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Università Bocconi
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global edition

one pandemic

fourteen stories

14 universities, 12 student newspapers, 13 countries, 4 continents



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Editorial Note

A global phenomenon calls for a global perspective. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, we at *Tra i Leoni* suddenly found ourselves questioning how to continue to bring value added to the table. We swiftly transitioned onto Microsoft Teams and turned that platform into our – temporary – headquarters. Yet our editorial staff had a clear feeling that the circumstances required us to rise to the challenge of keeping our journalism relevant for readers that are constantly bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information.

We are strongly convinced that providing tailored content and original insights is our highest mission. Thus, as a student newspaper, we have reflected on the importance of giving voice to students' perspective on how the emergency is impacting our lives. We pride ourselves greatly on the internationality of the Bocconi community and this is why we wanted this voice to be global.

In the past couple of months, we have reached out to several university newspapers from four different continents and asked them to write about how the coronavirus had turned the life of their student community upside down, altering their educational journey, daily routine and expectations.

We were eager to learn how their experiences were similar to or different from our own, how they were trying to cope with the disruption brought about by the pandemic and what gave them hope in these trying circumstances.

To our knowledge, this collaboration is the first of its kind. This makes us especially proud, and we hope that our global edition can be a trailblazer for more international projects in the future.

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Wuhan, China

Inside Wuhan: a student's quarantine in the city where Covid-19 first spread

Wuhan University is one of the most prestigious and selective universities in China, not to mention one of the oldest. It has recently built a vast international network, with more than 300 universities and research institutes in over 40 countries and regions.

Nevertheless, in people's minds Wuhan is primarily the place where the Covid-19 first spread. To learn more about how it felt to live there during the outbreak, we opted for the unfiltered and unbiased perspective of someone like us: a student. We talked to a Zimbabwe-born PhD Student in Law at the Athenaeum. He has lived in the capital city of Hubei for over 5 years now, since he started working on his Master's degree at Wuhan University, and has spent quarantine there. This is what he shared with us.

What do you remember of the earliest days of the Covid-19 outbreak and when did you realize that the situation was serious?

For me it happened suddenly. I clearly remember the day when everything changed: it was the 21st of January. I came back to Wuhan from Kathmandu in Nepal after being away for two months. A friend had warned me about it, but I did not take it seriously. However, when I got to the airport, I found a completely changed world. I was required by Security officers to wear a mask. Since then, I started to learn about the crisis and I also called my doctor to ask for advice.

When did the lockdown in Wuhan start? What was it like?

The lockdown in Wuhan started 5 days after I came back, on the 26th of January. From then on, people could not leave their home. I was staying in a residence at the University and I was locked in the campus for over three months. It was not possible for us to leave the residence except for very serious reasons or to go to the hospital. Fortunately, our university provided food for students for free: you could take it without leaving the building. Also, it was possible to do online shopping if you needed anything else.

Why did you decide not to go back to Zimbabwe?

Initially, I was not allowed to. Now, it would be possible for me to go

back to Zimbabwe, but I decided not to, since there are only a few flights (and they are quite expensive). Also, I don't want to put my family at risk.

Was there an emergency number or any other form of assistance to take care of the Coronavirus infections?

Yes, there was an emergency number that you could call if you felt any symptoms. They came to get you and took you to the specialized hospital. Also, we have received additional help from the University. There are two clinics inside the university campus: one has been dedicated exclusively to Coronavirus.

Did you get the Virus or do you know anyone who got it?

Neither I nor any of my friends got the Virus. As far as I know, barely anyone in my University got infected. The only person I know is an African guy from Cameroon that, however, lives in another city. I think this is because any possible interaction between students and the rest of the community was avoided from the start, as the lockdown started very early.

How have you managed to stay informed about the spread of the virus and about the containment measures, both at national and in-

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Coco** (Interviewer)

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+

Anonymous Student
(Interviewee)

Wuhan University
Wuhan, China



ternational level?

I got information from the University's institutional communications and primarily through the social network WeChat. On there, I received some updates on the national situation and also some international news.

What was your experience of the "quarantine"? Did you manage to continue studying/working during the lockdown?

Personally, I did not have any problem staying under lockdown for so long. I quickly understood what was happening and the fact that everyone was affected gave me solace. When I needed some time off, I went to an open space inside the building with a little garden. I continued to study and do research from my room and to entertain myself I watched movies, read a lot and kept in touch with my family.

How did the university manage distance teaching?

For now, all classes are online. Professors normally send links on a WeChat platform called "Tencent Meeting" and another Facebook-like platform called "QQ". Classes are in real time, so they allow for interactions with professors or other students just like we do in normal lectures. The graduating classes used the same platforms to do their thesis defence and complete other graduation procedures. To

make sure everyone is present, attendance registers are marked daily; sometimes more than once during the course of a single lecture. It hasn't been much of a challenge for people: maybe those outside of China have been affected the most, due to either time difference or lack of a stable Internet connection.

How is the situation right now in Wuhan?

Currently, life is almost back to normal: the lockdown was lifted in April and many shops and public places are now operating. However, those staying on campus are still under a sort of lockdown. Also, we cannot go out without permission from the University. When you do go out, and you enter public places or transport, you must show a green code from a mobile app that works as a certificate showing your health status. Indeed, we all got tested a few days ago and the results of health test appear there.

Singapore

The privileges of living through the pandemic in Singapore

Xie Yihui

The Octant
Yale-NUS
Singapore

On the morning of May 13th, the city-state was awakened by a downpour. Half of my dorm's living room had been completely soaked. I could only thank my forgetfulness in opening my room windows last night, near which my favorite books were saved by pure luck.

Luck is crucial in the age of pandemic - one need only think about the birth lottery that determines the socio-economic realities that underpin one's COVID-19 experience. It determines whether you live in a squalid, crowded S11 dormitory for migrant workers or the serviced suites of Yale-NUS campus: the former has more than 2000 cases as of late April, whereas the latter has none.

We are not experiencing the same pandemic. We could say that COVID-19 accentuates pre-existing socio-economic divisions, which I was not informed enough of previously.

Perhaps that is also the silver lining of this pandemic - we are more aware of our privilege at the cost of many others, the broken system that lets the most vulnerable to bear the brunt of the crisis. It is ironic that their lives finally count now, literally.

As one of the few residents in my residential college, I saw the campus reset itself to factory setting as I walked through empty corridors, patios and sky gardens: nothing is there by default. I wonder how fortunate I was to live among a community of interesting souls and receive the liberal arts education that I had dreamed of.

Even natural beauty is not something to take for granted. I have recently discovered the joy of window-side musing, watching long and eventless afternoons evolve into Nature's dramatic displays of colors, which is a blessing to behold during the extended boredom and emptiness normally occupied by chores and routines.

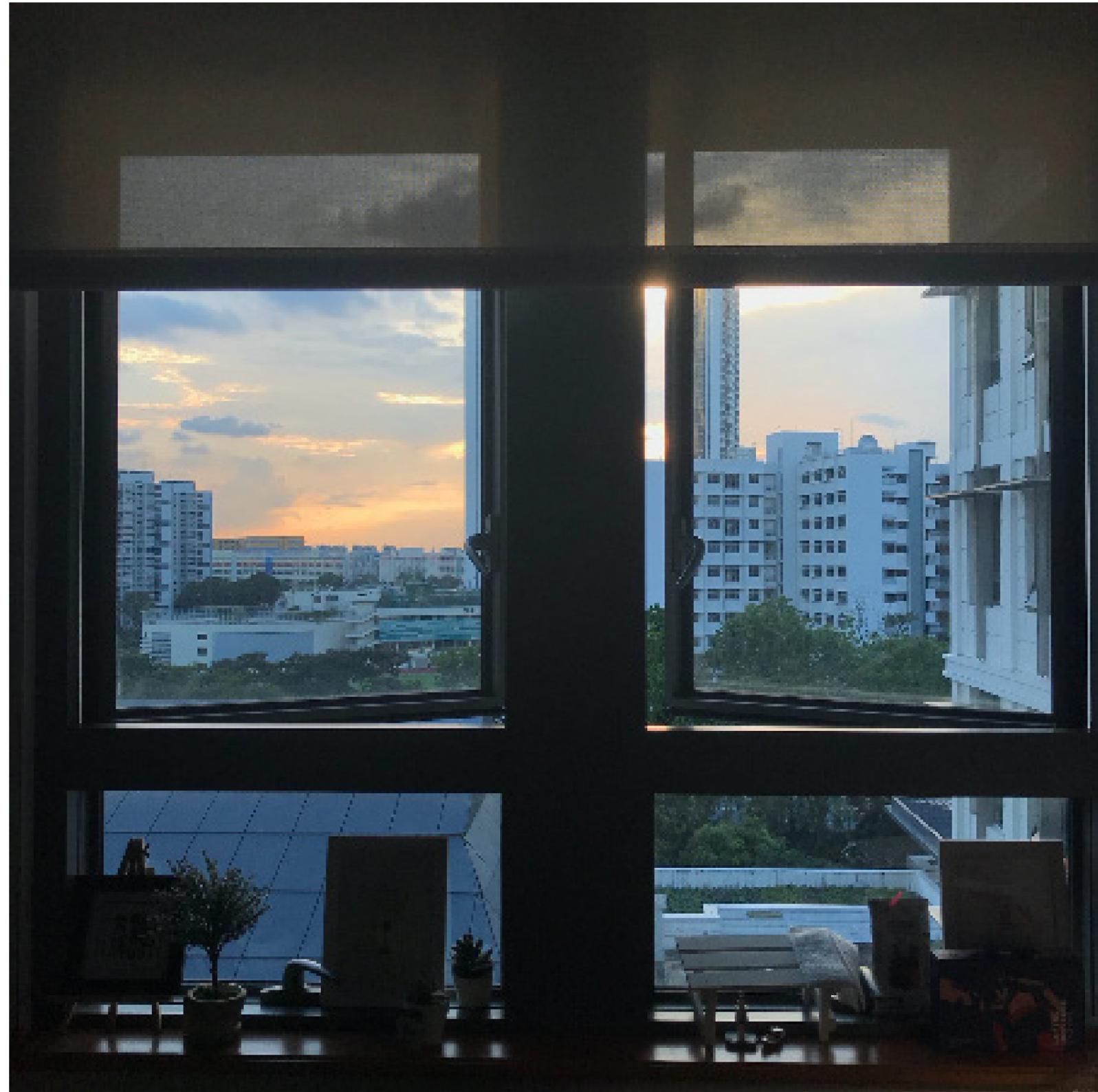
Ultimately, the pandemic is the singular reminder of our shared fragility and mor-

I have recently discovered the joy of window-side musing, watching long and eventless afternoons evolve into Nature's dramatic displays of colors...

tality. I realized how small and powerless I am even on this tiny city-state. And despite that, I am still privileged to have a safe space to live in an unexpected danger like the downpour or the pandemic.

And yes, as I am writing the article, I also have realized that even the possibility to muse about the impacts of a pandemic is itself a privilege when many others are suffering. I do not want to downplay their struggles, but I do hope that awareness of our privileges can be a counterbalance to the dark reality while not legitimizing it.

As we go on trying to name and define our experience and formulate our stories, I wonder if we could all look beyond our individualistic pursuit and appreciate the privilege that is too often cast as a given, because even living through a day safely is a privilege.



Paris, France

Fighting a pandemic in the land of human rights

Martin Terrien

KIP
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In all the countries that failed to tackle the coronavirus crisis with efficiency – whether it be because of a late response or an under-performing health system –, the solution to these early failures seems obvious to many. They should implement what has worked in South Korea, Singapore, and all the other nations that encountered some form of success in their struggle for nipping the epidemic in the bud. That includes extensive tracking to monitor the spread of the virus and to break the transmission chains; and what better way to do it in the 21st century than technology?

The French government applied this strategy; or at the very least, it tried to. Indeed, only days after the “StopCovid” app had been presented, many citizens of the self-proclaimed “land of human rights” made it very clear that they would not accept mass tracking under any conditions. Op-ed articles, petitions, growing worries from cybersecurity experts, virulent parliamentary debates, fears of the GAFA, GDPR restrictions... Many obstacles had to be overcome, while its implementation seemed to be widely accepted everywhere else, like in the UK or South Korea.

French people seem allergic to any deprivation of their liberties that has the potential to live on after the crisis – them accepting the lockdown already looked like a miracle. Therefore, an app that allows the government – and its private partners – to access

strategic private data from the whole population was unlikely to be consensual in a nation that prides itself in being the inventor and the protector of civil liberties.

This crisis is characterized by the necessity of constantly making difficult compromises: any measure that achieves some results now implies heavy sacrifices. The main question is: which ones? Should we sacrifice the lives of our elderly to avoid a recession and long-lasting debt? Or, in this case, should we put aside some of our safeguards to be more efficient in our fight against this pandemic? In the light of the recent decision of the French government not to release the “StopCovid” app, it appears that France has made its choice.

This crisis is characterized by the necessity of constantly making difficult compromises: any measure that achieves some results now implies heavy sacrifices.

Some might argue that the French are foolish and do not measure the gravity of the situation. To a certain extent, this is true. Beyond the lack of institutional preparation, the management of the crisis has been hindered by citizens taking public recommendations too lightly: everyone in France remembers the overcrowded bars only a day after the



President asked everyone to practice social distancing, or people having a picnic in parks despite the lockdown. Such disregard for essential measures truly harmed the fight against coronavirus at a crucial time.

However, the current questioning on the matter of automated contact tracing is not some kind of whim of an irresponsible population. We French people have our flaws, and the world knows it. We complain a lot. We protest a lot. We can be a little too hostile to change. But all of this might be the consequence of a long-lasting critical mind that can be very useful in such troubled times. The recent reluctance to mass tracking is not coming from spoiled citizens. We have already seen what can be done in the name of a noble cause with the emergency measures that were passed to fight terrorism since 2015: a 2-year state of emergency, followed by a transposition of many of its features into common law. This was synonymous with an important limitation of civil liberties, but without the aforementioned

chronic French suspicion, my country could have ended up passing a “Patriot Act”-like bill and undermining human rights a little more.

There is always a great reason to get rid of some rights because they are impeding efficiency in times of emergency. But the question is: what will it allow when the crisis is over? The quite dark turn Singapore took in the last weeks shows us a glimpse of how wrong things can go: what started as contact tracing quickly evolved into a mass surveillance strategy.

Facing this pandemic is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and obviously our top priority today. But the way we face it will also greatly determine what kind of world we will live in the day after. And let us not forget that the greatest threat to the fight for democracy is forgetting it when fighting other battles.

Cape Town, South Africa



courtesy of The Guardian

Coronavirus: A South African Perspective

The cost of lockdown

Coronavirus has decimated populations and crushed the economies of many of the affected countries. These predominantly developed countries have a higher resistance to it than South Africa. What does this mean? It means that they have more adequate healthcare facilities, better standards of living and a less vulnerable population. Their societies aren't largely immunocompromised as a result of malnutrition, HIV & AIDS, Tuberculosis and other conditions that are commonplace in South Africa. It also means that they can put measures in place to keep their economies afloat. All over Europe, large stimulus packages are being injected into their economies. Other places such as Australia and the USA are providing their citizens with a once-off payment to improve their spending power. Many believe that the

stimulus packages employed by the South African government are far from enough. Leading economists Dawie Roodt and Jameel Ahmad predict that our economy will shrink by 4 – 6% in the second quarter of 2020. The results of this will be catastrophic. The already struggling economy is going to get hit with roughly 370 000 job losses this year.

Only 77.7% of South Africans live in formal houses (Stats SA). The rest mainly live in traditional or informal settlements. These informal settlements are colloquially referred to as "townships." Conditions here are perfect for the spread of a pandemic. There is limited access to sanitation and waste removal. People live in high density, corrugated iron shacks, that are often overpopulated. For this reason, South Africans responded positively to

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our president, Cyril Ramaphosa's early decision to initiate a lockdown when we had only 550 confirmed cases. The hard lockdown began at midnight on Thursday, March 26, and will continue until midnight on Thursday, April 30. After Thursday we will no longer be in a "hard lockdown," however many of the same rules still apply. We will still be confined to our homes and the restrictions will be slowly lifted in accordance with a multi-phased approach that has been detailed by government. Lockdown regulations are difficult to adhere to for everyone; however, it proves increasingly difficult for those living in informal settlements. These people do not have comfy homes with access to basic amenities that they can hibernate in for the duration of lockdown. They need to walk to access toilets and running water, they need to regularly buy food because they cannot afford to stockpile, and they need to travel to collect government grants to pay for their necessities. Footage has circulated from Khayelitsha – Cape Town's biggest informal settlement – that depicts residents not adhering to lockdown regulations. Children play in the street, while adults go about their daily business. The reasons for this have just been explained, however they are exacerbated by the perpetuation of false information like, "Coronavirus is only for white people." These beliefs surfaced in South Africa as the contraction of COVID-19 was only linked to international travel – a privilege that many believe is only afforded to white people. This is dangerous as it leaves many of these residents thinking that they are immune to the disease.

Residents of these areas have also been subjected to extreme cases of military and police brutality. Within the first nine days of lockdown, there had been eight recorded deaths at the hands of the police. This was in conjunction with numerous cases of torture, assault and corruption. In response to this, Minister of Police, Bheki

Cele said in a press conference, "I hear them (people) crying that cops and soldiers are brutal. Not listening to us is brutality." In fact, many believe that he urged officers to use force when he told them to "push" people back to their homes if they were uncooperative. While this comment may seem harmless, it could be manipulated to the whims of an already aggressive military and police force. Cele is not the only politician seeming ambivalent about the conduct of these forces. A member of the Democratic Alliance, the opposition to the ruling party in South Africa, endorsed a video circulating on twitter that portrayed alleged lockdown offenders being publicly humiliated by being forced to do squats and "jump frogs" as punishment. This act contravened three sections of our constitution, which still apply under our current "State of Disaster."

Under normal circumstances, South Africa is marred by high rates of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This, to the extent that a new consciousness and protest movement took to the entire country last year (2019). Lockdown has exacerbated this problem. Within the first week of lockdown, more than 2,300 GBV related complaints had been received by the police. Women and children are being confined with their abusers for weeks on end with no escape for fear of a violent police backlash. Responding to this in a letter addressed to the nation, President Ramaphosa assured that government was prioritising GBV in the national response to the pandemic by continuing support services to women and children.

While this paints a grim picture of South Africa, it is important to note that we have performed excellently against the predicted models and maintain low rates of infection. At the time of writing this, the infection rate has been brought down from 42% before the lockdown, to 4%. The lockdown is working.

courtesy of Deccan Herald



Mannheim, Germany

About a Germ(any)

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The coronavirus poses many challenges for every country in the world. Still every country takes individual measures. We want to tell you what is going on in Germany.

Distinctive features of the DEUTSCHES GESUNDHEITSSYSTEM

When looking at statistics about the COVID-19 pandemic, the striking feature of Germany is its low fatality rate. As of this writing, the WHO counts roughly 170,000 confirmed cases and 7,500 deaths, which amounts to a fatality rate of somewhat over 4 percent. While it is steadily rising, it has been between 2 and 3 percent well into April, when there were already around 100,000 cases. While only time and rigorous research will give definitive answers, several explanations appear reasonable.

First, Germany has large hospital capacities in proportion to its population. There are approximately 600 hospital beds per 100,000 citizens (83 million citizens total), which is above the European average. That is despite the fact that for economic and efficiency reasons, the number of hospitals and hospital beds has been continuously reduced over the last decades. However, the bed count is only one of several factors for the performance of a healthcare system in the fight against Corona.

Second, lifestyle habits obviously influence Corona transmission. In Germany multigenerational households of adults are uncommon in comparison to, for example, Southern European countries. Thus, if the workforce gets infected first due to higher mobility, the spread to the older population is slower.

Third, the low death rate may be caused by comprehensive testing and a subsequently lower amount of unreported, not severe cases. Like many other countries Germany has massively

ramped up its testing capabilities. Currently about 3.1 million samples have been tested, with 150,000 tests available per day. Recently the official guidelines for whom to test have been expanded, because there is sufficient capacity. The number of conducted tests of roughly 30.000 per million citizens, however, is in the same scope as those of comparable nations.

Competition amongst BUNDESLÄNDER

When the COVID-19 pandemic started in Germany, the politicians reacted relatively fast. This was driven by the government, but also by the prime ministers of the 16 separate federal states. In Germany the central government gives up parts of its responsibility to these states. And especially in this health crisis they had, and still have, a lot to say about the actions taken against the coronavirus.

During the start of the crisis, the federal states reacted differently. While most of the states wanted to wait with its actions for the decisions made by the German government, the Bavarian prime minister Markus Söder went a faster route. He implemented restrictions and the closing of public areas earlier than the rest of the country. His actions at the time had big support from the population and created pressure for the other states to react, which might have helped the country to sustain the crisis better. However, many politicians took that with a grain of salt. Especially the prime minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, who is in a potential rivalry with Markus Söder for the position of the chancellorship.

After a month of shutdown, the public is get-

ting restless and wants their normal life back. Or at least one that allows them to get back to their job and make ends meet. However, the steps have to be taken cautiously. There is now an official agreement between the states and the government, that the states can choose, to a certain degree, what they want to ease. All states started to loosen their restrictions rapidly afterwards. North Rhine-Westphalia is one of the fastest states this time, while Bavaria keeps it relatively strict. The competition goes in the opposite direction this time, away from stricter control towards loosened restrictions. Also the restrictions now differ mostly in details between states and it is easy to get confused. Nevertheless, the competitive nature of our states may have given us an advantage in the start, but may now also lead to a hasty loosening of restrictions.

Beware of the GRUNDGESETZ

Regarding Germany's unique history our government is required to impose restrictions carefully. In 1933 Adolf Hitler rose to power by declaring a national emergency. Under these circumstances he was able to restrict basic civil rights, turning democracy into dictatorship. There is an increase in critical voices concerned that the Coronavirus restrictions threaten our democracy again. The current situation is in no

way comparable to Nazi Germany, yet for many Germans this is a sensitive topic.

Right now, Germany sees a growing number of so-called hygiene demonstrations. The group of protesters is demographically diverse, from people worried about their basic rights to right- and left-wing extremists and conspiracy theorists. As a very aggressive gesture concerning the debate about vaccination against coronavirus, some extremists even wear a "Judenstern" with the word "unvaccinated" sewn onto. They abuse this symbol, which in Nazi Germany was used to mark people of Jewish descent to exaggeratedly express that they feel like the unwanted minority.

Examples like that show that in these days extremists often misuse the comparison with Nazi Germany. For this reason, it must be highlighted that the government, on the contrary, strives to guarantee most of our civil rights. In comparison to many other countries we had a minimum of restrictions. There were no lockdowns except for the state of Bavaria. At no time it was forbidden to go outside, the government just calls on everyone's solidarity to stay at home. It is not a time of prohibition; it is a time to remember that we are a community which has to stick together.



GRUNDGESETZ
für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Bombay, India

Quarantine Days at IIT Bombay



**Amogh Gawaskar,
Suman Mondal,
Saman Siddiqui,
Varun Sule,
Apurv Tiwari**

Insight
Indian Institute of Technology
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The day when we were all told to return to our homes amidst the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Mumbai and all across India – the only exceptions being international students, Indian students who reside abroad, and students facing medical conditions. I fall in the middle bucket because my parents had the miraculous idea of moving to Dubai last year. I hence mailed the Dean and got a prompt reply within half an hour that I was permitted to stay in the institute, but I would have to move to Hostel 13. The reason, I gather, is that Hostel 18 (in which I reside) is huge and it wasn't possible to run the entire hostel with PHO (Public Health Office, the cleaning staff) and maintenance intact just for the three or four-odd people who were going to stay behind. Most of the PHO workers of Hostel 18 were also going back to their hometowns just like the students here. I was more than relieved by the provisions made by the institute to accommodate us in Hostel 13.

Initially, the Hostel 12 mess was functional, but because the caterer was incurring losses, the CHMS (Centralized Hostel Management System) employees agreed to run the Hostel 4 mess. A rotational contract was decided upon, whereby different mess caterers, namely hostel 3, 4, and 11, cater to the students for 8 days each, but the location remains Hostel 4 mess itself. It feels pretty privileged to get a different taste of food every week and be offered 4 meals a day with differing varieties. There were days when we had only biscuits and tea for tiffin, but there were days when we had 2 vegetables for dinner, complete with doodh sevain or halva. The mess even has markings for people to stand 6 feet apart. The workers serve the food and we must tell them what we want. A member of the STF (Student Task Force) is always present to register who all have come to eat, and to oversee the process. A good thing about the mess being in Hostel 4 is that we have to walk there from Hostel 13, and hence are having 2-kilometre-long strolls even during the lockdown each time we go to eat. I am always accompanied by a friend of mine who is also staying back, with due social distancing, of course.

On the professional front, as a final year student in the Aerospace Department, my academic project is purely experimental, and due to the technician not being available and with the department practi-

cally closed, I cannot perform any experiment there during the lockdown. If the lockdown happens to be extended, I will have even less time to complete my project as the thesis submission is slated to happen by latest 30th June as usual. I am also partly to blame here as I used to work less during the earlier months of this year and had thought of completing a huge chunk of work between March to June, as is the general trend among final year students across all departments who are working on their thesis. But due to the unprecedented lockdown, I will have to put in some extra effort, once the lockdown ends, to complete my problem statement in a satisfactory manner. The people who have an experimental project, or who require the department systems to be functional, or have to use the department resources, will have it tougher than me because they will first have to come to the institute. I am sure that the professors will keep this in account during the evaluations (I hope), but the problem is in our personal satisfaction with the work output. People who were hoping for a publication based on their work this semester will probably be the worst affected.

A lot of people message me asking what do I do all day? How do I manage my late-night hunger pangs? So here is my routine. As there is no work nowadays, my nights tend to end later. At times I see the sunrise from the C-wing 6th floor and then go to sleep. Having slept this late, it is no wonder that I wake up at 2:30ish PM. And the tiffin timings are from 4:30 PM to 5 PM. So, I just have enough time to laze around, freshen up, catch up on my notifications, and then go dine. After tiffin, I stroll around the garden beside my wing, and then go to watch the mesmerising sunset from the 6th floor balcony overseeing Powai Lake and Hiranandani, during which I am joined by that friend of mine. And before it is even completely dark, it is dinner time (7:30 pm to 8:15 pm). Post that, I indulge in a variety of activities ranging from serial chatting, reading a book, utilising the unlimited internet by exploring YouTube and Netflix, do karaoke, work on that murder mystery I am trying to write, and while away my time scrolling through memes. And if I have to go to the grocery store or medical shop at the YP gate market, it is a 4 km round trip which takes a minimum of 1.5 hours to complete due to public transport being stopped. Deliver-



continued from page 13

ies are also on, and we sometimes order food from reputed services like Zomato and Dominos, who claim to deliver and prepare food in a hygienic manner, taking all precautions. There is a contactless delivery option as well. The delivery has to be collected at the gates of the institute to prevent the rider from coming in, for the safety of the campus residents.

The paths are so serene and beautiful at this time of year with the roads full of small yellow flowers and fallen Bougainvillea leaves (that soft purple leaved flowery tree). Some trees are laden with red or white flowers, while some trees are experiencing fall, with their dried brown leaves falling randomly on your head. The doggies of the insti are the most confused, wondering where have all their humans gone? The animal welfare group of the institute is doing a marvellous job in these trying times to feed all the cats and dogs of the campus. Dogs are mostly on the roads these days instead of the hostel premises because their humans are no longer present in the hostels. The dog couple who reside near the cowshed, and their 4 kids, have claimed the patch between Hostel 8 and the Hostel 5 T-Point. Some of the Hostel 9 dogs including Pablo and Pacho have expanded their territories far and wide and are now always found in front of Hostel 5. A couple from the Hostel 17 construction site recently had 5 puppies, who are too cute, adorable, bellos, maravolosos (Spanish for beautiful and marvellous), bahut pyaare (Hindi for very lovable).

Talks are on to accommodate the PHO workers on the campus premises in order to facilitate their duties by improving their convenience. The administration has been trying to make our stay here as

hassle-free as possible. Recently, the Dean of Student Affairs visited the mess during tiffin and came to everyone to ask if they are facing some issues, and that they are trying to do their best in order to handle the situation.

Some people are having debates over whether IITB is doing enough for the country being the premier technical institute. A lot has been done and is being done, including,

- Manufacturing and distribution of DIY facemasks for healthcare officials.
- Creation of apps to connect manufacturers of PPE with healthcare officials and hospitals. An app to monitor the movement and security in quarantine zones has also been developed.
- A nasal gel to prevent entry of the virus through the nose is being created. This will aim to prevent entry as well as inactivate the trapped virus.
- A low-cost ventilator has been developed to battle the shortage of these vital devices in hospitals.

The students, researchers, professors and technical staff are tirelessly working in spite of the lockdown in order to contribute to the nation's fight against the virus. Is it enough? I don't have an answer for that, but as far as handling the situation inside the institute goes, I will say that I at least am satisfied with all that is being done by the administration and the STF.

Paris, France

A la Recherche du Temps Perdu

Journal des Etudiants Editorial Board

Journal des Etudiants
ESSEC Business School
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Students are always running out of time. Just like the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, we are trying to deal with our classes, clubs, and, of course, life outside of school. In this peculiar time when all French students are confined, time management has become one of the most astonishing consequences of Covid-19. Lockdown is not all sunshine and roses – students applying to university or looking for internships have just seen their level of stress increase significantly. With that being said, it seems that students have now more time, even as some professors use the lockdown to increase the workload. Does this unexpected “break” allow them to discover new hobbies, or is it un temps perdu?

Holidays?

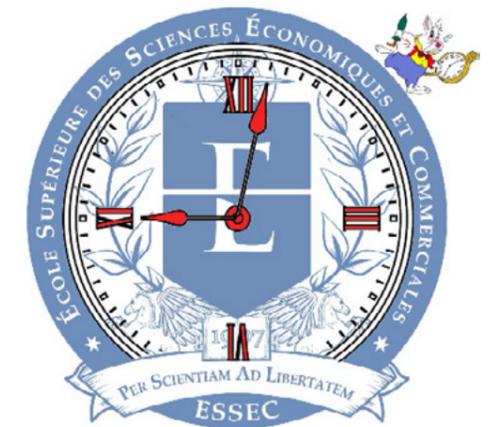
It took only a week after schools closed for ESSEC professors to start giving online lectures. The success rate of these classes is heavily dependent on the subject taught. Core classes, such as finance and accounting, lend themselves better to online teaching, while electives, and language classes in particular, are harder to follow via the Zoom platform. Some of the negative points of online teaching are obvious: students have difficulty focusing, and interactions online are not as smooth. However, some enjoy the flexibility provided by online classes, as it gives them more time to do other stuff.

Furthermore, due to ESSEC's programs that give students the opportunity to study abroad on one of the university's three global campuses in Paris, Rabat and Singapore, as well as the fact that our school hosts many international students, many ESSEC students are not citizens of the country in which they are studying. As attendance remains compulsory for certain ESSEC programs, many students who have home must now deal with unusual lesson schedules. Some have to wake up very early to attend lectures given in Singapore, while others have to go to bed late to attend lectures given in Paris. Because ESSEC is doing its very best to keep on schedule with courses as they would have been if physically delivered in a classroom, the international experience is not as seamless as it could have been, considering these time zone issues that have an impact on our studies. The ESSEC administration, however, is doing its best to accommodate international students by giving students the opportunity to skip lectures given between midnight and 6:00AM, as long as said lectures are watched later on during the day.

What about our social life?

At ESSEC, we spend a lot of time with our student clubs, and fortunately this has not changed during the lockdown. Groups such as Comedia, the university's drama club, have overcome the distance barrier by encouraging its members to attend online rehearsals. Thanks to platforms such as Zoom and Skype, Comedia will continue to work on shows that were planned for May. The show must go on!

This solidarity goes beyond student clubs: ESSEC's student offices have announced a crowdfunding effort to raise money for French



hospitals, and launched initiatives encouraging ESSEC students to help educational platforms provide courses to young students. Here's hoping that this mindset will outlive the crisis.

The current lockdown has completely changed the way we interact. People are behind their computers, unable to meet their group of friends, and it can seem that they only exist through their social media accounts or during Zoom calls. Although it is not the same thing as speaking face to face, there are some pros to these new forms of communication – people can log in to work or to school in their most comfortable clothes, and everyone can speak one after the other as long as people cut off their microphone.

There is also the persistent fear that we are being recorded, the difficulty to transmit real human emotions through a screen, and while people may be fully connected to their coworkers, classmates and family, it is very hard to meet new people.

What do we do with all this Temps perdu?

The lockdown has a few upsides. Those familiar with ESSEC will know how far the main campus is from Paris – far enough that students spend can spend easily an hour and a half travelling to and from campus every day. During the lockdown, there is no more time lost commuting. The administration has also recommended that classes be cut shorter, which makes a big difference to students at ESSEC who may take as many as seven classes in a trimester. We suddenly have a lot more time on our hands.

What exactly are students doing with their newfound free-time? Augustin, our Editor, is enjoying DIY and ping-pong, things he hadn't done in years. Maxime finally stopped putting off his jogging for another day – he uses his daily outing to stay in shape. Charlotte has been learning new languages, while Etienne is taking a free coding class offered by Stanford University.

We're all glad to be able to finally do things we wanted to do. There are indeed some pros to online teaching. As students of a fantastic business school, we are lucky enough to be able to use this temps perdu to discover and pursue new passions and projects. However, we want to mention that our editorial team is extremely lucky – most of us have had the chance to go back home, outside of our tiny Parisian apartments. This is not the case for everyone, and we are fully aware that we are a fortunate few.



Stockholm, Sweden

Social Distancing before it was cool

Ethan O'Leary

Minimax
Stockholm School of Economics
Stockholm, Sweden

Distance. The new parameter of cautiousness. A somewhat arbitrary comfort blanket unnatural to embrace. Enforcement in Sweden is constrained by a fiscal desperation to pull through an emergency unscathed yet simultaneously facilitated by the natural construct of an introverted society. Sweden has been socially distancing since before it was cool.

Emerging from a mild but dark winter, the realities of a global pandemic are overlooked by the Swedish gratitude for sunshine. Swedes are proudly accustomed to a seasonal quarantine every year as daylight and heat are scarce. Loneliness is already a problematic topic in the country as this voluntary isolation is coupled with the highest rate of single person households in Europe. And when escaping this domestic solitude, an unwritten rule writes everyday conduct: always keep to oneself. The Stockholm metro dance is a precious microcosm of this Scandinavian ideology whereby commuters systematically seat themselves in a uniform fashion to avoid being at proximity to one another. In reality, this is an ode to the Swedish respect that embodies the country's charm; yet is one of many examples of why Swedes adjusted so naturally to quasi-enforced social distancing.

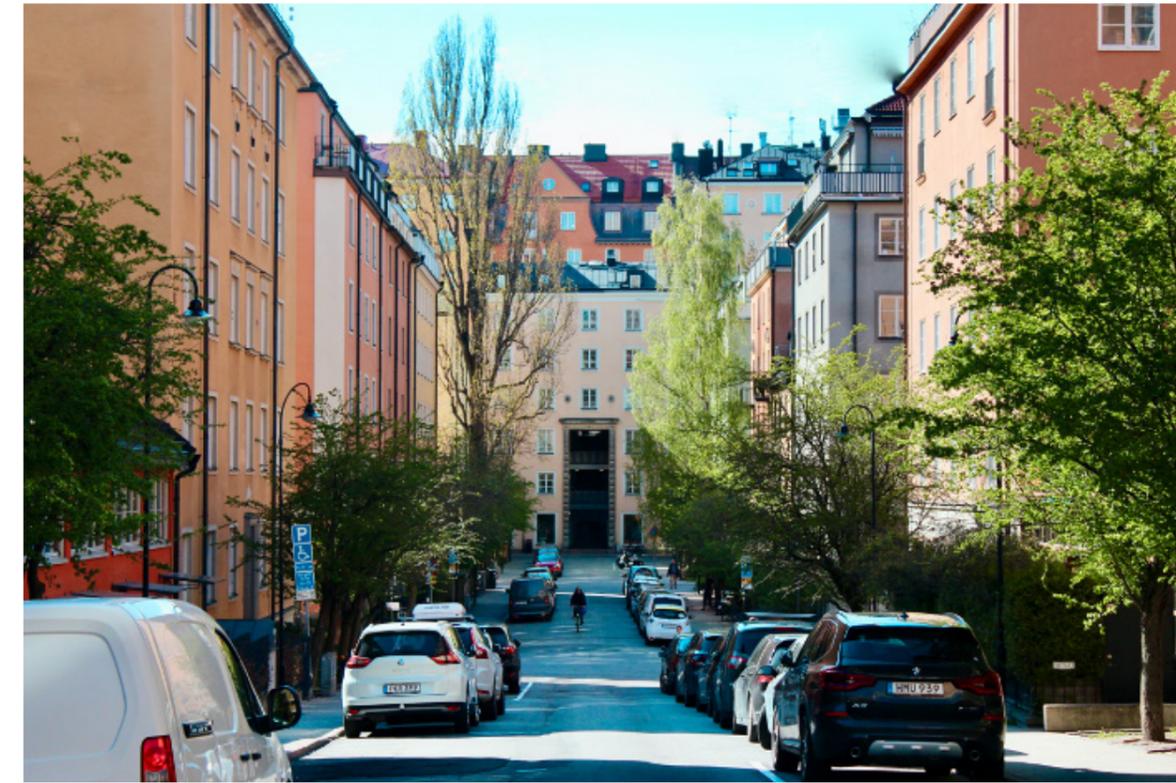
State epidemiologist Anders Tegnell has become a national icon since the COVID-19 outbreak came to Sweden as chief architect of the Swedish response to the pandemic. His guidance has been nothing but contrapuntal to our neighbouring countries. Norway, Denmark and Finland all imposed extremely strict lockdowns early on and have been fortunate enough to report low death tolls, albeit the reporting mechanisms vary between countries and so whether these figures are comparable in their raw form is questionable. Sweden, on the other hand has embodied an approach closer to a set of trusting recommendations rather than forced shutdowns. Groups are limited to fifty people which is a generous quota considering Denmark set her limit at two. Compatible industries have shifted to remote working yet offices are seldom empty. Restaurants and bars must only offer table service and space their tables by some vague metric yet terraces remain bustling with desperate sunshine seekers.

That Tegnell's strategy is controversial is an understatement. An obvious critique is the herd-immunity aim subtly adopted in Sweden has sadly sacrificed many of the country's vulnerable. Opposers of the government have argued

that the economy has been favoured over the population's health and wellbeing and empirically, the statistics accordingly point towards a comparable economic downturn in the country to the rest of the EU. However, the reliance on the common sense of Swedes to act out of their own accord and continuing to allow outdoor excursions to public places has helped avoid the wider social complications. These include worsening citizen mental health and rising domestic abuse cases.

Talking with many Swedes, there seems to be a majority approval of this unorthodox strategy; some even look onto our neighbours as overreacting. Nonetheless, some still air on the side of being overcautious; yet still this comportment is not too indifferent from that of their winter of solitude. Officials continue to argue that daily life has changed for all and whilst this is not entirely false, the extent to which we have had to shift our routines is a comforting relief for most. Though, what has got most of the population talking is how lucky we are as Swedes. Relieving statistics suggest that herd immunity is close to completion in the capital. Even as the WHO continues to object that immunity may not be achieved after recovery, a health official at the Swedish daily press conference on the 4th May told reporters that it appeared in fact people had full or partial protection against the virus post-infection.

What seems clear is that as much as Sweden has tried to escape the spiral of solitude experienced by many global citizens today, the debate is as prevalent as elsewhere. Swedes are renowned for their love of complaining and passive aggression and are certainly not wasting an obvious opportunity for displaying these talents. Whichever road upon which a conversation embarks, they all seem to arrive at the same final destination. In its nature, the pandemic affects us all, however much we pray to avoid it. Even if Sweden is hanging on by a loose thread to a version of normality, the reality remains that we are in this war as much as our neighbours. Even if the country is steering away from the skid and rebelling against the conformity of lockdown, her citizens still carry as much social responsibility, if not more, than others further afield. Regardless of one's view of the current position of the Swedish government and the loosely adjusted society we are experiencing, every person has been affected in some shape or form. What is yet to elucidate is how successful this gamble Anders Tegnell has lead us into will turn out to be.



Milan, Italy

What a time to be *Bocconiani*

Barbara Balcon

Tra i Leoni
Università Bocconi
Milan, Italy



Our sense of community: this is what struck me the most when I arrived on campus, twenty-one months ago. I had not left Italy, yet I suddenly found myself in a melting pot. Despite being an introvert, I remember vividly how I could just effortlessly introduce myself to anyone at the many aperitivi organized to help freshmen get to know each other, just because we knew that everyone in the room was studying at Bocconi.

To break the ice, all students were asking variations of the usual questions: "Where are you from?", "What BSc are you enrolled in?", "Why Bocconi?", and the answers revealed how different our backgrounds were. What our identities had in common was only being Bocconiani – and that was more than enough.

I come from a small and rather isolated town and to someone like me, Milan felt like a whole new world. I was amazed to find Bocconi's urban campus completely foreign to the flaws of my hometown and, sometimes, of Italy itself. We could live the dream of being in our own kingdom, with our own rules.

Little did I know that, after an year and a half living that dream, I was in for a rude awakening. On February 22nd we received an e-mail from the Rector informing us that all educational activities would be suspended, as required by a new provision issued by CRUI Lombardia (a regional entity).

I was far from realizing how serious the emergency was and, in fact, I barely noticed what was going on. I was too busy preparing for a job interview that was supposed to take place in a few days in London. Like most Bocconi students I had rapidly adapted to a fast-paced lifestyle: it was then perfectly normal to forget about lectures, study interview material like crazy, pack and land in Canary Wharf in a matter of days. Had someone told pre-Bocconi me that I would have been pulling this off without hesitation, I would have probably fallen off a chair.

The day before the interview, I received a call from Human Resources. They asked to confirm where would I be travelling from. I will never forget the dead silence on the other end of the phone after they heard me saying: "Milan". All travel arrangements were cancelled, and the video-interview was also postponed due to market turbulence – but this is another story.

National borders were likely to be closed in a matter of

hours and freedom of movement within Italy was expected to be significantly restricted too. Each student had to take a tough decision: stay or leave. We all knew that, whatever the destination, we could remain trapped there for an uncomfortably long time.

As everybody rushed home, I was left wondering what home means. Is it where your parents, siblings and pets live? Is it where you spend most of your days, where you carry out your present plans and start scheming your future ones?

After self-quarantining in Milan for 14 days, I decided to leave the city and reunite with my family. Being with them in these difficult times has unquestionably been a source of comfort. However, after a few weeks it became apparent that something was starting to crack. Before the lockdown, I had become used to being there just for a few days before leaving again. That was not enough to notice how I had outgrown my room, which had not changed much over the years. It never felt so cramped. Every time I went outdoors, I felt prying eyes on me. I had forgotten how they inspect and judge each passer-by and the current situation only made it worse. The smaller the town, the more intense the stare.

I have often found myself ruminating on a particular episode that took place in early February, during the very first days of the current semester. During one of the weekly meetings of Women in Finance (a student association I am part of) we shared what had been the highest moment of our lives. It took me some thought before I could elaborate on a definite answer and the conclusion stroke me for its simplicity. I had an epiphany that would make Joyce proud: I was actually living the best period of my life so far.

The day before the beginning of the current semester, I had just taken my last final and spent the afternoon with a dear friend of mine. We just went for a stroll in the city centre, yet it was the most fun I'd had in a long time. That night I was so hyped about the upcoming days that I was unable to fall asleep. When was the last time I could not sleep out of sheer excitement? I was most likely still a little girl.

I had a meeting planned with the Editorial Board of *Tra i Leoni* and we had plenty of ideas to bring to the table. The new courses were all promising. I had found a group of peers who shared my same goals and interests. I was about to submit my application for the much-awaited Ex-



Photos by Giacomo Zonco of Bocconi Students Photography Association

continued from page 27

change Program and I was close to landing an internship. Everything seemed to make the bull case for the semester and the future had never been so bright.

Physically and metaphorically, I was finally in a place where I belonged and it really felt like home.

The Covid-19 outbreak wiped away those dreams. Separated from our colleagues, our lives seem to have taken a different path. Our newspaper cannot be printed. Lectures do not feel quite the same online nor will our internships, for those lucky enough to still have one. The chances of going abroad for a semester next year are fading. I felt like I had been deprived of the signature Bocconi experience, of its open and international essence.

Sheltering in my hometown has been like going back to the past, and the journey proved rather distasteful. I have never felt so out of place, despite having lived there for the vast majority of my life. It could not work, just like you cannot put an apple back on the tree once it has fallen.

When travelling across regions became possible again, on May 4th, I did not think twice before going back to Milan. Being here is seldom a matter of coincidence: Milan is by definition the city of opportunity in Italy. It has always welcomed people from all parts of the country and, while there might be few citizens with truly "Milanese blood" left, this is what makes Milan simply Milan. Now more than ever, this is the place where one carefully chooses to be, and the emergency has not killed its vibe.

When I first visited the campus after months of absence, it was just the same: I met only one girl and I could tell that she was a fellow *Bocconiana*.

I experienced the city like never before: the decrease in traffic made cycling around much less dangerous and I have taken full advantage of the situation to explore the neighbourhood. If only I had realized earlier how many exquisite spots can be found just around the corner: Navigli, City Life, Bosco Verticale (vertical forest), Sempione Park and Porta Venezia just to name a few.

My personal favourite, however, is still the Bocconi Campus. Early birds may be familiar with the experience of hitting the streets at dawn: you do not get to meet that many people, mostly runners, elders and dog owners. Every time you make eye contact, there is something that draws a smile on your face. Just the few of you share a special place of yours, some secret coordinates in time and space that are precluded to those who are not even aware of what they are missing out on.

When I first visited the campus after months of absence, it was just the same: I met only one girl and I could tell that she was a fellow *Bocconiana*. Despite not knowing each other, we stopped for a second and we smiled behind the mask. We were silently sharing something that those outside of our bubble could not experience nor understand.

In that moment I clearly felt that the very same questions we started with, "Where are you from?" and "Why Bocconi?" were more meaningful than ever. No matter where or with whom we are, we still share the same legacy, the same mindset and the same ambitions. We are in this together and have never lost what makes us *Bocconiani*: our sense of community.

Seoul, South Korea

Seeing is Believing? South Korea's Response to an Invisible Virus



Dongwoo Kang

The UIC Scribe
Yonsei University
Seoul, South Korea

Korea was first known to the West as the “Hermit Kingdom,” ruled by a dynasty that sought isolation from the rest of the world. The modern Republic of Korea embodies a stark contrast, with its integration into the global economy having paved the way to rapid economic development and the fostering of K-culture with admirers across the world. However, such openness would also beckon inadvertent disaster, as the country became one of the first to fall victim to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, Korea’s former moniker may also describe most other nations, as populations worldwide have been involuntarily forced to adopt a “hermit” lifestyle, distancing themselves from within and without. In an ironic twist, it is Korea that seems to have largely avoided reverting back to its hermit status without compromising national health. In fact, Korea, currently on the verge of recovery, has been highlighted as an exemplary case of maintaining the outbreak without a nationwide lockdown or travel ban (only in early April did the country impose entry restrictions for countries banning Koreans as a reciprocal measure).

The number of infections in Korea has dwindled significantly to the single digits. On May 6, Korea reported no local cases for three consecutive days. What led to such a turnaround? For one, Korea made astute early preparations. The government had set up a special task force to deal with such epidemics following the previous MERS outbreak, and had initiated an internal emergency drill as early as December 2019. Another key factor was the utilization of technology. Once it was clear the virus had begun to spread, the government did not hesitate to cooperate with pharmaceutical firms to develop testing kits. Innovative technology, such as quick and efficient drive-thru screening centers or the use of smart phone apps to rapidly distribute information on nearby infections, also assisted ordinary people with combating the virus. Perhaps most importantly, the success of such employment of technology also depended greatly on transparency. The Korean government strove to maxi-

mize its testing and inform the public about each infection case, despite the potential for early outrage from the staggering figures. On the other end, the general public trusted reports and held fast to the belief that early social distancing measures would come to eventually reward them.

This transparency of information was the critical remedy in the absence of a medicinal cure. The fear of the unknown is universal, and a terrifying deadly virus, invisible to the naked eye, only provokes this instinct. However, this same fear drove 19th century “Hermit” Korea to shun foreign knowledge and science, slowing the country’s adaptation to the changing world until it regrettably fell victim to colonial oppression. The missing details of COVID-19 leave room for political interference and much debate about what those details could be. Yet, there exist enough information about the virus to mitigate its reach, e.g. wash your hands or avoid social gatherings. These facts, along with information tracking the domestic spread of the virus, are what the Korean government helped mass propagate, what the Korean populace trusted in, and what other countries should aim to replicate. The spread of correct information needs to outcompete the spread of the virus. Disputes about the unknown or proven containment measures are unnecessary and potentially deadly. The virus will not determine who is right, but only who is left.

The improving situation in Korea is certainly encouraging. Yet, as part of the global community, Korea will continue to be affected by the virus as long as it remains present in other parts of the world. As many Koreans have come to believe, self-isolation does not mean one should also isolate oneself from outside information. Accurate yet critical exchange of information from within will hopefully prompt nations to collaborate globally on swiftly beating this pandemic.

Toronto, Canada

Canada's largest student newspaper grapples with coronavirus



**Ibnul Chowdhury
Kathryn Mannie**

The Varsity
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada

How The Varsity covered the story – and how the story affected The Varsity

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the journalism industry in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, keeping the public regularly informed about the public health crisis is more important than ever, perhaps. Yet, the pandemic's devastating economic impact is threatening the very existence of newspapers.

In a way, the student media, including here at *The Varsity*, is also balancing these two realities.

As the University of Toronto's paper of record, and Canada's largest student newspaper, we understand first-hand how important it is to keep the U of T community in touch with the specific ways that it is experiencing the pandemic, whether in terms of education, employment, or housing.

Back in January, when the virus seemed to be a relatively distant concern for Canada, we were reporting on U of T students who were personally impacted by the lockdown in China, as well as a mask price gouging controversy at the university's bookstore.

A couple of months made a world of difference. Since March, we have been there to tell the rapidly developing story as the university moved all classes online, including breaking the first positive case of COVID-19 in the community, and as the university implemented new academic accommodations that were designed to help students adjust to the circumstances.

U of T is home to a large international student population, so much attention was also paid to their predicaments surrounding travel restrictions. And of course, we brought students important information about financial relief that the Government of Canada has made available.

The Varsity's coverage extended far beyond news reporting – we are also proud of how our Comment section has provided an extensive platform for students to voice themselves, whether in terms of their personal struggles or criticisms surrounding inadequate university action. Our writers have opined on the lack of a grace period as classes transitioned online, the impact of residence evictions on international students, and the lack of uniform academic support across our satellite campuses.

Our editorial board, which represents the voice of our masthead, also did not hesitate in calling for more from the university, such as for a more equitable approach to

COVID-19 a universal pass for courses.

Elsewhere Science reporters have done great work in covering U of T-based research, public health expertise, and even stressing the importance of remaining socially connected in these difficult times, while Sports writers discuss how to remain healthy and mentally fit in the face of physical distancing.

While covering the pandemic, we also had to bear with the fact that we were part of, and affected by, the story too. Campus life at U of T came to a grinding halt, and our journalists accordingly were no longer able to be on the ground. Physical distancing quickly affected our office operations as we cancelled in-person print production and distribution for our last two issues of the 2019–2020 year.

While we still produced the issues digitally for archival purposes, coordinating it remotely was a new and unexpected challenge, especially as our staff adjusted to the pandemic in their personal lives. Regrettably, we were not able to send off the year as we had hoped – we were not able to tell each other our proper goodbyes.

Looking ahead, as we report on U of T's plans to have a mixture of in-person and online courses for the fall 2020 semester, much uncertainty remains about campus life and its implications for student media. How a potential decline in student enrollment may impact our levy, how the economic situation may compromise advertising revenue, how the public health situation may continue to undermine our in-person operations – these are critical questions for student papers in the coming year.

Nonetheless, more than two months later, *The Varsity's* staff continues to rigorously cover the pandemic, even as we are physically disconnected from one another. We come together with the realization that it is up to us to do this work. We are united by the fact that, for 140 years now, *The Varsity* has been telling the stories that matter to the U of T community.

And no matter how much we may have to adapt and change to the circumstances, we will continue to be there to keep our community informed, to empower student voices, and to hold campus institutions accountable – even as it's from a safe distance.

Edinburgh, Scotland

Coronavirus and the long-term consequences of Edinburgh's cultural shutdown

Rob Lowrie

The Student
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh, Scotland

Edinburgh, as much as any in Europe, is a city defined by its culture. As a result of its rich literary history, its proliferation of theatres and galleries, and, most obviously, its summer festivals, the Scottish capital draws visitors from around the world, keen to explore the globally famous arts scene. This cultural dimension not only marks out Edinburgh, but also, quite literally, sustains it, the revenue brought in by tourism and the Fringe Festival indispensable to keeping the city running. In the wake of the coronavirus and its enforced closure of spaces and cancellation of gatherings, Edinburgh's future is uncertain.

We must remember that there are more serious consequences of the virus, and that the human toll in Scotland has not been as high as in other European countries. This does not, however, soften the blow of the news that, for the first time in over seventy years, the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe, the biggest arts festivals in the world, will not take place. The announcement was made at the beginning of April, but had been inevitable since early March, when corona-concern had really taken off amongst the British public. In a climate where physical contact is being limited so strictly, the bustle and activity which fill Edinburgh in the month of August could only have endangered human life.

The two gatherings, combined with the concurrent Military Tattoo, Edinburgh Art Festival and Edinburgh International Book Festival, draw 4.4 million visitors to the city each summer. The only cultural event which exceeds the Edinburgh Festival in scale is the Olympics. Last year produced record ticket sales of three million and generated over a billion pounds for the local and wider economy. This is the money which keeps Edinburgh afloat, which is so necessary to those who drive taxis, serve tables and pull pints. The

festivals yield those workers' most productive weeks of the year and, as with so many other professionals, the pandemic has stifled their income.

And what about the performers? Over 25,000 artists, actors and creatives from 70 different countries descend on the capital in August, hoping to use the festival as a springboard towards greater things, like so many famous names before them. Their shows will have been months, sometimes years, in the making. Though planned events are tentatively pencilled in for the summer of 2021, not everybody can afford to wait that long to earn their keep. Not to be forgotten are the festival's unsung heroes, those who hand out flyers in the Scottish seasonal rain, who work in the box office and operate beyond the bright lights of the stage. The Fringe provides employment opportunities for so many people, particularly the young. Its absence will be felt particularly keenly by them.

Edinburgh will need to bounce back in 2021. Spending by foreign tourists accounts for 3.4% of the city's economy, more than for any other part of the UK. The University of Edinburgh will lose out on the money it routinely generates from renting out spaces for performances, to add to the effect which the coronavirus has had on teaching methods and overseas applications. Given that the chief executive of the Fringe Society, Shona McCarthy, has affirmed commitment to refunding festival participants' registration fees, the recoupment will not be reached quickly.

This unprecedented cultural hiatus is not an altogether worrying thing, though. Edinburgh residents have long complained of the festival's expansion and disruption, of how foreign visitors are prioritised and locals priced out of their own city. Over the next fifteen months, the festi-

val planners have an opportunity to rethink how the Fringe and the other festivals can be presented in future. They can consider how the digitalisation of the festival-going experience, enforced this time round but a voluntary choice going forward, can be paired with more traditional forms of cultural consumption. This strategy can ensure that the festivals operate productively, profitably and sustainably. Given the current situation, safety is also essential.

The Edinburgh International Festival was started in 1947, a unifying force in the aftermath of war. It has continued to bring the city together in the ensuing decades. Scotland's

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon described its cancellation as 'a heartbreaking decision but the right one', pointing to the importance of preserving human life over economic or aesthetic concerns. We do not know exactly when it will be, but we can look forward to a time free from lockdown. Life as we know it will resume, and we shall be more grateful than ever for the small joys provided by art, theatre and comedy. 2020's festival-shaped gap will hit Edinburgh significantly, but it will not sink a city whose identity is predicated on performance.

Brad Fergie via Wikimedia Commons



Segovia, Spain

Segovia, Spain: A community strengthened by hardship

The Stork Editorial Board

The Stork
IE University
Segovia, Spain

Here in Segovia, Spain, we have suffered one of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks, and thus one of the harshest lockdown regimes, in the world. Segovia itself, in fact, was hit harder than almost any other province in Spain. Our hospital regularly sent patients to other cities, and our elderly population and many retirement homes fell victim to this horrible virus. Normally crowded and noisy streets lay empty, with the sound of birds and ambulances filling in the gap left by those staying home.

However, at 8pm, the city is revived, not through those breaking quarantine to party, rather those using quarantine to do so (an incredibly Spanish trait). For an hour, the *barrio* of San Lorenzo, the location of Segovia's first COVID case, becomes a center of festivities, with the elderly, children, and those in between coming to their balcony to celebrate our healthcare superheroes. Initiated daily by the sound of *Resistiré*, a Spanish classic focusing on resisting and overcoming challenges, various songs play for the next hour, closing off with the Spanish National Anthem.

"It's one of the best moments of the day," says an IE student still living in Segovia. "it's incredible and very emotive." "We think about everybody who is working for us and also in all those persons who couldn't [win] the battle."

Sometimes, live music accompanies this local djing, with clarinets and saxophones joining the symphony of clapping, cheering, and mid-2010s American and Spanish pop. Neighbors chat with each other from their balconies, getting to know those whose names, 2 months ago, they may not have known. They celebrate each other's birthdays and mourn each other's losses.

Signs of support dot the windows and grocery stores in the Barrio de San Lorenzo, praising both the healthcare workers of Spain and their robust healthcare system, one widely coveted by other nations.

"I feel as if I knew all my neighbours but I don't even know their names," says the same student. "We try to support each other even if we don't know each other, but we don't forget about the situation [in which] we are living." This situation reinforces the Segovian community.

This amount of celebration is not limited to Segovia, though. In a sign of support, major Spanish artists such as Vanesa Martín, Rozalén, David Bisbal, Melendi, and Manuel Carrasco formed the group *Resistiré 2020*, re-recording *Resistiré* for the difficult situation in which we find ourselves. In Mallorca, Spain, police have sung, danced, and played music for children unable to play outside. Online, the hashtag *#EsteVirusLoParamosUnidos*, or this virus we will stop together, has spread to all corners of Spanish social media, bringing a sense of unity to Spain.

These social efforts on the part of the Spanish people have certainly worked in uniting the population against the virus. Across the world, citizen-led backlash against stay-at-home measures endangers thousands, providing a hotbed for community spread. The UK, Germany, and the US are all experiencing significant protests, while in Spain, people feel grateful for the freedoms they have regained since the start of de-escalation on May 2nd. Going forward, the community spirit we have fostered through this crisis will remain our greatest asset to fighting this virus and any further challenges we may face as a nation.

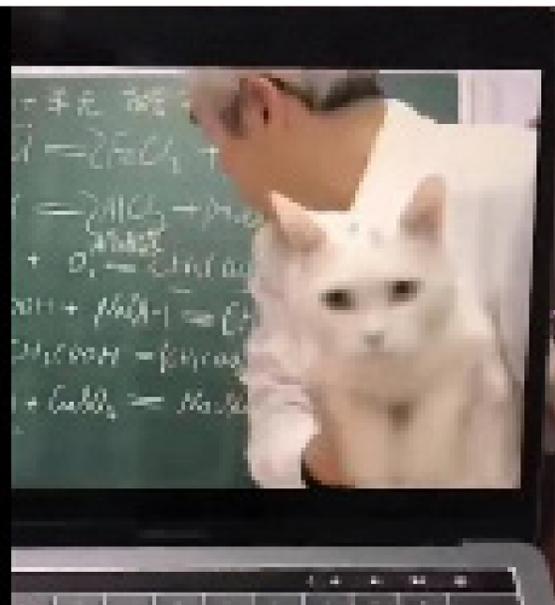


Beijing, China

Standing on the Horizon

Rong

Renmin University of China
Beijing, China



A chemistry teacher with a cat in his arms



A shop notice read "to be reopened on 1/30/2020". When I took the picture, it was 2/15/2020, but the shop was still closed.

Life with stay-at-home rules

With drones inviting villagers to give up playing Mahjong and go home, one of the vital entertainments during Chinese New Year, chiefs racked their heads to figure out new ways to enforce restrictions on group gathering in a gentle way. That was a miniature of the special 2020 Spring Festival. When spring comes to an end, bored foodies have already wasted tons of flour and sugar at the nearly burnt kitchen, students have witnessed strait-laced teachers with kittens or puppies in their arms and policemen have welcomed several surrendered fugitives who had found nowhere to hide under the national quarantine. These silver linings remind us that where there is shadow, there is sunshine.

However, we cannot forget the time when we breathed in the sorrowful pandemic. On the first day of the lunar new year, Hohhot, my hometown, located in Inner Mongolia, started community lockdown. Three days later, buses along with newly built subways were shut down. Five days after that, thousands of lovers had to postpone their wedding day on Feb 2nd 2020 and thus missed the precious symmetrical date that occurs once in a thousand years. When I went out for grocery shopping wearing my mask another week later, I noticed that restaurants originally prepared to start businesses on one or two days after the Spring Festival were still far from reopening.

Reflections during the pandemic

Nobody expected the situation to get so serious, neither I nor my friends. I went to a party the night before the Wuhan lockdown started, during which I saw my buddy who had returned home from Wuhan University last December. She was looked at with suspicion by everybody, the fear being that she had been infected by the virus. On the next morning I watched the lockdown news and chatted with my also-stunned Wuhan-born college classmate. "The number of confirmed cases of the 'unexplained pneumonia' in Wuhan has surged in recent days", she said, "but about one week ago the curve had kept so flat that all of us thought it had passed away." In the past few days, she was preparing for New Year with her family as every normal Chinese family. When the long-awaited New Year came, I noticed my family had been infected with a 'news-addiction virus'. We anxiously glued our eyes to the TV screen and couldn't bear missing any information about the coronavirus. Exaggerated canards reposted by unprofessional and fear-mongering citizens had gone viral across the Internet. When the confirmed cases soared to over 30,000 on the morning of February 7th, we learned about the death of Doctor Li Wenliang. I wept bitterly for the ordinary person who claimed to be a foodie on his social media Weibo: "When I want to eat oranges, I'm willing to rush for 1000 meters despite the storm outside.", "Big chicken leg attached to crotch looks so satisfying. Crispy skin, tender meat, along with an exclusive dry dish, it is definitely the best leg in the entire world! If a cup of coke can be added at this time, my life would have reached the peak!" The ordinary hero shared common hobbies with us, but he was gone, never to come back.

So why had the situation spun out of control?

Firstly, it was the cost of our arrogance. I had the experience of growing through SARS when I was 5 years old. I remembered that epidemic wasn't serious when it broke out in December 2002 in my hometown and everyone went back to school and work at the end of May 2003. As for COVID-19, I thought it wouldn't be more terrifying than its corona-cousin SARS. Obviously, however, that turned out not to be the case.

As a consequence, not until January 30th 2020 when the WHO declared the outbreak as PHEIC (i.e. Public Health Emergency of Public Concern) did my family and I finally acknowledge it as more severe than SARS in 2003. We were not rare examples, similar stories went on across the globe. Some of our acquaintances believed it was safer for their kids studying abroad, yet their delight disappeared when cases in other nations skyrocketed a month later. I, along with my classmates living in remote provinces near the border, once considered our hometown safer than Wuhan, but the situation reversed two months later. One day when my mom told me one of her colleagues' mom had passed away during the quarantine without seeing her daughter for the last time, I realized the cost was irreversible. Just as the novel *The Three-body Problem* puts it: "Weakness and ignorance are not barriers to survival, but arrogance is."

Secondly, irrationality fueled the disaster. From the world-famous Bat soup canard to oral liquid which could cure any disease, from conspiracy theory of man-made virus weapon to 5G equipment spreading pathogen, many social phenomena have caused depression and anxiety cases to rise alongside the pains caused by racism. At the early stage of the pandemic, I encountered a view posted by my friends on social media: "It was truly our fault to have the bat soup". I was bewildered as well as furious because I thought it was Guangdong people who have a bad reputation for eating wild animals (we used to make fun of them with saying like 'Guangdong people eat their neighbors in Fujian province'. Please allow me to apologize for the improper joke because it's a discrimination anyway and nobody should talk like that.) Why did Wuhan people pick up the bad habit? I searched the origin of the bat soup news and noticed two problems: on one hand, the news didn't show exactly when and where the picture was taken; on the other, although the news pointed out the correlation between bat and SARS as well as the seafood market where specialists tested COVID-19 for the first time, it didn't provide any expert opinion about it. So I thought the picture was a fake and the proof was untenable. The sense of alert came from my internship at a media company, where I learned that only the most shocking news could hit the climax. After setting the search time range to 2010-2018, I searched for the picture again and it turned out it had been taken by a tour guide in 2016 in the Palau Islands and it was tangentially related to COVID-19. I also found there were some people who had done the same job as me but their statements hadn't traveled as far as the original version did.

So what should be done in coping with misinformation? Should we seek to get rid of it? That's neither realistic nor necessary, for misleading news could ring the alarm for us to some extent. Take the bat soap for example, it led to legislation against eating wild animals in China. Therefore, given that the right of dealing with rumors cannot be vested onto any individual or institution, the best way is to think twice before clicking on the forward and to do some easy research with our critical thinking skills.

Finally, condemnation never works. On the day when Wuhan was suddenly locked down, I went over thousands of news and announcements in panic trying to dig out what made our government take the unprecedented action and why the Wuhan health sector had failed to control the spread. In the meantime, the Internet was inundated with reproaches: Who was to be blamed? The officials in the health sector? The respiratory doctors? The press who focused on VIP's private lives? The cooking enthusiasts who "had bat soap"? Who on earth could take the responsibility for the loss of Doctor Li Wenliang and millions of families throughout the world?

I couldn't figure it out. More specifically, the pandemic was more of a 'fallacy of composition' than some individuals' crime. The

term 'fallacy of composition' arose during the financial crisis with the meaning of "every sector doing what they were supposed to do but led to a tragedy by a confluence". For example in 2008, not merely bankers and officials, but also each innocent mortgager, depositor and consumer around the world who had enjoyed the prosperity before the subprime crisis had to share the loss and responsibility of the disaster. Similarly, this time everyone who didn't take the alarms seriously, even myself, might be to blame. Also, no matter who we denounced, finding someone to blame wasn't going to save lives. Those blaming words had no effect other than undermining the unity of the people. So stop thinking with conspiracy theories. If someone persist to think like that, let me provide him or her with a perfect one: it's a doom war schemed by corona-family in the microworld with the ambition to destroy all human beings.

Let's go back to the question: what spurred the situation out of control? With the hope to find something more reasonable and constructive, I discovered a clue in the news: an initial copy of diagnostic and treatment criteria released at the very beginning of January. There were two rigid criteria by reference to its corona-cousin SARS: first, the patient must have had a history of exposure to the sea food market or had contact with confirmed cases and second, body temperature above 38°C. Today, we are sure that these two criteria must have left out many infectious cases, because of the large number of asymptomatic COVID-19 carriers - a new trait SARS scarcely shared. Fortunately, a few days later it was modified in time and Wuhan was locked down as soon as possible. That improper criterion issue could largely account for the flat curve of confirmed cases in early January that I mentioned above. The surge of cases that later happened in several other countries could also be explained by this. So if there was something certainly to be blamed, it was the inappropriate criteria due to lack of experience and research on coronavirus.

Now we have shared losses of doctors, nurses, relatives and friends, and countless beautiful lives across the planet. Those who lost their loved ones might identify with the sentence below:

Improving treatments in practice did work, while blaming each other never works.

Keep walking into the blue times

The experience in fighting against SARS in 2003 not only proved quarantine to be effective but also popularized a team of doctors and nurses for China such as Zhong Nanshan and Li Lanjuan, who greatly lifted our spirits as a hero and a heroine. Some wonder why the Chinese people accepted the quarantine so willingly and completely, why thousands of medical workers volunteered to give their hands to Hubei province, and why we were 100% convinced we could and we would defeat the disaster. The answer may lie in Chinese characters: The word 'country', in Chinese '国家', can be divided into two words: the nation and the family ('国' and '家'). In Chinese culture, we believe the nation is the widest family and it deserves everyone to support, trust and guard it.

Recently in my hometown, the bans on domestic travelling has been canceled and coupons were released to stimulate the consumption. But the 2020s have begun with a worldwide disaster, and we need to recover from the loss and adapt to an uncertain new era. As Pantone put it when they designated "classic blue" as its Color of 2020: "Blue stands for the feeling of calm and reassurance that help us have that confidence to move forward."

It's time to remember the blue history and embrace the blue times. Those who passed away because of COVID live on in our memory. Standing on the horizon, we are one community sharing one future. I wish every creature on this planet could share the brightness ahead of the horizon.



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