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## INTERVIEWS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

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## FROM HUMILIATION TO DIGNITY: FOR A FUTURE OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

### The Coronavirus Pandemic as Opportunity in the Midst of Suffering<sup>1</sup>

Evelin Lindner<sup>2</sup>

Where do we stand, as humankind? We have dug ourselves into a multitude of perilous crises, both despite and because of what we call progress or economic growth. In service of profit, we practice strategies of development that shred our social fabric while simultaneously plundering our planet, fuelling a toxic combination of *sociocide* and *ecocide* that leads to intractable cycles of systemic humiliation. The coronavirus pandemic is one manifestation of this dire predicament. At the same time, there are also immense windows of opportunity waiting for us to use. The pandemic reminds us that we can and must change: change quickly and for the better. Unfortunately, instead of recognising the depth of the crises at hand and grasping the historic opportunities to exit, it seems that too many may choose to stay short-sighted and myopic. Consequently, humanity risks missing a momentous opportunity that could ultimately save countless generations of life on this planet. This article offers reflections on the predicament we as humankind face, as well as a way forward, a way that transforms debilitating humiliation into life-giving dignity. Hopefully, it works as a wake-up call for us to answer the following question together: How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?

*Keywords:* dignity, humiliation, coronavirus, ecocide, sociocide, *homo amans*

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version, formatted as per the journal style, of the original article available at <https://humiliationstudies.org/documents/evelin/FromHumiliationtoDignityCorona2020.pdf/> The original article is also available in German (translated by Georg-W. Geckler), as “Von der Demütigung zur Würde: Für eine Zukunft der globalen Solidarität Die Coronavirus-Pandemie als Chance in der Not.“ Downloadable at: <http://humiliationstudies.org/documents/evelin/FromHumiliationtoDignityCorona2020de.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Evelin Gerda Lindner*, a German-Norwegian medical doctor and psychologist, is the founding president of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies ([www.humiliationstudies.org](http://www.humiliationstudies.org)) and co-founder of the World Dignity University Initiative ([www.worlddignityuniversity.org](http://www.worlddignityuniversity.org)). She is widely known for her theory of humiliation and is a staunch advocate for human dignity. Correspondence regarding this article must be directed to: [e.g.lindner@psykologi.uio.no](mailto:e.g.lindner@psykologi.uio.no)

## **The Predicament: Crises Despite and Because of What we Call Progress**

The list of anthropogenic-induced tipping points that are being crossed or growing nearer on our planet is long. Biodiversity is lost, fisheries collapse, the ice caps melt, and the sea acidifies and rises, while, “we are also in an era of riots, revolutions, local experiments, and social movements from left to right that ... may look insane, but that are very real” (Wakefield, 2018, p. 6).

Now we have also a coronavirus pandemic. We are fortunate that this particular virus is not as deadly as the Ebola virus, because in this way the pandemic can work as a wake-up call rather than a death sentence (Lindner, 2020a). If we think of social factors such as dignity and humiliation, then the pandemic highlights both in unprecedented ways. The more the world interconnects, everything spreads out farther and faster, be it the nemesis of new viruses, the promise of shining ideals such as equal dignity, or the pain and anger that emerge when dignity is felt violated (Eriksen, 2016a; 2016b).

Present-day’s most definitorial systemic humiliation is a world-system that gives priority to profit maximisation rather than common good maximisation, a state of affairs that sends humiliation into every corner of the world. Not least, the coronavirus pandemic was a ‘predicted crisis’ due to this predicament.<sup>1</sup> The coronavirus pandemic throws into stark contrast the fact that global care for the common good is paramount, while the profit motive is destructive when it takes the lead rather than being of service (Mayer, 2020).

In 2018, we learned something interesting. Media theorist Douglas Rushkoff reported that a group of billionaires had invited him to talk, and he describes how he realised, to his astonishment, that they believed that something they called *the event* was unavoidable. ‘The event’ was a euphemism for “the environmental collapse, social unrest, nuclear explosion, unstoppable virus, or Mr. Robot hack that takes everything down” (Rushkoff, 2018, para. 6). Rushkoff reports what happened in the meeting:

They were not interested in how to avoid a calamity; they’re convinced we are too far gone. For all their wealth and power, they don’t believe they can affect the future. They are simply accepting the darkest of all scenarios and then bringing whatever money and technology they can employ to insulate themselves - especially if they can’t get a seat on the rocket to Mars. (para. 24)

In 2018, some readers might have thought that expecting ‘the event’ was unfounded paranoia by a few neurotic princes (Dennehy, 2018). I am among those academics who have designed their research outside the ‘ivory tower.’ I have been in touch with reality on the ground on all continents for more than forty-five years, and I see ‘the event’ happening soon, too, or, most probably, a number of events. Indeed, in 2019 and 2020, the coronavirus pandemic reminds us of those predictions.

As I see it, humanity is travelling down many dead-end roads simultaneously. For example, when we look at environmental collapse, global climate degradation is perhaps not the most significant threat, let alone a corona virus. The “alarming loss of insects will likely take down humanity before global warming hits maximum velocity” (Hunziker, 2018, para. 1). “The worldwide loss of insects is simply staggering with some reports of 75% up to 90%, happening much faster than the paleoclimate record rate of the past five major extinction events” (para. 3). Without insects “burrowing, forming new soil, aerating soil, pollinating food crops, etc.” (para. 8), and providing food for many bird species, the biosphere will simply collapse. Also, the rainforests are currently being destroyed at the rate of 80,000 acres each day, and the oceans are being degraded, with 200 species (plants, birds, animals, fish, amphibians, insects, and reptiles) going extinct each day, and another 26,000 species already identified as under threat. Ceballos, Ehrlich and Dirzo (2017) warn of biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signalled by vertebrate population losses and declines. Three-quarters of flying insects in nature reserves across countries like Germany have vanished in the last two decades (Carrington, 2017). In North America, three billion birds have disappeared since the 1970s (Lambert, 2019). These silent catastrophes have serious implications for all life on Earth. All this is not counting the damage of Earth’s biosphere through war and other military violence, for example, through the toxic remnants of war. Also, so-called peaceful technology damages the biosphere, such as radioactive contamination being released. The radiation from the TEPCO nuclear power plant Fukushima in Japan, for instance, has contaminated the entire Pacific Ocean. Indeed, highly responsible scientists have already predicted the possible extinction of the human species within one decade’s time, around 2026 (See “Will Humans,” n.d.; Burrowes, 2018; Kaufman, 2019; Welch, 2014). Kaufman (2019) warns that in case world governments fail to halve

greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, in an effort to provide some relief, global superpowers may decide to “block out the sun,” with the world’s most powerful militaries deploying aircraft to go up into the stratosphere to spray particles that reflect sunlight. He observes:

Short of worldwide consensus about how the technology should be used and who should control it – and remember now that nations can barely agree on an acceptable path toward curbing their own emissions – geoengineering would be controlled by a great power like the United States, China, or Russia. One or more of these world powers would carry out the project and enforce the rules, propelling us into a new era of climate imperialism where the very fundamentals of life in smaller nations – how much it rains, how much sunlight plants can absorb – are directly affected by the actions of a hegemon. (para. 11)

All this is part of *ecocide*, or the killing of our ecosphere. The Earth Overshoot Day has been earlier and earlier each year – in 2018, it was on the 1st of August and in 2019 on 29th July – it is the day on which humanity’s resource consumption for the year exceeds Earth’s capacity to regenerate those resources during that year.<sup>2</sup>

As to *sociocide*, or the killing of our sociosphere, inequality is at obscene levels, so much so that the word ‘inequality’ is a cynical trivialisation (Sassen, 2015. See also Mebane, 2019; People’s Policy Project, n.d.; Sassen, 2015).<sup>3</sup> People in countries like Germany, proud of their monetary wealth, are usually unaware that each of them, statistically, holds what would be the equivalent of sixty slaves in other world regions, a fact that indicates that their affluence may be related to enslavement, at least partly, and their pride may be naïve and misplaced (Dean, 2019; Hoffmann, 2016). At the same time, the social web of relationships has weakened also in the West to the point that a minister for suicide prevention (BBC News, 2018; see also Nelson, 2018; WHO, n.d.) and a minister for loneliness had to be appointed in Britain (Mannion, 2018. See also Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). These are the wounds that ‘monopoly capitalism’ inflicts on psychological well-being, as foreseen long ago: The system fails “to provide the foundations of a society capable of promoting the healthy and happy development of its members” (Baran & Sweezy, 1966, p. 285. See also Haque, 2019; Matthews, 2019; Ungar, 2019b).<sup>4</sup> Humanistic philosopher Erich Fromm (1974-1976/1992) wrote thus in the 1970s:

A person who has not been completely alienated, who has remained sensitive and able to feel, who has not lost the sense of dignity, who is not yet 'for sale', who can still suffer over the suffering of others, who has not acquired fully the having mode of existence – briefly, a person who has remained a person and not become a thing – cannot help feeling lonely, powerless, isolated in present-day society. He cannot help doubting himself and his own convictions, if not his sanity. He cannot help suffering, even though he can experience moments of joy and clarity that are absent in the life of his "normal" contemporaries. Not rarely will he suffer from neurosis that results from the situation of a sane man living in an insane society, rather than that of the more conventional neurosis of a sick man trying to adapt himself to a sick society. In the process of going further in his analysis, i.e. of growing to greater independence and productivity, his neurotic symptoms will cure themselves. (p. 65)

All this is just the beginning of a long list. These are dangers that all of humanity faces at its present juncture in history, dangers that may foreclose a dignified future for coming generations, if not the survival of the species *Homo sapiens* altogether.

It is always a shock when limits are reached that hitherto were imperceptible. Sudden tipping points change conditions so fast and drastically that it is difficult to bring about equally drastic adaptations. Humanity stands at a sweeping turning point now, at a historically unparalleled crossroads, and even though adequate responses will be extremely difficult to forge, this must be done. Today, we, as humankind, have the choice of proceeding unimpeded with 'business as usual' towards the global depletion of planet Earth's last resources, or we can rethink and shape our future path by inventing new ways of arranging our affairs on this planet. Never in our species' history have we encountered challenges that are more serious.

After millennia of hierarchical domination, the practice of subjugating people and nature now transmutes into a collectively suicidal strategy. The new *Zeitgeist* demands those who regard themselves as superior 'dignitaries' entitled to exclusive privileges to learn dignified humility and stop exploiting, oppressing, and humiliating allegedly 'lesser' fellow human beings and non-human species. The *Humilocene* waits to manifest, the 'epoch of humility.'<sup>5</sup>

The corona crisis is a perfect test case. So-called *myth-symbol complexes* can lead to violence if given the opportunity to mobilise around them

(Kaufman, 2001). Examples for such codes, blocks, or complexes are “militant, aggressive or violent customs and norms of action, connected to patriarchy and honour codes” (Vambheim, 2016, p. 20)<sup>6</sup> connected to the idea of being part of a cosmic Manichaean struggle between good and evil (LeShan, 1992. See also Galtung, 1996; 2000; 2002; 2003). As long as the corona virus is treated as an ‘enemy,’ as long as it is being approached with a mentality of war and crusading, as long as we look for villains to blame, we overlook our responsibility to do something about the conditions that make society a fertile ground, conditions that we are complicit with. Ecocide and sociocide are nothing to war against. Linda Hartling (personal communication, 30 March 2020) chimes in:

Framing the problem as a *war* serves to keep the hierarchy, the dominator system in place. It diverts attention from finding the most ecological and socially sustainable solutions, when, for example, environmental protections are rolled back, watered down, or discarded, rather than sustained and strengthened for the welfare of future generations.<sup>7</sup>

Human activity has robbed wild animals of their habitat and brought them into overly close contact with humans (Goodall, 2020), a problem of which indigenous peoples have been aware for a long time (Sadeque, 2020). This is just one more reason why indigenous habitats need protection against the currently practiced resource extraction, one more proof why it is dangerous that this extraction is driven by the profit motive instead of the care motive (International Resource Panel, 2019).<sup>8</sup> How could we think that “we would stay healthy in a world that was sick?” (Pope Francis, 2020, para. 6).

The future will bring answers to the many questions and speculations that presently occupy many people’s minds about the particularities of the corona crisis and its origins. What the crisis highlights here and now is the deadliness of the profit motive in numerous ways and at all levels, macro, meso, and micro levels. Acute danger comes from ‘disaster capitalism’ (Solis, 2020) and from the abandonment of important environmental protections under the cover of the crisis.<sup>9</sup> On top of this, money-driven right-wing hate entrepreneurship poisons all levels of society (Darcy, 2020).<sup>10</sup> At micro levels, people risk death when ventilators and masks are more lucrative when they are a scarce resource (Kulish, Kliff, & Silver-Grenberg, 2020).

The crisis also exposes chronic deep-seated misconceptions of health, misconceptions that literally ‘sell out’ health. Health is not the successful suppression of symptoms, particularly not when these symptoms are expressions of healthy defence strategies of the body. Many people have grown accustomed to placing the ability to function in a workplace above their health. The coronavirus pandemic requires people to refrain from such strategies. It requires them to strengthen their immune system – for instance, by getting enough sleep – most of all, however, it requires them to be aware that over the counter drugs such as Paracetamol/Tylenol (acetaminophen) only alleviate symptoms rather than dealing with the underlying cause and that they can easily be overdosed. The opioid epidemic that began in the 1990s was a stark expression of this problem;<sup>11</sup> yet, also acetaminophen can be poisonous: “Acetaminophen toxicity is the most common cause of hepatic failure requiring liver transplantation in Great Britain. In the United States, acetaminophen toxicity has replaced viral hepatitis as the most common cause of acute hepatic failure and is the second most common cause of liver failure requiring transplantation” (Farrell, 2020, para. 6).

The corona crisis highlights the need for heroic collective redirection of all attention and all forces, redirection toward sustainable communal care rather than towards individual profit (Sachs, 2020). The crisis calls for the strengthening of dignifying institutions of care rather than institutions dependent on corporate entities, privatisation, or individual charity.<sup>12</sup> Naomi Klein (2020), the author of *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*, spotlights attitudes about care brought to the forefront by the pandemic:

One of the things I really feel is being unveiled here has to do with care, has to do with the labour of care which is so systematically ... denigrated and devalued... We do not value the work of care because under capitalism we don't want to admit that we are interdependent. We don't want to admit that our success is never just our own... Overwhelmingly the people who do the work of care of propping up the whole structure are women, women of colour, people of colour.

To illustrate her point, Klein notes images of nurses wearing trash bags as personal protective equipment in New York City during the virus outbreak (see Spocchia, 2020). She urges humanity to move in a new direction: “I think the pivot here, the transformative moment here, has to do with grounding whatever is next in a valuing of that labour of care. We can never discard and

devalue that labour ever again” (Klein, 2020). The crisis calls for an ‘economy of life’ rather than an ‘economy of death’ (Keller, 2020)<sup>13</sup> – it calls for a *dignity economy* (Lindner, 2012). It calls on us to remember that humans are capable of solidarity and can find it fulfilling and meaningful to stand together. Linda Hartling (personal communication, 2020, March 30) sums up:

Rather than underreacting with half measures or overacting with aggressive protection, moving towards a dignity economy will create a new space for creative, collaborative, effective global action. Working together, humanity can move in a life-replenishing direction. It can develop systems and institutions that support the long-term, regenerative, and mutually beneficial health and well-being of all people and planet.

As Thomas Homer-Dixon from the faculty of environment at the University of Waterloo, Canada, observes,

Today’s emerging pandemic could help catalyse an urgently needed tipping event in humanity’s collective moral values, priorities and sense of self and community. It could remind us of our common fate on a small, crowded planet with dwindling resources and fraying natural systems. (as quoted in Brown, 2020, para. 4)

“What is possible through fear must also be possible through trust,” say others (Dregger, 2020), and “united in our diversity and accepting our differences instead of dividing us into races, we may, in any future, acquire a Consciousness of Civilized Beings – and act on it” (Rosa, 2020, para. 30).

What I call *big love* in my book on gender, humiliation, and global security is meant to be more than just a personal experience (Lindner, 2020). *Big love* is the manifestation of *Homo amans*, of the ‘loving being’ – *amans* is the present participle of Latin *amare* ‘to love.’ Even more, *big love* manifests what I call *Homo amans relationalis*, or the ‘loving relational being,’ the only model of human nature that I see fit to become a global culture if we, as humankind, wish to overcome the trappings of the security dilemma, the endless build up of military protection. This model, if realised, can manifest the knowledge and values, attitudes, and behaviours, which, if shared by the entire global community, can create a world worth living in for all of us now and in the future (Lindner, 2020. See also Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). This might sound like pie in the sky – unfortunately, we humans have managed to degrade our world to the point that this, I fear, is the only way towards survival.

## The Way Out: Immense Windows of Opportunity Waiting for Us to Use

Where do we stand, as humankind? We have dug ourselves into a multitude of perilous crises, both despite and because of what we call progress. We engage in systemic humiliation – *sociocide* and *ecocide* – or the shredding of the social fabric and plundering of the planet. At the same time, there are also immense windows of opportunity waiting for us to use. Unfortunately, so far, instead of recognising the depth of the crises at hand and grasping the historic opportunities to exit, it seems that most of us choose to stay short-sighted and myopic.

For the first time in its history, humankind is now in a position to succeed in bringing about the kinds of adaptation that are needed. For the first time, humanity can fully appreciate its place in the cosmos. Unlike our ancestors, we can see pictures of our Blue Marble from the perspective of an astronaut (Zimmerman, 2016). Unlike our forebears, we have the privilege of experiencing the *overview effect* with respect to our planet (White, 2014), which helps us understand that we humans are *one* species living on *one* tiny planet, so that we can embrace *biophilia* (Anderson, 2016), and feel ‘the ecology of the living’ taking place within *one* circumscribed *biopoetic* space that is shared between all beings (Weber, 2016). We have access to a much more comprehensive knowledge base about the universe and our place in it than our grandparents ever had. We have research showing that human nature is neither ‘good’ nor ‘evil’ but social, and that much of human action depends on the ways constitutive rules frame relational contexts. As it stands now, current systemic frames incentivise selfishness and cast suspicion on selflessness, in the belief that Adam Smith’s invisible hand will come to rescue. As a result – and I observe this all around the globe – people are being morally and psychologically crippled to the point that they lack the courage to envision and create systemic frames that would encourage pro-social behaviour with ‘visible hands.’

Feminist economists have long reminded us that our economies depend entirely on ‘invisible’ work, particularly that of women, and they warn that personal autonomy is a myth while dependency is the reality – one economist asked a fitting question: “Who cooked Adam Smith’s dinner?” (Marçal, 2012/2015. See also Fineman, 2004; Waring, 1988). The big hope is that enough people will wake up to understand that in an interconnected world it

is not only practical, but essential to our existence to move towards a world-system that enables trust to emerge both locally and globally. The hope is that enough people understand that it is feasible to attenuate the security dilemma, as global disarmament is far from impossible, because we, as humankind, make global armament possible.<sup>14</sup> As the corona virus explodes around the world, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres pleads for an “immediate global ceasefire” to “end the sickness of war and fight the disease that is ravaging our world... That is what our human family needs, now more than ever” (Guterres, 2020, para. 1, 10). We can also overcome the commons dilemma – the dilemma when people’s short-term selfish interests to exploit resources are at odds with long-term group interests (Hardin, 1968, 1998, 2007). In an interconnected world, long-term demise for all is the result when a few strong-men strive for domination over the rest and engage in the exploitation of humanity’s common planetary resources.

We do not have to make do with a world where ulterior interests capture all aspects of our lives, and even charitable NGOs turn into ‘missionaries of the new era’ of economism (Merz, 2012). We do not have to make do with world where equal dignity is mistaken as equal entitlement to profiteering, a world where this even informs the institutions of the world-system and legitimises free-riding on the common good at all levels: this is nothing but world-wide systemic humiliation. There are more options on the table than big or small government, namely, good governance. Good governance means shaping constitutive rules with the help of the subsidiarity principle, thus dignifying both local and global governance (Basu, 2019. See also Bello & Feffer, 2009; George, 2007; Lindner, 2012; Sundaram & Chowdhury, 2019).

I have coined the term *dignism* (dignity + ism) to describe a world where every new-born finds space and is nurtured to unfold their highest and best, embedded in a social context of loving appreciation and connection, where the carrying capacity of the planet guides the ways in which everybody’s basic needs are met. It is a world, where we unite in respecting human dignity and celebrating diversity, where we prevent unity from degrading into oppressive uniformity and keep diversity from sliding into hostile division.

The Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship (Human DHS, [humiliationstudies.org](http://humiliationstudies.org)) aims to convene a global dignity community since 2001. Together with Linda Hartling and a dedicated core group of scholars

and educators, I have the honour of nurturing this collaborative fellowship of people who walk the talk of dignity (Chowdhury, Britton, & Hartling, 2019; Hartling, 1995; Hartling, Lindner, Britton, & Spalthoff, 2013; Hartling, Lindner, Spalthoff, & Britton, 2013; Hartling & Lindner, 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2018b; Lindner, 2000; 2006a; 2006b; 2009; 2010; 2012; 2017; 2020a; 2020b; Lindner, Hartling, & Spalthoff, 2011; Lindner, & Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network members, 2006–2017).<sup>15</sup>

We are a global trans-disciplinary network of concerned scholars, researchers, and educators of all academic fields, together with practitioners, creative artists, and many others, who all wish to stimulate systemic change, globally and locally, to open space for dignity, mutual respect and esteem to take root and grow. Our goal is ending humiliating practices, preventing new ones from arising, and fostering healing from cycles of humiliation throughout the world. We suggest that a frame of cooperation and shared humility is necessary – rather than a mindset of humiliation – if we wish to build a better world, a world of equal dignity for all in solidarity.

We come together for two conferences per year, one at Columbia University in New York every December, and the other conference each year in a different location in the world. Incidentally, the conference we held just a few months before the corona virus pandemic commenced pertained directly to this crisis. We had our 33rd Annual Dignity Conference in the Amazon of Brasil, in Marabá and in Belém in the State of Pará,<sup>16</sup> where we became acutely aware of the disastrous consequences of overlooking, neglecting, and eradicating indigenous peoples, together with their knowledge of nature, their knowledge of how to live sustainably in dialogue with nature rather than slaughter it. The corona crisis is but one more expression of this neglect. Around 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic – transmitted from animals – and are linked to human activity,<sup>17</sup> and the Amazon fires were complicit (Berardelli, 2020).<sup>18</sup>

Our dignity fellowship is a fluidly evolving cooperative community rather than a monolithic organisation that speaks with one voice – neither do we wish to be a monolithic organisation.<sup>19</sup> Rather, we wish to manifest dignity by holding space for unity in diversity. In this context, I wear two ‘hats’: When I gather our global dignity family, I am a unifier who strives to protect the diversity of our members and supporters so that everyone can forge their own

path to dignity in their lives. On the other hand, I am also part of the diversity of our network, namely, when I write books, articles, or give lectures. In this text on the coronavirus pandemic, for instance, I speak only for myself as an individual researcher – with a background as medical doctor and psychologist – and it is important for me to make clear that my views do not define any ‘official’ view of our dignity movement.

As I hail from a displaced family who was deeply affected by the two world wars of the last century, I am particularly aware of the vulnerabilities of our human arrangements on this planet. All my life, I have been preparing for the next ‘Eleanor Roosevelt moment,’ like in 1948, when a window of opportunity stood open for dignity to get the attention it deserves. Linda Hartling and I, together with our close collaborators, are helping to nurture another moment like this through our dignity work, and we hope to be among the co-authors of this moment, contributing with our approach of what we call *big love*. When Rachel Carson published her book *Silent Spring* (1962), many were full of hope for a substantial turn-around; yet, the moment passed largely unused or was undermined by corporate interests.<sup>20</sup> Then came other serious wake-up calls, from the oil crisis in 1973, to the September 11 attacks in 2001, to an enormous financial crisis in 2007 and 2008. All these moments passed. We, the human family, even managed to turn down the kind invitation that the end of the Cold War offered to us, namely, the invitation to unite globally in respect for our diversity.

Still we are full of hope for an exponential change of heart, as we watch the heart-breaking coronavirus pandemic unfold. When a new Eleanor Roosevelt moment finally comes, we hope to be ready for a Universal Declaration of Human Vulnerability.<sup>21</sup> We hope to be ready to answer the following question together with you: How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland is the former Prime Minister of Norway. On 27th March 2020, she was in the Norwegian media explaining that the corona crisis was ‘a notified crisis’. Since 2018, she is co-chair of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board. In 2018, she was asked by the World Bank and WHO to lead the work on a report on how the world would deal with a global infectious and deadly epidemic. Together with the head of the International Red Cross, she brought together international experts and health politicians. The report came in September 2019, and she said: ‘For too long, world leaders’ approaches to health emergencies have been characterized by a cycle of panic and neglect... It is high time for urgent and sustained action. This must include increased funding at the community, national and international levels to prevent the spread of outbreaks. It also requires leaders to take proactive steps to strengthen preparedness coordination mechanisms across governments and society to respond quickly to an emergency’. See World Health Organisation. (2019, September 18). *World at risk from deadly pandemics: Expert group outlines steps to prepare for – and mitigate – the effects of a widespread global health emergency that could kill millions, damage global economy*, [https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual\\_report/GPMB%20Press%20Release\\_Final.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB%20Press%20Release_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Earth Overshoot Day is an initiative of Global Footprint Network, an international research organisation that is changing the way the world measures and manages its natural resources. See [www.overshootday.org/](http://www.overshootday.org/) The date of Earth Overshoot Day is calculated with data from Global Footprint Network’s National Footprint Accounts, which are available at the Ecological Footprint Explorer Open Data Platform at [data.footprintnetwork.org/](http://data.footprintnetwork.org/)

<sup>3</sup> Citing Bruenig, Mebane (2019) observes thus: “The top one percent had real income after transfers and taxes, 225 percent greater than that in 1979 as compared to 41 percent for the middle class. From 1989 to 2018, the top 1 percent increased its total net worth by \$21 trillion. The bottom 50 percent saw its net worth decrease by \$900 billion over the same period, in 2018 dollars” (para. 4)

<sup>4</sup> “The science of resilience is clear: The social, political and natural environments in which we live are far more important to our health, fitness, finances and time management than our individual thoughts, feelings or behaviours. When it comes to maintaining well-being and finding success, environments matter” (Ungar, 2019b).

<sup>5</sup> Like me, cultural ecologist and geophilosopher David Abram, et al. (2020), also feels the responsibility to create new vocabularies to make clear that we live in world where all earthly organisms are connected in an interbreathing vital flux. He has introduced the term *Humilocene* or ‘epoch of humility’ to foster ecoculturally inclusive ways for addressing the environmental and cultural crises of our time and to stimulate more-than-human conversations, opportunities, and actions that are humble and holistic. In 2014, Abram held the international Arne Næss Chair of Global Justice and Ecology at the University of Oslo, in Norway.

<sup>6</sup> Peace researcher Vidar Vambheim draws on the notion of memes, introduced by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins (2006), analogous to genes, to characterize cultural codes. Memes are seen as cultural replicators that survive, reproduce, and proliferate in a meme pool.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, ‘USA: Immediately revoke COVID-19 suspension of environmental protections’, *Amnesty International* (27th March 2020). Retrieved from [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/usa-immediately-revoke-covid-19-suspension-of-environmental-protections/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/usa-immediately-revoke-covid-19-suspension-of-environmental-protections/)

<sup>8</sup> This report was commissioned by the G7 countries, showing ‘that natural resource extraction and processing account for more than 90 per cent of global biodiversity loss and water stress, and around half of global greenhouse gas emissions.’

<sup>9</sup> The US Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) announced it would indefinitely suspend enforcement of environmental laws due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Richard Pearshouse, Amnesty International’s Head of Crisis and the Environment, protests: *USA: Immediately revoke COVID-19 suspension of environmental protections*, Amnesty International, 27th March 2020, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/usa-immediately-revoke-covid-19-suspension-of-environmental-protections/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/usa-immediately-revoke-covid-19-suspension-of-environmental-protections/)

<sup>10</sup> Note the role of the Heartland Institute: Kirchgaessner, S. & Emily Holden, E. (2020, March 27). ‘Naomi Seibt: “anti-Greta” activist called white nationalist an inspiration. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from [www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/28/naomi-seibt-anti-greta-activist-white-nationalist-inspiration](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/28/naomi-seibt-anti-greta-activist-white-nationalist-inspiration) The Heartland Institute, in the 1990s, “worked with the tobacco company Philip Morris to attempt to discredit the health risks of secondhand smoke and to lobby against smoking bans. Since the 2000s, the Heartland Institute has been a leading promoter of climate change denial. It rejects the scientific consensus on climate change, and says that policies to fight it would be damaging to the economy” (“The Heartland Institute.’ Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Heartland\\_Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Heartland_Institute) . The Identitäre Bewegung (IB), or the ‘identitarian movement,’ is Europe’s version of America’s alt-right. See, among others, Wilson, J. (2019, May 16). ‘Christchurch shooter’s links to Austrian far right “more extensive than thought.” *The Guardian*. Retrieved from [www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/16/christchurch-shooters-links-to-austrian-far-right-more-extensive-than-thought/](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/16/christchurch-shooters-links-to-austrian-far-right-more-extensive-than-thought/) The aim of the ‘identitarian movement’ is ‘Themeninvasion’ to achieve ‘Meinungshoheit’ in the Internet, or the invasion of Internet to achieve ‘opinion sovereignty’ through repeating and normalising their ideas and through aggressively trolling all disagreeable initiatives.

<sup>11</sup> In the United States, an extensive overuse of opioid drugs, both from medical prescriptions and from illegal sources, began in the 1990s.

<sup>12</sup> Millions of children in the United States of America are losing the meals they depend on as the corona virus closes schools. Charitable organisations call for help, see, among them, [www.nokidhungry.org/](http://www.nokidhungry.org/) or, for New York City, [www.cityharvest.org/](http://www.cityharvest.org/). See also Speri, A. (2020, March 12). ‘Why I’d rather be in Italy for the corona virus pandemic.’ *The Intercept*. Retrieved from <https://theintercept.com/2020/03/12/italy-coronavirus-united-states-preparedness/>

<sup>13</sup> Star chef Franz Keller (2020) speaks of the industrial production of food as ‘death industry’ in German ‘Sterbemittelindustrie’ (rather than ‘Lebensmittelindustrie’). He calls for a ‘kitchen revolution.’ Likewise, we could call for a ‘life revolution.’

<sup>14</sup> 4th June 2019: Nobel peace laureates Jody Williams and Leymah Gbowee joined fellow laureates Mohamed ElBaradei and Denis Mukwege, Master of New College of Humanities

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Anthony Grayling, and President of SFG Sundeep Waslekar, to issue the Normandy Manifesto for World Peace. The statement calls for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and a new conception of security based on universal human rights and rule of law. See [www.strategicforesight.com/downloads/EN%20Normandy%20Manifesto.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3DXB2cwtXpRAF2PrsAKwUTwB\\_gz0PNUtCyYBjCaG3d0fUkhnJuxad0r\\_w](http://www.strategicforesight.com/downloads/EN%20Normandy%20Manifesto.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3DXB2cwtXpRAF2PrsAKwUTwB_gz0PNUtCyYBjCaG3d0fUkhnJuxad0r_w)

<sup>15</sup> See an overview over publications of network members on [www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php), and an overview over publications by Lindner and core members on [www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php)

<sup>16</sup> We held this 33rd Annual Dignity Conference, a ‘Caravan’ conference, titled ‘Cultivating Good Living Amazon: Nurturing Solidarity with Mother Earth’, 28th August – 7th September 2019. The forest had been set on fire, and school children gave to us a ‘cry-for-help’ letter to bring it to everyone in the world who might be interested, downloadable from [www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/33.php#letter](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/33.php#letter). See the situation through my eyes at <https://youtu.be/fBY2TOIXILU>, and see our Dignity Letter in October at <https://conta.cc/2p9oKfG>

<sup>17</sup> *Six nature facts related to coronaviruses*, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), 8th April 2020. <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/six-nature-facts-related-coronaviruses/> The article begins thus: “Did you know that around 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic, as are 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases, in other words they come to us via animals? Zoonoses that emerged or re-emerged recently are Ebola, bird flu, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), the Nipah virus, Rift Valley fever, sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus, Zika virus disease, and, now, the coronavirus. They are all linked to human activity.”

<sup>18</sup> ‘Human impact on the environment may make pandemics more likely, experts warn’, by Jeff Berardelli, *CBS News*, 2nd April 2020, [www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-environment-pandemic-infectious-diseases/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-environment-pandemic-infectious-diseases/)

<sup>19</sup> See also [www.humiliationstudies.org/intervention/declarations.php](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/intervention/declarations.php)

<sup>20</sup> Greta Thunberg had a forerunner: Severn Suzuki. As a twelve-year-old, Suzuki spoke at the Earth Summit Rio92 to the leaders of the world. Her speech was hailed by everyone as deeply touching. Twenty years later, she came back to the Rio+20 Summit and her message was the following: nothing has happened! See *Severn Suzuki’s speech at Rio92, 1992*, published on 28th February 2007 by Evandro Barboza, <https://youtu.be/5g8cmWZOX8Q>. See also *Severn Suzuki’s speech at Rio+20, 2012*, published on 20th June 2012 by ONU Brasil, <https://youtu.be/1FmSxmpitBA>. See also <https://youtu.be/z5qcFpPlsYI>

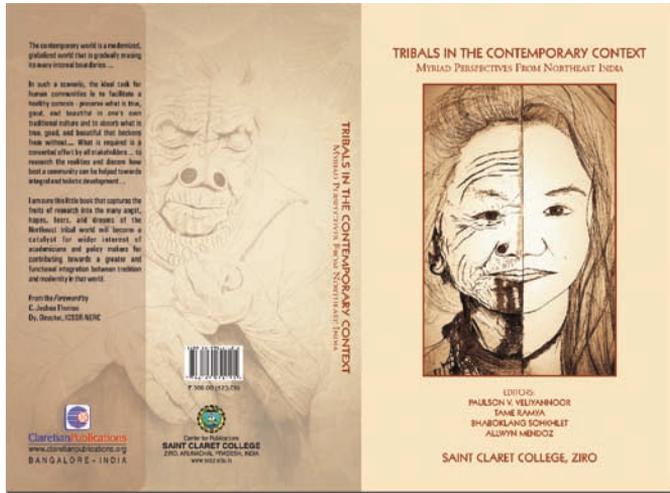
<sup>21</sup> Michael Britton in a personal communication, 1st April 2020: “If Eleanor Roosevelt were here today, instead of the universal declaration of human rights we might be ready, in one of Evelin and Linda’s Eleanor Roosevelt Moments, we might be ready for a Universal Declaration of Human Vulnerability, or a Declaration of Universal Human Vulnerability – premising a need for pulling together, universal cooperation as the foundation of planetary life.”

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