

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XI

COVID-19: A post COVID world – what will it look like?

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This Briefing highlights three articles looking at a post-COVID-19 future. They explain how positive changes could come out of this pandemic - if we act to support them happening in an ongoing way.

Financial Times: The pandemic will forever transform how we live

Journalist: Simon Kuper 9th April 2020

From homeworking to healthcare, Covid-19 has forced society to adapt in ways that should endure.

“It’s as if we’ve gone from 2020 to 2030 in one weekend,” Dutch educational innovator Christien Bok said.

What follows is a list of changes that have actually happened, should last, will save time or money and can mitigate horrors such as carbon emissions, loneliness and homelessness.

- **Working from home.** For a week it’s an experiment, but after nearly a month it starts to become institutionalised, even in professions that had never contemplated it before. Most lowly-paid employees — such as cleaners, cashiers and waiters — can’t work from home. But if white-collar workers shift their activity from city centres to residential neighbourhoods, support jobs will follow. Anyone still commuting to downtown will find roads and trains emptier.
- **Telemedicine.** The pandemic has sparked an almost instant time-saving revolution in medical care.
- **Older people** - many of whom have undergone an involuntary crash course in videoconferencing - will spend less time in germ-filled waiting rooms.
- **Better hygiene.** Coronavirus contrarians always point out that the ordinary flu kills thousands too. We now know how to do it: more handwashing; masks and self-isolation for infectious people whenever possible; and better availability of flu vaccines.
- **Volunteering.** When the British government asked for 250,000 volunteers to help the National Health Service during the pandemic, three times that number applied. Volunteering is a way to convert leisure into community. It also reduces loneliness, including among volunteers.

- **Checking on the elderly.** Even before lockdowns, many older people often went days without speaking to anyone. Now countless WhatsApp groups are reaching out to isolated neighbours.
- **Curbing domestic violence.** Lockdowns have worsened domestic violence, but have also alerted countries to an eternal plague. Better late than never, France has hurriedly enabled victims to seek help in pharmacies (using code words if necessary) and shopping malls.
- **Emptying American jails and housing the homeless.** Since the 1960s, the US has created a vast government-funded prison-industrial complex to control poor people, many of them African-Americans. Now that prisons have become virus incubators, many states are releasing nonviolent and elderly offenders, and arresting fewer new ones. Meanwhile, California has begun using federal funds to house some homeless people in hotels and motels.

Some good ideas really were just lying around waiting to happen.

https://rethink.ft.com/articles/pandemic-transform-live/?utm_source=FT&utm_medium=editorial_backfill

After the Pandemic, the Big Reset: Some of the greatest advances in American history were birthed by disaster

By Timothy Egan April 10 2020 New York Times

Every crisis opens a course to the unknown. In an eye-blink, the impossible becomes possible. History in a sprint can mean a dark, lasting turn for the worse, or a new day of enlightened public policy. Some of the greatest advances in American history — liberation of slaves, Social Security, robust clean air and water mandates — were birthed by disaster.

For now, the coronavirus pandemic is an epic of sorrow, and has many mortal months still to run. But in the midst of our suffering, our grief for loved ones lost, our loneliness in social isolation, we have a chance to re-engineer our world.

Here's a look at what may follow as the pandemic starts to settle:

Health Care. Universal medical coverage, whether expanding Obamacare with a public option or some form of Medicare for all, is going to happen. It's had majority support for some time. The pandemic has just sped up the timetable.

Work. Paid family leave. Working at home. Universal sick leave. Subsidized day care. A liveable minimum wage. Until about an hour ago, all of the above were considered progressive pipe dreams. To those who can't work at home, for one bright and shining moment we all appreciate grocery clerks, truck drivers, nurses, home health care workers and others as heroes. But we've never treated them that way with the range of benefits available to those who wear a different collar.

Food. With seven in 10 adults overweight or obese, the poor health and nutrition of most Americans is a horrid and accepted fact. But with the disproportionate number of Covid-19 deaths attributed to diet-related conditions, we are seeing, more rapidly, just how much this societal problem can kill. But lo: The Department of Homeland Security has just classified farmworkers as “essential critical infrastructure workers.”

Climate. One by-product of so many people working at home is clean air. With the global economy in a coma, emissions could fall by the largest amount since World War II. But this could have little impact on the trajectory of climate change if we don’t make larger structural changes. China is already firing up its coal-powered factories.

We have only a few years to save ourselves from ourselves. Our trashed and overheated world is a slower pandemic. The good news is that, even with the crash in oil prices, renewable energy use is on an upward course. Coal is yesterday, no matter how much Trump tries to promote it and China drags its heels.

More than anything, the pandemic has shown how quickly things can change if they must. Carpe diem.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/opinion/coronavirus-political-reform.html>

A New Normal

From Kwame McKenzie Wellesley Institute May 2020

Kwame sets out the problems with the “old” normal; like lack of sufficient funding for health, mental health and poverty.

“We need a new normal.”

“A new normal where we put people first – not say we will and then do the opposite. A new normal which aims to increase affordability, equity and inclusion. A new normal where people thrive, rather than just survive.

This means we need: good jobs, employment rights and wages which ensure that people thrive; a revitalized benefits system based on a universal basic income which ensures that we never again allow people to live in government sponsored poverty; and, a housing strategy that makes homes affordable. We need to: right-size our health and social services sector; look at how B.C. is improving standards for long-term care homes; and, reconsider the shelter system and find homes for the homeless.

We need to do this to honour the people who have died because of COVID-19, those who will die because they do not receive proper care, and the families who have not been able to properly grieve. We need to honour the essential workers who have put themselves and their families at risk, the employers who have lost their livelihood, the people who have lost their jobs and the students who have had their education disrupted”.

<https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/healthy-communities/a-new-normal/>