case of coronavirus, social media and apps like Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp have given fake news an unprecedented impact. Besides providing global access to information, these platforms also allow their users to add or produce material, and circulate it in record time. Posted on 20 April 2020, the video on the Ibadan fire had been shared over 380,000 times three days later.

Other factors have also encouraged the circulation of rumours and fake news. In Senegal, for example, the traditional media's focus on the number of people infected by COVID-19 and messages about the best way to prevent the spread of the virus did not fully satisfy the needs of citizens – who were looking for more positive news on possible treatments. So social media networks were employed to fill this void.

Fake news, which usually circulates in groups or circles of like-minded individuals, is easily consumed and considered to be "well-sourced" information. Voice messages and texts are often attributed to personalities, authorities or hospital service providers – who use their false authority to offer simple solutions, like regularly drinking hot or salty water to disinfect the throat. So-called religious leaders can also play this role.

It is not always easy for the ordinary citizen to distinguish between information from traditional media – which follows the rigours of news collection, processing, and verification – and information available via social media, even when this is clearly inaccurate or misleading. The desire to believe – especially in times of crisis – can outweigh the desire to be informed.

Developing critical thinking

The avalanche of fake news on social media, which the WHO has labelled an infodemic, has prompted digital platforms to launch an offensive to curb the viral spread of false information. This is done by promoting content from official sources, or banning advertisements touting miracle cures. Journalists specialized in fact-checking, like those at Africa Check and other fact-checking websites around the world, work hard to correct facts and guarantee reliable sources of information.

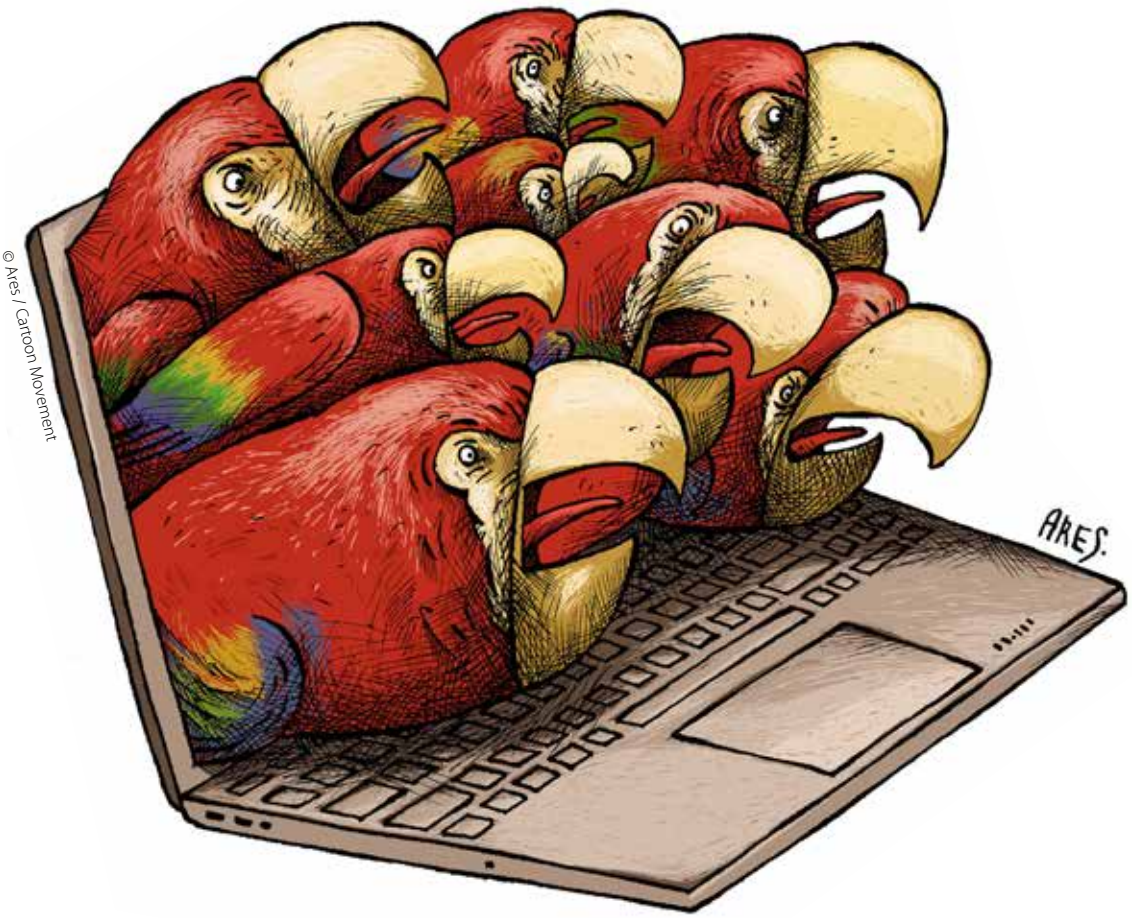
However, these efforts to stem the deluge of misinformation are clearly not enough. In May, the UN launched *Verified*, a global campaign which will create a cadre of "digital first responders" to share compelling, clear and accurate information about the crisis, and raise awareness about the risks of misinformation.

In 2019, Facebook launched a new flagging tool, allowing Instagram users to flag posts that they think contain fake news. It might also be a good idea to involve influential social media bloggers to raise awareness and train their administrators and moderators to combat false news.

Successful initiatives can be replicated. One example is Wa FM, an internet radio station set up in March 2020 to fight fake news on COVID-19 in Côte d'Ivoire. Broadcast primarily on Whatsapp, it relies on a network of around 200 volunteer journalists who walk the streets of Yopougon, a working-class neighbourhood in Abidjan – cross-checking information to correct fake news on social media, and to educate and raise people's awareness.

To combat fake news, it is necessary to use the same channels that disseminate and feed it. In Africa and elsewhere, it is also necessary to encourage critical thinking in citizens, regarding the information they receive. This could be done by encouraging them to question information sources and the identity of the authors. Without this kind of media education, conspiracy theories and fake news will continue to spread unchecked.

> "The desire to believe, especially in times of crisis, can outweigh the desire to be informed"



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Research:

"This epidemic will be a detonator"

Nathalie Strub-Wourgaft is one of the initiators of the COVID-19 Clinical Research Coalition, launched in April 2020. It brings together scientists, physicians, donors and policymakers from over thirty countries, to accelerate research on the disease in resource-poor nations. She argues that research must be specifically adapted to the needs of these countries.

Nathalie Strub-Wourgaft

Director of Neglected Tropical Diseases at the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), an independent research organization based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Interview by Agnès Bardon

UNESCO

● ***What motivated the creation of the COVID-19 Clinical Research Coalition?***

Clinical research on the coronavirus was already very active by mid-March – but it was concentrated in rich countries, where the majority of infected people were also located. There were a number of us who were concerned that no clinical trials were planned in countries in the South, whether in Africa, Asia or Latin America. There were still only a few cases there, but projections predicted that the epidemic would escalate, particularly in Africa. There was a clear imbalance between North and South in research. That is why we launched the Coalition. We still had in mind what happened at the time of the health crisis with the Ebola virus. A multitude of research projects had emerged at that time, but there was no co-ordination and no sharing of information between these different projects. It was necessary to avoid repeating those mistakes.

As COVID-19 was a new disease, everything had to be done from scratch – new protocols had to be invented, samples had to be described, clinical images had to be created. The research developed in parallel with epidemiology. It was necessary to go very quickly, but it was also necessary to avoid duplication in order to provide rapid answers to basic questions – how to avoid fatalities, how to avoid hospitalization, how to protect oneself, who were the risk groups? To make progress on these issues, however, a high level of analytical power is needed, which means bringing together information and data.

● ***Why is it necessary to develop specific research for countries with low resources?***

The therapeutic propositions that could be developed in the North are not applicable as such in the South – if only because comorbidities are not the same from one region to another. In Africa, for example, malaria, tuberculosis, or HIV are widespread, which is not the case in Europe. Moreover, health systems are different. In industrialized countries, hospitals have had difficulty coping with the influx of patients with severe forms of the disease. What about those not equipped with artificial respirators? As far as treatments are concerned, the molecules that are showing some promising results today are injectable molecules, and therefore require trained hospital staff. If this personnel is not available, other therapeutic solutions must be found.

In addition, it is unclear whether the virus is the same everywhere. It would appear there are geographical variants. Finally, the problems addressed by the social sciences also depend on the regional context – lockdown is not the same in Delhi as it is in a rural area in France. The impact of this confinement and its acceptability by the population varies from one region to another. Therefore, in research, the notion of context is essential. You cannot conduct scientific research in industrialized countries and apply it everywhere else. Research must be guided by the priorities of countries.

© Thierry Olivier Epi2mik

From microscopic to macroscopic, *drawing by French artist Thierry Olivier Epi2mik.*

● ***Could a health crisis of this magnitude raise awareness of the need to federate research efforts?***

Absolutely. We need to federate efforts in terms of identifying treatments, and diagnoses. It is necessary for the major donors to agree on priorities, which is absolutely essential in the response. We are at a time in history when we are all concerned by a global health

© Thierry Olivier Epi2mik / Courtesy of Cabinet d'amateur

Epidemic, *painting by Thierry Olivier Epi2mik, 2015.*

> "This new virus leaves us no choice but to work together"

problem. This is a totally new situation. Even the Ebola crisis was finally identified as an African problem. This new virus leaves us no choice but to work together. The fact that the World Health Organization (WHO) has named its first clinical trial "Solidarity" is not insignificant.

● ***Are we witnessing the beginnings of a better governance of research efforts?***

It is still a little early to say. The will is there, and we have better collaboration among the research community than in the past. We cannot yet talk about better governance, but we are getting closer to it. At the same time, nearly a thousand different clinical trials have been launched on COVID-19 – which means that internationally, there is no real collaboration.

This health crisis will be a tipping point, although it is still difficult to measure its impact. We are in the process of building a new way of working, but much remains to be done. One of the achievements is that today, we are trying to integrate the issue of access into research projects. At DNDi, for example, we are currently working on a clinical trial. We are looking at molecules that will be made available to populations, and will be accessible on a large scale. It seems obvious, but this hasn't always been the case.

● ***Could we talk about a breakthrough in this health crisis?***

There will be a before and an after. How could it be otherwise when the infections can be counted in millions, the deaths in hundreds of thousands? If this is not the case, it means that we are in denial about what we have just experienced. Time has been lost in research on this disease, but less than in the past. Ebola was a turning point. COVID-19 will be a detonator. This crisis is undeniably a lesson. Some people have been trying to sound the alarm for several years – like Bill Gates, who warned of a pandemic many years ago. Some had suggested that WHO member countries should devote 0.1 per cent of their budgets to research, according to priorities defined by the research imperatives of the day. Those voices must now be heard.

Indigenous peoples:

Vulnerable, yet resilient

The global health crisis has highlighted the resilience of some indigenous communities. But above all, it has revealed the fragility of these populations – whose poverty, malnutrition and poor access to health care makes them particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases.

A woman tattooed according to the 1000-year-old Kalinga tradition, looks out of her window in the remote village of Buscalan in the Cordillera.

© Jacob Maentz

Minnie Degawan

Director of the Traditional and Indigenous Peoples programme at Conservation International in the United States.

Indigenous peoples have always isolated themselves from the rest of the world when circumstances required it. In the Cordillera in the Philippines, for example, such a practice – known as *ubaya* or *tengaw* – is regularly observed at specific points of the agricultural cycle, to allow for the earth and the people to rest.

No one is allowed in or out of the community, including community members who happen to be outside when the lockdown was announced. A knotted clump of leaves is placed at various entrances and exits to signify that the community is on *ubaya*. It is taken very seriously by community members and neighbours alike – to violate it is to invite disaster for the entire community.

> “Poverty, malnutrition, and a high rate of pre-existing health problems have aggravated the risks of these populations”

The rituals which accompany the *ubaya* are an important part of the community response. They are not meant to instil fear or invite evil, but serve to strengthen the sense of community, as the elders call for the protection of all, including nature. Similar rituals – which emphasize the need to achieve a balance between the spiritual and physical world – are performed by elders in different indigenous communities in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to protect their villages. During these lockdowns, community members look out for those in need,

and extend help and share food, including dried sweet potatoes that have been stored for a rainy day.

Poverty and malnutrition

These traditional practices helped indigenous populations to cope with the containment constraints imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic and to organize their survival. "Their good practices of traditional healing and knowledge, such as sealing off communities to prevent the spread of diseases and of voluntary isolation, are being followed throughout the world today," stated Anne Nuorgam, Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).

But the health crisis has also acutely revealed the vulnerability of these communities. Indigenous populations – who suffer from a lack of health-care facilities and insufficient access to basic services, sanitation facilities and key preventive measures, including safe drinking water, soap and disinfectants – are the hardest hit by socio-economic marginalization that puts them at a disproportionate risk during public health emergencies.

Their continued struggle with deforestation, climate change and the loss of traditional livelihoods make them particularly vulnerable to new infectious diseases. Poverty, malnutrition, and a high rate of pre-existing health problems have aggravated the risks of these populations – many of whom dwell in multi-generational homes, in close proximity with their elders.

> "The efforts of governments to respond to the particular needs of communities are often sketchy"

Hunter-gatherers from the Aeta indigenous tribe hunting for birds and monkeys in a forest on Luzon island, the Philippines. They are thought to be among the country's earliest inhabitants.

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A young boy from the Ifugao community of wet-rice agriculturalists in the Philippines, is helped by elders to don the traditional dress for the annual punnuk *ritual, which marks the end of the harvest.*

Testing their way of life

The pandemic has only exacerbated the multiple problems faced by indigenous populations. In northern Thailand, for example, forest fires are raging, adding pressures to food security, and threats to physical well-being. The Naga people in India's north-east are faced with increased discrimination owing to their physical appearance and misconceptions about the virus. Naga students have been turned away from their lodgings and subjected to violence solely because of their Chinese features. The Dumagats of Southern Luzon in the Philippines dealt with food shortages while trying to stop the government from constructing the Kaliwa and Kanan dams in their territory. A similar story played out in Ecuador, where miners continued to pass through indigenous territories to extract oil, in spite of the lockdown.

But the current crisis is testing their way of life. Many cultural practices and traditions which call for gatherings and processions for events such as harvests or coming-of-age ceremonies, have been shelved in the interest of the safety of elders and the most vulnerable.

The efforts of governments to respond to the particular needs of communities are often sketchy, and do not address the long-term impacts on the livelihoods and survival of indigenous peoples as distinct populations. Some immediate steps must be taken to ensure that indigenous peoples are "informed, protected and prioritized" during the pandemic, Nuorgam stressed in a statement.

A key factor is to make sure that reliable and appropriate information is provided in indigenous languages. "The indigenous elders are a priority for our communities as our keepers of history and traditions and cultures," the UNPFII chairperson added. "We also ask Member States to ensure that indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact exercise their right to self-determination and their decision to be isolated be respected."

Any intervention or plan must have indigenous communities at the centre, in terms of their agency and rights. They have emphatically demonstrated that where traditional knowledge is still being utilized – and when they are in full control of their resources, and freely exercising their right to self-determination – they are more able to protect themselves, and nature and their environments. This is also true in the face of new challenges.

Shifting borders:

Invisible, but very real

Today's borders are no longer necessarily made of bricks and barbed wire. They are increasingly becoming moving barriers that rely on cutting-edge technologies and complex regulations to impose travel restrictions on citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accentuated this phenomenon.

Ayelet Shachar

Director at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, in Göttingen, Germany. *The Shifting Border: Legal Cartographies of Migration and Mobility* is her most recent book.

In 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, many predicted that sealed gates would soon become relics of a bygone era. Today, we find a different reality. Instead of disappearing, borders are metamorphosing. The border itself has evolved to become a moving barrier, an unmoored legal construct. It has broken free of the map; it may extend beyond the edge of territories or into their interiors. The unmooring of state power from any fixed geographical marker has created a new paradigm: *the shifting border.*

The shifting border is not fixed in time and place; it consists of legal portals rather than physical barriers. Responses to the global pandemic have accelerated this trend.

In January 2020, when a cluster of mysterious viral pneumonia cases struck in Wuhan, China, neighbouring Asian countries – that had already borne the brunt of the SARS and MERS outbreaks – wasted no time. In addition to public health responses, they introduced travel bans that restricted access to their territories.

© Noelle Mason

Backscatter Blueprint (La Maleta), *cyanotype from the series* X-Ray Vision vs. Invisibility, *by artist Noelle Mason. Based on an image from the website of the United States Border Patrol.*

Regulation of entry can now happen in foreign transit hubs, located even thousands of miles away. In Canada, for instance, anyone – including its citizens – presenting with COVID-19 symptoms were barred from boarding a Canada-bound plane. With this move, the country stretched its borders outwards both conceptually and legally – relocating its border-control activities to overseas gateways, primarily in Europe and Asia.

> "Instead of disappearing with the fall of the Berlin Wall, borders are metamorphosing"

A science-fiction reality

Remarkably, on the latest count (May 2020), nearly 200 countries have imposed such travel restrictions by banning inbound and outbound travel. At the height of the crisis, ninety-one per cent of the global population were living in countries that had introduced travel restrictions in response to COVID-19. None of these legally mandated bans on entry (and in some countries, exit) required even one battalion of soldiers to move to the edge of the territory, or a single sack of cement to be placed at the border. Instead, governments shifted the border to regulate mobility by blocking travellers *before* they embark, and even *after* they reach their destination – by being told to wear GPS wristbands, for example. Experts in the travel industry have suggested that individuals may prefer to pre-quarantine in their home countries.

Until a vaccine is developed, it is clear that the management of mobility and migration will be deeply altered.

> “Our bodies will become our admission tickets as biometric borders expand their reach”

What resembled science fiction is now a reality. Israel’s Ben-Gurion airport, already known for its strict security protocol, is now in the process of developing a “seamless” check-in process, whereby no human agent is involved. The goal is to create “coronavirus-free transportation hubs” and insulated “zones” or “bubbles” in which travel will resume. Only the healthy will be permitted through these “sterile” corridors.

These developments raise significant ethical and legal dilemmas. Health will become an invaluable asset, a prerequisite to travel. Countries including Chile, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom are exploring the idea of “immunity passports” – granting access to public life and mobility for some, while reducing it for others.

Smart tunnels and biometric borders

Even prior to the pandemic, governments were increasing their reliance on the biometric regulation of migration – which provides unprecedented technological “see-all” eyes to monitor and track *everyone*’s mobility *everywhere*.

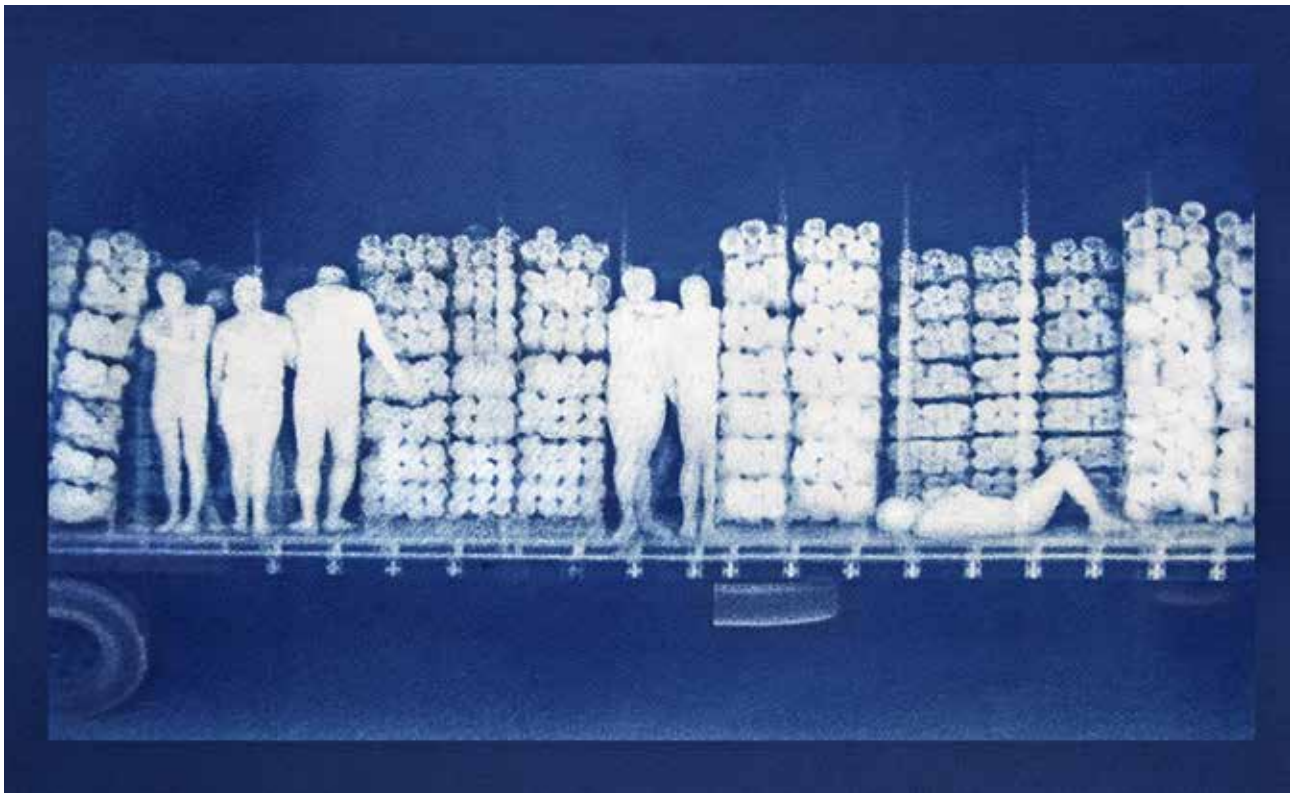
With the simultaneous rise of big data and the creation of vast databases that record biometric information of travellers, our bodies will become our admission tickets as biometric borders expand their reach. Countries including Australia, China, Japan, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates are leading the way. Dubai International Airport has introduced a pilot of new “biometric borders”– known as smart tunnels – that identify passengers through scans of a user’s iris and face.

To achieve this Orwellian vision, the location, operation, and logic of the border have to be redefined to allow governments or their delegates to screen and intercept travellers earlier, more frequently, and more distantly. Thus, travellers are tracked as they move through multiple check-points along the travel continuum.

As part of the effort to achieve migration and mobility management, an “electronic travel authorization” will now be required for the European Union – even for those who benefit from visa-free travel and are in possession of internationally coveted passports. The European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS), to be launched in 2022, will serve as a clearing-house for pre-travel authorization for visitors to all twenty-six countries in the Schengen area.

Linked to their passports, this additional layer of information-gathering creates a powerful yet invisible shifting border that is operational anywhere in the world – prior to departure, adjusting itself to the location and risk profile of the traveller.

Backscatter Blueprint (Primavera), *cyanotype based on an X-ray image that reveals human cargo in trucks. The artist questions the imagery produced by surveillance technologies.*



© Noelle Mason

A border in each of us

Other projects, such as the EU-funded pilot project called iBorderCtrl, add futuristic dimensions to mobility regulation. Incoming travellers are required to "perform a short, automated, non-invasive interview with an avatar [and] undergo a lie detector." The data is then stored in large interconnected databases – allowing authorities to "calculate a cumulative risk factor for each individual."

The calculated risk factor will appear in any future border crossing and may lead to further checks, or even a denial of entry. The iBorderCtrl avatar is trained to detect human deception by looking for "micro-gestures." Similar developments may soon be operational in the US, where AI-powered screening systems can track changes in blood flow or subtle eye ticks. The once-fixed border is thus not just shifting, but also multiplying and fracturing. Each person effectively "carries" the border with them.

These developments bear dramatic implications for the scope of rights and liberties. Treating the body as the site of regulation is no longer solely a purview of national governments. Major tech companies are heavily involved in data-mining and geolocating those who have tested positive for the virus (sometimes without consent).

But the very same crisis has shown us that another future is within reach. In response to the pandemic, the Portuguese government declared that all immigrants already on its territory – including asylum seekers – would gain access to the same rights as citizens to "health, social security, and job and housing stability as a duty of a solidarity society in times of crisis." Here, sharing the same risks, in the same place, at the same time, created camaraderie and community.

When the day comes that we can better treat this deadly virus, we will be left with the task of undoing its harsh, exclusionary impacts.

Women's writing:

Illuminating the darkness

The world after the pandemic will be different from the one that we've always known. It will be more benevolent towards the unknown, and more respectful towards living species, predicts one of China's best-known contemporary poets.

Zhai Yongming

Recipient of numerous international awards for her work, including Italy's Ceppo Pistoia International Literary Prize (2012) and the Northern California Book Awards (2012). Since her poem sequence, *Woman*, in the 1980s, the Chinese poet has published more than ten poetry anthologies and eight collections of essays. Her work has been translated into many languages.

In the face of a disaster, what literature should try to do is neither express a hasty eulogium, nor rash criticism. Instead, it should focus on individuals. It should be about the true emotions felt, and reflections on the disaster. Human beings need to learn to have a reverence for the unknown, show respect for life, and keep away from prejudices or a dichotomous way of thinking. If we can achieve this, the people of the world may be granted more liberty and tolerance when the pandemic finally dies out.

Starting with *Woman*, which I wrote in the 1980s, most of my poems have drawn inspiration from reality and from what goes on in society. So I hope my writing at the time of a pandemic is not a spur-of-the-moment thing, or just about drawing attention. I hope my work can be expressions of some concrete feelings and thoughts about this outbreak. As a writer, you need to present insights, rather than just slogans.

A special form of literary expression, poetry comes out of the depths of a heart that is deeply moved. Poems written at such times should be about people's sufferings and resilience in the face of a disaster. They need to be thought-provoking.

A poet must dedicate herself/himself to building a just society and protecting the environment. A writer is incompetent if she evades reality, or fails to say what she thinks about the world – she is then not playing the role that she is meant to.

> "A poet must dedicate herself to building a just society and protecting the environment"

Zhai Yongming at a farm in the ancient water town of Xitang, near Shanghai.

© Jie Mo

Écriture feminine as an alternative

In times of crises, women often demonstrate fearlessness, courage and engagement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Deng Ge, a young woman, organized a Contingent of Angels after the lockdown of Wuhan – to deliver goods to hospitals, care for the homeless, help patients find hospital beds, and provide free catering for medical workers, on a daily basis. She did this out of her own free will, braving great life-threatening hazards and pressure. Besides her, there are many women in Wuhan who have silently done their part as volunteers.

Écriture feminine, or feminine writing, is a relevant, not outdated, topic today. During the outbreak, for instance, Ruoshuiyin, a female poet and nurse on the front line, wrote poems about the true experience and feelings of medical professionals, which have been widely welcomed by the public. Her writing is irreplaceable in that her poems depict a character like that of a journalist on a battle-field, who can see for herself what really happened on the front line and present the whole picture.

In reality, women are already playing their roles in public contexts or domains. They are in positions which demand greater efforts, as they take on tasks that are often stereotyped as the business of men. Women constantly have to prove that being female is not a drawback.

Feminine writing is not something physiological, but rather a new perspective that does not follow the masculine discourse and thinking blindly. The feminine voice represents a different benchmark away from the existing aesthetic system, instead of simply filling the blanks or supplementing the masculine discourse.

Some women writers seem to be destined to truly transcend the fetters of their gender – which, as I see it, means that they fear no labelling, and are able to stay optimistic. Their work is like a light that shines through all darkness. I prefer to call this a "white night", to describe this darkness with the ambition and benevolence of women.

The pandemic has overshadowed the rosy prospect of a world characterized by security and liberty. We will have to live with uncertainty about the future for quite a long time. There may not be any prophet or sage who comes forth to guide us through. Will there be more liberty and tolerance in this world when we are finally through this?

If we are to achieve this freedom and tolerance, we must keep off prejudice or a dichotomous way of thinking, and forsake the habit of bashing things we have little or no knowledge of. The post-pandemic world should be less morbid – there should be more kindness towards people from other countries and towards other species. As the world constantly changes, and however hard the human race tries to shape the world with advanced technologies, Nature runs its own course, and we stand no chance of conquering it. We can only regard what is unknown with more reverence, and be kind to all species of life.

ZOOM

Lockdown travel diaries

Photos: Twelve photographers from *The Journal* project by the Women Photograph group

Text: Katerina Markelova, UNESCO

Isolation, loss of income, crushing domestic burdens – women photographers have been hit hard by the lockdown imposed to curb the COVID-19 pandemic. Faced with this unprecedented situation, more than 400 women photographers have come together in a unique collaborative project, *The Journal* – which started spontaneously in mid-March 2020, following a call on Facebook by the Women Photograph community.

Launched in 2017, this network – whose mission it is to increase the presence of women photojournalists in the media – has attracted over 1,000 members in more than 100 countries.

Women photographers participating in *The Journal* project documented their daily lives during the weeks and months of lockdown, through images. From Bangkok to Kampala, via Beijing, Tbilisi and Mexico City, they offer very personal, poetic, melancholic, or humorous accounts of their self-isolation. This plunge into their private lives portrays a paradoxical moment – lived collectively, but with each one in their own homes.

This women's perspective, which is claimed as such, is rare in a milieu where women photojournalists are blatantly under-represented. "There isn't a shortage of women photographers, just a lack of equitable hiring," explains Daniella Zalcman, founder of Women Photograph. The non-profit, which compiles data on parity in photojournalism, points out that only 29.5 per cent of the photos published in *The New York Times* in 2019 were taken by women. In *Le Monde* and *The Guardian,* the figure is just over ten per cent. The pandemic is likely to widen these inequalities even further.

As many as ninety-six per cent of the members of Women Photograph say they have been affected financially by the pandemic. The collective has set up the Women Photograph COVID-19 Emergency Fund to help their members, most of whom are independent photographers.

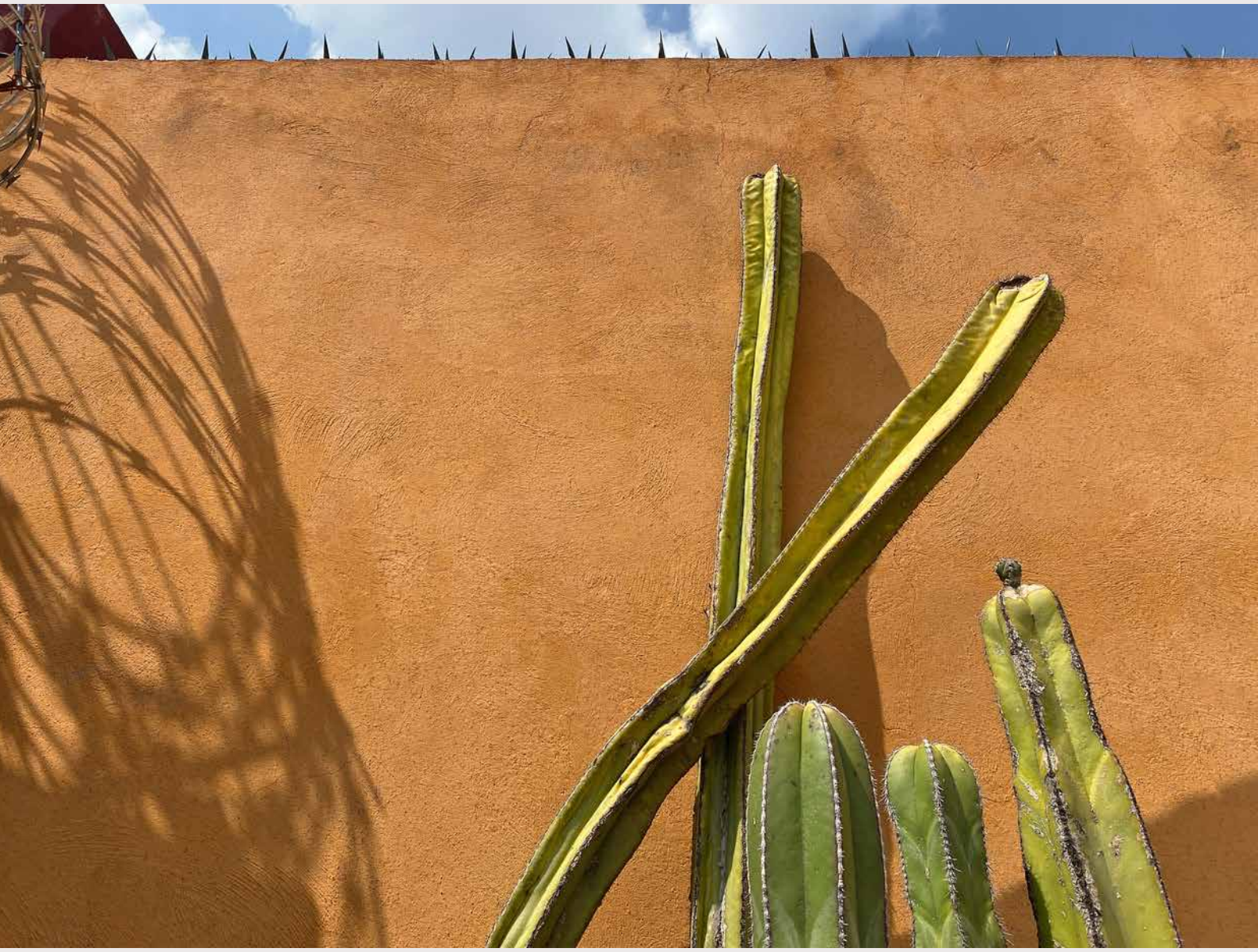
NAZIK ARMENAKYAN, YEREVAN, ARMENIA:
"Day 11 of isolation. Self-portrait with a cherry blossom tree blooming in our office backyard. Drove there to fetch some important things. Our office has been locked for over ten days."

YAN CONG, BEIJING, CHINA: *"On Day 3 of my 14-day quarantine in a Beijing hotel room, I started taking photos through the peephole. Throughout the quarantine, I was not allowed to leave my room, and all my meals were left at the door to avoid direct interpersonal contact. The peephole became the only way for me to observe the quarantine apparatus."*

TARINA RODRIGUEZ, PANAMA CITY, PANAMA: *"When the abnormal becomes normal in everyday life. This is the entrance to my home."*

ELISABETTA ZAVOLI, RIMINI, ITALY: "And in Darkness, You Find Colours *is a participatory photo project I've been working on with my two sons, Davide, 11, and Giovanni, 8. They are aware that beyond our garden fence, there's a serious epidemic going on all over the world. They have lots of questions about it, and fears and imaginations. To cope with these feelings, we decided to create a world of dreams – thanks to our connection with the countryside that surrounds us – by carving our imaginations out of complete darkness, by illuminating the scene, every night, with different sources of lights.*

➲ **SAUMYA KHANDELWAL, NEW DELHI, INDIA:** *"This is a photo of my grandfather, Mahesh Kumar Khandelwal, while he shaves in the sunlight entering his room in Lucknow, on 22 March, 2020. We had just sold our ancestral house (where the photo was taken), and were supposed to move out a couple of days later, but the lockdown has delayed those plans. In the meantime, I am cherishing the extra time I get in the house where I grew up."*



KHADIJA FARAH, NAIROBI, KENYA: *"Some days I don't wake up feeling like a wet rag. When that happens, I muster enough energy to do a face mask, paint my nails, and gab with my best friends around the world about non-virus-related issues. These days are becoming more frequent, and when I feel a bit more of myself coming back."*

JANET JARMAN, MEXICO CITY: *"Security in Mexico, where I live, has deteriorated significantly in recent years, adding an extra layer of stress to the health crisis. I am sure I am not alone."*

IMAN AL-DABBAGH, JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA: *Zahra and Samer had planned to be at a resort in Egypt for their wedding when the pandemic broke. Instead, they ended up being married quietly at home.*

DARO SULAKAURI, TBILISI, GEORGIA: *"My aunt is a first-grade teacher. She is old-school when it comes to technology, but has managed to learn really fast. She holds online classes from her bedroom via Zoom every day, with fifteen-twenty of her students. And – I love her!"*

ALEJANDRA CARLES-TOLRA, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM: *"In response to the current confinement, and as an attempt to keep myself inspired and positive, I started going around my London flat, looking for beautiful light coming from outside. I then decided to playfully portray the essential objects that accompany me these days, under this beautiful light that keeps me sane."*

WATSAMON "JUNE" TRI-YASAKDA, BANGKOK, THAILAND:
Food-delivery drivers practise social distancing while waiting for food and drink orders from restaurants that are open for takeaways and deliveries.

SUMY SADURNI, KAMPALA, UGANDA: *Alicia (right) has been on lockdown since before the COVID-19 pandemic, due to life-threatening injuries she sustained in an accident in Kampala. Danny (left), who is cooking goat on an outdoor stove, is her housemate, friend and support system. Now that they're both always at home, they spend their days baking, cooking, recovering, and relaxing.*

The microbes and viruses that made history

Epidemics and pandemics are not new phenomena. Leprosy, plague, cholera and smallpox have all left their deadly mark on human history. They have also led humans to question themselves, and often result in positive change.

Ana María Carrillo Farga

Medical historian, pandemics expert and professor at the Department of Public Health, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

Characterized by their rapid spread and high mortality rates, epidemics – whether they are linked to bacterial diseases, such as bubonic plague and cholera, or to viruses, such as smallpox, influenza and HIV/AIDS – have left their mark on human history since prehistoric times.

These epidemics have been responsible for a massive number of deaths – occasionally resulting in demographic disasters – and have even changed the course of history sometimes. The Great Plague of Athens, which struck the city between 430 and 426 BC, certainly precipitated the fall of the besieged city. The populations of the Inca and Aztec empires were decimated by smallpox, brought in by Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century. Many historians believe that the Spanish flu helped to accelerate the end of the First World War.

© Thiago Lucas / Cartoon Movement

The lack of knowledge about the diseases that caused these epidemics and their modes of infection, led the authorities, very early on, to take the only possible sanitary measures to limit their spread. Examples include the isolation of the sick, since the eighth century, to stop the spread of leprosy; then confinement in the fourteenth century, to contain the plague, which was rampant at the time. At sea, the corpses of infected people who died on ships were thrown overboard. The first measures of forced sanitary isolation were taken in Ragusa – now Dubrovnik – in the fourteenth century; then in Venice, in the fifteenth century. Both cities had imposed several weeks of quarantine on ships at the time. This measure became widespread in major ports, including Genoa and Naples in Italy, and Marseille in France.

The search for scapegoats

The consequences of such measures proved very unfavourable for trade. Like the Justinian plague which raged through different parts of the world from the sixth to the eighth centuries, the Black Death which struck Europe in the mid-fourteenth century, severely disrupted traditional trade routes. The Mediterranean basin was abandoned in favour of the region of Flanders, which became a major trading centre in Europe. In fact, the desire not to harm trade was a significant factor in the management of epidemics – often dramatically delaying measures to curb

their spread. It was not uncommon for traders and politicians to try to cover up their existence.

The history of epidemics is also marked by the emergence of popular movements against certain social groups accused of causing the disease. The massive, simultaneous and sudden loss of human lives generated such a sense of fear and disarray that it led to a quest to find the culprits – most often, the poorest and most marginalized populations, who were then discriminated against.

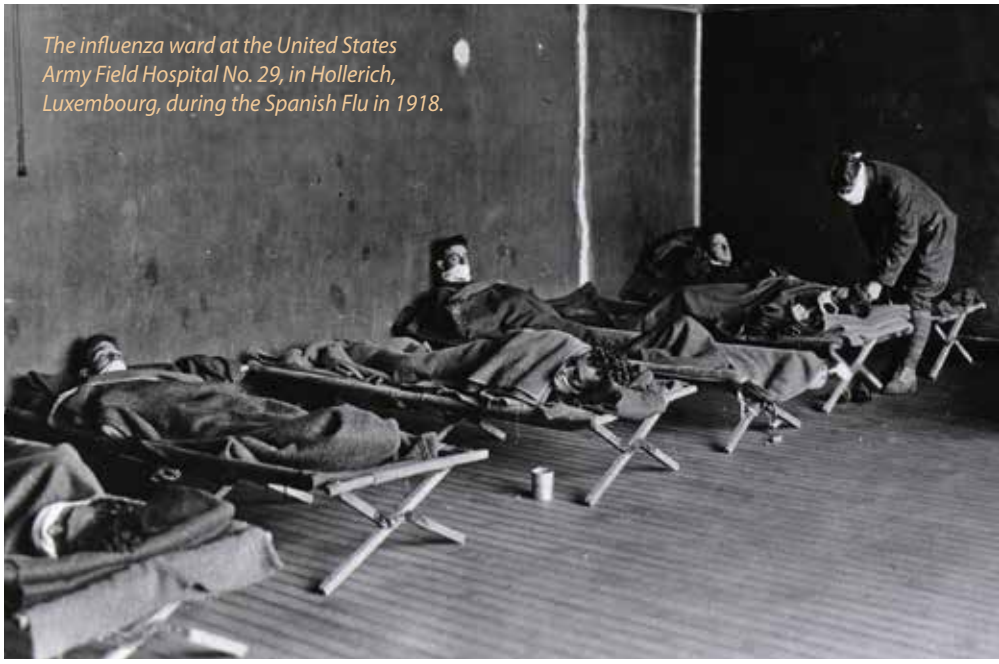
Pandemics caused widespread suffering, affecting entire families and villages. The Black Death killed an estimated 25 million to 40 million in Europe – a third to half of the population at the time. It took more than two centuries for the continent to regain its previous population. The Spanish flu of 1918 caused the deaths of an estimated 50 million people worldwide. It is difficult to imagine the state of devastation that this pandemic must have caused at the end of the First World War.

Confronted with death and the unexplained, these disasters led humans to reflect on their condition. The events also drove progress in the search for treatments and preventive measures. Although medicine was still in its infancy at the end of the Middle Ages, certain hygiene measures were beginning to be imposed. As early as in the fourteenth century, the bed linen of patients was being changed. After the cholera epidemic that struck London in the mid-nineteenth century, the authorities started monitoring the water supply.

Emergence of public health policies

The succession of deadly epidemics has led many countries to understand that it is more costly to treat a health crisis than to prevent it. Cholera, a pre-eminently social disease, highlighted the deplorable conditions in which most of the world's inhabitants lived and worked. The need to implement long-term health policies gradually emerged – to promote hygiene measures, adopt sanitary codes, and conduct research into the cause of diseases and their prevention.

As diseases do not respect borders, international co-operation in public health developed during the second half of the nineteenth century. This resulted in a series of conferences and the drafting of international health conventions.



The influenza ward at the United States Army Field Hospital No. 29, in Hollerich, Luxembourg, during the Spanish Flu in 1918.

© Public Domain / U.S. Department of Defense

> "Confronted with death and the unexplained, these disasters led humans to reflect on their condition"

In an effort to prevent the spread of epidemics – especially cholera and the plague – while limiting trade barriers and the free movement of people as far as possible, twelve European states organized the first International Health Conference in Paris in 1851. This resulted in a draft International Sanitary Convention, accompanied by international regulations concerning the plague, yellow fever and cholera.

Though similar conferences followed, it was not until 1903 that an International Health Convention was adopted, and the second half of the twentieth century that the World Health Organization was created, in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Even though epidemics are caused by the circulation of microbes and viruses, this does not fully explain them. Very often, they are also the result of environmental, food, migration, health, economic or political crises. Epidemics act as an aggravating factor in pre-existing crises, often caused by war and famine.

The current pandemic is no exception. It marks a crisis of our way of life. Scientific studies show that it is the systematic degradation of nature that is the root cause of the COVID-19 pandemic – industrial animal farming and deforestation in particular.

Widespread deforestation is exerting unsustainable pressure on habitats, forcing animals out of their natural environments and encouraging pathogens to jump from one species to another – as was the case for the Ebola and Zika viruses.

Epidemics put humanity to the test, with a collective threat, followed by mourning. But history has shown us that they always come to an end – and that emerging from each one, humanity has been able to reinvent itself, and even make some advances. The current pandemic could similarly lead to a world that is more respectful of the environment and of human life.

OUR GUEST

In an interview with the *UNESCO Courier*, Yuval Noah Harari, Israeli historian and author of *Sapiens*, *Homo Deus*, and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, analyses what the consequences of the current coronavirus health crisis are likely to be, and underlines the need for greater international scientific co-operation and information-sharing between countries.

● ***How is this global health pandemic different from past health crises and what does it tell us?***

I am not sure it is the worst global health threat we have faced. The influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 was worse, the AIDS epidemic was probably worse, and pandemics in previous eras were certainly far worse. As pandemics go, this is actually a mild one. In the early 1980s, if you got AIDS – you died. The Black Death [the plague that ravaged Europe between 1347 and 1351] killed between a quarter and half of the affected populations. The 1918 influenza killed more than ten per cent of the entire population in some countries. In contrast, COVID-19 is killing less than five per cent of those infected, and unless some dangerous mutation occurs, it is unlikely to kill more than one per cent of the population of any country.

Moreover, in contrast to previous eras, we now have all the scientific knowledge and technological tools necessary to overcome this plague. When the Black Death struck, people were completely helpless. They never discovered what was killing them and what could be done about it. In 1348, the medical faculty of the University of Paris believed that the epidemic was caused by an astrological misfortune – namely that "a major conjunction of three planets in Aquarius [caused] a deadly corruption of the air" (quoted in Rosemary Horrox ed. *The Black Death*, Manchester University Press, 1994, p. 159).

In contrast, when COVID-19 erupted, it took scientists only two weeks to correctly identify the virus responsible for the epidemic, sequence its entire genome, and develop reliable tests for the disease. We know what to do in order to stop the spread of this epidemic. It is likely that within a year or two, we will also have a vaccine.

However, COVID-19 is not just a health-care crisis. It also results in a huge economic and political crisis. I am less afraid of the virus than of the inner demons of humankind: hatred, greed and ignorance. If people blame the epidemic on foreigners and minorities; if greedy businesses care only about their profits; and if we believe all kinds of conspiracy theories – it will be much harder to overcome this epidemic, and later on we will live in a world poisoned by this hatred, greed and ignorance. In contrast, if we react to the epidemic with global solidarity and generosity, and if we trust in science rather than in conspiracy theories, I am sure we can not only overcome this crisis, but actually come out of it much stronger.

Yuval Noah Harari:

"Every crisis is also an opportunity"

© courtesy of Yuval Noah Harari

● ***To what extent could social distancing become the norm? What effect will that have on societies?***

For the duration of the crisis, some social distancing is inevitable. The virus spreads by exploiting our best human instincts. We are social animals. We like contact, especially in hard times. And when relatives, friends or neighbours are sick, our compassion arises and we want to come and help them. The virus is using this against us. This is how it spreads. So we need to act from the head rather than the heart, and despite the difficulties, reduce our level of contact. Whereas the virus is a mindless piece of genetic information, we humans have a mind, we can analyse the situation rationally, and we can vary the way we behave. I believe that once the crisis is over, we will not see any long-term effects on our basic human instincts. We will still be social animals. We will still love contact. We will still come to help friends and relatives.

Look, for example, at what happened to the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered] community in the wake of AIDS. It was a terrible epidemic, and gay people were often completely abandoned by the state, and yet the epidemic did not cause the disintegration of that community. Just the opposite. Already, at the height of the crisis, LGBT volunteers established many new organizations to help sick people, to spread reliable information, and to fight for political rights. In the 1990s, after the worst years of the AIDS epidemic, the LGBT community in many countries was much stronger than before.

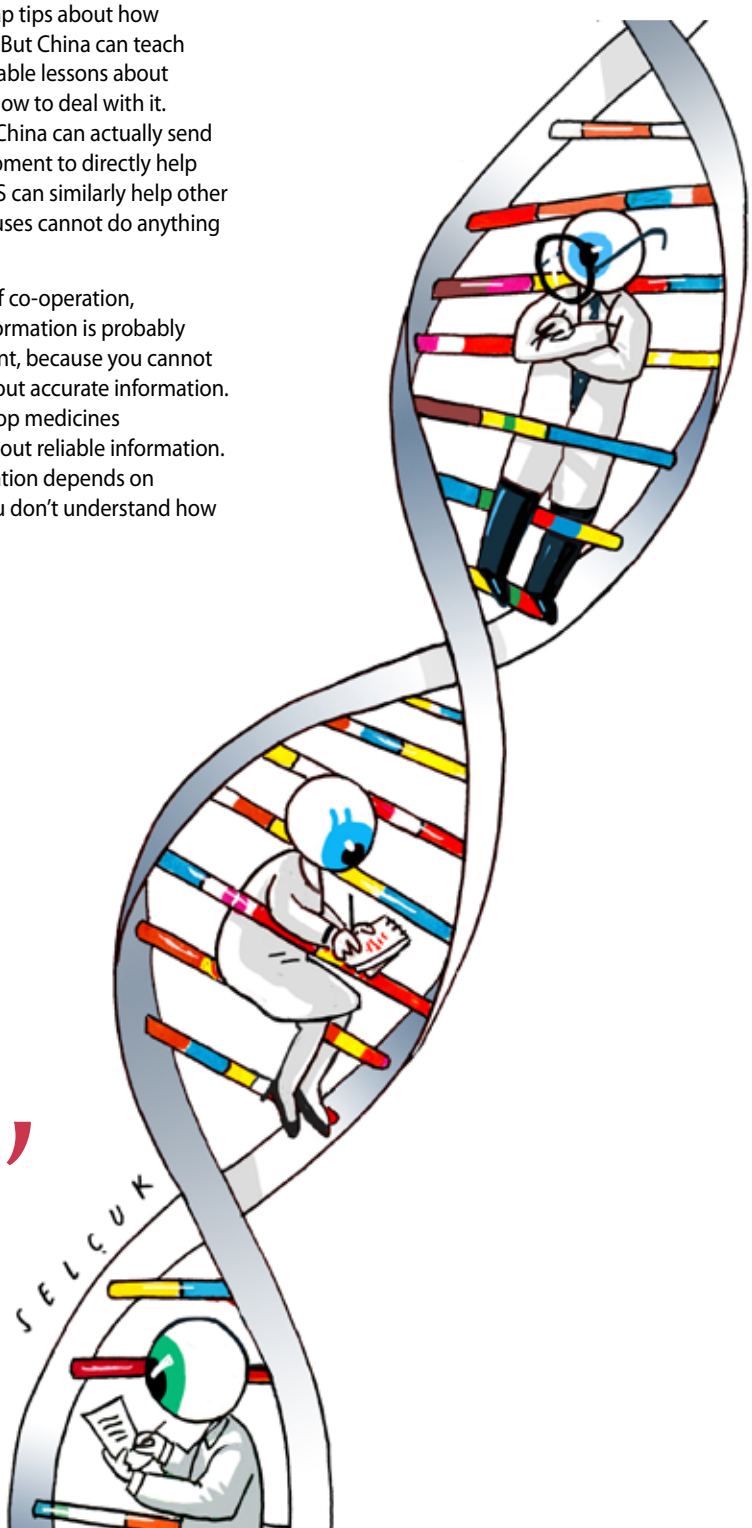
● ***How do you see the state of scientific and information co-operation after the crisis? UNESCO was created after the Second World War to promote scientific and intellectual co-operation through the free flow of ideas. Could the "free flow of ideas" and co-operation between countries be strengthened as a result of the crisis?***

Our biggest advantage over the virus is our ability to co-operate effectively. A virus in China and a virus in the United States cannot swap tips about how to infect humans. But China can teach the US many valuable lessons about coronavirus and how to deal with it. More than that – China can actually send experts and equipment to directly help the US, and the US can similarly help other countries. The viruses cannot do anything like that.

And of all forms of co-operation, the sharing of information is probably the most important, because you cannot do anything without accurate information. You cannot develop medicines and vaccines without reliable information. Indeed, even isolation depends on information. If you don't understand how a disease spreads, how can you quarantine people against it?

For example, isolation against AIDS is very different from isolation against COVID-19. To isolate yourself against AIDS, you need to use a condom while having sex, but there is no problem talking face to face with an HIV+ person – or shaking their hands and even hugging them. COVID-19 is an entirely different story. To know how to isolate yourself from a particular epidemic, you first need reliable information about what causes this epidemic. Is it viruses or bacteria? Is it transmitted through blood or breath? Does it endanger children or the elderly? Is there just one strain of the virus, or several mutant strains?

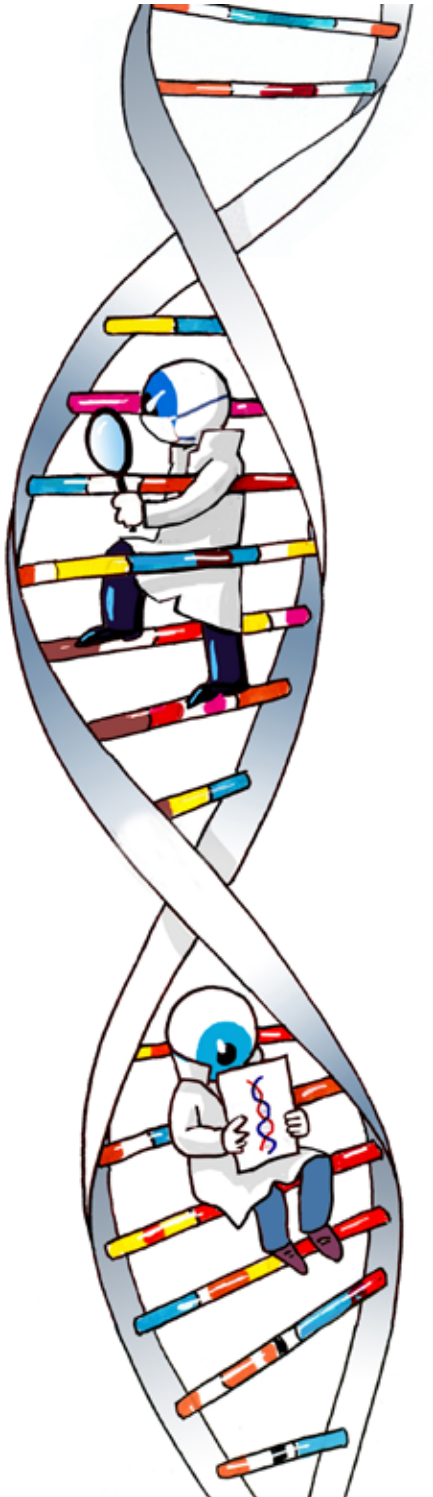
"If we want to enjoy trustworthy scientific information in a time of emergency, we must invest in it in normal times"



Illustrations: © Selçuk Demirel

In recent years, authoritarian and populist politicians have sought not only to block the free flow of information, but even to undermine the public's trust in science. Some politicians depicted scientists as a sinister elite, disconnected from "the people". These politicians told their followers not to believe what scientists are saying about climate change, or even about vaccinations. It should now be obvious to everyone how dangerous such populist messages are. In a time of crisis, we need information to flow openly, and we need people to trust scientific experts rather than political demagogues.

Fortunately, in the current emergency most people indeed turn to science. The Catholic Church instructs the faithful to stay away from the churches. Israel has closed down its synagogues. The Islamic Republic of Iran is punishing people who go to mosques. Temples and sects of all kinds have suspended public ceremonies. And all because scientists have made some calculations and recommended closing down these holy places.



I hope that people will remember the importance of trustworthy scientific information even after this crisis is over. If we want to enjoy trustworthy scientific information in a time of emergency, we must invest in it in normal times. Scientific information doesn't come down from heaven, nor does it spring from the mind of individual geniuses. It depends on having strong independent institutions like universities, hospitals and newspapers. Institutions that not only research the truth, but are also free to tell people the truth, without being afraid of being punished by some authoritarian government. It takes years to build such institutions. But it is worth it. A society that provides citizens with a good scientific education, and that is served by strong independent institutions, can deal with an epidemic far better than a brutal dictatorship that has to constantly police an ignorant population.

For example, how do you make millions of people wash their hands with soap every day? One way to do it is to place a policeman, or perhaps a camera, in every toilet, and punish people who fail to wash their hands. Another way is to teach people in school about viruses and bacteria, explain that soap can remove or kill these pathogens, and then trust people to make up their own minds. What do you think, which method is more efficient?

● ***How important is it for countries to work together to disseminate reliable information?***

Countries need to share trustworthy information not only about narrow medical issues, but also about a wide range of other issues – from the economic impact of the crisis to the psychological condition of citizens. Suppose country X is currently debating which kind of lockdown policy to adopt. It has to take into consideration not only the spread of the disease, but also the economic and psychological costs of lockdown. Other countries have already faced this dilemma before, and tried different policies. Instead of acting on the basis of pure speculations and repeating past mistakes, country X can examine what were the actual consequences of the different policies adopted in China, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Italy and the United Kingdom. It can thereby make better decisions. But only if all these countries honestly report not just the number of sick and dead people, but also what happened to their economies and to the mental health of their citizens.

● ***The rise of AI and the need for technical solutions has seen private companies come forward. In this context, is it still possible to develop global ethical principles and restore international co-operation?***

As private companies get involved, it becomes even more important to craft global ethical principles and restore international co-operation. Some private companies may be motivated by greed more than solidarity, so they must be regulated carefully. Even those acting benevolently are not directly accountable to the public, so it is dangerous to allow them to accumulate too much power.

This is particularly true when talking about surveillance. We are witnessing the creation of new surveillance systems all over the world, by both governments and corporations. The current crisis might mark an important watershed in the history of surveillance. First, because it might legitimate and normalize the deployment of mass surveillance tools in countries that have so far rejected them. Secondly, and even more importantly, it signifies a dramatic transition from "over the skin" to "under the skin" surveillance.

Previously, governments and corporations monitored mainly your actions in the world – where you go, who you meet. Now they have become more interested in what is happening inside your body. In your medical condition, body temperature, blood pressure. That kind of biometric information can tell governments and corporations far more about you than ever before.

● ***Could you suggest some ethical principles for how these new surveillance systems can be regulated?***

Ideally, the surveillance system should be operated by a special health-care authority rather than by a private company or by the security services. The health-care authority should be narrowly focused on preventing epidemics, and should have no other commercial or political interests.

I am particularly alarmed when I hear people comparing the COVID-19 crisis to war, and calling for the security services to take over. This isn't a war. It is a health-care crisis. There are no human enemies to kill. It is all about taking care of people. The dominant image in war is a soldier with a rifle storming forward. Now the image in our heads should be a nurse changing bed-sheets in a hospital. Soldiers and nurses have a very different way of thinking. If you want to put somebody in charge, don't put a soldier in charge. Put a nurse.

The health-care authority should gather the minimum amount of data necessary for the narrow task of preventing epidemics, and should not share this data with any other governmental body – especially not the police. Nor should it share the data with private companies. It should make sure that data gathered about individuals is never used to harm or manipulate these individuals – for example, leading to people losing their jobs or their insurance.

The health-care authority may make the data accessible to scientific research, but only if the fruits of this research are made freely available to humanity, and if any incidental profits are reinvested in providing people with better health care.

In contrast to all these limitations on data sharing, the individuals themselves should be given as much control of the data gathered about them. They should be free to examine their personal data and benefit from it.

Finally, while such surveillance systems would probably be national in character, to really prevent epidemics, the different health-care authorities would have to co-operate with one another. Since pathogens don't respect national borders, unless we combine data from different countries, it will be difficult to spot and stop epidemics. If national surveillance is done by an independent health-care authority which is free of political and commercial interests, it would be much easier for such national authorities to co-operate globally.

● ***You have spoken of a recent rapid deterioration of trust in the international system. How do you see the profound changes in multilateral co-operation in the future?***

I don't know what will happen in the future. It depends on the choices we make in the present. Countries can choose to compete for scarce resources and pursue an egoistic and isolationist policy, or they could choose to help one another in the spirit of global solidarity. This choice will shape both the course of the present crisis and the future of the international system for years to come.

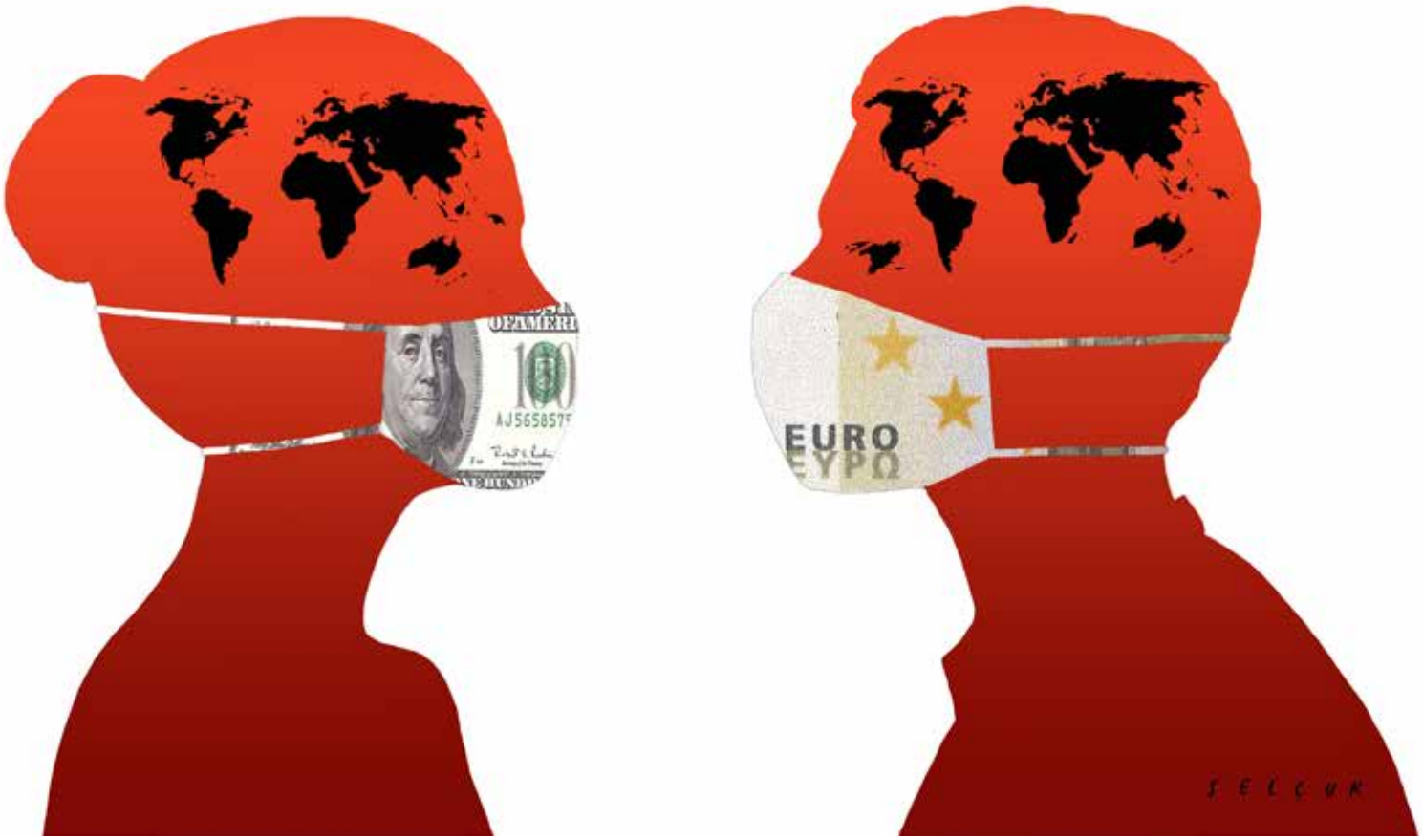
I hope countries will choose solidarity and co-operation. We cannot stop this epidemic without close co-operation between countries all over the world. Even if a particular country succeeds in stopping the epidemic in its territory for a while, as long as the epidemic continues to spread elsewhere, it might return everywhere. Even worse, viruses constantly mutate. A mutation in the virus anywhere in the world might make it more contagious or more deadly, putting in danger all of humankind. The only way we can really protect ourselves, is by helping to protect all humans.

The same is true of the economic crisis. If every country looks only after its own interests, the result will be a severe global recession that will hit everyone. Rich countries like the US, Germany and Japan will muddle through one way or the other. But poorer countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America might completely collapse. The US can afford a $2 trillion rescue package for its economy. Ecuador, Nigeria and Pakistan don't have similar resources. We need a global economic rescue plan.

Unfortunately, so far we don't see anything like the strong global leadership we need. The US, which acted as world leader during the 2014 Ebola epidemic and the 2008 financial crisis, has abdicated this job. The Trump administration has made it very clear that it cares only about the US, and has abandoned even its closest allies in Western Europe. Even if the US now comes up with some kind of global plan, who would trust it, and who would follow its lead? Would you follow a leader whose motto is "Me First"?

But every crisis is also an opportunity. Hopefully the current epidemic will help humankind realize the acute danger posed by global disunity. If indeed this epidemic eventually results in closer global co-operation, it will be a victory not only against the coronavirus, but against all the other dangers that threaten humankind – from climate change to nuclear war.

> "National surveillance must be done by an independent health-care authority which is free of political and commercial interests"



● ***You speak about how the choices we make now will affect our societies economically, politically and culturally, for years to come. What are these choices and who will be responsible for making them?***

We are faced with many choices. Not only the choice between nationalistic isolationism and global solidarity. Another important question is whether people would support the rise of dictators, or would they insist on dealing with the emergency in a democratic way? When governments spend billions to help failing businesses, would they save big corporations or small family businesses? As people switch to working from home and communicating online, will this result in the collapse of organized labour, or would we see better protection for workers' rights?

All these are political choices. We must be aware that we are now facing not just a health-care crisis, but also a political crisis. The media and the citizens should not allow themselves to be completely distracted by the epidemic. It is of course important to follow the latest news about the sickness itself – how many people died today? How many people were infected? But it is equally important to pay attention to politics and to put pressure on politicians to do the right thing. Citizens should pressure politicians to act in the spirit of global solidarity; to co-operate with other countries rather than blame them; to distribute funds in a fair way; to preserve democratic checks and balances – even in an emergency.

The time to do all that is now. Whoever we elect to government in coming years will not be able to reverse the decisions that are taken now. If you become president in 2021, it is like coming to a party when the party is already over, and the only thing left to do is wash the dirty dishes. If you become president in 2021, you will discover that the previous government has already distributed tens of billions of dollars – and you have a mountain of debts to repay. The previous government has already restructured the job market – and you cannot start from scratch again. The previous government has already introduced new surveillance systems – and they cannot be abolished overnight. So don't wait till 2021. Monitor what the politicians are doing right now.

MAPPING THE WORLD

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Education:
An unprecedented crisis

Katerina Markelova

UNESCO

The closure of schools and universities around the world to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused a major education crisis that reached its peak in mid-April 2020. Between 16 and 19 April, schools shut down in more than 190 countries, affecting 1.57 billion children and young people – over ninety per cent of all learners. Throughout the health crisis, UNESCO monitored the situation globally, by publishing a map of school closures on its website.

The choice of digital distance education – to which the vast majority of countries have turned, to ensure educational continuity – has made the problem of the digital divide even more evident. Some 826 million – half the world's pupils and students – do not have computers at home and 706 million (forty-three per cent) are not connected to the internet. The lack of connectivity is of particular concern in sub-Saharan Africa, where the proportion of young people without internet access at home is as high as eighty per cent.

According to a recent UNESCO survey on measures taken by fifty-nine countries to mitigate the impact of school closures, only fifty-eight per cent of low-income countries have e-learning platforms. Sixty-four per cent of teachers in countries that responded to the survey (regardless of income level) do not have sufficient digital skills to deliver online education effectively. This is also the case for eighty per cent of parents and forty-eight per cent of students.

MAPPING THE WORLD examines some of the initiatives to expand connectivity, taken within the framework of the Global Education Coalition, launched by UNESCO on 26 March 2020. Over 100 institutions from the public and private sectors have pooled their expertise to offer quick, free and appropriate solutions to countries that lack the technology, content, or skills needed for distance learning.

A deserted classroom at the Official Rural Mixed School in the Los Mixcos village of Palencia in Guatemala, April 2020.

PEAK OF SCHOOL CLOSURES and COALITION RESPONSES

This map shows the full extent of school closures around the world at the height of the crisis (as of 17 April 2020). It also shows some of the actions taken by members of the Global Education Coalition in support of distance education.

In **Lebanon**, UNESCO and Education Cannot Wait, with the support of the French government, provided the Ministry of Education and Higher Education with online learning content for teachers and students. Almost 300 video courses in mathematics, science, and French, provided by France's Réseau Canopé, are available on the online platform launched by the Ministry.

UNESCO and several coalition partners – including Moodle, Khan Academy, and Lark – have organized online training for teachers to develop the skills needed to implement online courses in five Pacific Island states: **Kiribati**, **Nauru**, **Papua New Guinea**, **Samoa** and **Tonga**.

In **Gabon**, UNESCO trained sixty primary and secondary school educational supervisors to design online courses. Courses produced within the framework of the Train My Generation: Gabon 5000 project have also been made available to the government.

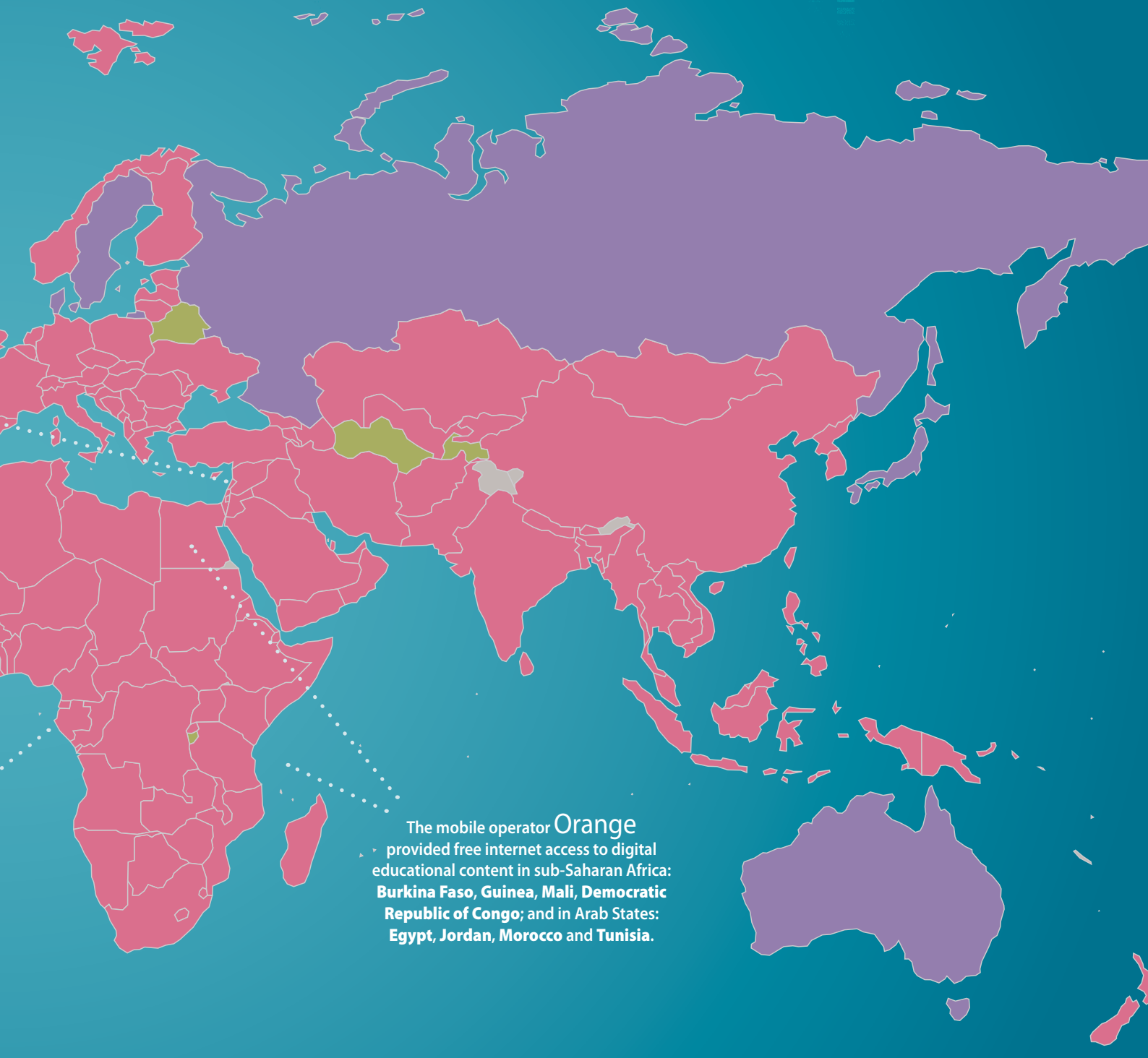
In **Samoa**, telecommunications company Vodafone provided around 80,000 learners with a free student SIM card that includes unlimited access to 4G data on a range of approved educational websites.

Localized *Country-wide* *Open*

→ **1,576,873,546** learners affected

→ **90.1%** of all **learners**

→ **190 closures** at the national level



The mobile operator Orange provided free internet access to digital educational content in sub-Saharan Africa: **Burkina Faso**, **Guinea**, **Mali**, **Democratic Republic of Congo**; and in Arab States: **Egypt**, **Jordan**, **Morocco** and **Tunisia**.

The figures correspond to the number of learners enrolled in pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education [International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 0 to 3], and in tertiary education [ISCED levels 5 to 8]. Enrolment figures are based on the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

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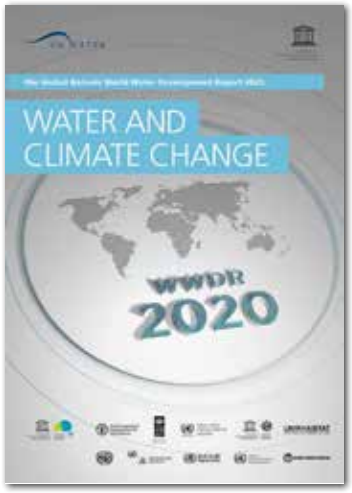
New publications



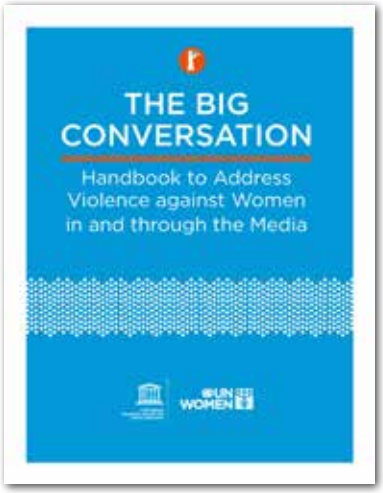
The United Nations World Water Development Report 2020

Water and Climate Change

ISBN 978-92-3-100371-4
234 pp., 210 x 297 mm, paperback, €55
Published by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water
On sale at https://www.dl-servi.com/

Supported by examples from across the world, the latest *United Nations World Water Development Report* describes both the challenges and opportunities created by climate change. It provides potential responses – in terms of adaptation, mitigation and improved resilience – that can be undertaken by enhancing the management of water resources. This would help reduce water-related risks, and improve access to water supply and sanitation services for all in a sustainable manner.

Co-ordinated and published by UNESCO's World Water Assessment Programme on behalf of UN-Water, the report is published every year on World Water Day.



The Big Conversation

Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media

ISBN 978-92-3-100332-5
90 pp., 116 x 280 mm, paperback
UNESCO Publishing/UN Women
Available on https://unesdoc.unesco.org

Violence against women remains one of the greatest human rights challenges of our time.

The most significant challenge remains the persistence of attitudes, beliefs, practices and behaviours in society that perpetuate stereotypes, discrimination and gender inequality.

This handbook provides guidance and tools for those working with and within the media. The media is regarded as a key 'entry point' for preventing violence against women and girls in the long-term. This is because of the media's unique reach to broad sections of the population, and its ability to influence and shape ideas and perceptions about what is considered socially acceptable.

Smart about Cities

Forging Links for the Future

ISBN 978-92-3-100376-9
240 pp., 160 x 230 mm, paperback
UNESCO Publishing/Netexplo
Available on https://unesdoc.unesco.org

Cities across the world represent unique, collaborative spaces that can serve as laboratories for developing and experimenting with new ways to tackle urban challenges.

This book aims at continuing to explore different models and approaches to the development of cities – revealing the limits of 'Smart Cities' as the concept for cities of the future. By observing how cities evolve and adapt, the author highlights the dynamic nature of cities and the importance of strengthening connections with their territories and other cities – creating social bonds between citizens and functioning as an ecosystem at the human scale.

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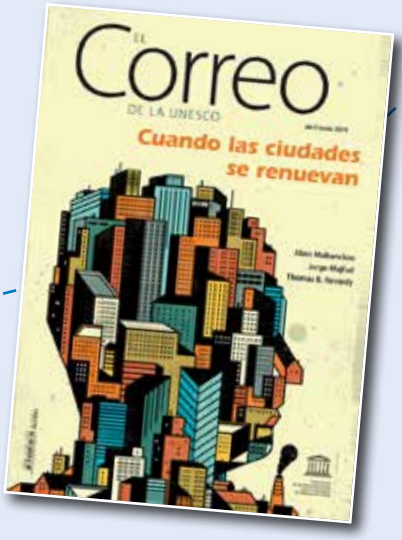

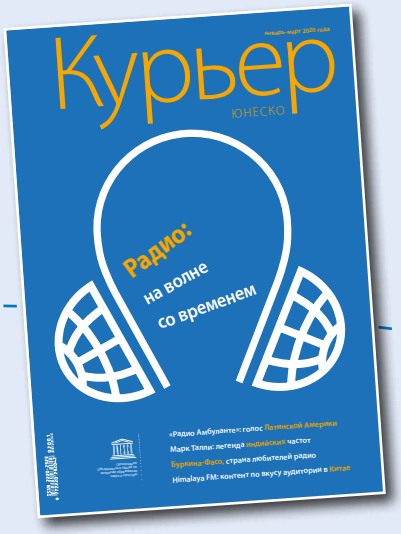

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