

**CITIES ON THE
FRONTLINE:
MANAGING THE
CORONAVIRUS CRISIS**

Agustí Fernández de Losada
and Hannah Abdullah (Eds.)

CIDOB **REPORT #05, 2020**

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MANAGING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC. TOWARDS MORE SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT URBAN FUTURES

This CIDOB Report examines how 12 cities around the world have managed the COVID-19 crisis and provides lessons to help guide future urban action. These include learning to govern complex, uncertain scenarios by placing decentralisation, cooperation and resilience at the heart of public policies; rethinking cities to encourage social distancing and make them healthier and more liveable without sacrificing density; and tackling the deep economic recession and social emergency without neglecting the commitment to advance on the ecological transition and address the climate crisis.



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An urban crisis in an urban world

COVID-19 is an eminently urban crisis taking place in an increasingly urbanised world. From its initial focus in Wuhan, China, the epidemic mutated into a pandemic as the virus spread by aeroplane across the vast network of globally interconnected cities. Once landed, it further spread by public transport out from economic and financial centres via rich, cosmopolitan, globalised neighbourhoods to cities' poorest parts and outskirts.

And yet despite its urban dimension, when the crisis broke out, it was national governments that took up the baton and hogged the spotlight. They decreed states of alarm, lockdowns and closures, coordinated health responses, security and border control and implemented the main economic measures aimed at cushioning the impact. In this context, the denialism of leaders like Trump and Bolsonaro and the nationalist and authoritarian rhetoric of others like Orbán have caused much ink to be spilled and raised the infodemic to pandemic levels.

But as the crisis has progressed, it has become clear that cities, despite their lower profiles and smaller

operating budgets, have been at the forefront of meeting citizens' most basic needs. They have done so by providing essential services such as transport and waste management, adapting public space to enable social distancing, caring for the most vulnerable, supporting companies, professionals and workers affected by the crisis, and strengthening healthcare systems.

Decentralisation and cooperation to face complex, uncertain scenarios

As this CIDOB Report points out, more decentralised countries like Germany, Austria and Argentina have had greater capacity to tackle the pandemic's complexity and coordinate context-specific responses. Even in countries

MORE DECENTRALISED COUNTRIES LIKE GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND ARGENTINA HAVE HAD GREATER CAPACITY TO TACKLE THE PANDEMIC'S COMPLEXITY AND COORDINATE CONTEXT-SPECIFIC RESPONSES.

whose leadership is clouded by denialism like the United States, Brazil and India, decentralisation has acted as a firewall, allowing cities and states to implement confinement and lockdowns that have mitigated the ravages of the virus. On the contrary, the data seems to suggest that the most centralised countries – and those that have temporarily re-centralised competences and rolled out uniform measures throughout their territory – have been less efficient (see Rode in this report).

Among other things, decentralisation requires consensual sharing of competences, empowered local governments endowed with enough resources to operate, and multi-level governance mechanisms that aim to ensure cooperation in a framework of non-hierarchical loyalty between the different spheres of government. These three variables — clarity of competences, sufficient resources and multilevel governance — are proving key to tackling the emergency. In many places, city governments have had to go far beyond their allocated powers to respond to social needs; and they have done so with clearly insufficient resources (human, material, technological and financial) – in many cases benefitting from strong doses of commitment, creativity and innovative capacity.

Experiences like those in Berlin, Buenos Aires, Vienna and Zurich (Knoblauch; Lanfranchi; Asadi; Uffer in this report) show that cooperation between different spheres of government is key to providing more efficient responses to the specific needs of citizens. Non-exclusive competences, shared efforts and greater contextualisation and attachment to the reality of the policies promoted at all levels facilitate the establishment of complementarity frameworks. Similarly, articulating metropolitan responses

has become a larger part of managing the crisis and has underlined the need for efficient governance structures that ensure adequate coordination when providing certain basic services (Klaus in this report). Cities with federal status (Berlin, Buenos Aires, Vienna and Zurich) or with metropolitan governments (London and Barcelona, although the latter has limited powers) are better placed to manage emergencies such as COVID-19 and will possess better tools for designing comprehensive recovery strategies that guarantee economic, social and territorial cohesion.

But just as important as multi-level governance and inter-municipal or metropolitan cooperation is the coordination of collaboration mechanisms with citizens and other urban stakeholders. Such mechanisms seek to generate collaboration and mobilise resources, talent, experience and meaningful capacity to respond and innovate. In many cities, alliances with civil society, the private sector and science have enabled public authorities to manage the emergency in ways that they could not have done alone, or at least not with the necessary speed and efficiency. Civic initiatives range from solidarity networks supporting the vulnerable (Parnell & Claassen in this report) and the innovative “makers” community sharing designs to produce healthcare and protective equipment on 3D printers (Abdullah & Reynés in this report) to science seeking solutions in fields as diverse as biomedicine, mobility, urban planning and sociology (Ng in this report).

**WHILE TRADITIONAL
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AND TECHNOLOGY,
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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
– HAVE BURST WITH
DYNAMISM.**

The alliances cities have built to address the crisis have transcended their administrative boundaries and national borders. While traditional multilateralism has struggled to articulate a coordinated response, the various forms of para-diplomacy – cities, science and technology, corporate and social movements – have burst with dynamism, generating digital spaces for dialogue and collaboration, the transfer of knowledge, exchange of experiences and political advocacy processes. As various authors in this report point out (Abdullah & Reynés; Acuto; Klaus; Rode), international municipalism has taken a step forward during this crisis, consolidating frameworks for collaboration with international organisations, philanthropic institutions, transnational civil society and academia. These collaborative structures will be key to managing the socioeconomic repercussions of the health crisis at both the local and global scale.

The ability to forge alliances is giving cities a firm foundation to face the complex, uncertain future that will define the new normality. Making progress on resilience and adaptation strategies, such as those already being drawn up to mitigate the effects of climate change, will require collective efforts and commitment. In this sense, the pandemic leaves us with important lessons that will need to be processed.

Towards the inclusive, sustainable city of multiple centralities

The crisis COVID-19 has provoked provides opportunities to rethink the city. Measures imposed to ensure social distancing – at least temporarily – will

THE CRISIS COVID-19 HAS PROVOKED PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO RETHINK THE CITY. . MEASURES IMPOSED TO ENSURE SOCIAL DISTANCING – AT LEAST TEMPORARILY – WILL REQUIRE KEY ASPECTS OF CITY LIFE, INCLUDING MOBILITY, USES OF PUBLIC SPACE, LOCAL TRADE AND TOURISM, TO BE RE-EXAMINED.

require key aspects of city life, including mobility, uses of public space, local trade and tourism, to be re-examined. The decrease in indicators such as pollution, traffic volume, noise and overcrowding during lockdown may provide some clues. So might tracing the impact of the pandemic on different neighbourhoods and social groups. As this CIDOB Report shows, the emergency has hit lower-income neighbourhoods hardest, along with the most vulnerable people (see Kling; Parnell & Claassen).

New urban mobility models can take several forms. Most importantly, they will need to counter the impulse to use private vehicles as a way to social distance, which would cause a critical increase in road traffic and pollution. To mitigate this trend and move towards a healthy city rationale, policymakers will have

to promote broad social consensus (especially with companies) to streamline public transport use and promote alternative and sustainable means of transportation, such as walking, bicycles and electric scooters. This will require traffic and pedestrian flows to be redesigned; roads will need to be adapted, reducing the space for cars and extending bicycle lanes (within the municipality and between municipalities in metropolitan areas); parking facilities for bicycles and electric scooters will need to be increased; and streets and entire areas of the city pedestrianised (as with Barcelona's super-blocks). Technology and big data will be central to all of this.

Further, the redesign of public space will need to be complemented by the redefinition of its use. The growth patterns of many cities have been fragmented and divided between centres that concentrate much of the

economic, commercial, social, cultural and scientific activity, more or less affluent residential neighbourhoods, and increasingly dilapidated outskirts. A transition towards the polycentric city – for example, the “15-minute city” currently implemented in Paris and Bogotá – with multiple centres that each host administrative, economic and commercial activity, services, culture, sports and leisure, would greatly reduce internal mobility in the city and improve citizens’ quality of life.

But the pandemic teaches us other important lessons that should condition the urban future. The case of tourism is paradigmatic, with the disappearance of tourists leading citizens to recover parts of their city. New tourism models must be designed around quality and sustainability rather than overcrowding, and they must connect to and interact with the city and its inhabitants. Tourism should not drive out cities’ inhabitants and its benefits should be evenly distributed across their multiple centres. It should strengthen local businesses and shops rather than the multinationals that erase cities’ most emblematic sites while smudging any hint of local identity.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 lockdown has highlighted and further deepened the inequalities present in urban environments around the world. Not all people have had the same opportunities because not all homes are equally large and comfortable, not all workers were able to work remotely, and not all children had the digital means to keep up with their classes (see Asadi in this report). Societies’ housing stock deficits and deep digital divides have been evident in cities on all continents. Guaranteeing the right to fair housing and using all means to mitigate the social disruption caused by technology will be major challenges for cities.

Public policies to mitigate the effects of the crisis and design the recovery

The design of the recovery process will be highly complex. Not just because all attempts to remove established structures face intrinsic difficulties and prompt resistance, but also because it will have to be done during an unprecedented economic recession, whose impacts are already being felt by substantial sectors of society. And then there is the global climate crisis, which cannot be ignored.

In the midst of all this, cities will have to promote public policies that guarantee prosperity, mitigate the social emergency and advance the ecological transition towards zero emissions scenarios in line with the commitments made before the pandemic broke out. Some cities, like Milan (Zevi in this report), have already begun work on comprehensive recovery strategies. They

particularly focus on strengthening economic sectors with high added value, such as ICT, biomedicine, transport, culture and the creative industries. Further, they seek to revise patterns of consumption and bolster local trade and production, the social and solidarity economy, the circular economy and digitalisation processes. These initiatives are closely linked to strategies that address the most vulnerable sectors of society and protect the rights of all citizens, as well as managing complex processes such as financialisation and technological disruption.

To implement these strategies and promote the necessary public policies, cities will need more capacities to mobilise financial resources (fiscal, surplus and debt), technical expertise and highly skilled professionals. Collaboration with other levels of government and alliances with urban stakeholders will also be indispensable; as will cooperation at international level with other cities and urban actors. But none of this will be possible without strong political leadership at all scales: local, national and international.

FIRST IN THE WESTERN WORLD MILAN GOES FROM BOOM-TOWN TO EMERGENCY HOT-SPOT

Milan and the wider region of Lombardy were the first epicentre of COVID-19 in the Western world. Considering this extraordinary role, other places have much to learn from the failures and successes of the city's crisis management. Despite severe resource shortages, Milan already began planning its socioeconomic recovery in mid-April. Building on public-private partnerships and a comprehensive adaptation strategy, the recovery measures address the current health crisis as well as future urban challenges.



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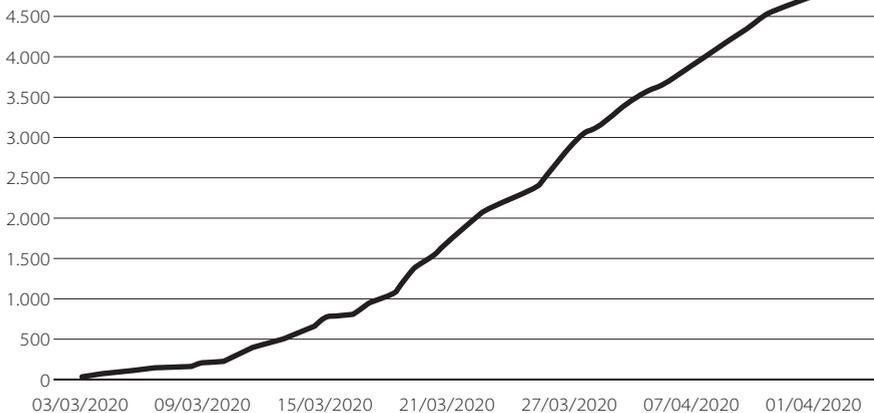
Two months ago, Milan was booming. As capital of Lombardy, one of Europe's richest regions, the city is Italy's economic powerhouse. It is central to various economic sectors like finance, trade, fashion, design, furniture, human sciences, publishing and the media; and its influence on the Italian productive system goes way beyond its administrative borders. In the 20th century, Italian factories were concentrated in the so-called "industrial triangle" between Turin, Genoa and Milan. Today, economists consider the "triangle" between Milan and the cities to its south and east, Bologna and Treviso, to be more significant in terms of GDP and logistics. In recent years, Milan has also become one of the most visited tourist destinations in the European Union (in 2019 it received almost 11 million visitors). Since the city hosted the 2015 World Expo, people from around the world have enjoyed its pleasant lifestyle, cultural and culinary attractions, and global events such as Milan Fashion Week and Salone del Mobile. Even the weather has changed: renowned for its fog, Milan has become sunny as never before, probably because of climate change.

Milan's boom phase has experienced an abrupt slump since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the city in February 2020. Milan and the wider region of

Lombardy found themselves being the first epicentre of the pandemic in the Western world. Considering this extraordinary role, other places have much to learn from the failures and successes of the city's crisis management.

Everything happened very fast. On February 19th a 38-year-old man tested positive for the new virus in a health centre in Codogno in the province of Lodi in the Milanese hinterland. Two other people were infected in Veneto, the adjoining region. On February 23rd schools in northern Italy were closed and ten towns in Lombardy were placed under quarantine, in so-called "red zones" whose borders were controlled by the police to prevent people from entering and leaving. In Milan, many public offices, museums, shops and restaurants closed. They reopened for a few days, when the mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, launched the social media campaign "Milan does not stop" in an effort to help keep everyday life and business running. While the initiative was at first welcomed, it was soon criticised as irresponsible. On March 4th the central government shut schools in the whole country. Four days later the Italian prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, declared all of Lombardy, an area of 10 million people, a red zone. On March 10th a nationwide lockdown was imposed.

Graph 1. Number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Milan



Source: MilanoToday / Region of Lombardy

When analysing the impact of COVID-19 on Milan and the city's response, it is important to emphasise that although the capital of Lombardy has been on the frontlines of the emergency, its administrative powers and economic resources have been very limited. In fact, as the Italian healthcare system is the responsibility of the regions, they have led the response to the pandemic – as has been the case with State Governors in the United

States. Further, while the Italian government is mobilising hundreds of billions of euros to manage the health, social and economic crises provoked by COVID-19, the Municipality of Milan, a truly global city, was only able to allocate a few million euros to tackling the emergency. Indeed, the city government's departments have had to cut their budget by 22% to compensate for the drop in city taxes that have resulted from the pandemic. Direct support from the national government has also been meagre. The government only transferred around 7 million euros to the Municipality of Milan, which were earmarked mandatorily to helping poor people with food and medical supplies.

The city's lack of resources and its dependency on the regional and central government are described in the Milan 2020 Adaptation Strategy (Comune di Milano, 2020), released by the municipality on April 24th. The document details how, in order to launch the city's recovery phase, which involves implementing new healthcare policies and measures (mapping, tracing, treating, etc.) as well as addressing socioeconomic shocks, support will be required from higher levels of government.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ALLIANCES AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WILL BE VITAL TO ADDRESSING THE SOCIOECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS OF THE HEALTH CRISIS.

Yet despite operating with severe limitations, the Municipality of Milan has taken various measures to address the emergency in its territory. To increase the number of intensive care beds, it collaborated with the Italian army on building the city's first provisional hospital, and with the Department of Civil Protection to design a second brand-new hospital. That said, having various levels of administration involved in these interventions has certainly reduced their speed and efficiency. It may be argued from these experiences that in an emergency, big global cities work better when managing policies autonomously and coordinating directly with the federal government. This also became evident in the poor handling of the crisis in retirement homes (managed by the regions), in which large numbers of people died, and jails in Milan and other cities (managed by the Ministry of Justice), where riots broke out in the first days of March.

The City of Milan has demonstrated great inventiveness in overcoming its financial constraints. Mayor Sala launched a Mutual Aid Fund to raise money from the private sector and individual donors, which has been very successful. The fund's effectiveness contains two lessons: firstly, that municipal governments increasingly depend on a variety of urban stakeholders and, secondly, that public-private partnerships are fundamental to fighting the pandemic.

Multi-stakeholder alliances and public–private partnerships will also be vital to addressing the socioeconomic repercussions of the health crisis. Milan has a very strong network of organisations devoted to solidarity that reacted promptly and efficiently. Many disadvantaged groups have been helped by the Church, companies, philanthropists and civil society organisations, and important entrepreneurs have supported hospitals and research centres. Recognising the great value of these initiatives, the Municipality of Milan created the website “Milanoaiuta” (“Milan helps”) to coordinate support in four main areas: funds for food, assistance for elderly and fragile people, home delivery and volunteers willing to help.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR MILAN IS NOT ONLY CRUCIAL IN ORDER TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE BUT ALSO TO PREVENT FUTURE EPIDEMICS.

Showing foresight, Mayor Sala was one of the world’s first mayors to initiate plans for the post-coronavirus socioeconomic recovery of his city. In an interview with the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper in early April he identified three priorities for Milan’s step-by-step recovery: the adaptation of digital and mobility infrastructures to the requirements of social distancing; the creation of new rules of conduct for public spaces such as stadiums, cinemas and theatres; and support for the local economy,

especially for small businesses, shops and other commercial activities that are at risk and that constitute the “soul” of the city (Giannattasio, 2020). The abovementioned Milan 2020 Adaptation Strategy lists five further governance priorities for the recovery phase: 1) civic empowerment and social inclusion; 2) support for companies and shops, digitalisation, urban regeneration and social innovation; 3) employment; 4) mobility, public space and the creation of a “15-minute city” (an approach currently being implemented in Paris); and 5) sustainability. Policies in these areas will be particularly geared towards vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children and women.

Mr. Sala’s leadership in initiating recovery policies for his city was also recognised by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, which appointed him Chairman of its Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, which was launched on April 16th. The C40 Taskforce will pay particular attention to the relationship between health and climate policies, a topic that will also be of central concern to Milan in the future. Milan and the region of Lombardy are among the most polluted parts of Europe and it has been argued that this environmental condition favoured the spread of the coronavirus in the area. By contrast, in Rome, where pollution levels are lower, the outbreak of the virus was far better contained, in spite of hundreds of trains travelling

between the two cities daily until March 8th. An environmental sustainability strategy for Milan is thus not only crucial in order to mitigate climate change but also to prevent future epidemics.

The coronavirus crisis in Milan and other cities calls for a more general discussion about the future of cities. Urban areas need to become both flexible and efficient, open and able to prevent another major outbreak of the virus. In particular, this balancing act will require cities to address the following challenges:

- Too many levels of responsibility reduce efficiency: the administrative relationship between global cities and the federal government needs to be rethought in order to increase effectiveness.
- Investments in healthcare, urban regeneration and environmental transition will be necessary to prevent future epidemics and attract new visitors.
- Urban infrastructures and mobility will need to be completely reshaped in order to allow for social distancing.
- Social segregation is a big threat: vulnerable communities are more exposed to the virus and need to be protected, or they can put everyone in danger.
- Working and leisure habits will need to change, but cities also need to protect their “soul” (events, streets, shops, etc.) if they want to continue competing globally.

In order to deal with these challenges, new urban governance qualities will be required: creativity, flexibility and the ability to cooperate will be part of the essential skill set of any effective future municipal government and mayor.

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BARCELONA'S CORONAVIRUS- MAKERS: CO-PRODUCING LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO A GLOBAL PANDEMIC



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Barcelona's response to COVID-19 has included innovative processes of co-producing public services. This has involved civil society, experts and local government, and has focused on urgent necessities like the creation and distribution of protective gear. The driving force behind this bottom-up, non-profit initiative has been the city's "maker" community. Much can be learned from these emerging modes of co-production in our efforts to create more resilient and sustainable cities.

A highly transmissible disease like COVID-19 tends to hit areas with larger populations hardest. Barcelona, one of Europe's most densely populated cities, has been particularly affected. However, while urban density accelerates the spread of infectious agents like the coronavirus, the clustering of people, knowledge and economic assets in cities also provides opportunities for effective responses. Even in times of social distancing, the concentration of people fosters collaboration and propels innovation, meaning cities and their innovation ecosystems can play a leading role in tackling the new global pandemic.

As part of its response to the coronavirus, Barcelona has witnessed a particularly innovative process of co-production of public goods and services. This has involved civil society, experts and local government, and has focused on urgent necessities like the creation and distribution of protective gear for hospitals, social services and retirement homes. The driving force behind this bottom-up, non-profit initiative has been the city's "maker" community, self-organising groups of people who experiment with digital technologies and low-cost resources to design gadgets that address all sorts of problems. A great deal can be learned from these emerging modes of co-production in our efforts to create more resilient and sustainable cities in the medium to long term.

The civic response of makers: between global connectivity and hyper-local collaboration

All around the world makers have organised to help mitigate the COVID-19 outbreak. One of the first initiatives was the global Facebook group Open Source Medical Supplies created at the beginning of March.¹ By the middle of the same month, a number of makers from across Spain had launched the open source platform CoronavirusMakers to share knowledge and collaborate on the design and production of emergency relief protective gear using 3D printers (Fernández, 2020; García, 2020).²

TRANSNATIONAL MAKER NETWORKS PROMOTED BY SOLIDARITY HAVE GIVEN RISE TO CITIZEN- LED HEALTH AND CITY DIPLOMACY.

Sharing knowledge across borders has been key to the effectiveness of the makers' response. Transnational maker networks promoted by solidarity have given rise to citizen-led health and city diplomacy. Barcelona's maker community has been in an ongoing dialogue with groups in Latin American cities, especially in Argentina and Colombia. While these exchanges have primarily been about sharing open-source designs and the best production and distribution practices,

they have also involved public authorities that are eager to learn from one another about how to collaborate with their local maker community, and how to up-scale these communities' DIY solutions.

Yet, at the same time, the makers mode of operating is hyper-local. It is about convening and connecting local actors and value chains by mobilising the talent and tools that have evolved around actual physical maker spaces. In Barcelona, one of Europe's capitals for digital and social innovation, the group of voluntary collaborators – including not only makers but also doctors, engineers, courier drivers, civil society organisations and public institutions – grew from around 50 to around 2,500 in just one month. The majority contribute by producing protective equipment using personal 3D printers in their homes. The type and quantity of protective gear produced is adapted to the needs of Barcelona's hospitals and social services offices (the primary equipment produced by the city's makers are protective face shields that have been approved by the Catalan health service, FFP2 masks, door openers to reduce contact with door handles, and ear protectors for elastic-strap face masks).

1. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/opensourcecovid19medicalsupsplies/about/>

2. <https://www.coronavirusmakers.org>

With the rapid growth of the movement in Barcelona various coordination nodes have been created at the city-district level. Individuals send the materials they produce at home to these nodes where they are assembled, disinfected and packed for transportation. The first batch of equipment was delivered to hospitals on March 22nd, seven days after the state of emergency was imposed in Spain. While national and regional governments were still debating who would buy what protective gear and how to distribute it, civil society was already acting.

Co-producing solutions at the local scale

In Spain local governments were the first to recognise the potential of the CoronavirusMakers and to collaborate with the movement. In the last week of March, Barcelona City Council declared its network of Ateneus de Fabricació (fab labs that facilitate citizen-led socio-digital innovation)³ to be an essential service that was to remain operative during the state of emergency, in order to help increase the makers' production levels. Along with other municipal maker spaces, the Ateneus de Fabricació have made their staff and over two dozen 3D printers available to produce protective equipment based on the CoronavirusMakers' open-source designs. To assure the best possible distribution of equipment to hospitals and prevent over- or under-supply, the Ateneus de Fabricació and CoronavirusMakers operate with a shared demand and supply list. By the third week of April, they had jointly met demand for protective equipment across all hospitals in the city and metropolitan area.

Barcelona's maker community and the city council's Ateneus de Fabricació were able to partner up so rapidly and successfully because they could build on pre-existing cooperative relations. The Ateneus de Fabricació are not fab labs in the conventional sense of digital innovation labs. As their name implies (which is derived from the Catalan tradition of neighbourhood Athenaeums), they have a strong capacity for social inclusion and innovation. Their mission is to empower all citizens to learn about and use digital technologies, fostering a social and solidary urban economy based on the principles of sharing and providing bottom-up solutions to local problems. Collaboration with the city's maker community is integral to this approach, which is currently showing high levels of resilience.

3. <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/digital/en/digital-empowerment/digital-education-and-training/fab-labs>

Another important reason why this public–community partnership has worked so well is that the city council has respected the horizontal network structure and open-source spirit of the CoronavirusMaker movement. It has resisted the impulse to put itself at the head of what began as and continues to be a civic movement, and (at least for now) it has refrained from politicising it for its own ends.

Lessons to be learned

What broader lessons can be learned from this co-production of public goods and services to respond to the local impacts of a global crisis? Firstly, it illustrates how co-production can support fast and innovative solutions

THE CO-PRODUCTION OF LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO TODAY'S GLOBAL CHALLENGES, SUCH AS THE CORONAVIRUS AND CLIMATE CHANGE, DEPEND ON BOTH LOCAL COLLABORATION AND GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY.

to immediate local needs. The civic response to the shortage of protective equipment in Barcelona was far more agile than that of the public sector. Weighed down by bureaucratic legal frameworks, public administrations are often slower to act and supporting more dynamic civic initiatives that are proving effective is one way for them to catch up with events.

But municipal governments can do more to facilitate the co-production of both short- and long-term solutions to enhance their cities' resilience.

Of particular importance is the creation of an enabling environment for innovative cross-sector cooperation. This requires more investment in local talent and knowledge infrastructures. Yet, as the case of the CoronavirusMakers illustrates, investments should not be limited to high-profile research centres with international reach. They should also include facilities such as the Ateneus de Fabricació that are open to anyone and connected with the needs and interests of local communities.

Further, an enabling environment should engage talent more actively in urban governance, and not just in times of crisis and recovery. As the UN 2030 Agenda states, active participation at the local level is the bedrock of the transition to sustainable development pathways. By reaching out to local talent and engaging it in policymaking processes, cities are likely to be better prepared and faster to act when having to adapt to future external shocks. The coronavirus crisis is showing that the sectors of digital and social innovation will be of particular relevance to managing both the immediate impacts of global challenges on cities and their longer-term socio-economic consequences.

A second important lesson to be learned is that the co-production of local solutions to today's global challenges, such as the coronavirus and climate change, depend on both local collaboration and global connectivity. The success of the CoronavirusMakers in Barcelona has rested on hyper-local networks of production and distribution that are intimately intertwined with the city's digital and social innovation ecosystem. However, at the same time, the movement's global connectivity has been essential to accessing open-source designs for protective equipment and tapping into other knowledge platforms. Relations between cities and their maker communities have often facilitated these information flows. They illustrate how city and citizen diplomacy are key to generating the bottom-up momentum and solidarity necessary for the creation of joint and just local solutions to global challenges.

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BERLIN: PRAGMATIC SOLIDARITY TO FACE COVID-19

The measures imposed by Berlin to contain the coronavirus pandemic are characterised by a pragmatic approach that poses less constraints on personal freedom than the measures adopted in other cities and countries. And yet it seems to be working. Support for small local businesses, solidarity and medical preparedness are at the heart of this approach.



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To understand Berlin's response to the current health crisis it is important to keep in mind that Berlin is one of Germany's three "city-states" (Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg), which are both federal states (*Bundesländer*) and municipalities. This special status, which comes with certain lawmaking powers, has given the city considerable autonomy in its management of the emergency situation. It is also important to note that Berlin was impacted later and less severely by the pandemic than cities in the south and west of Germany. While the first COVID-19 cases in Germany were reported at the end of January, Berlin only reported its first case on March 1st.

The central legal political instrument that Berlin's senate (the government of the federal state) adopted in its management of the health emergency is the Ordinance on Measures Necessary to Stem the Spread of the Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in Berlin.¹ At the core of these laws are comprehensive contact restrictions, including the prohibition of all public and private assemblies, meetings and events, rather than a total lockdown or curfew. From March 23rd, people were required to remain in their homes or

1. <https://www.berlin.de/corona/en/measures/directive/>

usual place of residence and were allowed to leave only under certain circumstances. Compared with other European countries where stricter lockdowns have been imposed, these circumstances included not only work, basic necessities and medical needs, but also walks and exercise. While the majority of Berliners responded well to the restrictions, a minority continued to meet in parks or privately. As a result, fines were introduced in the April amendment to the SARS-CoV-2 Ordinance, so that the physical distancing rules could be better enforced. Since the recent easing of restrictions, some have observed “Covid fatigue” (Die Zeit, 2020) in the city, with streets and parks filling up and many people no longer following the physical distancing rules.

A city of small and medium-sized businesses

Like other cities and countries, Berlin first ordered all “non-essential” places where people meet to close or restrict their activities. While cafes and restaurants could still sell meals for take away or delivery, pubs and bars had

UNLIKE OTHER GLOBAL CITIES THAT DEPEND ON BIG INDUSTRY OR A POWERFUL FINANCIAL SECTOR, BERLIN IS A CITY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES.

to close; hotels and other types of accommodation were no longer to allow tourists to stay; cultural institutions such as museums, exhibitions, cinemas and theatres were shut; most retail stores, with the exception of those selling essential products, also had to shut (interestingly, bicycle and book stores are considered “essential” in Berlin). Those essential stores that have remained open to the public, have had to introduce restrictions to prevent viral transfer, the main requirement being that of assuring at

least 1.5 metres distance between customers, as well as managing access and avoiding queues. Since mid-May, restaurants and cafés have also been allowed to open if they ensure physical distancing between guests.

However, although these measures have been more relaxed than in many other cities, they hit the core of Berlin’s economy: small shops and enterprises, the service and creative industries, the independent art scene and tourism. Unlike other global cities that depend on big industry or a powerful financial sector, Berlin is a city of small and medium-sized businesses. As a result, the impact of COVID-19 on Berlin has been worse than that of the 2008 financial crisis.

A survey by Berlin’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IHK Berlin, 2020) shows that only 5% of the city’s companies have so far come through the crisis unscathed, 48% have had to close down their operations completely or in large part, and 23% still fear going bankrupt. Taking a closer look at small-

er shops, retailers and the hospitality sector (which includes the cafés, bars and restaurants so important to and typical of Berlin), as well as B2C and B2B services companies, the fear of bankruptcy is around 50% in the hotel and restaurant sector, around 20% in B2C services companies and around 15% in B2B services companies. Turnover forecasts are also worrying. A good 42% of companies fear losing more than half of their turnover this year. In the hospitality sector, 67% fear this, while in the B2C services sector the figure is 46% and in the B2B sector almost 37%. This situation is directly reflected in personnel planning, with 42% of businesses preparing to downsize, particularly in the hospitality sector, where 76% of businesses have had to reduce personnel.

To protect the city's unique economic fabric, Berlin's senate has created an emergency fund of more than €1 billion to support small businesses and sole proprietors. Measures include tax deferrals, financial support for short-time work (*Kurzarbeit*) – a programme to subsidise employees' salaries while their working hours are cut due to reduced activity² – and special conditions for loans. These measures have been launched in addition to the financial support programmes of the federal government (e.g. tax relief and emergency funds for businesses, freelancers, self-employed people, musicians, artists, etc.).

The city is also collaborating with a civil society initiative called "*Rette Deinen Lieblingsort*" (save your favourite place), which supports small local businesses struggling with liquidity. This online initiative sells vouchers for products and services offered by Berlin-based businesses (e.g. shops, bars, cafes, restaurants, etc.) that can be redeemed after the lockdown. Since mid-May, almost €1.5 million worth of vouchers have been sold by over 2,600 businesses. Initiatives like these are particularly relevant for the social activity consumption that contribute to a large part of Berlin's culture and entertainment-centred economy. Unlike spending on items such as clothes or electronic devices, people will not make up spending to cultural or culinary venues once the crisis is over.

A focus on medical care and preparedness

Compared to other OECD countries, hospital capacities in Germany are high, with 8.00 hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants (in the US the number is 2.77, in Spain 2.97, in Italy 3.18, and in Japan 13.05). Berlin lies somewhat below this average with 6.00 beds per 1,000 inhabitants. Since Germany was not the first European country to be hit by the pandemic, hospitals had more time to prepare and learn from the experience of hospitals in, for ex-

2 At least 60% of employees' wages are covered. From May onwards, employees receive at least 70% from the fourth month onwards, and 80% from the seventh month onwards (for parents the rates are slightly higher).

ample, Lombardy. Further, to free up personnel and other capacities for the treatment of COVID-19 patients, German hospitals cancelled all scheduled admissions, operations and medical procedures (as far as medically justifiable). Clinics and hospitals in Berlin have collaborated on an emergency plan that details which patients will be brought where, why and how. For instance, some hospitals will specialise in COVID-19 patients while others will attend other emergency patients.

Coming close to the record-speed hospital construction in the Chinese city of Wuhan, Berlin built a new Corona Emergency Hospital in just four weeks. This was certainly not an easy task, considering that in Berlin up to 37

COMING CLOSE TO THE RECORD-SPEED HOSPITAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE CHINESE CITY OF WUHAN, BERLIN BUILT A NEW CORONA EMERGENCY HOSPITAL IN JUST FOUR WEEKS.

authorities have a say in new construction projects (ranging from authorities responsible for forest law and nature conservation through to monument protection). Such processes usually take several years and even longer if something goes wrong (Berlin's "new" airport has been under construction for 14 years). Construction law is amongst the most complicated in Germany and hospitals are among the most challenging construction projects due to very high regulatory standards. However, a paragraph in the Berlin building regulations, which states that

installations for non-armed civil defence do not have to go through a proper approval or licensing procedure, provided a loophole that made the rapid planning and building of the new hospital possible. Experts believe that this may be the first time the paragraph has been applied to such a case. The meaning of "danger" and "civil protection" has thus been redefined by the pandemic (Hommerich, 2020).

Time will tell ...

The measures outlined above seem to be working for Berlin. On the one hand, the city has reacted very pragmatically. The local healthcare sector in particular has excelled in pragmatism, as constructing a completely new emergency hospital in only four weeks shows. On the other hand, solidarity with and among Berlin's citizens – who aren't Germany's wealthiest – remains overwhelming. Berliners have adapted and a wave of support and good will can be felt in the city. The notion of "pragmatic solidarity" may seem like a contradiction in terms. However, it is precisely what characterises Berlin's approach to the pandemic. Time will tell whether the measures put in place will still be effective when the pressures on the city's health and public services increase during a potential second wave of infections.

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LONDON AND COVID-19: TOO COMPLEX FOR ONE GOVERNMENT?

Addressing the COVID-19 crisis involves a level of complexity that is overwhelming governments around the world. Nowhere is this more evident than in cities that are at the centre of the current outbreak. The handling of the corona emergency in London is an example of central governments aiming for national consistency rather than enabling city-specific leadership. It is becoming increasingly clear, that a successful recovery and post-crisis phase will have to rely on more elaborate and effective forms of multi-level governance.



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London's response to COVID-19 has so far mostly been determined by the actions of the UK's central government. Emergency measures taken by national governments are currently paramount in most of the world's cities, but the UK's governance system is particularly centralised. Almost completely aligned emergency measures were implemented across England (which has a population of 55 million) unlike, for example, in Italy, the United States or Germany, where more regional and state-specific approaches were taken.

At the same time, it was London that reported the UK's first concentrations of cases and where COVID-19 infections rapidly took hold throughout March. At that point, Greater London, which covers an area of 1,570 square kilometres and is home to 8.9 million inhabitants, was seen as particularly vulnerable, given its international links and vibrant urban economy supported by one of the world's most extensive public transport systems. London also features some of the UK's worst air quality, considerable health inequalities and numerous overcrowded homes with unhealthy living conditions – all additional determinants of a more serious impact of the current pandemic. On the plus side, London offers its residents access to many parks and open spaces

and its population includes a high proportion of children and young professionals.

By now, the following facts have been confirmed about London's exposure to the pandemic: As of May 10th, almost 5,600 deaths of hospital patients who tested positive for COVID-19 have been documented in the city. Death rates of up to 144 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in some lower-income communities in east London are almost three times higher than those in more affluent south-western areas. In terms of the economic impact, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has estimated that the national economy will shrink by 25% in the second quarter of this year, and by 13% over the whole year.¹ Following the OBR's methodological assumptions, the Greater London Authority (GLA) forecasts a similar impact on the London economy.² Preliminary evidence from a YouGov survey suggests that unemployment may have doubled in the city in the past few weeks. International travel to and from the city has virtually collapsed with Heathrow recording a passenger drop of 97% in April.

As concerns are beginning to shift from an almost exclusively public health perspective to addressing larger social and economic impacts, London is recognising the enormous challenge ahead. Most of its competitive advantage is built around precisely those characteristics that seem to enable the spread of infectious diseases: global connectivity, employment densities of up to 140,000 persons per square kilometre, a public transport share of more than 40%, big cultural and sports events, prime sites for tourism and an extensive restaurant, café, bar and club culture.

So how are the above health and broader challenges addressed by different tiers of government in London's case? At the national level, the UK was relatively late to apply more stringent measures and initially seemed to have been embracing a more liberal approach. National leadership on the most relevant actions in London included the "soft lockdown" which began on March 23rd (after pleas for voluntary action failed to produce the desired social distancing over a sunny weekend just before). From then on people were allowed only to leave their homes for one of the following four reasons: shopping for basic necessities, one form of exercise per day, any medical need, and designated key workers were permitted to travel to and from work. Education moved online after all schools were closed

1. <https://obr.uk/coronavirus-analysis/>

2. <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-economy-today>

(except for some partial capacity for the children of key workers). National health emergency measures included the postponing of all non-urgent operations and the building of a new temporary Nightingale Hospital with 4,000 beds at east London's ExCeL exhibition centre. The National Health Service (NHS) also implemented a volunteer scheme, which attracted an initial 750,000 applications across the country by March 29th 2020. On May 13th, some relaxations of lockdown rules were implemented, allowing more workers to return to their workplace and expanding outdoor exercise and leisure activities.

By contrast, city and borough-level government principally operated as the implementation agencies of national decisions.

When it comes to the Greater London Authority and the directly elected mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, his prominence in leading decisions was compromised by the forces of centralisation but slowly increased over the first phase of the emergency response. On March 12th, he was finally invited to join the national government's emergency response COBRA committee after having been sidelined until then. A major concern for the mayor is providing public transport – one of the exclusive remits of his office – without putting Transport

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for London (TfL) staff at risk (28 bus drivers have died in London so far). Securing national government support to help with the enormous financial deficit currently building up as a result of the dramatic decline in ridership (potentially a £2bn hole in TfL's finances) is a further priority for the mayor. The mayor also launched a £2.3m Culture at Risk emergency fund to protect the city's creative and night-time businesses: grassroots music and LGTBQ+ venues, creative workspaces and independent cinemas.

Most recently, Mr Khan has become a vocal advocate for the wearing of protective equipment, above all face masks, in all public spaces and transport in London. However, he does not have the power to instruct the public to do so. The mayor also clashed with the national government when he demanded that all construction sites should be closed down during the lockdown. This has not consistently happened in London and only certain larger construction companies decided to completely shut down their sites.

At the local scale, London's 33 boroughs are the main social services providers and state school operators and are responsible for a range of other public services such as waste, cleaning, local transport (above all parking)

and public spaces. Their response focusses primarily on maintaining critical services, dealing with the partial closure of schools and assisting with new crisis-related community needs. The boroughs also actively got involved in managing public space, at times even restricting access to some parks and spreading information about social distancing and other health measures. Another major concern for London's local authorities has been the impact of the lockdown restrictions on the future of the city's independent businesses. The London Growth Hub, which was established by the mayor in partnership with local boroughs, has been providing one-to-one support to businesses and employers, offering financial, legal and practical advice to help them manage the crisis.

At the community level, mutual aid groups at all levels started appearing throughout March. Some of these were organised ad-hoc by a few local residents, others made use of chat groups or neighbourhood apps and were then often consolidated by larger and more experienced community help organisations. The London Community Response Fund was established by the GLA and the City Bridge Trust to support community and voluntary organisations to provide food and other essential services to those in need (Mayor of London, 2020). It has since received donations in excess of £16m. Similarly, many councils such as Hackney have increased their own funding to local organisations that provide essential support to residents.³

The response of London's citizens to government measures was overwhelmingly positive and accepting. Potentially as a result of avoiding draconian lockdown measures and opting for softer messaging of "saving lives", attitudes across the UK are the least supportive of re-opening businesses of 14 countries recently surveyed (Skinner, 2020). According to UK government statistics, public transport in London declined by about 90% to 95% up to mid-April (Department for Transport, 2020). Mobility trends included in Google's COVID-19 Community Mobility Report suggest an 80% reduction in mobility linked to retail and recreation (Google, 2020). This drop occurred late March and levels remained as low throughout April. Similarly, grocery shopping trips dropped by 40% and have remained at low levels since. By contrast, an initial drop in park visits by around 50% in early March has entirely been reversed and a 5% increase was recorded late April. Work-place mobility is also slowly recovering from a decline of 65% back to a 50% reduction. Throughout lockdown, residential mobility within communities is up by around 15%.

3. <https://hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-volunteering>

As the attention now shifts to lockdown exit strategies, there are concerns about how the city's transport networks will accommodate social distancing measures as people begin to return to work. Seeking to avoid overcrowding and infection transmissions on densely packed buses and tubes, City Hall and TfL have been working on the Mayor's Streetspace Plan to fast track the transformation of the city's streets and expand cycle networks and pedestrian walkways (Groves, 2020). Pavements in the London Borough of Lambeth are already being widened, a shopping street in Hackney has been closed to cars, and residential streets in Croydon have been made access only. In the coming months as people continue to work from home, there are likely to be fewer longer journeys, and an increase in shorter local journeys. The plan is to transform local town centres on the TfL road network to ensure that these journeys can be walked or cycled where possible.

AS LONDON MOVES TOWARDS AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE AS PART OF A RECOVERY AND ULTIMATELY POST-CRISIS PHASE, ITS MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM WILL HAVE TO RESPOND FLEXIBLY TO DIFFERENT SCENARIOS.

As London moves towards an uncertain future as part of a recovery and ultimately post-crisis phase, its multi-level governance system will have to respond flexibly to different scenarios. To develop these scenarios, evidence will be needed about the following critical questions that are not unique to London: Will population growth and international immigration pick up again? Can overcrowding be reduced while continuing to promote a desirable increase in urban densities? Can homelessness and uncertain tenure be substantially reduced in the long run? Is there an opportunity to redesign London's streets with a considerable increase in space for walking, cycling and place functions such as gathering, seating and playing? How and with what space requirements will business and financial services recover? Will the tech industry continue to urbanise? Will co-working spaces continue to offer premium rents? At what point and with what level of technology and/or protection can public transport ridership, visits to restaurants, bars and cultural institutions and tourism recover? Is the future of retail small neighbourhood shops plus online deliveries? And, what will the future of education look like, including university education?

Every single of these questions is massively complex and overwhelming in their own right. London will only be successful in accessing the relevant insights across this almost absurd range of uncertainties if it engages in an extensive dialogue and exchange with other cities, key stakeholders and information providers. Addressing these as part of a coherent government strategy will require unprecedented levels of coordination between national, city-wide and local government.

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VIENNA'S HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

The coronavirus has left governments around the world and at all levels facing emergency situations. Lockdowns, stay-at-home orders and a wide range of other restrictive policies have reinforced existing socioeconomic inequalities. Cities are on the frontline of protecting their residents' rights and supporting them in coping with the new "normality". The City of Vienna, which has a cross-cutting commitment to human rights in all its areas of competence, has also taken a human rights-based approach to managing the current crisis.



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The outbreak of the coronavirus fundamentally changed people's lives overnight. Everyone, from children to adults and the elderly, has had to adapt to a new everyday and working "normality" and is faced with many new challenges, worries and future uncertainties. People's sense of insecurity has been heightened by the fact that not everyone has access to transparent, clear and comprehensive information on the risks of the virus and the measures implemented to contain it. Public authorities can only reduce this insecurity by disseminating reliable information and investing in building trust in their capacities to manage the crisis in compliance with democracy, the rule of law and human rights standards. However, when the virus first broke out containment was the top priority and many of these values did not seem to rank high on the political agenda. The longer the emergency measures last, the less information is made public about their bases in research and data, and the more controversies over them are growing. Questions are raised about whether our human rights are being disproportionately curtailed and the rule of law undermined.

Transparency, accountability, non-discrimination and participation are four important pillars of the human rights-based approach for ensuring democracy. The City of Vienna, which has been

a Human Rights City since December 2014 and has a cross-cutting commitment to human rights in all its areas of competence (Asadi, 2019), has also tried to respect human rights in its management of the coronavirus crisis, ensuring equality and non-discrimination in its response to citizens' needs and the provision of public services. The situation is a big test for the resilience of the city's human rights approach, which is embedded in the framework of broader European and international conventions and charters. In what follows, I discuss how this approach is being implemented in some of the most pressing areas of the city's crisis management.

The right to information

The right to information is an essential human right. Public authorities at all government levels must secure this right and its non-violation, as well as guaranteeing access to reliable and comprehensible information even in emergency situations.

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES CAN ONLY REDUCE INSECURITY BY DISSEMINATING RELIABLE INFORMATION AND INVESTING IN BUILDING TRUST IN THEIR CAPACITIES TO MANAGE THE CRISIS IN COMPLIANCE WITH DEMOCRACY, THE RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS.

As part of its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the City of Vienna developed several user-friendly mobile applications, hotlines and platforms that provide information on health services, daily needs, regional products, digital cultural activities and other online municipal services. The coronavirus hotline offers information in different languages, including sign language, and there is dedicated information for children. Residents can submit personal inquiries in different languages to which the Integration and Diversity Department responds in 24 languages (by email or phone). The City of Vienna considers the right to translation part of the right to information. In the case of COVID-19 translation services have been viewed as particu-

larly important, as immigrant and minority communities that do not have access to translated information may be forced to rely on information provided by their countries of origin. But health policies and prevention measures vary across the world.

Children's right to education

The right to education is anchored in the Austrian constitution. However, its implementation is a federal competence and it must be available to all under any circumstances. The lockdown and the transition to homeschooling have compromised children's equal opportunities to access education. Factors such as the availability of an internet connection and

computer, enough space for pupils to work and parents who can support their child's learning have increased inequalities in the educational system, discriminating against those more affected by poverty (e.g. single parents, migrants and asylum seekers). As part of its commitment to the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child and to "leaving no child behind", the City of Vienna has developed free online courses that support pupils in homeschooling and distributed 5,000 laptops (City of Vienna, 2020). Further, kindergartens and schools stayed open for children with no parental support, and teachers took great efforts to be in regular contact with their pupils. Building on the expansion of WLAN facilities in schools that took place prior to the pandemic, the education hub of the city's Directorate of Education has provided online tools to support teachers and pupils of all ages in distance learning.

The right to housing

Although the coronavirus is often deemed a "democratic virus", its socioeconomic consequences do not affect everyone equally. Existing inequalities, especially in the field of housing, have escalated. To comply with the right to housing (under Article 31 of the European Social Charter, Revised) and to ensure safe housing throughout the crisis, the City of Vienna has adopted a policy for preventing evictions. The

**ALTHOUGH THE
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housing department will stop evictions for its 220,000 flats, which house half a million residents, if they have problems paying rent. The cooperative and limited-profit housing sectors that account for another 180,000 flats have followed this example. Further, following the mayor of Vienna's appeal to the Austrian federal government to protect private rental sector tenants (which is a national competence), a new law was passed on April 4th. Those who cannot pay their rent between April and June because they lose their job or their working hours are reduced due to the coronavirus crisis need not fear being evicted or their rental contracts being terminated. They have until December 31st to make the outstanding payments.

Since the end of March, the application process for rental housing allowances has also been simplified (City of Vienna, 2020a). Until further notice, applicants no longer need to submit all the documents formerly required (e.g. those relating to unemployment or entitlement to benefits) – they can be presented later. In such cases, the city can make an advance assessment and grant an allowance for a limited period of six months. Further, extensions to existing housing allowances are taken on the basis of the last ap-

plication submitted prior to the crisis. Finally, the provision of emergency quarters for the homeless, which was originally only planned until April, has been extended until August (City of Vienna, 2020b). The pandemic has made homeless people even more vulnerable and they form part of the high-risk group. To secure their health, the number of shelters has been increased and the number of occupants per shelter has been reduced.

The right to work

To mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus, the City of Vienna and its partners have created the “Stolz auf Wien BeteiligungsGmbH”, which invests in local companies that face liquidity problems because of the lockdown, but which have a promising future in the long-term. Eligible companies must be a strong part of Vienna’s identity, relevant beyond the city, economically important for up- and downstream sectors and able to secure a significant number of jobs. The initiative is a best practice in public–private partnership.

The city’s small businesses are also supported by rent reductions. Rent payments for the approximately 5,000 Viennese shops and businesses located in buildings owned by the city and affected by the lockdown are reduced or waived. The procedure is uncomplicated and non-bureaucratic. Business tenants are exempt from paying rent in April without having to present an application.

Measures taken to support employment have included amendments to the Vienna Social Welfare Act, creating a one-stop-shop for young adults (aged up to 25) seeking employment. The service offers a unique opportunity for cooperation between labour market services and the City of Vienna under one roof. The target group of this service are 25,000 unemployed and about 10,000 welfare recipients.

Right to bodily integrity

Even before the pandemic, one in five women in Austria were exposed to physical or sexual violence, mostly from their partner or ex-partner. Confinement measures have increased the risk of women and children becoming victims of gender-based violence, obliging governments more than ever to take protective action. The City of Vienna, which is committed to the right to integrity of the person of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 3), has responded to increased demand for information by stepping up the resources of its 24-hour helpline for women (APA, 2020) and guaranteeing that shelter capacities would be increased if necessary (City of Vienna, 2020c).

Future challenges

The City of Vienna has proven flexible and inclusive in its response to the health, social and economic challenges posed by the coronavirus. An important principle it has adhered to is that of leaving services of general interest in local hands. This approach is showing that the successful “Viennese way” also works very well in times of crises. Given record unemployment and an impending social crisis, like any other city, Vienna will have to allocate more resources to combating the economic and social consequences of COVID-19. The availability of digital technology has opened a wide scope of possibilities and can potentially have a positive environmental impact on future working and travel habits. I am optimistic that Vienna, drawing on its human-rights approach to public policy, will be able to address the challenges lying ahead in a holistic and sustainable manner, all the while keeping the local, national and global context in mind.

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ZÜRICH'S COVID-19 RESPONSE: A NATIONAL RESPONSE ORCHESTRATED BY A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Zurich's response to COVID-19 has been national. For the first time since World War II, the Federal Council (the executive branch of the federal government) has invoked emergency powers. A soft lockdown based on trust in people's behaviour and a broad economic support package have helped the healthcare system as well as the employment market to avoid complete collapse.



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Zurich's COVID-19 response is first and foremost a national response. As a consequence of the SARS and H1N1 outbreaks, the Swiss government revised the Epidemics Act originally introduced in 1970. The new law, in force since January 2016, allows the Federal Council to take control and coordinate measures without parliamentary or cantonal approval in order to manage infectious diseases. The work-sharing between the federal government and the cantons is defined by a three-step approach based around what are categorised as "normal", "particular" and "extraordinary" situations. In "normal" situations the cantons are in charge of prevention and supervision. In "particular" situations the federal government makes decisions in coordination with the cantons. And finally, in "extraordinary" situations the federal government takes complete control and the cantons and communities only follow orders. For a country like Switzerland, where any federal authority is based on the cantons' approval, an "extraordinary" situation is truly extraordinary.

On February 28th, three days after the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Switzerland, the national government for the first time implemented the new Epidemics Act and declared the circumstances to be "particular". It banned events

involving more than 1,000 people and, shortly after, those with more than 100 people. On March 16th the government changed its assessment of the situation to “extraordinary”. This entailed the mobilisation of the military and the alignment of containment measures across all cantons (which meant that some cantons that had ordered the closure of hotels had to reverse this measure as it was not part of the national package). Interestingly, there was no opposition to this centralised approach, at least at the beginning. Cantons and communities seemed to be pleased for the federal government to take control. Nevertheless, the canton of Ticino, one of the most affected regions, demanded and was granted an exception to implement more restrictive measures. The incident demonstrated that the federal government is willing to accommodate specific regional needs and interests in its decision-making.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO ACCOMMODATE SPECIFIC REGIONAL NEEDS AND INTERESTS IN ITS DECISION-MAKING.

A “soft” lockdown with a (mostly) obedient civil society

Switzerland’s centrally administered lockdown is relatively soft compared with the measures taken by its bordering countries France and Italy. People are still allowed to leave their homes and move around as long as they are in groups of less than five. Most parks and playgrounds remain open and people are encouraged to go for walks. In Zurich, the lockdown involved the closures of some parks in which people tend to aggregate in larger numbers. To ensure the new rules are complied with, the police have visibly changed their priorities: while a lot more graffiti is appearing around the city, the police are first and foremost concerned with making sure that people in public spaces keep two metres apart.

According to police reports, Zurich’s population has mostly followed the new rules. Research by the ETH (the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) and the canton of Zurich shows that people’s travel distances have drastically reduced (Statistisches Amt des Kantons Zürich and ETH Bereich Covid-19 TF, 2020). The government has attributed the relatively disciplined behaviour of the population to the success of its national information campaign. Surveys show that 98% of the population are aware of the behavioural guidelines (Bundesamt für Gesundheit, 2020).

Despite regional differences (the cantons closest to Italy were hardest-hit), Switzerland has managed this first wave of the pandemic relatively well: no hospital has reached capacity in terms of its intensive care beds and the number of new cases confirmed by tests is decreasing.

A broad economic support package with some help from civil society

With the announcement of the lockdown, the federal government also presented a support package for the economy of over CHF40 billion (€38 billion). The package has four main pillars:

- To maintain business liquidity, banks are providing government-backed credits of up to CHF500,000 at 0% interest, or credits of between CHF500,000 and CHF20 million at 0.5% interest. Businesses can apply via a short seven-step online form.
- To prevent unemployment, employers can apply to the *Kurzarbeit* (or job-saving) programme to subsidise their employees' salaries while activity is reduced or put on hold. This is a pre-existing programme in Switzerland for preventing layoffs when businesses face temporary and unavoidable hardship. For businesses affected by COVID-19, the programme was extended to include temporary and hourly workers as well as apprentices. At the time of writing, one-third of the workforce in the canton of Zurich is benefitting from this programme. Unemployment has nevertheless grown from 0.5% to 2.8% between mid-March and mid-April. Without the *Kurzarbeit* work programme, it is estimated that unemployment would be around 30% in the canton of Zurich.
- Self-employed workers who have to close their business and artists who can no longer perform receive 80% of their daily income up to a maximum of CHF196 (€186) per day. This programme, which is essentially like a guaranteed basic income for those directly or indirectly affected by the lockdown, is also available to people who have to take unpaid leave or cannot work because they have to take care of their children or are under quarantine. Interestingly, two weeks after the programme was introduced, demands for benefits for childcare were still relatively low. According to the Federal Association of Unionised Employees (Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund), this is partly because firms are providing their employees with extra paid time-off and partly because the programme is little known (Blumer, 2020).
- Finally, the government is supporting cultural institutions (e.g. museums, concert halls, etc.) with CHF280 million and is providing CHF100 million in subsidies and credits for sport organisations.

In addition to the national government's economic support package, the City of Zurich has offered rent reductions to businesses leasing city-owned real estate, and financial support to private daycare centres that have lost

clients (although daycare centres have been allowed to remain open, the social pressure on parents with non-essential jobs to keep their toddlers at home has been high). The municipal government has also created a website that features different support services, from community-organised help with home schooling to professional hotlines for people suffering from anxiety or loneliness.

Maybe due to the government's efficient and broad response, civil society initiatives have been slow to emerge and have taken a secondary role in Zürich and Switzerland more broadly. However, for those falling through the cracks of the government's economic measures, or those who need

CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN SLOW TO EMERGE AND HAVE TAKEN A SECONDARY ROLE IN ZÜRICH AND SWITZERLAND.

short-term relief until they receive government support, they are important. A call by Swiss Solidarity, a non-profit organisation, for financial support to help those most in need raised CHF10 million in one day. Other civil society efforts, organised by spontaneous neighbourhood initiatives or professional organisations, include online platforms to connect local retailers with their consumers, hackathons and "giving fences", on which people can hang health-

care products and other donations for those in need. One of the more interesting private-sector initiatives this author came across was launched by Migros – one of Switzerland's two major supermarket chains – in collaboration with Pro Senectute, the national organisation of retired people. An employee at Migros's IT services developed a peer-to-peer app that matches high-risk individuals with "helpers" for grocery shopping. With 20 orders per day and 81% of those made by people aged 66 or older, it has fast become the most popular online shop for the elderly.

The path towards a new normality

On April 16th the federal government announced its partial plan for returning to normality: from April 27th certain businesses (like hairdressers and private medical clinics) can reopen, and from May 11th kids of mandatory school age will go back to school and shops, bars, restaurants, and museums can reopen. To resume business, the different industry sectors had to present the protective, social distancing and contact tracing measures they would put in place (e.g. to have a cup of coffee in a coffeeshop customers need to provide their name and phone number). This approach once again reflects how the Swiss government is hesitant to govern from the top down and instead looks towards those affected to contribute to a compromise that will hopefully keep both the healthcare system and econ-

omy from collapsing. While the announcement of the lockdown seemed to attract little opposition, calls for a more democratic process to negotiate the reopening of the country are now increasing.

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SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: EVERYTHING MUST CHANGE

The cities and counties of the San Francisco Bay Area reacted judiciously and swiftly in the face of an emerging COVID-19 crisis. But while the dramatic change in work, consumption and lifestyle habits during months of shelter-in-place have given a glimpse of alternative futures, long-term solutions to the housing and transportation crises that trouble the Bay Area have not as yet been built into COVID-19 responses. Despite strong regional collaboration between local authorities, sudden budgetary cuts mean these challenges are likely to persist, and to the degree that they do change, the shifts may result from private sector decisions rather than public sector policies.



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Like the COVID-19 pandemic, the major challenges the city of San Francisco faces – most notably housing supply and transportation infrastructure – are shared by the neighbouring cities that together with San Francisco make up the greater Bay Area. As residents of the city itself commute south to Silicon Valley to work, as displaced residents move to Oakland or even farther east to Sacramento for housing, and as counties collaborate on their COVID-19 responses, San Francisco benefits from analysis that takes a metropolitan approach. The metabolism of the city and its economy suggest as much, as do the demographics: San Jose’s population in fact exceeds that of San Francisco, and at approximately eight million, the metropolitan region is nearly ten times the size of San Francisco’s.

When on Tuesday March 17th seven counties in the San Francisco Bay Area implemented “shelter-in-place” orders, the metropolitan region became one of the first in the United States (US) to take dramatic steps to limit the spread of COVID-19. The City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County soon followed, and on March 19th California Governor Gavin Newsom issued a state-wide order. In both these initial orders and subsequent ones, residents and companies were bound by the more conservative or restrictive orders – whether

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issued by a city, county or the state. At the time of the initial order, the Bay Area, and in particular Santa Clara and San Mateo counties – along with Seattle’s King County – looked to be the early West Coast epicentres of the pandemic. Nearly three months later, neither Santa Clara nor San Francisco County ranked in the top 50 US counties for COVID-19 cases. And while questions about reopening remained fraught and the economic consequences dire, the mayors of the three largest cities in the region – London Breed of San Francisco, Libby Schaaf of Oakland and Sam Liccardo of San Jose – all received positive press coverage for their quick action and leadership.

On May 7th, while the San Francisco Bay Area continued to shelter in place, a group of more than 40 cities, organised by the network C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, issued a forward-looking “Statement of Principles” regarding economic recovery from COVID-19. It is ambitious and worthy of analysis. Two principles in particular speak to the difficulty of undertaking a preliminary – albeit necessarily partial – analysis of the COVID-19 response in the San Francisco Bay Area. First, the endorsing cities asserted that: “The recovery, above all, must be guided by an adherence to public health and scientific expertise, in order to assure the safety of those who live in our cities” (C40, 2020). The principle, of course, reflects the politicisation of response measures in countries like the US, but it also reflects the dynamic, real-time nature of COVID-19 knowledge and expertise. Even with lessons learned shared across borders (whether by governments or civil society, see Abdullah and Reynés Garcés in this volume), policymakers and responders in spring 2020 had to operate with a degree of uncertainty regarding the pandemic’s trajectory. A subsequent principle from the C40 statement added: “The recovery must address issues of equity that have been laid bare by the impact of the crisis – for example, workers who are now recognised as essential should be celebrated and compensated accordingly and policies must support people living in informal settlements.” Here is a different temporal frame: one that begins with structural economic forces that long predate COVID-19. Economic and social inequities “laid bare” by COVID-19’s social and economic effects did not spread from Wuhan or emerge suddenly in 2020. In Davos-esque jargon, a mega-crisis of unprecedented proportions met with structural megatrends around economic and social inequality, technology, climate change and geopolitical competition.

This combination of expertise and uncertainty, and long-term trends and breaking developments, has provided seemingly endless material for analysts, panellists and commentators: we’ll build back better; we can’t afford to build back; the international order is dead; the US alliance system is shredded; the EU won’t survive; the suburbs will rise again; cities and urban areas are done.

On the same day in late May, the *New York Times* featured an op-ed headline declaring meat over while another headline noted the return of the hot dog.

It is in this context – where nothing is certain and everything is possible – that geographical focus provides a helpful anchor. As organised as cities have become collectively on the global stage, not all megatrends or repercussions from COVID-19 affect them equally. This is part of the reason there are now more than 300 such networks globally, and why larger ones such as C40 have subnetworks focused on discrete issues. For example, many of London’s economic competitive advantages, such as global connectivity and density, are points of vulnerability during a pandemic or early recovery (see Rhode in this volume). The same can be said of New York City. Tech, however, is a bit different. Analysis in mid-March – early days indeed – by Mark Muro, Mark Maxim and Jacob Whiton of the Brookings Institute (Muro et al., 2020) overlaid the industries expected to be hardest hit with their weight as a percentage of discrete municipal economies. The analysis showed non-“Global Cities” that were highly reliant upon energy or leisure, such as Midland and Odessa, Texas, and Savannah, Georgia and Las Vegas, Nevada, respectively, to be at most risk. Neither the Brookings analysis nor the financial market analysis by Moody’s upon which they drew (Zandi, 2020) identified technology as an especially vulnerable industry. In fact, the Brookings paper suggested that “[a]mong the 100 largest metro areas, the economically safest are mostly tech-oriented university towns. Provo, Utah is the least exposed, followed by Durham-Chapel Hill, N.C., Hartford, Conn., Albany, N.Y., and San Jose, Calif.”

AS ORGANISED AS CITIES HAVE BECOME COLLECTIVELY ON THE GLOBAL STAGE, NOT ALL MEGATRENDS OR REPERCUSSIONS FROM COVID-19 AFFECT THEM EQUALLY.

But while the major technology employers may not have immediately experienced the catastrophic economic blows endured by the travel and energy sectors, for instance, the public and private sectors in the Bay Area both began planning for radically different futures. As the joint OECD and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) report *Subnational Governments Around the World: Structures and Finance* (2016) makes clear, subnational governments in the US, including cities, do not top the table in terms of subnational revenue as a percentage of national public revenue. The top spots were taken by Denmark and Canada. But while the federal and state governments do provide the majority of the funding for issues like infrastructure, cities like San Francisco are nonetheless extremely reliant upon their own business and property tax bases. This has long been viewed as a source of strength and independence, but during periods like

the COVID-catalysed economic downturn in the first half of 2020, it also exposes them to sudden shocks. In May 2020, Mayor Breed directed city departments to slim their budgets by 10% in the face of a looming \$1.7 billion deficit. True to the uncertainty surrounding the direction of the pandemic and the global, national and regional economy, she also directed staff to make preparations for an additional 5% cut. To the east across the Bay Bridge, Oakland, a city with a population roughly half that of San Francisco, was projecting an unexpected \$80 million budget gap. Mayor Liccardo estimated San Jose's deficit at between \$70 and \$100 million. The US Conference of Mayors' "Fiscal Pain Tracker" makes clear the breadth of the budget crisis, which stretches beyond the bigger cities to include tertiary cities such as Richmond, Sant Cruz, Fremont, Santa Rosa and West Sacramento.

These budgetary constraints, coupled with those faced by the State of California, are likely to limit the ability of San Francisco and other cities to radically address the ongoing housing crisis in the region. State Senate Bill 50, which sought to increase housing density and limit certain zoning restrictions, including those introduced by local governments, has long been the focal point of the housing debate and battle in California. On May 22nd State Senator Scott Wiener introduced a pared-down version of the bill that while still targeting zoning restrictions did not include new public funding for housing developments. In the context of COVID-19, with residents staying home across the state, the need for the bill became all the more apparent while the means to address the larger crisis reduced.

The housing crisis has a rough parallel in the transportation crisis: amplified by the success of the technology, it threatens to worsen upon recovery. The Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Report for California on May 2nd, almost exactly six weeks after the shelter-in-place orders were issued, showed a 75% drop versus the baseline for retail and recreation-related movement in San Francisco County, with a 65% reduction in Santa Clara County.¹ Workplace-related mobility was down 47% and 40%, respectively. (The numbers, for what it's worth, were dramatically different in the surrounding agricultural counties. Fresno, Kern and Tulare Counties, sources for much of California and the country's food, showed workplace mobility reductions of 23%, 20% and 19%, respectively.) As embodied in the famous tech buses departing from San Francisco, Oakland and elsewhere to Silicon Valley, traffic and transportation have become a battleground for larger questions about the influence of the ICT revolution on the region.

1. The latest Google COVID-19 Mobility Report is available at: <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>

In some futures, this continues to be the case. The “Rebound Travel Time Calculator” developed by the Work Research Group at Vanderbilt University calculates the changes to traffic and commute times if residents return to work but increase their use of single occupancy vehicles (Hu et al., 2020). Of the major metropolitan areas in the US, according to their model, if commuters abandon public transport San Francisco faces the steepest increase in commute times at somewhere between 20–80 minutes per person (Boston, by comparison, is between 6–22 minutes). During the shelter-in-place period, cities like Oakland and San Jose have accelerated their progress and programmes on pedestrianising city streets; and while these programmes can improve city life and ultimately limit traffic, they will not solve the challenge outlined by the Work Research Group should public transportation options remain limited or the public choose to avoid them.

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The most influential recovery policies implemented in the region may turn out to be those of the major technology companies who so altered the Bay Area landscape to begin with. On May 21st Menlo Park-based Facebook announced that employees could permanently work remotely. The announcement followed similar policy changes by Twitter and Square. Within days an anonymous survey of more than 4,000 tech-sector workers claimed that two-thirds of those asked would consider leaving the Bay Area if they could work remotely. As with most of the long-term COVID-19 repercussions, these are early days yet. Nonetheless, the first principle of the C40 statement declared: “The recovery should not be a return to ‘business as usual’ – because that is a world on track for 3°C or more of over-heating” (C40, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis intersected and continues to intersect with an array of ongoing global trends. It has driven down emissions temporarily but radically disrupted climate negotiations. It has laid bare the selfishness of America First policies but sown mistrust of China. And, zooming in to the San Francisco Bay Area, it has prompted major employers to radically rethink how they work in ways that could dramatically change housing and transportation dynamics in the Bay Area. The more things change, the more they stay the same? Maybe. Or as Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa had it in *The Leopard*: “If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change”.

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SHUT DOWN OR ADAPT? PANDEMIC-ERA INFRASTRUCTURE IN A DIVIDED CHICAGO

In Chicago, COVID-19 revives themes raised by an earlier disaster: the 1995 heat wave, which, like the coronavirus, caused the most suffering in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods. It also revealed that resilient infrastructure – both social and physical – can profoundly improve outcomes. As city officials walk a line between shuttering city life and adapting to the challenge, creative approaches to infrastructure can make Chicago stronger in the face of disaster.



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As Chicago confronts the COVID-19 crisis, its experience recalls the patterns raised by an earlier disaster. In July 1995, the city experienced a week of sweltering temperatures of up to 41° C which combined with high humidity to push the heat index to 52°C. Roads cracked, cars broke down and the electrical grid buckled. Hospital systems were strained, vital social services taxed and by the end of the heat wave more than 700 Chicagoans had died (Klinenberg, 2002).

The geographic manifestations of the heat wave revealed Chicago's fault lines – but also its assets. Poor and African American and Latino neighbourhoods suffered the most. But certain poor neighbourhoods fared much better than others, a fact sociologist Eric Klinenberg attributes to their strong “social infrastructure”: community organisations, useful public spaces and relationship-building institutions that enabled neighbours to support each other in a crisis.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, Chicago faces the challenge of adapting its infrastructure – social and otherwise – to meet the needs of the moment. The city's response has charted a careful, sometimes contradictory path. As it repurposes some infrastructure to meet current demands,

it struggles to figure out how to use other assets, and has preferred to shut down public spaces than to alter them.

The city's approach reveals the fine line leaders must walk between suppressing and exploiting features of city life and the challenge of thinking creatively about city infrastructure in the effort to build a more equitable, functional and humane city out of the pandemic.

Mapping the crisis

Chicago, a city of 2.7 million people, is divided between a relatively prosperous North Side and the more economically mixed South and West Sides, with areas of concentrated, racialised poverty – what one writer

calls “Manhattan smashed against Detroit” (Semuels, 2018).

THE CITY'S APPROACH REVEALS THE FINE LINE LEADERS MUST WALK BETWEEN SUPPRESSING AND EXPLOITING FEATURES OF CITY LIFE AND THE CHALLENGE OF THINKING CREATIVELY ABOUT CITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE EFFORT TO BUILD A MORE EQUITABLE, FUNCTIONAL AND HUMANE CITY OUT OF THE PANDEMIC.

The coronavirus pandemic, like the heat wave a quarter-century earlier, has put African American and Latino residents, and residents of the deindustrialised South and West Sides, at far greater risk than North Siders and those the city categorises as “white” – defined by the US Census Bureau as people who identify as “having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa”. Latinos – people with roots in Latin America – are four times more likely to test positive than whites. Thus far, African Americans have died from the disease at nearly three times the rate of whites, while Latinos have died at nearly double the rate of whites.¹ As of the end of May, the city had over 42,000 confirmed cases

of COVID-19 and 1940 deaths, nearly half of whom are African American.

Economic circumstances force more residents of the South and West Sides to leave their houses in spite of stay-at-home orders. Residents of these neighbourhoods are less likely to have jobs that can be worked from home. A media report from early May found mass transit boardings dropped upwards of 90% in several North Side “L” stations, but only around 60% in sta-

1. The latest data for Chicago is available on the city's official website: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/covid-19/home/latest-data.html>

tions on the South and West Sides (Ramos, 2020). For residents with few mobility options, transit continues to serve a vital role.

As elsewhere, the virus, which at first raised alarms about the dangers of a globally interconnected economy with hypermobile workers, appears to have left those segments of Chicago's workforce relatively unscathed (Legrain, 2020). Most of Chicago's wealthiest neighbourhoods have low case rates, undoubtedly bolstered by residents' ability to work from home, while the neighbourhoods with the highest case rates are mostly the working class and struggling African American and Latino neighbourhoods on the city's western edge. Among the city's globally interconnected – the Loop – rates are among the lowest in the entire city. Those at the top of the global city's hierarchy have experienced low rates of infection relative to the service workers at the bottom.

Adaptation versus suppression

Chicago's mayor, Lori Lightfoot, and Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker responded swiftly to the crisis relative to other US cities. The Chicago Department of Public Health issued a shelter-in-place order on March 18th, when the city had only 122 recorded cases (Cherone, 2020). As in other cities, non-essential businesses were shuttered, restaurants limited to kerbside service and non-essential trips restricted.

Essential infrastructure was adapted to meet the needs of the moment, as it was in the past. In the aftermath of the 1995 heat wave, the city built strategies to keep vulnerable people safe during heat waves, including cooling centres and plans for outreach to vulnerable residents. During the coronavirus, it transformed McCormick Place, the gigantic lakefront convention centre, into a field hospital for COVID-19 patients. Fearing an outbreak among the city's sizable homeless population, it rented out hotels to serve as makeshift homeless shelters (Freund, 2020).

Public transit underwent what in normal times would be considered radical changes. Whereas in New York City, MTA officials cut service as ridership dropped – leading to dangerous crowding – Chicago's CTA committed to maintaining service levels even as ridership dropped precipitously in an effort to keep riders safe. Advocacy organisations also pushed the CTA to institute rear-door boarding on buses to better protect drivers and stopped enforcing bus fare payment.

Its "infrastructure" of philanthropies adapted, creating large emergency response funds for nonprofits and response teams to bolster neighbourhood social infrastructure.

But the city government took a different approach to its public spaces. From nearly the start of the lockdown, it approached public space as a potential vector of disease, shutting much of it down rather than adapting it. On March 26th, the Mayor closed the Lakefront Park system, the city's largest network of parks and a vital off-street route for bicycle commuters. It also shuttered the popular 606 Trail, providing no alternate route for either. As a result, cyclists and other park users complained that the decision deprived them of safe infrastructure for essential transportation (*Chicago Reader*, 2020).

If the city's initial approach to public space was suppressive, it was

FROM NEARLY THE START OF THE LOCKDOWN, THE CITY OF CHICAGO APPROACHED PUBLIC SPACE AS A POTENTIAL VECTOR OF DISEASE, SHUTTING MUCH OF IT DOWN RATHER THAN ADAPTING IT.

leavened by a clever social media campaign urging residents to avoid going outdoors. It promoted hashtags such as #StayHomeSavesLives and #WeAreNotPlaying. Most effectively, it embraced a popular internet meme featuring a glowering Mayor Lightfoot, binder in hand, transposed over images suggesting outdoor enjoyment: the mayor glaring at smiling parkgoers, at a television graphic of a sunny weather forecast, at Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (Hernandez, 2020). Some residents placed photographs of the vigilant

mayor glaring from apartment windows beside signs urging passers-by to #StayHome. The humour softened the edge of a policy approach that almost reflexively considered public space both a threat and an expendable luxury.

For residents for whom such spaces were luxuries, the message was clear and sensible: stay home. But for those in crowded housing, with small children, or who, by virtue of circumstance, had to continue to go outside and navigate public space, it offered less.

The city had justification for its wary approach to parks and other public spaces, having little information on how easily the disease could be transmitted outdoors. But its policy marked Chicago as somewhat outside the mainstream of other large cities, whose leaders have asked how public spaces can be reimagined to meet residents' transportation, physical and psychological needs. Across the United States and Europe, city leaders are seeking to create more public space; many have exploited their street networks to create routes for safe, socially distant travel and to forestall an expected crush of car traffic once lockdowns lift. Some

cities have widened off-street trails and carved out new bike lanes from traffic lanes. “Open streets” or no-through-traffic streets for pedestrians and cyclists, serving as safe, socially distant transportation routes, have appeared in cities across the United States and the world.

Towards the future

Chicago was slow to embrace this creative approach to its streets for fear of encouraging outdoor congregation. But city leaders have recently begun to re-open public spaces, including some parks, and open streets—albeit mainly for outdoor dining and recreation, not transportation.

Such an approach may be a small step towards aligning the city’s treatment of its public spaces with that of its public transit, its convention centres and its hotels – treating well-managed public spaces as a vital resource and potential asset. A more intentional effort to provide safe walking and cycling routes that meet the needs of vulnerable neighbourhoods – alternatives to buses, trains and cars – can also bolster community life at a time when social ties are as important as ever.

As Klinenberg’s study of the 1995 heat wave illustrated, resilient neighbourhoods with strong social networks, support systems and adaptable infrastructure are likely to fare better than those without such advantages. The pandemic poses a similar challenge and calls for action. As Chicago transitions from crisis management to planning the future, the essential components of city life – transit, parks, streets – can serve as the building blocks for a more resilient, more equitable future.

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CAN COVID ACCELERATE THE METROPOLITAN UNITY OF GREATER BUENOS AIRES?

As in most metropolises, the pandemic brought a sudden interruption to the lives of the people of Greater Buenos Aires (GBA). From early on, Argentina has stuck to a strict Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation scheme. The GBA's capacity for metropolitan coordination, a test for its leaders, has been a positive surprise, and the political response has been unprecedented.



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On March 19th 2020, the day Dr Alberto Fernández completed his first 100 days leading the national government, Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation was decreed and the country's borders were closed as a public health protection measure to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. This measure, unprecedented in Argentina's modern history, also featured another novelty of major political impact: it was announced jointly by the national president, the Head of Government of the City of Buenos Aires, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, and the Governor of Buenos Aires Province, Axel Kicillof. These three figures govern the territory of what is known as the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires (MRBA). It was a highly unusual gesture in the country's political culture.

The Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation marked a turning point in the lives of Buenos Aires' citizens, restricting many freedoms in the pursuit of collective health. Time will tell if it will also facilitate long overdue institutional coordination in the metropolitan area. For now, the various scales of government seem more united by the dread and horror of the likely news of lost lives than by any compatibility of political party or ideology. While the national and provincial governments belong to different strains of Peronism, the city is run by the republican coalition that ruled the country until December 2019.

As Argentina's main gateway, the MRBA – home to around 15 million people – is worst hit by the pandemic's effects. The city council prepared for the quarantine by arranging a group of epidemiologists on the 107 helpline of the Emergency Medical Attention System to provide information and relief for suspected cases. One week after the first case, the measures were stepped up and those over 65 years old were asked to preventively isolate themselves, and all arrivals from abroad were obliged to carry out a period of 14 days' isolation in hotels contracted by the city council. Finally, March 20th marked the first day of the Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation decreed by the head of state.

FOR NOW, THE VARIOUS SCALES OF GOVERNMENT SEEM MORE UNITED BY THE DREAD AND HORROR OF THE LIKELY NEWS OF LOST LIVES THAN BY ANY COMPATIBILITY OF POLITICAL PARTY OR IDEOLOGY.

As of May 12th the city has 2,871 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 126 people have died. Of the total number of cases, over 26% (759) are located in vulnerable neighbourhoods. The MRBA has 4742 cases in total (1871 + 2871). According to the daily national report and the national map published by the newspaper *La Nación*, the MRBA accounts for over 63.3% of the country's positive COVID-19 cases.¹

The challenges of dealing with the pandemic are multiple, starting with inter-jurisdictional coordination. Unlike other cities, the metropolitan area does not have a metropolitan regulatory framework or a specific entity. However, the national government worked alongside those of Buenos Aires province and city to decide on the measures to be taken, setting aside ideological and political differences. Most of the accesses to the city were closed to avoid movement between the two jurisdictions. Measures were also taken to limit mass passenger transport and to reserve it for essential personnel. Mandatory checks were introduced at major intercity train stations with the installation of rapid test points and infrared thermometers. Managing resilience to face this crisis as well as those to come as a consequence of climate change will require metropolitan governance mechanisms to be developed (Lanfranchi et al., 2018).

In the city, the government made agreements with hotels to provide space for preventive isolation to citizens returning from abroad, but also for use

1. Up-to-date data published by La Nación can be found at: <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/en-detalle-infectados-fallecidos-coronavirus-argentina-nid2350330#/>

as medical centres for minor cases of coronavirus. Similarly, facilities were opened to host people living on the street during quarantine and provide them with accommodation. In terms of education, a Connected Educational Community (CEC) was created to provide support to students, their families and teachers to carry out academic activities from home. The city also offers *Cultura en casa* (Culture at Home), which provides easy access to cultural content free of charge via the government's website. Over 21% of the total population of the city of Buenos Aires is over 60 years of age. To care for it, the *Adultos mayores* programme (Elderly Adults programme) was set up, which enables telephone assistance and help with shopping to be given through an extended network of volunteers.

In recent days, the focus has been on the city's vulnerable neighbourhoods. A substantial rise in coronavirus cases has been noted and, for this reason, it was decided mass door-to-door testing should be carried out for people with symptoms. What is more, due to the sanitary conditions of certain houses, several centres were opened to enable inhabitants to comply with mandatory isolation. Finally, over these weeks, the compulsory use of facemasks was imposed in all public spaces in the city with a very high rate of compliance among the city's residents.

IT IS AN INTERESTING TIME TO START INNOVATIVE URBAN PLANNING PROCESSES, AS MANY THINGS ARE EXPECTED TO CHANGE IN THE "NEW NORMAL", WHICH SEEMS TO BE HERE TO OVERTURN EXISTING PARADIGMS.

Perhaps one of the most interesting opportunities the new scenario presents is the possibility that local governments will be motivated to implement new approaches to public space, using tactical urban planning tools to test "temporary" transformations, that could become definitive if they work. Thus, the government recently announced the partial or total pedestrianisation of 100 streets and avenues of the city in record time to allow neighbourhood shops to reopen while respecting social distancing. It is an interesting time to start innovative urban planning processes, as many things are expected to change in the "new normal", which seems to be here to overturn existing paradigms. In fact, the city already had an updated Environmental Urban Plan on its agenda.

What will the city be like in the decades to come? Will a commitment be made to mobility models that focus on decentralisation, proximity and pedestrianisation? Like Paris's 15-minute city and Barcelona's Superblocks strategy, Buenos Aires is developing a new Environmental and Anthropological Urban Plan that puts the environment and people first. These ideas

are currently being discussed within the council of the Urban Environmental Plan and the city's Urban Development Secretariat. It is to be hoped that they will enter the implementation and co-creation stage with all the city's vital sectors sooner rather than later. For this, "PlanificAcción" methods have been proposed (Lanfranchi, 2019), which focus on building social capital through the participatory design of transformative projects, while simultaneously defining the plan's strategic guidelines.

It may be said that, so far, the measures taken by the governments have been successful in terms of public health, as Argentina has one of the region's lowest rates of contagion. However, after 55 days of compulsory isolation, the economic situation for *Porteños*, and for all Argentinians, is very worrying. The future is uncertain, but the current unity among the leaders of Greater Buenos Aires is promising, and perhaps we can emerge stronger out of the current crisis as a society.

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COVID-19 IN CAPE TOWN: INITIAL STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES

Cape Town has been South Africa's COVID-19 hotspot. The provincial and local governments have intervened to prepare the city as a COVID-19 entry point and there has been an outpouring of civil society action. State and civil society partnerships complement, contradict and coexist in efforts to respond to the risk posed by the virus. Only joint action has managed to mitigate some of the most negative impacts of a tight lockdown, ensuring that poor people did not starve and that the benefits of an early and firm restriction of movement could be achieved.



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COVID-19 is a quintessentially urban pandemic, originating in a street market, leading to city lockdowns across the world and impeding city-to-city connectivity – at least for a while. It is also urban because, typically, local actors move to the frontline of community support, with sub-national governments working alongside neighbourhood religious or gang leaders in public facilities, schools, community centres and on street corners. Local service providers and enforcement agents (a patchwork of civil society structures and ordinary residents) give the city-specific texture to COVID-19 responses and it is this collective action that will define post COVID-19 urban politics.

In a global pandemic the local context is particularly important. Dependence is necessary on outside (national and international) information, resources and connections, but effective responses to any crisis (before, during and after) need to work with local realities and draw in multiple micro actors. Understanding the wider trajectory of a pandemic hinges on establishing the composite, variegated global picture of local responsibilities and reactions. How different local authorities navigate risk depends on sub-national as well as national policy responses, but also on how residents and civil society organisations mobilise around pandemic-induced problems.

How well the various stakeholders work together at local level may be most significant of all in mitigating the non-health dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis and defining new modes of engagement.

Cape Town has been South Africa's COVID-19 hotspot. As a major port city and leading global tourist destination with significant underlying health risks – associated with high levels of diabetes and HIV/Aids and the world's highest incidence of tuberculosis – it has been particularly vulnerable to the new virus. At the end of May the city accounted for more than 60% of South African cases (Cowan, 2020). Although the overall COVID-19 incidence and death figures for Cape Town are currently low, the city may be

HOW DIFFERENT LOCAL AUTHORITIES NAVIGATE RISK DEPENDS ON SUB-NATIONAL AS WELL AS NATIONAL POLICY RESPONSES, BUT ALSO ON HOW RESIDENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS MOBILISE AROUND PANDEMIC-INDUCED PROBLEMS.

seen as South Africa's Milan or New York. The situation is exacerbated by local government's limited health and social protection mandate, fractious intergovernmental relations, comparatively limited state resources, and very high levels of social, economic and health vulnerabilities across the country.

But the city, which has a fractured past, also has a tradition of mass organisation in the face of crisis. Over the past three months there has been a huge outpouring of action to mitigate the unintended consequences of a tight lockdown (for the first two months there was no access to alcohol or tobacco and very heavy restriction of movement). The most visible civil

society response has been the launch of a network of online community groups. At the same time, the provincial and local government have tried to intervene beyond medical preparations around the lockdown to prepare Cape Town as a landing point for the virus. What emerges is that only joint action has been able to mitigate some of the most negative impacts of the harsh lockdown regime to ensure that poor people did not starve and the benefits of an early and firm restriction of movement could be achieved.

Cape Town under lockdown

Cape Town was the country's COVID-19 landing point. The terms of the response were set on March 15th when a national state of disaster was declared. With the scale of the challenge, it is unsurprising that all of government and civil society galvanised their resources and that (at least in the critical early phase) actors within the state and beyond worked together. This partnership-based response presupposes capacity in each stakeholder

group – existing relationships of trust at the local level and stakeholders being institutionally able to work together.

In Cape Town, because government health, education, transport and welfare (and some policing) fall under provincial not local government control, both the premier and the mayor have critical responsibilities for citizens' welfare at city level. The metropolitan area of Cape Town accounts for two-thirds of the population of the Western Cape province, making the city the major hub of provincial COVID-19 concerns and raising issues of intergovernmental cooperation, which have not always been happy (Cowan, 2020). These inter-state tensions appear to have been put aside to respond to the enormous social and economic challenges of COVID-19 lockdown; in most cases working in partnership with civil society actors.

Unemployment in the city runs at 11.9% (Western Cape Government, 2017) and many households have low wages, depend on meagre state grants, and have had their income halted by lockdown, stretching existing social safety nets beyond capacity. As a result, the immediate threat in lockdown Cape Town was access to water and food (Davis, 2020). In response, the national government introduced a R500 billion social relief and economic support package to bolster existing food assistance through vouchers and cash transfers. The package included plans for the Department of Social Development to partner with the Solidarity Fund (a public benefit company supported by business, civic society and government aimed at funding COVID-19 relief measures). Along with school closures and the freeze on non-essential services nationwide, the Department of Education initially closed provincially executed school feeding schemes that provide food to millions of learners on a daily basis under the National School Nutrition Programme. However, at a provincial level, school feeding schemes in the Western Cape were quickly reopened and have since provided meals to learners across the province with the help of the Peninsula School Feeding Association and other community organisations.

The Western Cape's Provincial Treasury also approved additional funding of R53 million for short-term emergency food relief programmes. A portion of this funding has been allocated for family food parcels (R20 million to distribute 50,000 food parcels) to be prepared and distributed through the Department for Social Development and selected non-governmental organisations (Department of Health 2020). The remaining funds were directed towards early childhood development centres and feeding schemes through schools as well as the Department of Social Development. At city level, the mayor donated equipment and ingredients to NGOs running community kitchens across the city's jurisdiction. The city's Water and San-

itation Department also distributed water tanks and trucks to informal settlements where residents do not have access to piped water. Preparing the city for COVID-19 and responding to the unfolding impact of the virus required the combined efforts of all three tiers of government – national, provincial and local – across a range of agencies and previously established civil society partners. However, the most visible responses have not been state-driven.

As the lockdown intensified in Cape Town, shortfalls in government food provision became apparent (particularly for migrants who do not qualify for government welfare provisions), and the serious risk of food insecurity and hunger became obvious. In response, inter-and intra-neighbourhood

**“ON-THE-GROUND”
CITY-BASED
RESPONSES FORM
PART OF AN EMERGING
COUNTRY-WIDE SOCIAL
JUSTICE RESPONSE TO
THE PANDEMIC.**

mobilisation around food has taken various forms across the city and has included established charities and faith groups fundraising for and establishing community kitchens and food parcel delivery schemes. The Cape Town Together (CTT) movement and associated neighbourhood-based Community Action Networks (CANs) emerged as new civil society actors.

Cape Town Together is a Facebook-based collective that started as a community response to COVID-19 prior to lockdown. The collective rests on self-organised efforts to take local action and share resources. Each CAN is organised at the neighbourhood level through WhatsApp and Facebook groups and is also connected to the broader CTT network, which aims to support these locally led neighbourhood initiatives. CANs distribute food and other essentials such as face masks and soap, but have also shared information about COVID-19 and good hygiene practices, launched fundraising campaigns, and performed neighbourhood mapping to identify who needs help.

These “on-the-ground” city-based responses form part of an emerging country-wide social justice response to the pandemic organised under the banner of the C19 People’s Coalition. The coalition, which has a strong Cape Town leadership, comprises over 250 organisations and 20 working groups working to lobby the South African government for what it describes as an effective, just, equitable and pro-poor response to the pandemic. The over 250 organisations include many of the traditional anti-apartheid social movements of trade unions, community organisations and NGOs. In policy terms, their focus is crucial not least because it makes more directed and extended demands of a post-COVID national and sub-national state. C19 members are united under a shared “Programme of Action” which stresses income security for all (a basic income grant); access to sanitation and to

food; the importance of community self-organisation and representation in national coordination; adequate training and support of community health workers and other frontline health and emergency services workers; free, open and democratised communication; mitigation of inequalities in the educational system; and prevention of a nationalist, authoritarian and security-focused approach in containing the virus (C19 People's Coalition, 2020). COVID-19 responses, in other words, have reinvigorated an already powerful locally grounded civil society movement in Cape Town and South Africa.

Collaboration, complementarity or conflict?

Collective efforts to respond to the risk posed by COVID-19 in Cape Town are characterised by the coexistence of complementarity, collaboration and conflict within government and between government and civil society. A well-organised and experienced civil society in the city, which was forged in opposition to apartheid and in response to HIV/Aids, meant that gaps in government delivery were patched by religious communities, homeless shelters, feeding schemes, NGOs and community-based groups, such as those mobilised in response to COVID-19. Together, these organisations complemented the government's efforts to address the basic needs of a population kept indoors under one of the most tightly controlled of all lockdown regimes, filling gaps left by inadequate and patchy state-sponsored social protection – particularly with regards to food and water.

COVID-19 amplified pre-existing inequalities in Cape Town and revealed flaws in an otherwise reasonably strong disaster risk response. Unlike the shorter-term emergencies precipitated by fire or flooding, neither the municipality nor the province was able to respond adequately to provide sustained support to the most vulnerable over an extended period of exposure. Over and above the hardships of housing problems, loss of livelihoods, insufficient capacity for distributing food, inadequate data on who needs support, the bureaucracy involved in verifying food claims have made the threat of hunger posed by COVID-19 greater than the threat of the disease (Davis, 2020). Civil society agility bolstered and complemented government efforts and partially filled this gap.

Civil society also proved more flexible than government in this crisis. Pre-existing civil society organisations could rely on the information and systems they already had in place for identifying who needs support and offering it, whereas the CANs have been able to rapidly and flexibly respond to need through direct communication over WhatsApp and other platforms, and mobilise in order to distribute resources where needed. In some instances, civil society organisations such as soup kitchens, feeding associations and

public health charities have collaborated directly with the city and province to provide food and medical staff to homeless shelters and community clinics, and to distribute food within neighbourhoods – in doing so providing services on behalf of government. A more lasting legacy of COVID-19 is likely to be a stronger and more coherent demand from civil society for the state to deliver on its mandate of urban transformation.

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FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS? MELBOURNE IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19



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CIDOB REPORT
05- 2020

After living through a catastrophic bushfire in January 2020, Melbourne was hit by COVID-19. The pandemic has underlined the challenges of governing a large metropolitan area like Melbourne and the dependency of global cities of its stature on international networks. Halfway through the year, a potentially protracted economic crisis almost certainly looms. Managing a global city in the midst of overlapping crises might just be the new state of affairs.

In the middle of the global lockdown the events of late 2019 can seem like a distant reality, but for many Melbournians they remain burned into memory. Reports of the outbreak of what was then known as SARS-CoV-2 started spreading as the city had just finished witnessing one of the, if not *the*, most devastating bushfire seasons in recorded history. With 20% of Australia's forests burnt in bushfire, accounting for more than two-thirds of Australia's annual emissions budget (approx. 350m tonnes of CO₂) and billions of property, agricultural, insurance and tourism damage, at the beginning of February Melbournians were still surveying their charred regional and suburban fringe as the pandemic hit home.

Melbournians were given just a few weeks' respite between a climate-induced disaster and a health catastrophe. But, nearing the end of the southern hemisphere's summer, the situation seems brighter than in other major international cities. From a comparative perspective one could argue Melbourne has been relatively untouched by the global turmoil caused by the coronavirus: as I type this, there have been 1,182 confirmed cases in Greater Melbourne (only 89 are currently sick, an increase of 17 from yesterday) and 18 confirmed deaths total. Lockdown restrictions are still in place, but are slowly easing and are set

to loosen further in the months to come as long as no further spikes in cases occur. Such figures seem very different from those in key theatres of the crisis like Milan, New York and London.

Yet the global lockdown, the inevitably deep economic downturn it will provoke, and social distancing measures are hitting hard even in the wake of relatively comfortable contagion figures. As many have already noted, for a predominantly urban (86%) country accounting for 25 million people, whose economy is highly dependent on global connectivity, COVID-19 might mark a dramatic turn for the worse even if the outbreak itself remains contained. The federal government's A\$130bn JobKeeper

THE CITY HAS ALSO BEEN LOOKING AT THE POSSIBILITY OF LEVERAGING THE RECOVERY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE CHANCE TO BUILD A BETTER MELBOURNE.

wage subsidy programme will to some extent ease the impact of the crisis on employment, but estimates foresee the nation's unemployment rate possibly rising to between 10% and 15%.

Local government in Melbourne has been relatively quick to take action. The city rapidly stepped in to offer A\$5 million in grants to small and medium-sized businesses and non-profit organisations to invest in online and e-commerce capabilities and a A\$2 million fund providing financial assistance to artists and small organisations to develop new work, or for the digital presentation of artistic works and performances. Importantly, along with artists and indeed the poorest (with for instance a A\$6m programme for homeless quarantine support), the city has also sought to support essential workers even with mundane gestures such as issuing free parking stickers for up to 8000 frontline workers in the healthcare and other vital services sectors. In a country built on migration, many of those working in these jobs hail from abroad.

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Here Melbourne's "global" character has been very clearly shown. The city also stepped in to show leadership in the protection of its large international student body, which numbers over 200,000, at least 52,000 of whom live in the city centre, well before its major universities acted. Early in April the mayor and the council launched a dedicated support hub, including advice, an ombudsman function and a hardship fund, and called for increased support for students from overseas, many of whom found themselves in precarious living and services situations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state government of Victoria matched this with a A\$45 million International Student Emergency Relief Fund, as well as a broader COVID-19 health costs waiver for overseas visitors

The city has also been looking at the possibility of leveraging the recovery as a transformative chance to build a better Melbourne, starting with experiments taking place in the midst of the crisis. This is certainly a perfect moment for this kind of experimentation: cycling rates in the city have been reaching record levels during lockdown, and road traffic has reportedly fallen by 88%. The city council has been proactive about seizing this opportunity. Plans are afoot to do away with several car parks to allow for more footpaths and to roll out 12 kilometres of pop-up cycling lanes across the CBD in the name of social distancing as COVID-19 restrictions start to ease. In this Melbourne has been following the temporary mobility retrofit trend set by Milan and Berlin and has done so as the likes of London and Paris are also moving in a similar direction. Many of these innovations are neither novelties nor unprecedented efforts. Much like London, Sydney had been rolling out a “cycling highway” since 2014. In fact, several of the proposed changes to the way we will at least temporarily move in the city as we enter a new phase of the crisis were already present in the council’s *2030 Transport Strategy* and are in all effect simply being fast-tracked.

**THE BUSHFIRE,
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ACROSS THE GREATER
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Yet Melbourne is not just the City of Melbourne (Gleeson & Spiller, 2012). The latter accounts for approximately 37 square kilometres and a population of 169,961 and while it is certainly home to some of its major economic, educational and cultural players and many of the renowned landmarks, it is far from the whole of Melbourne. The wider area covers five million people and 10,000 square kilometres, and is in turn surrounded by not-so-small regional realities like Geelong (253,269 people) on the south-west coast and Ballarat (107,325 people) in the north-west inlands. Similar to Sydney, 31 municipal councils make up what we call Greater Melbourne. This is a key local issue (Rossiter & Gibson, 2011). For instance, the largest share of the city’s population (46.6%) lives in areas covered by the outer local governments. In the absence of a metropolitan or regional authority like the Greater London Authority (GLA) in London or even just the state government coordination body of the Greater Sydney Commission in New South Wales, it has fallen to the state government of Victoria to manage much of the response to the crisis. In fact, many would argue that the COVID-19 response across Australia has reminded us of the power of premiers and states and the limits of both local councils and the federal executive in Canberra.

As flagged above, Melbourne as a city has responded proactively to several of the chronic issues heightened by the crisis. Yet it perhaps remains less in

the global spotlight than its international peers in organisations like the C40 Cities, 100 Resilient Cities or ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. It has not been in the limelight of international leadership as a promoter of global – or indeed regional – discussions and exchanges between cities. Milan has for instance become chair of the Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force sponsored by C40, and Freetown has been a regular presence in non-governmental and multilateral (virtual) fora, sharing its dramatic experience with containing the 2014–15 Ebola epidemic. New York City, Helsinki and Montreal are leading conversations about leveraging the SDGs or acknowledging the possibilities of tackling inequality in a time of deepening economic divisions (Acuto, 2020).

Here, Melbourne has an opportunity to do more. The bushfire, climate and health crises all bring to the surface the deeper underlying crisis of inequality across the greater metropolitan area, with major issues in terms of poverty (12.6% in Greater Melbourne), homelessness (up by nearly 50% in the last decade) and vulnerability for the lower-income households across the region.

The bushfire crisis had already begun underscoring this with an emphasis on suburbs and peri-urban livelihoods in the global city (Connolly et al., 2020). COVID-19 has also hopefully brought into play a more explicit focus on these more cross-cutting dangers from hundreds of thousands at risk (Lee et al., 2020). Action on this front has been a little slow coming, but both state and city executives are relatively well attuned to the issue. Once again, the opportunity for Melbourne is clear: it can act as a true bridge between continued local leadership, its rightful place as a global city amongst its peers and as an important regional voice for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, but it could also step up internationally as much as a promoter of discussions about widening urban inequality gaps in the midst of yet another major disruption. Indeed, we should not discount that this crisis may be far from over and that the next crisis may be just around the corner. In January the catastrophic bushfire season seemed to have set the tone for the Victorian capital for 2020. Then COVID-19 came to Melbourne. Halfway through the year, a potentially protracted economic crisis almost certainly looms. Managing a global city in the midst of overlapping crises might just be the new state of affairs, and not just down here in the antipodes.

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HONG KONG'S HEAD START IN TACKLING THE NEW CORONAVIRUS

Hong Kong, one of the world's most densely populated cities, has proven highly resilient in containing COVID-19. The tragic lessons learned during the SARS epidemic of 2003 gave the city a head start in tackling the new coronavirus. Its whole-of-government-cum-society approach, which has been built on informed policymaking and an acute sense of responsibility among the population, might provide some insights for European and other Western cities that have been hit harder by the pandemic.



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CIDOB REPORT
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Like any global city, Hong Kong is vulnerable to infectious disease. Its location in southern China and several convenient cross-border links with the mainland, where COVID-19 first broke out, have made the city's population even more exposed. Density in some parts of urban Hong Kong is as high as 48,500 per km², more than four times the density of New York City. About 210,000 of the 7.5 million population live in some 92,700 sub-divided units (SDUs) and half of these are elderly, children and patients with chronic disease (CSD, 2016). Per capita living space in SDUs is only 5.3 m² (ibid.) and not all of the units have separate toilets. The city's high-density built form provides the perfect condition for chimney or stack effect in disease transmission. Yet, Hong Kong has proven to be one of the most resilient cities in containing the new coronavirus. On May 13th, almost four months after the identification of the first COVID-19 patient, the city reported 1,051 confirmed cases and four deaths. By comparison, on the same day, New York City, where the first case only appeared on March 1st 2020, reported 2,193 confirmed cases and 115 deaths. The divergence between how the pandemic has unfolded in the two cities illustrates the inconsistency of the recently popular argument that there is a direct causality between urban density and the impact of COVID-19.

What accounts for Hong Kong’s “success” in fighting the pandemic, especially when 17 years ago the city lost 299 lives to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a more deadly coronavirus than the one currently spreading? Hong Kong learned many lessons from the SARS outbreak in 2003, which laid bare major health governance issues in the city and highlighted the importance of local modes of health governance for containing an epidemic or pandemic (Ng, 2008). Since SARS, the city’s government has developed detailed guidelines to foster a whole-of-government-cum-society approach to prepare for, monitor and combat infectious diseases. Comprehensive guidelines have been developed not only for medical actions, but also for schools and public education, work places, homes for the elderly and disabled, social services, public and private housing, public transport and aviation, tourism and hotels, and restaurants and markets.

HONG KONG LEARNED MANY LESSONS FROM THE SARS OUTBREAK IN 2003, WHICH LAID BARE MAJOR HEALTH GOVERNANCE ISSUES IN THE CITY.

elderly and disabled, social services, public and private housing, public transport and aviation, tourism and hotels, and restaurants and markets.

SARS, and the little information that was initially available about the atypical pneumonia, also taught Hong Kong the great importance of collaborating with national and provincial-level health authorities in mainland China on disease

surveillance. Over the past two decades the government of Hong Kong has been in regular contact with the Chinese Ministry of Health and the health authorities in the province of Guangdong and the region of Macao (both of which played a leading role in tackling the SARS epidemic), and it has been an active member of international health networks for information sharing. Further, as a result of SARS, Hong Kong’s medical community was able to build up expertise in coronaviruses. The city’s doctors and scientists played a critical role in identifying SARS as a coronavirus and Hong Kong’s “anti-SARS hero”, a professor from the University of Hong Kong, later became a member of the Chinese National Sanitation and Health Committee. During the past few weeks, many of the same experts who led the battle against SRAS have formed part of the government’s advisory committee on COVID-19, which has informed the city’s policymaking. To help Hong Kongers make sense of the new virus and combat “infodemics”, the government is holding daily press conferences that are led by a soft-spoken doctor, and it has created a dedicated website that provides live information on the development of COVID-19.

The government of Hong Kong has done a meticulous job of tracing the source and connections of cases and alerting people early on to the danger of social gatherings. But the government was also helped by people self-disciplining. The “ghost” of SARS and the horrifying unconfirmed sto-

ries from the mainland about the “new SARS” led many Hong Kongers to practice self-imposed social distancing almost from day one. In fact, many people already started wearing masks when the WHO and local government were still insisting that this was only necessary for sick people (before the Chinese University of Hong Kong closed for the Chinese New Year on January 24th 2020, half of my students were already wearing masks in class).

The situation changed towards the end of the Chinese New Year holiday in early February, when masks were becoming a rare commodity and the government announced the first emergency measures. To ensure social distancing, schools were closed until further notice and the entire public administration, except essential services, was told to work from home. At the end of March, when the number of COVID-19 cases increased due to incoming travellers, public gatherings of more than four people were prohibited (this number was relaxed to eight before Mother's Day). Conscious of the large number of Hong Kongers working or studying abroad, the government had already introduced measures to prevent the import of new COVID-19 cases in early March, before the WHO declared the virus a pandemic. The Asia Expo near the city's international airport was turned into a testing centre and since March 19th all arrivals from foreign countries have been quarantined. The government operates a mobile app that uses geofencing (rather than GPS) technology to ensure that these people stay in the quarantine location while protecting their privacy. On March 25th the measures were tightened further. The border was closed to all non-Hong Kongers and returnees had to go through a 14-day quarantine. Since April, returning Hong Kongers, including those without symptoms, have had to undergo a deep-throat saliva test. Those with symptoms are sent to triage and test centres in hospitals.

With the increase in confirmed cases, the government mobilised substantial funds to adapt the city's medical infrastructure and to financially support its citizens. In addition to repurposing hostels, resorts and new public housing estates, the government used HK\$1.1 billion (US\$1.41 billion) from the Lottery Fund to build temporary quarantine facilities. Further, it allocated HK\$290 billion (US\$37.2 billion) to subsidise peoples' salaries and, similar to the United States federal government, it made direct payments of HK\$10,000 (US\$1,282) to each citizen. Both of these measures are unprecedented and they indicate how severely Hong Kong's economy, which privileges exchange over use value, has been hit by the pandemic. Compared to 2019, GDP has dropped 8.9%, service exports have plunged 37.8% and consumption is down by 10.2% (Choi, 2020). To mitigate the impact on small businesses and shops, the government has provided rent reductions to enterprises located in government-owned buildings and some private

property owners have followed suit. But there are also emerging efforts to turn the economic crisis into an opportunity for change and innovation. Some of the city's startups are working on innovative and future-oriented solutions to doing business in times of social distancing and lockdown, and some NGOs have joined an international movement to reconsider the merits of "economic growth" and push for a more progressive urban agenda for a sustainable, climate-friendly, ecological and humane future.

More broadly, Hong Kong's civil society has been very active in filling the gaps in government action to tackle COVID-19 and its socioeconomic consequences. SARS left a lasting imprint on the city's civil society: people know from experience that they have to

SARS LEFT A LASTING IMPRINT ON THE CITY'S CIVIL SOCIETY: PEOPLE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT THEY HAVE TO PRACTISE SELF-HELP AND SUPPORT THE POOR AND MARGINALISED.

practise self-help and support the poor and marginalised. There exists a strong collective belief that the "haves" bear a moral obligation to help the "have-nots". Some examples of civil society action include NGOs, pop stars, evangelical Christians and other charitable organisations mobilising resources to source face masks for street cleaners, the elderly, people living in SDUs, the homeless and students having to attend public examinations; a private foundation sponsoring the disinfection

of 1,000 SDUs with antibacterial and antivirus solutions that can provide protection for up to nine months; private companies offering donations to purchase protective gear for the poor and to subsidise the rents of families living in SDUs; and key government officials and university presidents donating their salaries to combat COVID-19. To soothe peoples' anxiety and sense of hopelessness, different organisations are offering psychological and in-kind support via web or WhatsApp platforms. Other platforms offer traditional Chinese medicine anti-virus recipes or low-cost yet nutritious meals to the poor or those who have lost their jobs. These are no small feats considering the city has been deeply divided by the months-long urban protests triggered by the introduction of the extradition law in February 2019 (Ng, forthcoming). Yet, in typical Chinese culture, collective interests (in this case public health) matters much more than individual "rights and liberties".

The tragic lessons learned during the SARS epidemic gave Hong Kong a head start in tackling the new coronavirus. Well-coordinated actions by the government and an acute sense of responsibility among the population have allowed the city to limit the spread of the pandemic and some of its socioeconomic repercussions.

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COVID-19: A MIRROR FOR THE URBAN WORLD'S CONTRADICTIONS



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CIDOB REPORT
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The 21st century was meant to be the urban century. In the various forums that consider and discuss the impact of cities it has become habitual to call the 19th the century of empires, the 20th the century of nation-states and the 21st the century of cities. Certainly, over the past few decades we have witnessed a process of urbanisation unlike any before in human history in its intensity, speed and global scale (no region of the world has been left out). Urban agglomerations have established themselves as centres of innovation, employment and economic development whose influence stretches beyond their administrative boundaries and territories.

But the coronavirus pandemic forces us to look in the mirror and face the challenges, contradictions, fragility and vulnerabilities of our global urban society. The dramatic consequences of COVID-19 in the health, economic and social fields do not pose new problems. Rather, they have exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and tensions. Many of the wounds left by the 2008 economic, social and financial crisis have been ripped open again amid public service dismantlement, recentralisation and lack of funding for local governments.

This emergency has made the poor even more vulnerable. Consider, for example, the agglomerations of shantytowns and slums on the outskirts of cities in Africa and certain parts of Asia where it is impossible to respect even minimal hygiene or social distancing measures. It is also driving the exclusion of new sectors of the population in the cities of the Global North (an entire segment of society has become visible that relied on informal structures). And it should not be forgotten that lockdown is aggravating the gender gap and gender violence.

In the words of Claudia López, the mayor of Bogotá, we seem suddenly to have discovered that great cities are more than just sites of production and

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC FORCES US TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND FACE THE CHALLENGES, CONTRADICTIONS, FRAGILITY AND VULNERABILITIES OF OUR GLOBAL URBAN SOCIETY.

consumption. Caught up in processes of globalisation, of achieving competitiveness, of climbing all sorts of rankings and in the design of the major infrastructure and cities of the future, we have forgotten that what gives a city meaning are its citizens, the people who live in it. Cities are spaces in which millions of men and women seek opportunities and a better life.

Faced with this reality, cities are making great efforts to adapt quickly to the new situation and equip themselves to respond to new needs. No one can deny that local governments are at the

forefront of the fight against COVID-19 and its negative effects in all areas. Beyond health responses and the adaptation of medical services, a whole range of changes are being made at various levels:

- Rethinking both political and technical governance structures (e.g. producing integrated cross-cutting systems) and the interaction between political leadership and technical personnel. The introduction of remote working among public sector employees has been accelerated.
- Changes to the model of providing public services and the need for new data and indicators that not all cities possess.
- Determining what basic and essential services consist of.
- Consolidating citizen and community self-management models to help groups that local government struggles to reach.
- Questioning how to relate to citizens and, in turn, forms of citizen oversight.
- Relationships and joint work between the different levels of government.

Local governments are also under pressure due to the major investments in human and financial resources they are having to make and the gaps left by a chronic funding shortfall.

Beyond this, lockdown has presented us with images of our cities that force us to think seriously about basic issues such as the future of public space, mobility, density, local businesses, adequate and affordable housing, key infrastructure, the limits of so-called smart cities and digital divides.

While services and investments are being adjusted to tackle the pandemic, local governments are now having to think about how to design plans for recovery and adaptation to what has been called the new normal. Although, as networks of local governments like Metropolis (the global association of large cities and metropolitan areas with 138 members from all world regions) advocate, it is not a question of adapting to the new normal but of generating the necessary transformations. This is a unique time to propose solutions that transform urban spaces for future generations.

IN CONCERT WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORKS, LOCAL LEADERS AND THEIR TECHNICAL TEAMS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO RETHINK OUR CITIES.

In concert with local government networks, local leaders and their technical teams have a responsibility to rethink our cities, identify new mobility models, facilitate the transition to more social, inclusive and sustainable economic models, place care at the heart of our public policies, redesign public space, implement nature-based solutions, rediscover biodiversity, ensure cross-cutting approaches to gender and respect citizens' rights. In short, they must commit to a new, creative urban planning that includes specialists from all fields and all actors in the territories.

The fallout from the pandemic has shown that it is more important than ever to strengthen the ties between cities and to promote peer-to-peer exchanges, learning and cooperation. In fact, from the first minute, the mobilisation of local governments in their own territory has been accompanied by mobilisation and cooperation between cities and their networks at international level. This would certainly not have been possible without the prior experience in international action and decentralised cooperation.

It is fascinating to see how networks have been able to react and produce tools to help their members to find solutions. There is no major network that has not launched an initiative to support its members. Standout initiatives include the Cities for Global Health platform launched by Metropolis in conjunction with AL-LAs (Alianza Euro Latinamericana de Cooperación entre Ciudades) and support from UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments). This platform seeks to facilitate decision-makers' access to ideas about how urban spaces around the world can cope with similar situations.

It invites local and regional governments, regardless of their size, to share measures (strategies, specific policies, protocols and action plans, etc.) that have been specifically designed to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as measures to address other health emergencies. We might also mention Live Learning Experience, led by UCLG with the support of Metropolis and UN-Habitat, a series of thematic online exchanges (on housing, the informal economy, funding services, etc.) seeking local-level answers and solutions for the reconstruction and recovery stage. Other important initiatives are C40's Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, the Global Resilient Cities Network's (GNC) collaboration on COVID-19 recovery, and ICLEI's COVID-19 resources.

Intriguingly, while all networks initially embarked on a race to see who could launch a particular initiative or lead a process first, a new awareness of cross-network cooperation and support has been generated around their various instruments. If it continues, this process will strengthen the municipalist movement and ultimately result in better support for cities around the world. Today more than ever what matters for cities is that no one is left behind and that we are able to build urban spaces that are resilient (socially, economically and environmentally), safe and sustainable.

CIDOB

BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

The COVID-19 crisis has unfolded in an urbanised world in which global interconnections between cities have accelerated and intensified the pandemic's impact. But cities have also been at the forefront of managing the crisis and responding to citizens' needs. While national governments initially took the lead in containing the emergency, cities have been tackling many of its on-the-ground socioeconomic repercussions. They have reinforced municipal health infrastructures, reinvented essential services such as transport and waste management, reorganised public space to ensure social distancing, supported local businesses and entrepreneurs, and attended to the most vulnerable. At the same time, urban communities have mobilised countless civil society initiatives to complement and fill the gaps in government action.

This CIDOB Report examines how 12 cities around the world – Milan, Barcelona, Berlin, London, Vienna, Zurich, San Francisco, Chicago, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Melbourne and Hong Kong – have managed the COVID-19 crisis and provides lessons to help guide urban governance in times of pandemics. Some of the key issues addressed are how decentralisation and multi-stakeholder cooperation are essential to effectively govern complex, uncertain scenarios and generate context-specific responses; the need to rethink cities to make them healthier and more liveable without sacrificing density; how to tackle the impending economic recession and social exclusion without neglecting the commitment to the ecological transition; and why these challenges make international collaboration between cities more important than ever.