



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

Helda

---

## Notes on the Corona Crisis

Näre, Lena

Helsinki University Press

2020-06

---

Näre, L, Bendixsen, S & Holley, P 2020, 'Notes on the Corona Crisis', Nordic Journal of Migration Research, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.332>

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/316287>  
10.33134/njmr.332

---

cc\_by\_nc\_nd  
publishedVersion

---

*Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.*

*This is an electronic reprint of the original article.*

*This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.*

*Please cite the original version.*

---

**EDITORIAL**

## Notes on the Corona Crisis

Lena Näre<sup>1</sup>, Synnøve Bendixsen<sup>2</sup> and Peter Holley<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Social Sciences (Sociology), University of Helsinki, Helsinki, FI

<sup>2</sup> Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, Bergen, NO

Corresponding authors: Lena Näre ([lena.nare@helsinki.fi](mailto:lena.nare@helsinki.fi)); Synnøve Bendixsen ([Synnove.Bendixsen@uib.no](mailto:Synnove.Bendixsen@uib.no))

---

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Corona virus, pandemic; migration; migrant workers; NJMR

---

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected lives across the globe and transformed our daily lives and securities. Arundhati Roy compares the current era as the pandemics in history to a portal, 'gateway[s] between one world and the next.' She suggests that instead of walking through the portal with 'our prejudice and hatred' we should leave those behind and be 'ready to imagine another world' (Roy 2020). Let us begin from where Roy ends and reflect what the pandemic has revealed and taught to us, and how this knowledge can help us to imagine another world.

The first peek into another world could help us better tackle climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic has decreased emissions globally. The resulting improvement in air quality in cities and the clarified waters have given us a concrete view of what our environment looks like when climate change is tackled. For scientists studying climate change, it has offered a live laboratory situation to analyse what the best measures are to cut emissions. For all researchers, the pandemic has forced us to reflect on the sustainability of our work and lifestyle, for example, whether travelling to conferences around the world is always necessary.

The second peek allows us to see the rapid changes in knowledge workers' daily lives. After the pandemic, remote work will most likely increase. The pandemic has also fast-forwarded the introduction of online teaching courses, urging the need for developing new pedagogical skills, but with yet-unknown consequences in terms of job security and time pressures. Potential scenarios include that universities could cut teaching staff and compensate with online courses and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Scholars also suggest that the current exceptional working conditions (at home) is highly gendered, with future gendered consequences for faculty advancement, particularly for those with care duties (Minello 2020).

Thirdly, the pandemic has demonstrated the value of scientific knowledge, and this will hopefully push us beyond the post-truth world. More than before, we need multi-disciplinary research. The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the importance of not only natural sciences but also social and humanistic sciences when currently, without a vaccine, the most efficient ways to combat the spread of the virus relate to human and social behaviour. We need social scientific knowledge concerning daily decision-making and responses to social norms as well as knowledge about the importance of generalised trust in the society, better communication of information, as well as statistical knowledge modelling the spread of the virus.

Fourth, although some have claimed that the pandemic is a great equaliser because the virus in itself does not discriminate, nothing could be further from the truth. The pandemic has revealed the deep societal and global inequalities. Due to existing societal inequalities and discrimination, people are disproportionately confronted with the virus. Their health history partly determines how well they can cope with the disease. For instance, poor people suffer more from pulmonary diseases caused by air pollution than wealthy. In countries with no universal health care coverage, such as the United States (US), getting treatment depends on one's socio-economic position. In the US, young people who otherwise seldom get the most serious forms of the disease have died of complications resulting from the disease due to lacking health insurance. Due to global lockdowns, poor people working in informal sectors and service jobs have lost their livelihoods. Arif Husain, World Food Programme's chief economist warns that an estimated 265 million people are in risk of starvation this year (Dahir 2020). The pandemic as a critical event also crystallises prevailing radical inequalities that are not only class and gender based, but also racialised and based on migrancy (cf. Näre 2013).

Irregular and regular migrants and refugees are amongst the most vulnerable groups in the world affected by the pandemic. In Italy, the pandemic has made visible how dependent the Italian elder care system is on migrant, mostly female, live-in care workers. Many migrant elder care workers have lost their jobs but cannot return to their home countries because the borders are closed (Widding & Näre 2020). Yet, migrant workers have explicitly been excluded from the extensive government financial support package intended for crisis-affected workers, ironically named *Cura Italia*—Care for Italy.

Agriculture is another sector dependent on migrant workers. At least in Germany and Finland special arrangements have been made to allow Eastern European seasonal workers to come to work in the fields in these countries (Kukkonen 2020). Similarly, in the United Kingdom (UK), Romanian workers have been flown in to fill a considerable labour shortfall among skilled agricultural workers despite the UK government's promises to curb immigration in the light of a Brexit motivated by widespread xenophobia (Lindsay 2020). Such arrangements not only will potentially put the workers' health in risk but upon their return, they might endanger fragile health care systems in Romania and Ukraine (Rogozanu & Gabor 2020). The sudden lockdown in India made migrant workers from rural areas without jobs, pay, and opportunities to return home in unsafe conditions. Meanwhile, in the Gulf Arab states and other countries, large-scale deportations of migrant workers take place apparently without necessary precautions against the virus. In Iran, due to loss of income and lack of access to health care, Afghan refugees are returning to war-torn Afghanistan in the thousands, potentially bringing the virus with them to a country with scarce health care facilities and resources to treat coronavirus patients (Hayeri & Mashal 2020).

Migrants and refugees stuck in crowded refugee camps, in Italy, Greece, Iraq, and elsewhere, cannot practice physical distancing and might lack access to fresh water or basic hygiene. But even in Finland, in reception centres that have to operate at the maximum level of resource use, which translates for instance into several bunk beds in one room and limited number of showers, inhabitants have little means to take the necessary health actions urged by national governments to protect themselves and their families.

Rather than seeking to return to 'normality', several voices on social media and beyond, see these times rather as a call for change: the crisis has called attention to the reality that our 'normality' is defined by an unjust, unequal, and unsustainable way of life. As Arundhati Roy argues, pandemics have historically compelled humans to reimagine their world. We can take this situation as an opportunity to rethink our way of life. Rethinking requires both

individual and collective effort. Just as C. Wright Mills (1959) exhorted researchers to develop an inherently forward-looking 'sociological imagination' over half a century ago, the particular historic moment in which we now find ourselves presents us with the opportunity to put forward new ideas that challenge the old way of life.

The Corona Spring has also brought important transformations to our journal. The previous contract with our publisher Versita, nowadays Sciendo (owned by DeGruyter Open) needed to be renewed. The NMR board decided to use the opportunity and to open up our publishing contract for new offers, especially from university presses. We received good offers from university publishers in the Nordic countries and our previous publisher, but one publisher was able to offer an excellent deal that will enable us to grow NJMR over the coming months and years. We are very pleased to inform you that we have decided to accept the offer from Helsinki University Press (HUP). At the heart of the tender process, we wished to continue our free and completely open-access publishing. With Helsinki University Press and its collaborating partner, Ubiquity Press, NJMR will continue to operate according to a Gold Open Access publishing model without any article processing charges (APCs).

This is the first issue with our new publisher. It has been a demanding task to transfer NJMR's catalogue of nine volumes and to switch journal management platforms, but this has gone rather smoothly thanks to the hard work of Anna-Mari Vesterinen at HUP and Tim Wakeford at Ubiquity Press. At this point, the editorial team would also like to thank Sciendo for assisting us with publishing NJMR over the past nine years. In particular, we wish to thank Ewa Żurawska-Seta for all of her hard work and for her problem-solving skills when we encountered problems with Editorial Manager.

In addition to changing publishers, NJMR has also expanded its editorial team. Lena Näre and Synnove Bendixsen continue as NJMR's editors-in-chief, and they are joined by assistant editors Justyna Bell from Oslo Metropolitan University and Haodong Qi from Malmö University. Our book review team has also expanded, now being led by Jaana Palander from the University of Eastern Finland. Jaana is supported by Alyssa Marie Kvalvaag from Nord University, Dixie Larios from the University of Bergen, Olivia Maury from the University of Helsinki, and Klara Öberg from Halmstad University. Anne Häkkinen from the University of Jyväskylä has stepped down as our lead book review editor after doing a fantastic job for several years. Again, thank you, Anne, for all of your hard work! Finally, Peter Holley continues his great work as our Managing Editor. Thank you also to all our reviewers and authors who make this journal. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

### Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

### References

- Hayeri, K** and **Mashal, M.** 2020. Afghanistan's Next War. *The New York Times*, 22 April. <<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/22/magazine/afghanistan-coronavirus.html>>. Accessed on 23 April 2020.
- Kukkonen, L.** 2020. Suomen tiloille saapuu tilauslennoilla hätäavuksi 1500 ulkomaista kausityöntekijää, satokauden kohtalo silti epävarma. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 16 April. <<https://www.hs.fi/talous/art-2000006476794.html>>. Accessed on 21 April 2020.
- Lindsay, F.** 2020. Romanian Workers Are Flying In To Fill U.K. Labor Shortages And Remainers Are Loving It. *Forbes*, 17 April. <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/freylindsay/2020/04/17/romanian-workers-are-flying-in-to-fill-uk-labor-shortfalls-and-remainers-are-loving-it/#569777045f4b>>. Accessed on 24 April 2020.

- Mills, CW.** 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Minello, A.** 2020. The pandemic and the female academic. *Nature*, 17 April. <[https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01135-9?fbclid=IwAR0Jn2cWcklajfum489Dcl5oeFqF5jjL\\_8KMQxVoNwr85GgKFO5Fn\\_rLu0w](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01135-9?fbclid=IwAR0Jn2cWcklajfum489Dcl5oeFqF5jjL_8KMQxVoNwr85GgKFO5Fn_rLu0w)>. Accessed on 24 April 2020.
- Näre, L.** 2013. Migrancy, gender and social class in domestic and social care labour in Italy – An intersectional analysis of demand. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(4): 601–623. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.745238>
- Rogozanu, C and Gabor, D.** 2020. Are western Europe's food supplies worth more than east European workers' health? *The Guardian*, 16 April. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/apr/16/western-europe-food-east-european-workers-coronavirus>>. Accessed on 21.4.2020>. Accessed on 23 April 2020.
- Roy, A.** 2020. The pandemic is a portal. *Financial Times*, 3 April. <<https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>>. Accessed on 21 April 2020.
- Widding Isaksen, L and Näre, L.** 2020. We are all affected, but not equally: Migrant domestic workers in pandemic times. *Discover Society*, 16 April. <<https://discoversociety.org/2020/04/16/we-are-all-affected-but-not-equally-migrant-domestic-workers-in-pandemic-times/>>. Accessed on 21 April 2020.

**How to cite this article:** Näre, L, Bendixsen, S and Holley, P. 2020. Notes on the Corona Crisis. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 10(2): pp. 1–4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.332>

**Submitted:** 27 April 2020    **Accepted:** 27 April 2020    **Published:** 28 May 2020

**Copyright:** © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.