



ADRU
Academy of the
Disaster Research Unit



SARS CoV 2 Monitoring Report

Week 18, April 27th – May 3rd 2020

Academy of the
Disaster Research Unit (ADRU)

Rationale

As part of a real time evaluation of the SARS CoV 2 pandemic (with focus on epidemiological, economical, societal, and cultural developments in Germany and Iran) the research team, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Martin Voss, is conducting a weekly monitoring of real time developments. Multiple national and international media outlets, research platforms and scientific and organisational guidelines, briefs and updates are screened on a daily basis to feed into this weekly outlet. The rationale behind this is to support the projects' network partners in Iran and Germany with a condensed overview of key developments, trends and events that are shaping the global, German and Iranian outbreak response and recovery. The selection of subjects are driven by 3 factors:

- relevance to network partners – based on regular bilateral and multilateral feedback/input
- the focus area of the real time evaluation (epidemiological trends, economic, societal and cultural effects, escalating risks and downstream effects, risk communication and vulnerabilities)
- global trends and developments as the pandemic evolves

The setup of these short briefs is structured by technical area, with country relevance and specificities included under each main headline. The chapters are precluded by pertinent general observations. This could be mainstream big ticket items or fringe subjects that are easily overlooked in the global flood of information. Some topics will be followed through their evolution in time while others may only appear once. While subjectively selected, the briefs are descriptive in nature and leave analysis and critical interpretation to the reader. Initially based on the research teams' perception of relevance, the content will gradually represent the importance of topics for network partners in both countries.

Keywords: pandemic, covid-19, health, epidemiology, data, science, treatment, trial, risk, escalating risks, vulnerability, global, , economy, society, culture, risk management

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General Observations April 27th – May 3rd 2020

European leaders have pledged allegiance to fight the virus. On Monday 4th of May a global [virtual pledging conference](#) will be held in which “the global cooperation platform aims to accelerate research, development, access and distribution of a Covid-19 vaccine and other treatments”, the leaders wrote, adding that it has “laid the foundation for a real international alliance to fight Covid-19”. Funding will be directed to health organisations such as CEPI, Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance, the Global Fund and Unitaid. “If we can develop a vaccine that is produced by the world, for the whole world, this will be a unique global public good of the 21st century,” the European leaders wrote. The leaders said the coronavirus crisis was “a defining moment for the global community”. “By rallying around science and solidarity today we will sow the seeds for greater unity tomorrow,” they concluded. “Guided by the sustainable development goals, we can redesign the power of community, society and global collaboration, to make sure that nobody is left behind. This is the world against Covid-19. And together we will win”¹.

Health

Treatment: the discussion around Remdesivir as possible treatment for COVID 19 continues. While a smaller scale study from [China](#)² indicates no improvement under the treatment of the drug the US has now conducted a study that allows [for hope](#). Early results from an international trial of 1,000 participants reveal the drug cut recovery time from a median of 15 days to 11 and was also linked to a better chance of survival³.

In the absence of a vaccine achieving **herd immunity** is one possible strategy for consideration in fending off a contagious disease. The concept is to ensure a certain percentage of a population is immune against the disease so that those immune do neither fall ill nor spread the disease further. Thus those without immunity have a lesser chance to get infected. The percentage required to stop a disease from spreading depends on how contagious an infection is. Usually 70% to 90% of a population needs immunity to achieve [herd immunity](#)⁴. Scientists at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School for Public Health warn that “herd immunity against COVID-19 will not be achieved at a population level in 2020”. Although more than 2.5 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported worldwide, studies suggest that (as of early April 2020) no more than 2-4% of any country’s population has been infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19). Even in hotspots like New York City that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, initial studies suggest that perhaps 15-21% of people have been exposed so far⁵.

¹ The Guardian (03.05.2020): European leaders join forces to combat Covid-19, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/european-leaders-join-forces-to-combat-covid-19>

² Boseley S. for The Guardian (23.04.2020): First trial for potential Covid-19 drug shows it has no effect, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/23/high-hopes-drug-for-covid-19-treatment-failed-in-full-trial>

³ Boseley S. for The Guardian (29.04.2020): Remdesivir: early findings on experimental coronavirus drug offer 'quite good news', retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/29/remdesivir-coronavirus-drug-experimental>

⁴ D’Souza G., Dowdy, D. (10.04.2020): What is Herd Immunity and How Can We Achieve It With COVID-19? retrieved from: <https://www.ihsph.edu/covid-19/articles/achieving-herd-immunity-with-covid19.html>

⁵ D’Souza G., Dowdy, D. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2020): Early Herd Immunity against COVID-19: A Dangerous Misconception, retrieved from: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/from-our-experts/early-herd-immunity-against-covid-19-a-dangerous-misconception>

Political, Economic, Social, Cultural Effects

The head of the OECD goes strong on the possibility of an inclusive [green deal](#) recovery. “As we move towards the next phase of the COVID-19 crisis in many countries, governments have a unique chance for a green and inclusive recovery that they must seize – a recovery that not only provides income and jobs, but also has broader well-being goals at its core, integrates strong climate and biodiversity action, and builds resilience.”⁶ Angel Guerres points out that the world is not prepared to deal with SARS CoV 2 nor is it prepared to cope with other looming disasters like climate change biodiversity collapse, life-shortening air pollution, and ocean acidification. In his opinion piece he identifies three dimensions that stand out to accelerate a fair, low-carbon recovery:

1. *Aligning the short-term emergency responses to the achievement of long-term economic, social and environmental objectives and international obligations (the Paris Agreement and the SDGs). This includes, in the short run, securing jobs while avoiding unconditional subsidies to polluting activities.*
2. *Preventing both lock-in of high-emissions activities and worsened well-being of those in the bottom 40% of the income distribution. COVID-19 has dramatically worsened the conditions of vulnerable groups, both in advanced and developing economies. The efforts to build an inclusive and sustainable future must prioritise a fair transition to a low-carbon economy.*
3. *Systematically integrating environmental and equity considerations into the economic recovery and stimulus process. Support to the most affected sectors and investment in infrastructure must pass the test for contributing to a low carbon economy going forward⁷.*

Companies are making money of sourcing COVID 19 positive blood samples to sell to tech firms in search for a treatment or vaccine. Margins are up to over 1000% of the “usual” price for samples. It is a shady business with networks and middleman who all [win](#) from this pandemic⁸.

This week’s weekly letter from Transparency International focusses on transparency in procuring vital medical equipment and supplies. Key statement is: “Fast and effective should not mean opaque and dirty”. The article highlights that already nepotistic examples of quick and dirty deals are coming to light but also outlines steps and examples on how a **centralised, public platform** listing how public money is being spent to tackle the pandemic would help increase accountability and deter those seeking to take criminal advantage of the crisis⁹. Falling into week 17 but relevant to the same subject is the [OECD statement](#) on bribery in the global response to the virus. The OECD Working Group on Bribery is going to examine the possible impact and consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on foreign bribery, as well as solutions to help countries strengthen their anti-bribery systems.

Vulnerabilities

The World Health Organization states that residents in care homes accounted for [up to half of all coronavirus deaths in Europe](#). Hans Kluge, the WHO’s regional director for Europe, said personal protective equipment and testing must be prioritised in care homes where deaths amounted to an

⁶ Gurría A. OECD 27.04.2020): An Inclusive, Green Recovery is Possible: The Time to Act is Now, retrieved from: <https://ccacoalition.org/en/blog/inclusive-green-recovery-possible-time-act-now>

⁷ ibid

⁸ Bradley J. (01.05.2020): Blood Samples, Vital for Antibody Tests, Sold at Exorbitant Rates, retrieved from: <https://www.ny-times.com/2020/05/01/world/europe/coronavirus-blood-samples.html>

⁹ Transparency International (01.05.2020): This week in corruption: Swift, smart and...clean, retrieved from: <https://voices.transparency.org/swift-smart-and-clean-b158c74fb8f7>



“unimaginable human tragedy”¹⁰. Despite the high proportion of deaths among older people, new research from scientists in Scotland challenged the idea that most of those who have died from coronavirus may have died soon of other health issues. Their study found that victims of the disease typically [died 12 years sooner](#) than expected¹¹. Meanwhile, an analysis by the Guardian revealed ethnic minorities in England are dying in [disproportionately high numbers](#) compared with white people¹².

The lockdowns taking place around the world are causing a multitude of risks, including a drop in uptake of routine [vaccinations](#). Doctors’ fear that a reduction in vaccinations risks outbreaks of whooping cough, measles, mumps and rubella in the future¹³. WHO and UNICEF have published a joint statement on the importance to continue routine immunization. Countries should be prepared [to vaccinate](#) those at higher risk and ensure everyone, including the most marginalized, will have equal access to a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available¹⁴.

The number of articles pointing at the growing existential fears in societies is steadily increasing. Uncertainty and being able to manage the great unknown is another phenomenon that is broadly discussed. A valuable contribution to the ongoing discussions is a Deutschlandfunk Interview with psychologist Stephan Grünewald, who explains how life’s existential realities (i.e. unemployment) are beginning to take precedence over the common good (i.e. health) and that there is a growing polarisation within society between those who perceive lockdown as hell over those who take it as a welcome slowing down¹⁵. WHO this week reformatted the [daily situation report](#) to improve accessibility for persons with visual impairment – of which one I obviously am as suddenly I find the document much easier to access, including the way overall and new cases are being reported¹⁶.

Risk Communication

Albeit scientific proof and far reaching agreement in the science community Trump continues to spread word that the virus was manufactured in a lab in [Wuhan](#) province, China¹⁷.

¹⁰ World Health Organisation (23.04.2020): Statement – Invest in the overlooked and unsung: build sustainable people-centred long-term care in the wake of COVID-19, retrieved from: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/regional-director/statements/statement-invest-in-the-overlooked-and-unsung-build-sustainable-people-centred-long-term-care-in-the-wake-of-covid-19>

¹¹ The Economist (02.05.2020): Would most covid-19 victims have died soon, without the virus? Retrieved from: <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/05/02/would-most-covid-19-victims-have-died-soon-without-the-virus>

¹² Barr C., Kommenda N., McIntyre N., Voce C. (22.05.2020): Ethnic minorities dying of Covid-19 at higher rate, analysis shows, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/22/racial-inequality-in-britain-found-a-risk-factor-for-covid-19>

¹³ Sample I. for The Guardian (26.04.2020): Missed vaccinations could lead to other fatal outbreaks, doctors warn, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/26/missed-vaccinations-could-lead-to-other-fatal-outbreaks-doctors-warn>

¹⁴ World Health Organisation (20.04.2020): WHO/UNICEF joint statement – Maintaining routine immunization services vital during the COVID-19 pandemic, retrieved from: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/statements/2020/whounicef-joint-statement-maintaining-routine-immunization-services-vital-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

¹⁵ Stephan Grünewald im Gespräch mit Rainer Brandes Deutschlandfunk (02.05.2020): Die Existenzangst vieler Menschen wird immer größer“ retrieved from: https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/coronakrise-die-existenzangst-vieler-menschen-wird-immer.694.de.html?dram:article_id=475886

¹⁶ World Health Organisation (03.05.2020): Situation report – 105 Coronavirus disease 2019, retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

¹⁷ Singh M., Davidson H., Borger J. for The Guardian (01.05.2020): Trump claims to have evidence coronavirus started in Chinese lab but offers no details, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/30/donald-trump-coronavirus-chinese-lab-claim>



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