Media Development
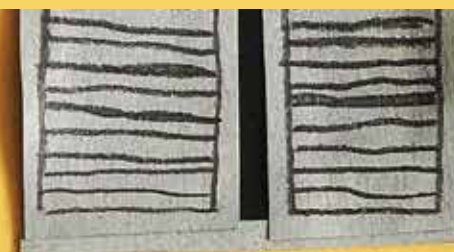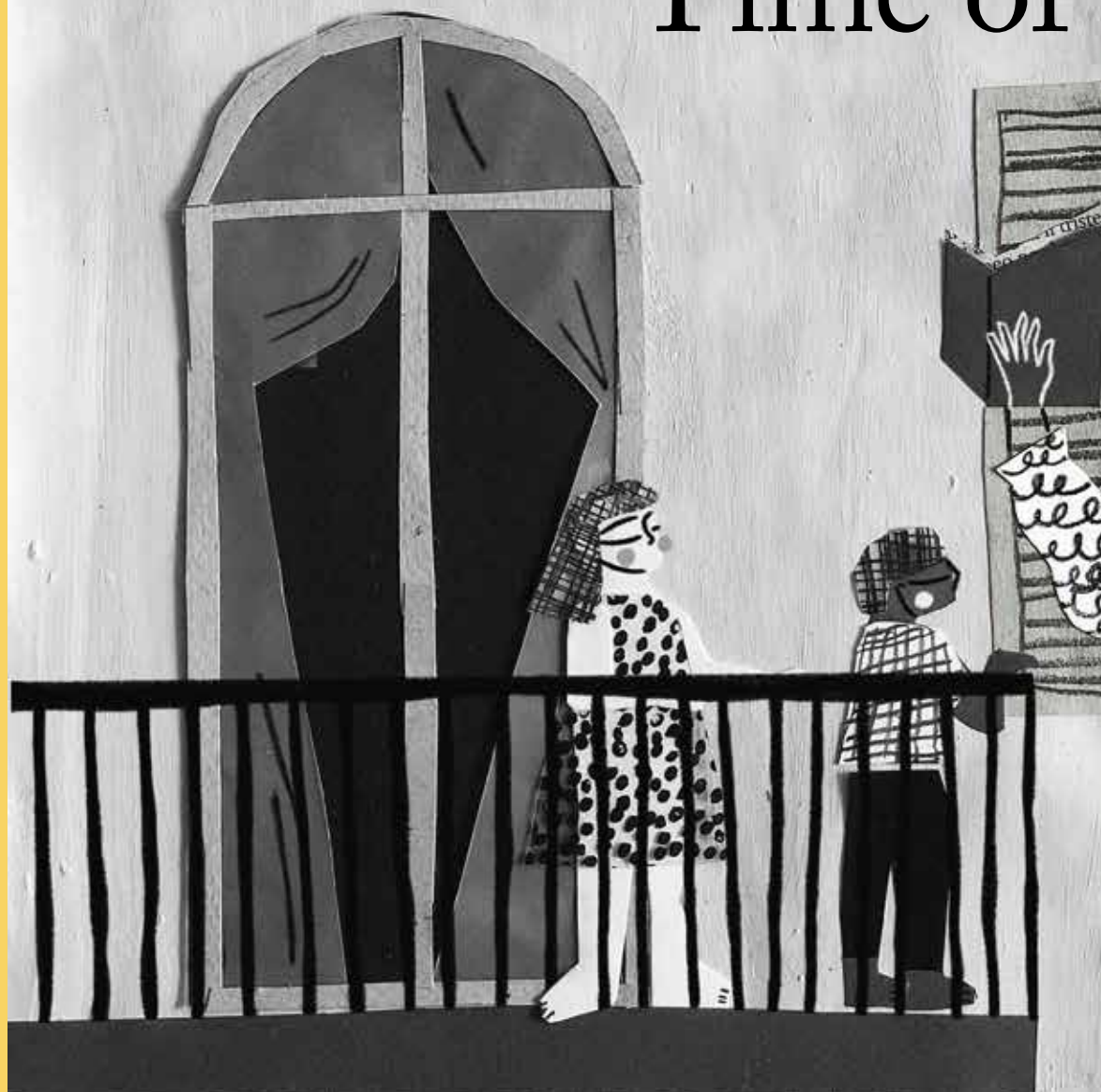
Communication in a
Time of Crisis

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EDITORIAL

Fifty-five years after the death of the French author Albert Camus, and at a time when Ebola was raging in West Africa, the British journalist Ed Vulliamy wrote a glowing tribute about one of the writer's best-known books first published in 1947. "Of all Camus' novels, none described man's confrontation – and cohabitation – with death so vividly and on such an epic scale as *La Peste*, translated as *The Plague*."[1]

When Covid-19 reared its ugly head in late 2019, it was no surprise to see many people turning to *The Plague* for inspiration about how to respond to the pandemic. Undoubtedly, in years to come, a great many books, plays, films, and works of art will take as their theme what we now recognize as a global trauma.

From a broader communications perspective, sustained efforts by public service media in many countries to provide accurate, trustworthy and life-saving information about Covid-19 had to contend with government confusion, ineptitude, and in some cases blatant denial. Mixed messages regularly appeared in the mass media together with rumours, distortions and lies on social media.

In contrast and in the global South, community media (especially radio) took the lead in supplying information that was more reliable. Development experts have long understood community media's edge when it comes to tackling misinformation and mistrust. Community media also have the ear of the people:

"To be useful, information must be tailored to the intended audience. It must respond to people's questions and concerns, not just give them instructions. And it must be clearly expressed using concepts, sentence structures and terminology that audiences are familiar with. Experience from previous disease outbreaks shows this is a key factor for communities' trust in and uptake of health guidance."[2]

Even a cursory search of the Internet reveals a plethora of information platforms, pamphlets, guidebooks, and research studies covering multiple angles and initiatives related to Covid-19 – an avalanche itself described by some as an "information pandemic". The double-edged nature of new information and communication technologies (NICTs) and social media, with their advantages and disadvantages, has become self-evident – especially because lives are at stake.

In 2019, Taiwan was ranked the ninth most technological and 13th most digitally competitive nation in the world. Its response to Covid-19 appears to have been exemplary, positively aided and abetted by NICTs:

"Bottom-up information sharing, public-private partnerships, 'hacktivism' (activism through the building of quick-and-dirty but effective proofs of concept for online public services), and participatory collective action have been central to the country's success in coordinating a consensual and transparent set of responses to the coronavirus. A recent report from the Stanford University School of Medicine documents 124 distinct interventions that Taiwan implemented with remarkable speed. Many of these interventions bubbled into the public sector through community initiatives, hackathons, and digital deliberation on the vTaiwan digital democracy platform, on which almost half the country's population participates. (The platform enables large-scale hacktivism, civic deliberation, and scaling up of initiatives in an orderly and largely consensual manner.) A decentralized community of participants used tools such as Slack and HackMD to refine successful projects."[3]

The technologies used to help combat the effects of Covid-19 – such as tracking and tracing – inevitably raised questions of privacy, social surveillance, and the risk of data manipulation by security services and corporate interests. In the context of the digital society,

none of these issues was new, but the pandemic exacerbated the sense of intrusion, loss of privacy, and state control.

The pandemic also burrowed its way much deeper into the human psyche than anyone might have expected. It fractured family and community. It negated social behaviour. It isolated. It made some people more selfish and others more aware. It highlighted failures in political and economic structures. But it also began to create a sense of resilience, togetherness, and survival.

These are the themes of this issue of *Media Development*. It's not all doom and gloom. A great deal of positive and creative thinking is emerging and there is every hope that the world will learn from it and be a better place.

As Mathilde Kpalla writes in her article:

"The hope is that when we come out of this crisis, there will be a new sense of responsibility on the part of each and everyone, a sudden awareness that excessive materialism has made so many people insensitive and blind to the values of living together, such as friendship, solidarity, honesty, justice and love. A materialism that led to excessive pressure on nature and brought increasing imbalances into our society."

There is a long way to go yet, but as Dr Rieux, the hero of Albert Camus' *The Plague*, remarks, "There's no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency. That's an idea which may make some people smile, but the only means of fighting a plague is – common decency." ■

Notes
1. "Albert Camus' The Plague: a story for our, and all, times". *The Guardian*, 5 January 2015.
2. "Do You Speak COVID-19?" Policy Brief (March 2020) Translators Without Borders
3. "How Civic Technology Can Help Stop a Pandemic: Taiwan's Initial Success Is a Model for the Rest of the World" by Jaron Lanier and E. Glen Weyl. *Foreign Affairs*, 20 March 2020.

Actions, consequences, remembrances: Reflections on the coronavirus pandemic

Chris Arthur

When I started to write this reflection on how – or whether – the coronavirus pandemic would change human behaviour, the first thing that came to mind was unexpected. I remembered war photographer Robert Capa's famous comment: "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough".

I am not a frontline medic dealing with Covid-19 cases. I don't look after the vulnerable elderly in a care home. I'm not involved in lab work studying the virus and looking for a vaccine. So far, the area in which I live has not been an infection hotspot. Only a few of my friends, family, and acquaintances have fallen ill to date; fewer have died as a result of this disease.

Of course I'm glad to have been so fortunate. But it also makes me wonder if anything I write about this topic may be invalidated because it fails to meet the literary equivalent of Capa's criterion of quality. In other words, will my reflections lack focus, clarity, precision because I've not been close enough to the crisis for my writing to catch its significance properly?

In the circumstances, it seems best to start by making clear the perspective from which I'm writing – namely one that's been relatively insulated in terms of experiencing at first hand the pain and devastation this virus has brought to so many millions of people. Though it may cast

doubt on my competence as an expert witness, this is a perspective I very much wish to maintain.

Like everyone, I've been affected – lockdown, social distancing, new rules of interaction, new constraints, anxiety about falling ill myself or seeing those I love succumbing. Covid-19 has taken the life of one family member, leaving others to grieve in isolation, deprived of the physical contact that makes bereavement more bearable. The disease has disrupted the lives of those I care about and visited devastating economic consequences on all of us. Employment has been ruptured. Ordinary pleasures that we once took for granted have been suspended, changed, maybe lost forever. Carefully laid plans for education, travel, work have been derailed. Personal relationships have suffered as friends and colleagues shy away from contact. But I count myself incredibly fortunate nonetheless. Compared to many I've been lucky.

It would be reassuring to be able to state plainly what the main consequences of the coronavirus crisis are. Providing a systematic list of its outcomes in order of their seriousness, identifying the ways in which it has and will affect us, both as individuals and as members of larger groupings – family, neighbourhood, nation, species – would give a measure of comfort as to our ability to understand, control, and recover from this disease. But one of the most unsettling aspects of the pandemic has been the way in which it generates uncertainties, raising many hard-to-answer questions. What is it safe to do? Who is it safe to see, to touch? Where will the next cluster of infection fall? How will jobs, income, travel be affected in the long-term? How many lives will Covid-19 claim in the end? Why are some people so much more susceptible than others? Are we close to finding a vaccine? Will it be safe? What steps can be taken to slow transmission? In terms of things getting back to normal, is it more realistic to think of months, or years, or never? What will a post-coronavirus world look like?

As I write this essay, the pandemic is still raging. Much as I'd like to offer definite answers, clearly map its course and consequences, assess with certainty its impact on us, the nature of the phenomenon and the point in its unfolding that it's reached means that any such efforts would be highly provisional, underlain by all the unpredictability of whatever's going to happen next. It may be years before we can properly gauge effects. We're faced with an enormous array of problems. How will mask-wearing affect the emotional development of young children? What mental health issues will lockdown's confinement create? Can schools and universities successfully migrate their operations online, or will the learning of the Covid-19 generations be compromised? How will the arts recover? Will environmental concerns be listened to or side-lined as nations struggle to restore their economies? How will the constraints on close physical contact affect the making of new relationships? Will the increased virtual interaction that our digital technologies facilitate offer new avenues of closeness, even intimacy, or make us feel more isolated?

Rather than formulating necessarily speculative hypotheses that address the situation as a whole or any of its manifold specific issues, I want to pinpoint some of the ways in which the coronavirus crisis has so far affected me. I've felt its impact variously, but four areas stand out as being more than just idiosyncratic tropes that apply only to my situation. These four areas feel like straws in the wind that identify strong currents of influence and the direction in which they may take us. Far from introducing anything novel, they all concern things I was – or should have been – aware of already.

1. Inequality

Through news, social media, and the informed imagination – anchored by direct observation of what's happening around me in the streets and shops – it's clear that people's experience of the virus is enormously varied and that this variation is closely tied to existing inequalities. Individual circumstances make for exceptions to every rule, but, in the main, wealth cushions the impact of coronavirus, poverty makes it worse. A single parent in an inner city high-rise with no

savings, no job, little if any social support, who's reliant on benefits and public transport, will have a very different lockdown experience from that of a professional couple who can continue their highly paid jobs at home, where home is a large detached house with garden in a pleasant suburb. An Indian migrant worker in Kolkata who falls ill with Covid-19 as they try to get back to their home village will face hardships unknown to a Canadian banker in Vancouver afflicted with the same illness. Seen more clearly, as a day-to-day reality, the fact of inequality feels increasingly unfair and intolerable.

2. Nature

With employment suspended, social interaction limited, travel curtailed, and shopping made occasional and solitary, I've found myself – like many others – walking more, cycling more, doing more gardening. Being outside in the natural world has made me more appreciative both of its beauty and its potency as a source of refreshment and solace. But it's also rekindled an awareness of how routinely we abuse it. The absence of traffic and ambient background noise has made the delight of birdsong more obvious. The slower pace of non-motorized locomotion means that I've taken more notice of the trees and flowers, the animals and insects that share my world. Noticing such things emphasizes the need to cherish and protect them.

3. Vulnerabilities

The fact that everyone is susceptible to this disease, that anyone can become infected and that, for some, their infection will be serious if not life-threatening, has highlighted the fundamental vulnerabilities we all share. In the midst of ordinary health and wellbeing, it's easy to forget that we are mortal creatures, our lives lived always alongside the threats of illness, accident, age, and death. Living in the shadow of Covid-19 brings daily into the spotlight of attention those uncomfortable aspects of life we often prefer not to dwell on. These aspects are nicely summed up in a Buddhist teaching that I've found coming

back to mind repeatedly. The teaching is known as "The Five Remembrances". The first four of these state that:

* I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old.
* I am of the nature to have ill-health. There is no way to escape having ill-health.
* I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death.
* All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.

4. Reliance on others

The pandemic has caused the rhythms of ordinary life to be suspended. People have been encouraged to stay at home. Whilst this has had the potential to foster a sense of isolation – or entrapment – it's also led to a realization of the extent to which we're reliant on others. How would we live without key workers in farming, transport, shops, banks, post offices? Postal and other deliveries and refuse collection have started to appear in a new light. Those in the caring professions – whether in hospitals, care homes, or in the community – now seem quietly heroic. It's clear humans are a social species. Even as it isolates us the virus emphasizes the extent to which we're interdependent. It fosters recognition of the value of relationships that were previously unnoticed or taken for granted.

Clearly these four areas of coronavirus's impact don't involve anything I've not encountered before. The unfairness of inequality, the beauty and fragility of the natural world, human vulnerabilities, and our reliance on other people – these are all things that were, or should have been, clearly evident already. What's new is the way in which I've come to realize them so much more insistently over the course of the last few months. I suspect I'm by no means alone in this newfound realization of the obvious.

Will this heightened awareness of these basic features of our world change the way in which we live in it? That's hard to say. The fact that

they're already part of our experience yet have often had little impact on our behaviour gives little ground for optimism; the fact that they're so potently resurgent now suggests that maybe, just maybe, we'll find them harder to ignore. If they remain in the foreground of the mind, perhaps it will make for a kinder, more equitable, environmentally responsible and reflective mode of living. If our consciousness returns to being dimmed and blurred by pre-coronavirus habits of living, this change in the tempo of the psyche will no doubt be forgotten and the metronome of materialism and consumption will make us its galley slaves again. Perhaps we are standing at a kind of crossroads of the spirit. Our choice of which direction to take will have momentous consequences.

Robert Capa's advice may hold for taking war photographs. His equation of proximity and quality has a convincing ring to it. Being there, in the thick of the action, up close and personal seems like a guarantor of authenticity. But is this always the best perspective from which to view things? Sometimes we need to stand back to get a better picture, pause before reaching a conclusion, wait until the dust of the present settles. Not surprisingly, given its impact on the world, the coronavirus pandemic has generated a massive amount of commentary and analysis. There have been numerous think-pieces like this one, articles, scientific papers, TV and radio programmes, blogs, not to mention countless personal exchanges via social media and email. No doubt this will soon be joined by a raft of books.

Hopefully this torrent of communication will not only help us to see clearly the way the pandemic has affected us and how best to counter it, but also how it offers an opportunity to rethink and reform the way we're living. Partly because Capa's dictum has been in my mind, and partly because issues of closeness and distance are so central to controlling transmission of the virus, I hope that any reflective process will include a kind of philosophy of proximities. At what distance should we stand from each other, from nature, from the fundamental truths that define our existence, from the needy who are always with us?

The fifth of "The Five Remembrances" states that:

* My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground on which I stand.

The actions of which coronavirus is a consequence are still a matter of debate. It's hard to judge the extent to which it's simply a natural phenomenon and the extent to which – in its spread if not its origin – it's something caused, or exacerbated, by the way humans have acted. In terms of the control of its transmission, the actions of individuals are of paramount importance. All of us now have a duty to act in certain ways and not to act in others. Perhaps this newfound focus on individual responsibility will make us more mindful of the impact of our actions; perhaps the common ground on which all of us stand, and on which all of Earth's creatures depend, will in future be treated with the respect it warrants. ∎

Note
Translation of the Five Remembrances by Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Buddhist Teaching*, Parallax, Berkeley: 1998, p.116.

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Covid-19, social exclusion and digital inclusion

Philip Lee

A paradox was evident during the coronavirus pandemic. People turned to digital technologies to be in communication and yet felt increasingly out of communication. Self-isolating people became distanced from the socio-cultural environment in which they were accustomed to live and it began to appear alien. To adapt the well-known saying from L. P. Hartley's novel The Go-Between *(1953), the present became a foreign country, where they did things differently.*

Media specialist Michael Traber once described a prison culture of public communication, illustrating it with a parable:

"Try to imagine yourself as an inmate in a prison. In fact you have been in prison all your life. You were born there and grew up there. You live there with many other prisoners. But neither they nor yourself really know why you are there.

You catch glimpses of the outside world, and you wonder what it is like out there. But the fact that you really don't know does not worry you excessively. Because you consider the state of being a prisoner as normal, the prison your natural habitat. As prisoners, you don't have newspapers or radio and television sets. But there is an intercom system in your prison. The governor tells you everything that's going on outside. He should know; he is well informed.

Occasionally new prisoners join you, usually for a short time. They tell you the strangest tales of what is happening outside, stories which confuse you. You are glad when they leave. Then you appreciate all the more the reassuring voice of the prison governor over the intercom.

This worldview from prison is a metaphor of our news culture. We see and hear very little of what is really going on in the world, and what we see and hear are unconnected fragments of an often distorted reality. Again, the real tragedy of this situation is that we consider it normal, that, like prisoners, we trust the media's intercom system."[1]

Surrounding the bubble of news and today's social media is the habitat of community, bounded by upbringing, education, language, culture, and social mores. It offers security, stability, and the psychological comfort of shared values.

The anthropologist Edith Turner, elaborating on the work of her partner Victor Turner, has written about *communitas*: the sense felt by a group of people when their life together takes on full meaning:

"Communitas comes through the readiness of the people – perhaps from necessity – to rid themselves of their concern for status and dependence on structures, and see their fellows as they are… Many circumstances can produce communitas. It often comes in the direst moments of the life of a person or society."[2]

The coronavirus pandemic has clearly created a sense of *communitas* at different levels: the local and the response of neighbours to people in need; the national and the collective response of health and social workers; the global and increased recognition of a common humanity whose sufferings are closely tied to – exacerbated by – political and economic systems. What emerged was a certain sense of global solidarity, even while people, communities, and nations struggled to overcome structural deficits and

political inertia.

At the same time, the very sense of *communitas* was challenged by physical distancing both immediate (family, friends, neighbours) and figurative (fragmented nations and a global village made distant by travel restrictions). While physical distancing was relatively easy in so-called developed nations, in countries of the global South, where conditions are radically different, problems became apparent. For example, in many rural contexts water scarcity meant that basic hygiene such as frequent washing of hands was impossible.

Building more inclusive economies and societies

The world may still be a global village, but barriers have now been erected that it will take time to remove. Paradoxically, separation and isolation, which deny a primordial need for human warmth and touch, have also improved our view of the "other", the "outsider", and our sense of human compassion. Many have been struck by the words of UN secretary general António Guterres:

"We simply cannot return to where we were before Covid-19 struck, with societies unnecessarily vulnerable to crisis. The pandemic has reminded us, in the starkest way possible, of the price we pay for weaknesses in health systems, social protections and public services. It has underscored and exacerbated inequalities, above all gender inequity, laying bare the way in which the formal economy has been sustained on the back of invisible and unpaid care labour. It has highlighted ongoing human rights challenges, including stigma and violence against women.

Now is the time to redouble our efforts to build more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. The recovery must lead to a differ-

ent economy."[3]

Guterres quite rightly calls for greater inclusivity in political and social systems that are able to respond more swiftly and adequately to today's challenges. The coronavirus pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities while creating deep suspicion and mistrust. Where did it come from? How might it have been prevented? Why were measures not taken sooner to counter its spread? These legitimate questions were aggravated by xenophobia, racism, denial by national leaders, and once again by the scandal of fake news spread by social media.

Annie Game, Executive Director of IFEX, the global network of organisations promoting and defending freedom of expression, commented:

"Despite efforts to provide timely fact-checking and some form of responsible content moderation, it is much easier to spread misinformation than to counter it. The lie goes viral; the correction generally does not. The problem is exacerbated by some world leaders who are exploiting this crisis and the elevated platform it gives them to ramp up their rhetoric vilifying the media – sowing confusion and distrust among people already reeling from the pandemic and hungry for answers."

What Michael Traber called the ideological prison of public communication – to which must be added the technological prism of social media – worked against the circulation of trustworthy information and knowledge that might have saved lives. In addition, in a number of countries, e.g. China, Iran, and Thailand, governments failed to uphold people's right to freedom of expression, vilifying and taking action against journalists and healthcare workers. This ultimately limited effective communication about the onset of the disease and undermined trust. In response, Human Rights Watch made the following recommendations:

* Governments should fully respect the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, and only restrict them as international standards permit.
* Governments should ensure that the information they provide to the public regarding Covid-19 is accurate, timely, and consistent with human rights principles. This is important for addressing false and misleading information.
* All information about Covid-19 should be accessible and available in multiple languages, including for those with low or no literacy. This should include qualified sign language interpretation for televised announcements; websites that are accessible to people with vision, hearing, learning, and other disabilities; and telephone-based services that have text capabilities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Communications should utilize plain language to maximize understanding. Age appropriate information should be provided to children to help them take steps to protect themselves.
* Health data is particularly sensitive, and the publication of information online can pose a significant risk to affected persons and in particular people who are already in positions of vulnerability or marginalization in society. Rights-based legal safeguards should govern the appropriate use and handling of personal health data.
* Reliable and unfettered access to the internet should be maintained and steps should be taken to ensure internet access be available to people with low incomes.

Social media platforms change tack

US-based social media platforms, in stark contrast to how they have dealt with misinformation in the past, competed to be responsible and reliable sources of information about the coronavirus. Yet misinformation still continued to mutate and spread. Research carried out by Oxford's Reuters Institute looked at the spread of 225 false or misleading claims about coronavirus and discovered

that 88% of the claims appeared on social media platforms, compared with 9% on television or 8% in news outlets. A key finding was:

"In terms of formats, most (59%) of the misinformation in our sample involves various forms of reconfiguration, where existing and often true information is spun, twisted, recontextualised, or reworked. Less misinformation (38%) was completely fabricated."

A separate survey by the Pew Research Center, "Nearly three-in-ten Americans believe Covid-19 was made in a lab", said that, "About half of U.S. adults (48%) report having come across at least some news and information about Covid-19 that seemed completely made up, with 12% saying they have seen a lot of it and 35% saying they have seen some."

In April 2020, journalists wrote an open letter titled "Rupert Murdoch, Fox News' Covid-19 misinformation is a danger to public health" (*The Guardian*, 20 April 2020) calling on them to ensure that the information they deliver is based on scientific facts:

"The basic purpose of news organizations is to discover and tell the truth. This is especially necessary, and obvious, amid a public health crisis. Television bears a particular responsibility because even more millions than usual look there for reliable information. Inexcusably, Fox News has violated elementary canons of journalism. In so doing, it has contributed to the spread of a grave pandemic."

However, elsewhere Covid-19 brought out the very best in public service media. Many are the television and radio stations and newspapers that focused in depth on how institutions and individuals were dealing and coping with the pandemic. It was not solely a matter of health advice and statistics. Many also focused on the psychological impact on people and communities unable to care for each other, their loved ones, and those who succumbed to the virus.

The *Financial Times* urged that the burden

of the pandemic should be shared fairly. Reviewing moral codes held by religious traditions, the newspaper (11 April 2020) cited Rabbi Hillel ("That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow"), Jesus Christ ("Love your enemies"), and Immanuel Kant ("Act according to the maxim that you would wish all rational people to follow"). Recognizing that the threats which unite us also divide us – rich and poor, young and old – the editors concluded:

"Within all the moral traditions that insist upon the universal nature of our obligations to one another, the answer seems quite clear: we should act as if we really believed that 'we are all in this together'. Those with the means to do so must help everybody else cope with the virus and with the costs of coping with it, not only today, but in future."

It will be impossible to heal the divisions and to shape a future in solidarity *without* communication. The same digital platforms that today reinforce rumour, misinformation, and fake news can also provide what the historian Simon Schama calls "the oxygen of sociability".[4] They can contribute to greater understanding between people, to establishing new values, and to building a new sense of trust. But they will have to be monitored and regulated by independently appointed and financed bodies acting within appropriate legislation, and by civil society, which has a vested interest in genuinely democratic communication systems and in the public accountability of Big Tech.

Only strict oversight can guarantee a digital future in which people and communities are able to communicate with all the imagination and creativity that make them human. Only then will people gain a sense of *communitas* that is truly inclusive. ▪

Notes
1. Traber, Michael (1995). "Beyond patriotism: Escaping the ideological prison". In *Javnost*, Vol. 2 No. 2.
2. Turner, Edith (2012). *Communitas. The Anthropology of Collective Joy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
3. "Recovery from the coronavirus crisis must lead to a better

world", *The Guardian*, 2 April 2020.
4. "In a sickly time". *FTWeekend*, 11 April 2020.

Philip Lee is General Secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and Editor of its international journal Media Development. His publications include T*he Democratization of Communication* (ed.) (1995), *Requiem: Here's Another Fine Mass You've Gotten Me Into* (2001); *Many Voices, One Vision: The Right to Communicate in Practice* (ed.) (2004); *Communicating Peace: Entertaining Angels Unawares* (ed.) (2008); Pu*blic Memory, Public Media, and the Politics of Justice* (ed. with Pradip N. Thomas) (2012); and *Expanding Shrinking Communication Spaces* (ed. with Lorenzo Vargas) (2020).

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Advocating a gender-equal post-pandemic world

Marites N. Sison

A sampling of news headlines, five months after the WHO declared Covid–19 a pandemic, shows media and institutions finally catching up to the gender dimensions of the novel coronavirus: Covid–19 crisis could set women back decades, experts fear; Why Covid–19 is a disaster for gender equality; Decades of progress on gender equality in the workplace at risk of vanishing; Women essential in fight against pandemic.

News media's initial preoccupation with the five journalistic Ws – Who, What, When, Where, and Why – of the disease was understandable. The global health and economic crisis spawned by the virus was unlike anything most of us had ever experienced before, except, perhaps, those who lived through the global influenza pandemic of 1957-58.

The first accounts of how the novel coronavirus affects men and women differently focused mainly on medical outcomes. Initial studies that emerged from China's Hubei province, where Covid-19 cases were first reported, noted that the virus appeared to be more fatal in men than women.

By early March 2020, the medical journal *Lancet* was among the first to call out the "concerning" absence of policies and public health efforts that address "the gendered impacts" of the disease: "We are not aware of any gender analysis of the outbreak by global health institutions or governments in affected countries or in preparedness phases," said a March 6 article authored by Claire Wenham, Julia Smith, and Rosemary Morgan, on behalf of the Gender and Covid-19 Working Group.

Analysing how biology and gender norms are affecting the burden of Covid-19 "is a fundamental step to understanding the primary and secondary effects of a health emergency on different individuals and communities, and for creating effective, equitable policies and interventions," they said.

They argued that it was not enough to account for immunological differences between the sexes, citing that data from China's State Council Information Office – which showed that more than 90% of health-care workers in Hubei province are women – emphasized "the gendered nature of the health workforce and the risk that predominantly female health workers incur."

School closures to stem Covid-19 transmission in China, Hong Kong, Italy, and South Korea – the first countries where the virus spread – were also bound to have "a differential effect on women, who provide most of the informal care within families, with the consequence of limiting their work and economic opportunities," they said.

Lockdowns would pose "financial challenges and uncertainty for mostly female foreign domestic workers, many of whom travel in Southeast Asia between the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Singapore," they said. Gendered implications of quarantine must also be considered, given differences in women and men's physical, cultural, security and sanitary needs, they added.

The authors also wondered why women "have not been fully incorporated into global health security surveillance, detection and prevention mechanism," given their frequent frontline interactions with communities.

Women on the frontlines

Since many governments, institutions and people likely did not anticipate the extent to which the

virus would upend the world as we know it, many failed to optimize what would have been an opportune time – International Women's Day on March 8 – to call attention to the impacts of Covid-19 on women.

Except for some media, like BBC World, which published a story about how the "virus upheaval is hitting women in Asia" and the American news website, Axios, which reported a rise in domestic violence cases in China during the quarantine, most stories that day focused on commemorative rallies and how they were scaled back because of Covid-19.

The Axios article was an offshoot of a story published March 2 by an online Chinese news site, Sixth Tone, which reported a surge in domestic violence cases in February, weeks after several cities were put on lockdown to contain outbreaks. The BBC World article cited similar concerns raised by The Lancet – the double burden of longer work shifts and home care, the physical and emotional toll exacted on women frontline workers, and the precarious work status of migrant domestic helpers. It also named domestic violence and Covid-19's long-term economic impact on women as major concerns. "The hashtag #AntiDomesticViolenceDuringEpidemic has been discussed more than 3,000 times on the Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo," it noted.

Days after the WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic on March 11, more independent groups, NGOs and institutions began sounding the alarm about the "high risk" roles played by women during the pandemic, citing estimates that between 70 to 77% of the world's healthcare workers are women; and 83% of the social care workforce. Women, they declared, are on the frontlines of the fight against Covid-19.

A week later, The Atlantic declared Covid-19 "a disaster for feminism," and decried "the West's failure to learn from history." Academics who studied the Ebola crisis, and past outbreaks like SARS, swine flu, and bird flu had found that "they had deep, long-lasting effects on gender equality," it noted. And yet, the article lament-

ed, these weren't informing Covid-19 responses worldwide.

The Lancet piece had underscored the same thing earlier, noting that during the 2014 to 2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, women were "more likely to be infected by the virus, given their predominant roles as caregivers within families and as frontline healthcare workers."

Past outbreaks had also demonstrated that women were "less likely than men to have power in decision-making around the outbreak, and their needs were largely unmet," it stressed.

Lessons that should have been learned during past outbreaks clearly weren't practiced. Similar to what happened during the 2015 to 2016 Zika virus epidemic, critical resources and attention were diverted away from women's reproductive and sexual health in many countries during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Violence Against Women (VAW): "A shadow pandemic"

On March 26, UN Women Deputy Executive Director Anita Bhatia lamented that "while some voices have flagged the impacts on women, gender concerns are not yet shaping the decisions that mainly male leaders are making."

It is "striking how many of the key decision-makers in the process of designing and executing the pandemic response are men," she added. While there were "a few shining examples of women Heads of State or Government, women are conspicuous by their absence in decision-making fora in this pandemic." Statistics from Women in Global Health bear this out; for example, while 70% of the global health workforce fighting on the frontlines of the pandemic are women, only 20% of the WHO emergency committee on Covid-19 are women. Meanwhile, women leaders – who make up less than 7% of the world's leaders – have won praise for how they managed the pandemic in their own countries.

WHO would later issue guidelines on Covid-19 and violence against women (VAW), noting that "health workers, the majority of

whom are women in many settings, may be at risk for violence in their homes or in the workplace." VAW, said the WHO, "is a serious problem that may be exacerbated when health systems are under stress."

More Western media began paying attention as activists reported an uptick in domestic violence cases after lockdowns were imposed and governments urged people to "stay home, save lives."

On April 6, UN Women issued a statement calling violence against women and girls "a shadow pandemic." Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, said domestic shelters and helplines around the world were reporting higher calls for help as more countries went on lockdown. "Helplines in Singapore and Cyprus have registered an increase in calls by more than 30%," she said. "In Australia, 40% of frontline workers in a New South Wales survey reported increased requests for help with violence that was escalating in intensity."

Women's rights activists and civil society organizations in Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States also flagged a "heightened demand for emergency shelter" for women and children fleeing domestic violence, said Mlambo-Ngcuka. Domestic violence cases – already at an alarming rate before the pandemic – are reported to have increased by 20% as people were trapped at home with their abuser during the lockdown.

The rise in domestic violence during the pandemic was not surprising, according to experts. "Times of economic uncertainty, civil unrest and disaster are linked to a myriad of risk factors for increased violence against women and children," said a paper published by the Center for Global Development. "Pandemics are no exception." The 2008 global financial crisis also saw a jump in domestic violence cases, it noted.

And yet, some governments were slow to respond. In Mexico, where violence against women and children are not uncommon, "a network of shelters in the country reported an 80% increase in the number of distress calls," according to human rights activists. However, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador denied this, as well as his own interior secretary's report that the first six months of 2020 had seen a 46% increase in emergency distress calls reporting domestic violence.

"The biggest setback in gender equality for a generation"

The economic fallout triggered by Covid-19 has severe implications for gender equality, experts warned. "Data shows that both women and men are experiencing downward changes in the availability of economic resources, but not equally," according to a rapid assessment survey conducted by UN Women with governments and mobile network operators in 11 Asia-Pacific countries. "Most sources of income have decreased for at least 50% of the population. The gender gaps in income reductions are largest in family businesses, remittances, properties and savings, with women at a disadvantage."

Women, regardless of whether they were employed in the formal or informal sector, suffered the largest drops in income from paid jobs (65% compared to 56% of men), the study said. They also had a larger share of reduction in paid hours (50% compared to 35% of men).

The pandemic had a disproportionate negative impact on women because among the hardest hit were the restaurant, retail, hospitality, and tourism industries, "service occupations with high female employment shares," said a preliminary research by the National Bureau of Economic Research in the U.S.

"From an economic perspective, low-paid, young, working-class women are known to be hit the hardest," Natasha Mudhar, global chief executive of The World We Want, an enterprise working to accelerate the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, told the BBC. This inequality is compounded by a gender pay gap, said Mudhar.

The year 2020 was supposed to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, described by UN Women

as "the most visionary agenda for women's rights and empowerment everywhere." Instead of marking gender equality gains, experts are now lamenting big losses because of Covid-19.

"We are experiencing the biggest setback in gender equality for a generation," writes Sofia Sprechmann, secretary-general of the humanitarian agency Care International, in an article published by the World Economic Forum. "This pandemic is having a deep impact on women and is throwing away decades of hard-won battles both in terms of gender equality and women's economic rights." She cites the impact on women entrepreneurs. "In Sri Lanka, 90% say their income has decreased and their supply chains are disrupted. In Guatemala, 96% do not have enough money to buy basic food items, and the same amount say the crisis has increased unemployment in their community," said Sprechmann. "Many of these women are now truly on a cliff edge, at risk of hurtling right back into poverty. A devastating prospect after they've worked so hard to succeed."

Again, many governments were slow on the uptake. Even Canada, whose government is regarded as more committed than most to gender equality, is still figuring out how it can help women get back on their feet.

The Prosperity Project, a new national non-profit organization created in the middle of the pandemic by 62 female leaders across Canada, said it had anticipated Covid-19's disproportionate impact on women and has been investing in research to develop programs "to maintain women's successful participation the economy." Funding for this research came from members. "Ironically, there has been no response from government yet," it said in August.

Media and Covid-19

With regard to the role that media has played during the pandemic, most news outlets have been lauded for fulfilling the essential task of providing the public with accurate and timely information. But they have also been called out for a lack of stories about the impact of Covid-19 on women and for not featuring women as experts and frontline actors. "Where are the women experts on Covid-19? Mostly missing," lamented an article in the *British Medical Journal,* which observed that men were dominating public and academic discourse about Covid-19 and decisions about how to handle the pandemic. It cited a University of London study which found "2.7 male experts to every woman expert interviewed on six UK flagship news programmes" between February and March.

While there is so much that can be written about the pandemic, Ed Wasserman, dean of UC Berkeley's Graduate School for Journalism, expressed concern that because today's newsrooms have been hobbled by layoffs, the focus has been on breaking news rather than in-depth coverage. "You're looking at a news media complex that's probably 40% weaker than it was a generation ago, in terms of bodies it can put in the field to tackle a difficult story," said Wasserman.

In some cases, community media, particularly women's radio, have stepped in to fill the gap. *Mama FM,* a women-focused radio station serving the underprivileged in Uganda, changed its programming to focus on the Covid-19 pandemic. In Ukraine, *Hromadske Radio,* a non-profit radio station created new programs that focused specifically on women's issues such as domestic violence and child care.

Women and post-Covid-19 recovery

As governments and institutions look towards post-Covid rebuilding, there are calls not only to mitigate the pandemic's devastating impact on women, but to put them at the front and centre of continuing response, as well as recovery efforts.

Women are key to getting their communities back on their feet, said Sofia Sprechmann. "Women entrepreneurs have overcome so many barriers to get their businesses thriving and to overcome poverty. And it is precisely these women that hold the power to face the gigantic task ahead," she said. "We've seen it with the Ebola crisis, with women from war-torn countries, and we know we will see it after this pandemic.

Women can and will elevate their communities back out of poverty, rebuilding what they have lost, and they urgently need our support and help."

A UN policy brief on the impact of Covid-19 and women noted that the social and economic impacts of the pandemic "have created a global crisis unparalleled in the history of the United Nations – and one which requires a whole-of-society response to match its sheer scale and complexity."

Any response, whether at the local, national or international level, "will be significantly weakened if it does not factor in the ways in which inequalities have made all of us more vulnerable to the impacts of the crisis. Or, if we choose to simply repeat past policies and fail to use this moment to rebuild more equal, inclusive and resilient societies," it added.

Civil society and grassroots organizations must seize this opportunity to help build a post-pandemic world that is gender-equal. As an initial step, they can pressure their own governments, businesses, and national and international institutions to apply a gender lens to continuing response and recovery efforts, offer their own solutions and demand seats at the table. ∎

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Covid-19 : Le déchainement des crises

KPALLA Mathilde

Le 11 mars 2020, l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé (OMS) déclarait de pandémie la maladie de trouble respiratoire à coronavirus, Covid–19 Déjà le 06 mars 2020, le Togo a déclaré son 1ᵉʳ cas de contamination et le 28 mars, son premier décès, à l'instar de plusieurs autres pays africains et du monde entier. Toute la planète se retrouve ainsi face à une crise sanitaire dont les effets pervers ont rapidement affecté tous les secteurs de la vie plongeant tous les pays dans des lendemains sans précédent, pleins d'incertitudes.

La crise sanitaire à corona virus s'installe et embrase tous les pays, et il faut prendre des dispositions pour y faire face. Dans cette lutte contre la pandémie, tous les pays ne disposent pas des mêmes armes : certains pays sont plus démunis que d'autres. La précarité des systèmes de santé, la fragilité des infrastructures, le niveau de vie très faible et la vulnérabilité des populations sont autant de facteurs défavorables surtout pour les Etats africains qui semblent presque tous logés à la même enseigne. Et comme si cela ne suffisait pas, les mesures barrières décrétées par l'OMS comme le meilleur remède, à défaut de vaccin, ont complètement bouleversé les habitudes du vécu quotidien avec les contraintes du confinement et de fermeture des frontières.

Le semblant du vivre en communauté, qui donnait encore un peu d'humanité à ce monde devenu individualiste égoïste et capitaliste, s'est effrité, renforçant l'isolement, le repli sur soi….

L'interdiction de rassemblements, la quarantaine pour les cas suspects… Bref, la distanciation, un concept incompatible avec la culture africaine, où l'on va saluer et aider les malades ou enterrer ses défunts avec faste, a façonné un nouveau mode de vie dans laquelle chacun perd ses repères. Donc, de crise sanitaire, la pandémie du Covid-19 a basculé nos sociétés dans une crise sociétale. Ecoles fermées, marchés et sites de divertissement clos, lieux de cultes sous scellés, visites familiales sous contrôle…. la société cherche vainement à se réinventer.

Confinés à la maison, les parents se confrontent à des enfants à gérer seuls. Et les failles de l'éducation apparaissent. La responsabilité ou l'irresponsabilité des uns et des autres se dévoile.

A la crise éducationnelle, s'en suit la baisse des activités économiques, Le monde vit au ralenti : frontières terrestres et aériennes sont fermées l'emploi est au ralenti. La crise économique se profile avec la réduction des échanges commerciaux et la baisse des productions. Du coup, la pénurie des biens de consommation attise la spéculation, fragilisant davantage les plus démunis acculés dans leurs derniers retranchements. Conséquences du capitalisme néolibéral, dans des sociétés encore fragiles !

Désorienté, tout le monde « se met à parler », proférant plus des contre-vérités, comme pour conjurer le mauvais sort. Les professionnels des médias et de la communication n'ont jamais mis autant d'énergie à lutter contre la désinformation et à sensibiliser, professant à longueur de journée le vrai de l'ivraie. La communication n'a jamais été autant sollicitée. Crise de l'information, crise communicationnelle.

Quelle attitude adopter ?

Dans la plupart des pays africains, l'attitude fut et est encore pour certains de se réfugier dans le déni, la négligence, ou alors l'égoïsme. On a l'impression que les périodes de crise ramènent l'homme à son état sauvage. D'autres personnes sont encore dans la théorie du complot. Pendant ce temps, le nombre des cas de contamination augmente même si au Togo, la situation est encore contrôlable en comparaison à d'autres pays de l'occident. Il faut sensibiliser, informer, déconstruire. Et pour cette dernière action, la tâche est ardue, les réseaux sociaux sont devenus incontrôlables, les « *Fake news* » assaillent de partout. L'outil technologique essentiel s'est brusquement mis au service de « l'ennemi invisible ». Le partage viral de fausses informations sur les plates-formes mérite d'être contrôlé.

Un cas d'école, qui interroge sur les risques que présente l'exercice de la liberté d'expression dans le contexte de crise sanitaire. En effet tout le monde, a trouvé dans les réseaux sociaux les places publiques rêvées pour échanger, confronter leurs points de vue comme cela n'avait jamais été possible auparavant.

Selon Phillipe Mouron :

« De ce point de vue, les réseaux sociaux remplissent correctement leur mission démocratique en donnant une parfaite égalité d'accès à des moyens de communication des idées et informations et c'est pourquoi le débat est nécessairement pollué par les mécanismes de manipulation qui ont pu prospérer dans ces services. Pour autant, n'est-ce pas là la fin ultime de cette liberté fondamentale ? Les informations qualifiées de « fausses » ne doivent-elle pas être acceptées comme un élément à part entière du débat ? Leur diffusion ne participerait-elle pas du débat d'intérêt général et de la vie démocratique ? Les réponses à apporter à ces questions sont essentielles pour cerner la nécessité des limites qui peuvent être apportées à la liberté d'expression pendant cette période de crise sanitaire. »[1]

Les idées divergent quant aux mécanismes de lutte contre la manipulation de l'information en cette période de crise. La liberté d'expression peut-elle subir des restrictions au titre de la santé ? Ceci ne remettrait-il pas en cause un droit fondamental que garantit, l'article 19 de la déclaration Universelle des droits de l'homme ?

Phillipe Mouron pense qu'il vaut mieux préconiser des mécanismes alternatifs comme :

«La nécessité d'une certaine réactivité face au caractère exponentiel que la diffusion de contenus sur les réseaux sociaux. » il suggère aussi « le recours à des systèmes d'autorégulation et de co-régulation qui pourraient à ce titre révéler une certaine efficacité dans la lutte contre la manipulation de l'information relative au corona virus. ».

Il conclut en disant : « …..il apparait que la lutte contre la manipulation de l'information ne saurait être déléguée à un seul acteur. De façon générale, aucune instance, dans un régime démocratique, ne peut s'ériger en tribunal de la vérité. La distinction entre le « vrai » et le « faux » ne saurait être confiée exclusivement ni au pouvoir législatif, ni au pouvoir exécutif, ni aux tribunaux ni aux opérateurs de plateformes, ni aux journalistes, ni aux experts et aux chercheurs en médecine, ni aux citoyens. Elle implique une régulation multiple qui met en cause l'ensemble de ces acteurs. Telle une Hyde de Lerne, l'information se diffuse désormais par plusieurs canaux placés sur un pied d'égalité. Ceux-ci ne doivent ni se concurrencer, ni converger mais s'équilibrer les uns les autres en recoupant les points de vue ».[2]

Sur le plan éducationnel, selon le rapport mondial de suivi sur l'éducation (GEM) 2020 de l'UNESCO du 23 Juin : « 40% des pays les plus pauvres n'ont pas réussi à assurer un accès à l'éducation pour tous pendant la crise du covid 19. Cette exclusion est encore plus forte quand on examine les disparités qui sont dues aux questions d'origine, d'identité et de capacité ».

Sur cette question d'éducation, les réflexions sont profondes, et les plates-formes s'en donnent à cœur joie. La remise en question des histoires des peuples, les dénis ou les contrevérités. La crise identitaire qui s'accentue. Le phénomène « Black *Lives Matter* » qui se renforce, des statues et des symboles qui tombent.

Autres crises mises en lumière par la Covid-19 : Crise spirituelle, crise psychologique.

Certaines populations, au Togo par exemple et presque partout ailleurs en Afrique subsaharienne, ont toujours su transcender leurs problèmes, souffrances et autres au travers de leur foi, par une confiance en un Dieu qui peut tout. Et dans le cas d'espèce d'un Dieu qui peut les exempter de la maladie, il n'est pas question de respecter les mesures barrières pour prévenir la maladie, mais prier simplement. Mais les Eglises sont fermées. Alors pour y arriver, les réseaux sociaux, les plates-formes sont mis à contribution, bien utiles cette fois-ci, il faut faire intervenir des pasteurs, des médecins, des psychosociologues. Car au-delà de la maladie elle-même, la psychose reste un sérieux problème auquel les populations font face.

Un monde à réinventer peut-être…

La maladie à corona virus a la particularité de révéler les insuffisances des systèmes mis en place depuis des décennies sur tous les plans. Il est clair que la crise est révélatrice des inégalités sociales. Certes, le virus rappelle aux riches comme aux pauvres, leur finitude en tant qu'humain, mais n'est-il pas plus facile de se protéger si l'on est riche ?

C'est un ainsi qu'un problème de santé a mis à mal tout un système, contredisant ainsi toute la logique régissant ce capitalisme à outrance que les sociétés, surtout celles africaines subissent depuis longtemps. Une société consumériste folle.

La plupart des sociologues sont unanimes sur le fait que cette pandémie laissera des traces. L'humanité devra questionner ou questionne déjà ses habitudes de vie, de consommation mais aussi ses systèmes mis en place qui privilégient l'individu au détriment d'une vie solidaire et sociale efficace.

Certes, le tableau passe du noir au gris foncé, pour dire que, même si le pire n'est pas encore tout à fait passé, l'espoir est permis. Mais que va-t-il se passer une fois la pandémie terminée ? Un effondrement où un monde meilleur à inventer ? Notre monde peut-il changer ? Pour devenir plus juste, égalitaire, plus humanitaire ? Et si rien ne

se passait, les faits sont têtus.

L'espoir est qu'au sortir de cette crise, il soit situé la responsabilité de chacun et de tous, une prise de conscience que le matérialisme excessif a rendu insensibles et aveugles tant de gens aux valeurs du vivre ensemble, telles : l'amitié, la solidarité, l'honnêteté, la justice et l'amour. Un matérialisme qui a également conduit à une pression excessive sur la nature et entrainé des déséquilibres croissants dans notre société. ▪

Notes

1. *Coronavirus et fausses informations. Les ales de la liberté d'expression en période de crise sanitaire*, par Philippe Mouron, Revuedif.com
2. *Coronavirus et fausses informations. Les ales de la liberté d'expression en période de crise sanitaire*, par Philippe Mouron, Revuedif.com

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Hacia dónde mirar en tiempos de crisis y pandemias

Leonardo Félix

Del sesgo de supervivencia y de dónde poner nuestras miradas y acciones.

Las pandemias y sus efectos colaterales no son nuevas en el mundo, así como tampoco son nuevas las acciones que se toman a fin de hacer prevalecer una supervivencia para quienes sufren los efectos devastadores de nuevas enfermedades ya sea de origen bacteriano o viral. Lo que sí es nuevo evidentemente, es el modo o los distintos modos en que una "gran aldea" globalizada como consecuencia de los grandes multimedios, que concentran información, así como los modos en que la misma se distribuye y es valorada, aparecen en escena en este último cuarto de siglo.

Durante la II Guerra Mundial, el matemático Abraham Wald nacido en Rumania a principios del siglo XX y nacionalizado en USA luego de migrar forzadamente junto con su familia en 1938 frente a la invasión Nazi sobre territorio austriaco, especialista entre otros temas en economía y fundador del análisis secuencial, esgrime un argumento interesante que podemos aplicar salvando las distancias del caso, con lo que vive hoy el mundo de la "Gran Aldea" frente a la pandemia y la posterior cuarentena (en sus distintas fases) con el covid19.

Abraham Wald tomaba el resultado de los aliados sobre los aviones que volvían de los combates midiendo las perforaciones que tenían en distintas partes de su fuselaje (alas y cola del avión mayormente) y lo denominó: *"sesgo de supervivencia"* esto es, cuáles eran los impactos recibidos de los que volvían a casa vivos y por ende qué áreas del avión debían ser reforzadas para próximos ataques. En sí, si bien el mecanismo de análisis
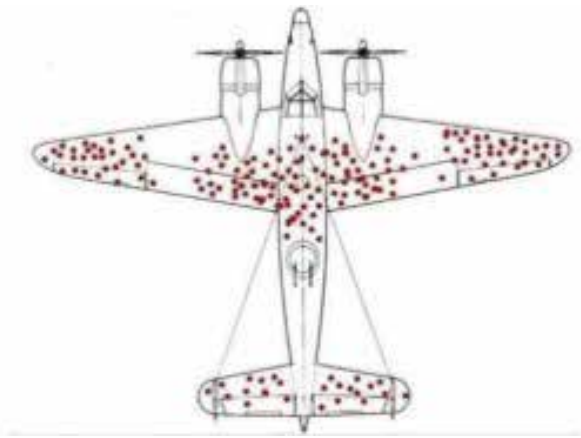
es claro, deja otras fuertes preguntas en el aire, que no están ubicadas en los sobrevivientes, sino en aquellos que no habían podido volver a casa. ¿dónde estaban ubicados esos impactos? ¿de qué intensidad habían sido que no les permitió sobrevivir al fuego enemigo?

Inmediatamente esto nos lleva al análisis de la cantidad de víctimas mortales del covid19 en todo el mundo y de qué modos pone el acento los grandes multimedios en el universo comunicacional que compartimos con claras diferencias de acceso y conectividad. Porque, es casi intuitivo señalar que no es morbo por la muerte y su sufrimiento lo que dará la diferencia en cómo cuidar vidas, derechos humanos y la capacidad de comunicarse, sino acciones comprometidas y colectivas en favor de las mismas.

Saltando la barrera de la atrocidad.

Una evidente sobre saturación de información con las muertes registradas en todo el mundo y, donde América Latina en su conjunto lidera las encuestas de mortandad, así como noticias que instalan el miedo y el fatalismo de, "*sin importar lo que hagamos de todos modos vamos a morir*" parecen fundamentar su línea argumental, simplificando elementos complejos que ameritan resoluciones y procesos complejos y colectivos. Una simplificación binaria entre la economía, por un lado, y la enfermedad de la muerte por el otro. A riesgo de las propias vidas, las audiencias parecen hipnotizadas al momento del planteo que nos dice que, no se puede dejar la salvaguarda de la economía en pos de una cuarentena que parece atentar todo el tiempo contra ella, o contra el sistema en su conjunto sin tomar en cuenta el

capitalismo deshumanizante que se sufre a diario.

Es imprescindible un periodismo de investigación que pueda saltar por sobre la barrera de la "atrocidad" y el "horror", y que nos permita focalizar la atención sobre cada vida que se pierde entendiendo que hay experiencias únicas y narrativas que subyacen en cada una, que deben ser contadas y sostenidas en el tiempo. No se trata del "mercado" o la "salud", no se trata de replicar la cultura sacrificial de los dioses del mercado donde unos pocos millones de vida no cuentan en la medida que la producción siga su curso con los más fuertes o, como mostraban, el pasado jueves 30 de abril de 2020 manifestantes armados frente al capitolio de Michigan – ubicado en su capital, Lansing, mientras se discutía el extender la declaración de emergencia de su gobernadora, la demócrata Gretchen Whitmer, la completa falta de solidaridad y violencia civil al cuidado de las vidas más vulnerables.

Hacia la vida…hacia los derechos a la comunicación para todas y todos

A pesar de toda mala señal y peores pronósticos, la vida de cada ser humano tiene una fuerza única e irrepetible que responde sobradamente a cualquier maquinaria de exclusión y fatalismo que se plantee. Las mismas plataformas digitales de ONGs a lo largo del mundo y en particular de América Latina, han planteado nuevas narrativas disputando vida donde solo se lee "muerte", disputando cuidado, preservación y ternura, frente a un medio que solo parece plantear la salvación del más "fuerte".

Junto con estos nuevos modos de reorganización del trabajo (home office) para las personas que tienen el privilegio de contar con un empleo, se hizo evidente la brecha digital ya existente, con largas horas frente a un computador o notebook, que evidencian la ya precaria condición de trabajo y junto con esto, la falta de accesibilidad en la región a "bandas anchas" reales y firmes en su funcionamiento; servicios prestados con poca o nula asistencia técnica de parte de sus servidores.

Resulta fundamental poner en la agenda de

los medios estos elementos que quedan expuestos con la pandemia, precarización laboral – que sufren en gran medida las mujeres en el continente – y una brecha digital que dificulta aún más el cumplimiento del trabajo existente. Junto con esto, y salvando la falsa dicotomía entre "economía vs. salud" es también prioritario instalar el tema de la responsabilidad de los Estados frente a este cataclismo y dónde ponen el grueso de sus inversiones, al momento de hablar de ciudadanías y electores.

Elevar la mirada frente a todo "sesgo de supervivencia"

Muchos años atrás, como nos cuenta el relato bíblico del libro del Génesis, Noé tuvo que ver cómo resolvía el tema del diluvio universal y todos los animales que Dios le pidió llevara con él para salvaguardar la continuidad de las especies y la humanidad misma; luego de semanas y semanas donde solo el agua los rodeaba, comienza la exploración de Noé para ver si las aguas habían descendido lo suficiente.

Para mi asombro cada vez que vuelvo a releer este maravilloso texto, Noé no tira una "sonda" hacia abajo para medir la profundidad y comprobar el nivel de las aguas; el texto dice puntualmente: *"Noé esperó otros siete días, y volvió a soltar la paloma. Ya empezaba a anochecer cuando la paloma regresó con una rama de olivo en el pico. Así Noé se dio cuenta de que la tierra se iba secando"* (Gen. 8.10-11). Nuestro personaje bíblico evidentemente mira hacia los cielos para esperar una respuesta que trajese la paloma. Mira hacia arriba esperando discernir qué hacer.

Es importante frente a la gravedad de lo que vivimos, frente a este nuevo "cataclismo" global, no perder el sentido de dónde ponemos la mirada, sobre quién o quiénes posamos nuestra mirada, nuestras acciones y nuestros pensamientos. Si lo único que perdura es el "sesgo de supervivencia" de Wald, no dejaremos de ver en ningún momento a los y las sobrevivientes de esta pandemia, acudiendo solo al morbo de la muerte para anestesiar e invisibilizar las vidas e historias que están detrás de cada perdida humana.

Foto: A. Amdán (Telám) en el barrio de San Telmo. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Del domingo 29 de marzo de 2020.

Del mismo modo, si no levantamos la mirada en ningún momento, lo único que prevalece es la devastación y la soledad de lo que el cataclismo se llevó. Periodismos comprometidos con las vidas y sus narrativas, son aquellos, en definitiva, que pueden elevar la vista más allá de esta tragedia, reclamar y poner en agenda, una responsabilidad colectiva sobre el cuidado de la vida, y a su vez, visibilizar e incidir, para que la sociedad civil impacte sobre las acciones de los Estados que deben, sobre todo, cuidar las vidas en justicia, educación y salud que son el sustento de sus acciones. ∎

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En México, la pandemia silenció las voces de las personas migrantes y refugiadas

Marie-Pia Rieublanc

A pesar de que muchas fronteras cerraron en el continente americano a raíz de la pandemia de Covid–19, México siguió recibiendo a miles de personas inmigrantes después de marzo. Pero estas personas fueron excluidas de las comunicaciones de prevención oficiales y las medidas de distanciamiento social limitaron sus oportunidades de encontrarse y organizarse para ejercer su derecho a la comunicación contrarrestando los discursos xenófobos que aumentaron durante la pandemia.

Amigo migrante, si no traes cubrebocas, serás detenido y deportado." Estas palabras poco amigables fueron difundidas en julio en las páginas de *El Orbe*, un periódico mexicano editado en Tapachula, ciudad del estado de Chiapas ubicada a cuarenta kilómetros de Guatemala y receptora de miles de personas inmigrantes cada año.

A pesar del cierre de las fronteras de Estados-Unidos y de los países centroamericanos, los flujos migratorios no han parado en México durante la crisis sanitaria provocada por el nuevo coronavirus… y los discursos discriminatorios tampoco. De inicios de marzo a fines de julio, la Comisión Méxicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR) registró a 10,309 solicitantes de refugio, en su mayoría hondureños y haitianos. Fueron menos en comparación al mismo periodo en el 2019, año en el cual las llegadas de personas refugiadas fueron históricamente altas debido a que la crisis de derechos humanos en Centroamérica estaba en su auge, pero superaron las cifras del 2018. A estas personas se suman otros miles que entran a México sin pedir asilo sino con el proyecto de cruzar el país para llegar al Norte.

Excluidos de las comunicaciones oficiales

Sorprendentemente, cuando se desató en México la pandemia, las instancias gubernamentales no desplegaron esfuerzos considerables para prevenir la circulación del virus entre la población inmigrante. La campaña "Quédate en casa" diseñada por la Secretaría de Salud para incentivar el confinamiento voluntario, que incluía la difusión masiva de carteles en la calle y las redes sociales, no se dirigía a quienes tenían un difícil acceso a la vivienda, como es el caso de muchas personas en contextos de movilidad.

Los múltiples mensajes de información sobre las medidas de distanciamiento social, el uso de cubrebocas o de gel antibacterial y el lavado de manos tampoco estaban diseñados para personas que viven en situaciones precarias con difícil acceso al agua y a productos de higiene. No se difundieron mensajes en los idiomas de las personas más presentes en los flujos actuales, como el creole, hablado por los haitianos, o los idiomas hablados en países africanos, de los cuales huyen cada vez más personas para refugiarse en México y Estados Unidos.

Mensajes xenófobos para criminalizar e intimidar

A cambio, los que sí se difundieron con más impacto en los medios de comunicación fueron los discursos discriminatorios hacia la población inmigrante. La xenofobia no es nueva en México y se agudizó desde que llegaron en octubre 2018 los primeros grupos multitudinarios de refugiados centroamericanos denunciados como una "invasión" por el presidente estadounidense

Donald Trump. Pero se incrementó aún más durante la pandemia y las personas recién llegadas fueron equiparadas a un peligro, como en el cartel difundido por *El Orbe (ver imagen)*. El mensaje final que se puede leer abajo de la ilustración ("No seas muco*, toma conciencia, te contagias y nos contagias"), posiciona directamente a las personas migrantes como irresponsables y vectores del nuevo coronavirus.

"Lo que busca este mensaje es intimidar y manipular: no está escrito en ningún reglamento que una persona pueda ser deportada por no usar mascarilla, pero claramente es otra forma más de seguir criminalizando, discriminando y señalando a las personas en movilidad", denuncia Diego Lucero, integrante del Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Matías (CDHFM), el cual lleva veintitrés años acompañando a personas en situación de movilidad en la frontera sur de México.

"No hemos visto ninguna denuncia ni reacción por parte del Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación (la CONAPRED), por lo cual quisimos crear nosotros mismos una campaña con lonas sobre cuidados colectivos inclusivos para contrarrestar este mensaje, pero como estábamos en tiempos de pandemia no hemos podido hacerlo", lamenta Diego Lucero, quien coordina el área de ejercicio colectivo de derechos. "También queríamos elaborar una campaña contra las narrativas discriminatorias que señalan a las personas migrantes como 'responsables de la suciedad de la Ciudad', dejando en botes de basura públicos mensajes positivos creados con las personas migrantes y refugiadas, pero se tuvo que

postergar", agrega Diego.

Confinamiento e impotencia

Estos dos ejemplos muestran cómo la pandemia limitó las posibilidades de las personas migrantes y sus defensores de ejercer su derecho a la comunicación interviniendo en el espacio público para combatir la xenofobia, debido a que muchas organizaciones de la sociedad civil han tenido que suspender actividades a partir de mitad de marzo para respetar las medidas sanitarias implementadas a nivel nacional.

En este país de 125 millones de habitantes, donde el 30 de agosto se registraban 595,841 casos acumulados y 64,158 defunciones, el confinamiento voluntario sigue vigente más de cinco meses después de su arranque oficial. A partir de la primera semana de septiembre, solo 10 de 32 estados pasarán al semáforo amarillo (un código oficial que se refiere a una etapa de la pandemia en la cual "hay más actividades, pero con precaución"), lo que sigue impidiendo proyectar actividades grupales presenciales a mediano plazo en gran parte del país.

En este contexto, La Sandía Digital tuvo que cancelar el taller que planeaba organizar en agosto con el apoyo de la fundación WACC en el marco del proyecto "Voces Migrantes: Libertad de expresión y acceso a la información en México". El objetivo era crear una campaña colaborativa con un grupo de veinte personas migrantes para generar narrativas positivas sobre la migración y uno de los caminos contemplados era justamente aliarse con el Centro de Derechos Fray Matías. Pero la colectiva no quiso abandonar el proyecto del todo y optó por una serie de podcasts que será realizada de manera colaborativa mediante mini-talleres con personas migrantes en los próximos meses.

La importancia de los encuentros

Más allá de las actividades específicamente diseñadas para generar acciones de intervención narrativa, también desparecieron muchos espacios de plática y escucha donde personas en

situación de movilidad y víctimas de violaciones a sus derechos humanos podían contar sus historias de manera libre y segura. "Esto ha afectado sobre todo a las mujeres que necesitan estar en círculos no mixtos para hablar con confianza y a niños y niñas con quienes hay que organizar juegos para que se puedan expresar más fácilmente", agrega Diego Lucero del Fray Matías.

"Es una lástima que no se hayan podido organizar encuentros entre personas migrantes durante la pandemia porque es necesaria la retroalimentación entre las personas que hemos avanzado en el proceso de refugio y las que acaban de entrar", lamenta Roque Moreno, refugiado hondureño de 52 años quien acaba de obtener su residencia permanente en México. Conoció a La Sandía Digital en septiembre 2019 en el marco de un proyecto a favor de la integración socio-laboral de personas migrantes y estaba ansioso por participar en el taller que se tuvo que cancelar en agosto.

Incomunicados

Fuera de la esfera de las organizaciones no gubernamentales, este padre de familia empleado en una maderera ha visto afectadas también sus relaciones personales con otras personas migrantes por la pandemia. "Justo durante las dos semanas antes del inicio del confinamiento, solía reunirme mucho con un grupo de amigos de Venezuela y Honduras con quienes nos juntábamos para ver películas y hasta hicimos un pequeño viaje juntos, pero ya nada de eso fue posible después y es difícil mantener el contacto solo por Whatsapp", reconoce Roque, quien se siente "alejado" de la comunidad migrante desde que ha empezado la crisis sanitaria.

El aislamiento ha sido un problema para muchas personas migrantes que se quedaron incomunicadas durante la pandemia, sobre todo para las que fueron impactadas económicamente por ella. El acceso a los smartphones, la 4G y el internet es un privilegio al cual pocas personas migrantes en situaciones preciaras tienen acceso. "Las que perdieron su empleo a raíz de la crisis sanitaria no tienen el dinero para recargar sus saldos o pagar el wi-fi aparte de una renta", explica Diego Lucero, cuya organización ha mantenido atenciones individuales por vía telefónica durante la pandemia. "Sabemos que las personas más vulnerables se están quedando sin atención porque no se pueden comunicar con nosotros", lamenta.

La vida en comunidad en los albergues

Mientras se promovía el aislamiento y el distanciamiento social en todo el país, la vida en comunidad siguió en los albergues para migrantes. Cuando se desató la crisis sanitaria, varios cerraron sus puertas a nuevos ingresos para evitar contagios mientras los huéspedes tuvieron que dejar sus trabajos. Se generó una situación sin precedente en la cual las personas solicitantes de refugio o en espera de una visa por razones humanitarias (un documento que les permite transitar libremente en México) tuvieron que alargar su estancia sin poder construir su autonomía financiera. Y aunque sus trámites migratorios se seguían procesando, avanzaron más lento que lo normal.

"Muchas personas se sentían angustiadas por no poder hacer nada mientras sus familias estaban enfrentando la crisis sanitaria en sus países de origen y por no poder seguir sus caminos, pero afortunadamente logramos mantener un ambiente muy bonito durante todo el confinamiento", cuenta la hermana María Antonia, coordinadora de la Casa Mambré, un albergue gestionado por la organización Scalabrinianas Misión con Migrantes y Refugiados (SMR) en la Ciudad de México, donde se confinaron hasta 37 personas después del inicio de la pandemia.

Dentro de la atención integral que este albergue siempre proporciona a sus huéspedes, se tuvieron que incluir círculos de palabra en las mañanas después de cada desayuno y hasta una atención psicológica facilitada por personas contratadas por SMR y proporcionada de manera individual vía videoconferencias.

De alguna manera, albergues como la Casa Mambré se volvieron pequeños oasis de colectividad en medio del distanciamiento social promovido durante la pandemia, en los cuales

pudieron expresar sus angustias y su creatividad libremente. Dado que nadie externo podía entrar a facilitar talleres, fueron los mismos huéspedes quienes tuvieron que encargarse de las actividades recreativas. "Ellos eran los protagonistas y eso permitió que se apoyaran unos a otros, cada uno con sus talentos y sus habilidades", agrega María Antonia, recordando que se dieron clases de educación física, de zumba, de matemáticas, de teatro y de pintura.

La palabra de estas personas migrantes no ha llegado al espacio público a través de campañas contra la xenofobia, pero al enterarse de esta experiencia de resiliencia y solidaridad, quienes los quieren criminalizar y discriminar, ¿tal vez podrían cambiar de opinión? ∎

Palabra despectiva usada en Tapachula para decir de una persona que es necia y mal educada.

Marie-Pia Rieublanc, integrante de La Sandía Digital. Periodista y comunicadora francesa, lleva seis años en México, donde ha trabajado en asociaciones civiles además de realizar reportajes para diversos medios. Se ha encargado del área de comunicación de Otros Mundos/Amigos de la Tierra México, una organización en defensa de los territorios ubicada en el estado de Chiapas. Ahora vive en la Ciudad de México y forma parte de La Sandía Digital, una colectiva de producción audiovisual y comunicación estratégica, donde coordina el área de comunicación así como el proyecto "Voces Migrantes".

Battling the "pandemic of misinformation"

Christina Pazzanese

When a disease outbreak grabs the public's attention, formal recommendations from medical experts are often muffled by a barrage of half-baked advice, sketchy remedies, and misguided theories that circulate as anxious people rush to understand a new health risk.

The current crisis is no exception. The sudden onset of a new, highly contagious coronavirus has unleashed what U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called a "pandemic of misinformation", a phenomenon that has not gone unnoticed as nearly two-thirds of Americans said they have seen news and information about the disease that seemed completely made up, according to a recent Pew Research Center study.

What distinguishes the proliferation of bad information surrounding the current crisis, though, is social media. Kasisomayajula "Vish" Viswanath, Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, said the popularity and ubiquity of the various platforms means the public is no longer merely passively consuming inaccuracies and falsehoods. It's disseminating and even creating them, which is a "very different" dynamic than what took place during prior pandemics MERS and H1N1.

The sheer volume of Covid-19 misinformation and disinformation online is "crowding out" the accurate public health guidance, "making our work a bit more difficult," he said.

"Misinformation could be an honest mistake or the intentions are not to blatantly mislead people," like advising others to eat garlic or gargle with salt water as protection against

Covid-19, he said. Disinformation campaigns, usually propagated for political gain by state actors, party operatives, or activists, deliberately spread falsehoods or create fake content, like a video purporting to show the Chinese government executing residents in Wuhan with Covid-19 or "Plandemic", a film claiming the pandemic is a ruse to coerce mass vaccinations, which most major social media platforms recently banned.

In order to be effective, especially during a crisis, public health communicators have to be seen as credible, transparent, and trustworthy. And there, officials are falling short, said Viswanath.

"People are hungry for information, hungry for certitude, and when there is a lack of consensus-oriented information and when everything is being contested in public, that creates confusion among people," he said.

"When the president says disinfectants … or anti-malaria drugs are one way to treat Covid-19, and other people say, 'No, that's not the case,' the public is hard-pressed to start wondering, 'If the authorities cannot agree, cannot make up their minds, why should I trust anybody?'"

Need for on-the-job journalism training
Mainstream media coverage has added to the problem, analysts say. At many major news outlets, reporters and editors with no medical or public health training were reassigned to cover the unfolding pandemic and are scrambling to get up to speed with complex scientific terminology, methodologies, and research, and then identify, as well as vet, a roster of credible sources. Because many are not yet knowledgeable enough to report critically and authoritatively on the science, they can sometimes lean too heavily on traditional journalism values like balance, novelty, and conflict. In doing so, they lift up outlier and inaccurate counterarguments and hypotheses, unnecessarily muddying the water.

"That's a huge challenge," said Ashish Jha, K.T. Li Professor of Global Health and Director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, during

an April 24 talk about Covid-19 misinformation hosted by the Technology and Social Change Research Project at the Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics and Public Policy.

"What I have found is a remarkable degree of consensus among people who understand the science of this disease around what the fundamental issues are and then disagreements about trade-offs and policies," said Jha, who is a frequent commentator on news programs. "The idea of covering the science in a two-sided way on areas where there really isn't any disagreement has struck me as very, very odd, and it keeps coming up over and over again."

Then there is the problem of political bias. This has been especially true at right-leaning media outlets, which have largely repeated news angles and viewpoints promoted by the White House and the president on the progress of the pandemic and the efficacy of the administration's response, boosting unproven Covid-19 treatments and exaggerating the availability of testing and safety equipment and prospects for speedy vaccine development.

Tara Setmayer, a spring 2020 Resident Fellow at the Institute of Politics and former Republican Party communications director, said what's coming from Fox News and other pro-Trump media goes well beyond misinformation. Whether downplaying the views of government experts on Covid-19's lethality, blaming China or philanthropist Bill Gates for its spread, or cheering shutdown protests funded by Republican political groups, it's all part of "an active disinformation campaign," she said, aimed at deflecting the president's responsibility as he wages a re-election campaign.

But turning around those who buy into false information is not as simple as piercing epistemic bubbles with facts, said Christopher Robichaud, senior lecturer in ethics and public policy at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) who teaches the Gen Ed course "Ignorance, Lies, Hogwash and Humbug: The Value of Truth and Knowledge in Democracies."

Over time, bubble dwellers can become co-

cooned in a media echo chamber that not only feeds faulty information to audiences, but anticipates criticisms in order to "prebut" potential counterarguments that audience members may encounter from outsiders, much the way cult leaders do.

"It's not enough to introduce new pieces of evidence. You have to break through their strategies to diminish that counterevidence, and that's a much harder thing to do than merely exposing people to different perspectives," he said.

While Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have all recently ramped up efforts to take down Covid-19 misinformation following public outcry, social media platforms "fall short" when it comes to curbing the flow, said Joan Donovan, who leads the Technology and Social Change Project at HKS.

Since the national shift to remote work, many social media firms are relying more heavily on artificial intelligence to patrol misinformation on their platforms, instead of human moderators, who tend to be more effective, said Donovan. So many users suddenly searching and posting about one specific topic can "signal jam search algorithms, which cannot tell the difference usually between truth and lies."

These firms are reluctant to spark a regulatory backlash by policing their platforms too tightly and angering one or both political parties. "So they are careful to take action on content that is deemed immediately harmful (like posts that say to drink chemicals), but are reticent to enforce moderation on calls for people to break the stay-at-home orders," said Donovan.

Viswanath said public health officials cannot, and should not, chase down and debunk every bit of misinformation or conspiracy theory, lest the attention lends them some credence. The public needs to more closely scrutinize and be "much more sceptical" about what they're reading and hearing, particularly online, and not try to keep up with the very latest Covid-19 research. "You don't need to know everything," he said.

Putting the onus entirely on the public, however, is "unfair and it won't work," said Viswanath. Institutions, like social media platforms, have to take more responsibility for what's out there.

Communication surveillance of social media
Public health organizations should be running effective communication surveillance of social media to monitor which rumours, ideas, and issues most worry the public, what is understood and misunderstood about various diseases and treatments, and what myths are circulating or being actively promoted in the community. And they need to have a strategy in place to counter what they're picking up. "You cannot control this, but you can at least manage some of this," Viswanath said.

Though some Covid-19 misinformation and conspiracy theories are outlandish or even dangerously inaccurate, Robichaud said it's a mistake to dismiss those who believe them as people who don't care about the truth. Many cognitive biases get in the way of even the best truth-seeking strategies, so perhaps we could all benefit from a little more intellectual humility in this time of such great uncertainty, he said.

"Most of us are, at best, experts in a tiny, tiny area. But we don't navigate the world as if that were true. We navigate the world as if we're experts about a whole bunch of things that we're not," he said. "A little intellectual humility can go a long way. And I say that as a professor: It's true of us, and it's also true of the public at large." ▪

Reprinted with permission from Harvard Gazette, May 8, 2020. This article forms part of a Coronavirus Update series in which Harvard specialists in epidemiology, infectious disease, economics, politics, and other disciplines offer insights into what the latest developments in the COVID-19 outbreak may bring.

Christina Pazzanese is a Harvard Staff Writer.

Intersectionality, community, and memory of a just future

Glory E. Dharmaraj

The dual shadow cast by the Covid-19 pandemic and the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, by police brutality has made many of us in the USA "see" things which often go unreported or underreported in the media landscape. The dual pandemic has unveiled social inequities as never before. News media have been relentlessly capturing impact stories of Covid-19 as well as systemic racism.

A cursory look at the headlines in news media on the medical pandemic throws light on the impact of the layered crisis of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities. "Families in the Lower Income Brackets Hit the Hardest by Covid-19," "CDC (Center for Disease Control) Hospital Data Point to Racial Disparity in Covid-19 Cases," "Black and Latino Communities Hardest Hit By Covid-19," "Covid-19 incidence more than triple among Native Americans," "The erasure of Indigenous people in U.S. Covid-19 data," "Young People of Color with pre-existing Conditions face elevated Covid-19 risk," "Covid-19 is a 'crisis within a crisis' for homeless people," "Small rural counties struggle with Covid-19 in ways big counties don't," "Work-from-home model does not work for this group," "Parking Lots Have become a Digital Lifeline," and "Women care givers at the front of the crisis." The issues identified are humanized with compelling stories.

For naming and identifying the patterns that emerge from these stories, I turn to a way of *seeing* popularized by Kimerlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar. A lens and a critical framework of seeing these multiple realities of inequalities collectively is known as *intersectionality*. A lawyer by profession, Crenshaw who worked among battered women in the 1980s, especially African American women, named an experience that these women embodied. That is, multiple layers of oppression due to their race, class, sexuality, locality etc., *intersected* in the everyday lives of these women at the margins.

Crenshaw names the current moment of the dual pandemic in the U.S., as the convergence of "intersectional vulnerabilities" and "pre-existing vulnerabilities".[1] A peek at the news coverage and analyses of the media highlight these inequities, while addressing these issues is a burden laid at the feet of communities and policy makers at large:

* Digital divide is more pronounced among particular racial, ethnic groups such as African Americans and Hispanics. For example, 25% of these groups are smartphone only internet users, compared to 10% of white population. Lower-income adults' access to high-speed internet at home is limited.[2]

* Extreme economic inequality is highlighted as a pre-existing condition. For instance, while 45 million people lost their jobs due to the pandemic, the combined wealth of 614 billionaires increased by $584 billions, according to one study.[3] Further, people do not have equal access to healthcare or paid sick leave.

* A gendered reality is the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women as caregivers and low-income workers. Further, under the lockdown and household isolations, domestic violence against women and girls has also increased.

* Hate speech relating to Chinese Americans and Covid-19 increased. Between February 9 and March 7, there was a 50% rise in news articles relating to Covid-19 and anti-Asian American discrimination, especially Chinese Americans and East Asian Americans.[4]

* Separated from their parents, migrant children in detention centres, shelters, and hotels are either deported during the pandemic without recourse to asylum or await their fate at the hands of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement legal procedures.

* Immigrants beg to be released from detention centres in fear of the spread of Covid-19.

Putting on a mono-dimensional lens such as an economic or gender or racial framework misses the intersectional negative impact of the nature of Covid-19.

Historical memories & meanings revisited

The medical pandemic is a crisis within the pandemic of structural and systemic racism, especially against the African Americans. In the wake of the death of George Floyd by police brutality, Black-Lives-Matter protesters took to the streets in support addressing racial injustices against African Americans. Solidarity marches against racism and police brutality around the world flashed across the media. Most of the protesters in the U.S. are white, unlike, the Civil Rights protest marchers in the 1960s, and today's marchers are under 35 coming from various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

News stories of racial injustices as well as stories of protesters righting the wrongs of history have created a constantly evolving and shifting communication environment.

* Toppling monuments and statutes, signs and symbols in public settings, which glorify narratives of slavery and colonialism.

* Replacing racial stereotypes and brands in the advertising history. Quaker Oats, the owner of a 131-year old brand of Aunt Jemima, said that it would change the name and logo of its trademark, a long- enduring racial stereotype of a devoted and submissive African American slave. The symbol romanticized the era of slavery in the U.S., when enslaved African American women served as maids in the kitchens, and "mammies" in the households of slave-owners nurturing the children of the latter.

* Retiring Native American names and mascots in sports that stereotype the indigenous peoples. The Washington National Football League's *Redskins* name and logo will be replaced by a new nickname and logo. Yet other names and logos caricaturing Native Americans in sports remain, while affected communities continue to call for dropping the use of denigrating representations in names and images.

* Addressing semantic inadequacy in the definition of "racism" in the American Reference Dictionary, *Merriam Webster*. The updated definition includes a key missing component: systemic oppression. Now the Dictionary amplifies racism as a "doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and designed to execute its principles and a political system founded on racism, racial prejudice or discrimination."[5] It was a feat accomplished by the advocacy of a 22-year old African American woman, Kennedy Michum, with the Dictionary's publishers.

Some of these changes are symbolic. The removals and dislocations of Confederate flags, statutes, and signs are contested realities, since these images and representations belie belief systems and identities often associated with white supremacy for those who have lived the underside of history as well as those who now stand in solidarity with the latter. For others, the same emblems are visual symbols and historical markers of heroism and heritage in the public space. Historical injuries and the accompanying struggles are likely to be fought in the memories of people, as history is being revisited in order to sift through myths and facts.

Covid-19 and fake news

The medical pandemic, coupled with the pandemic of racial injustice, has been exploited to spread misinformation and fake news. The World Health Organization calls the spreading of medical disinformation an "infodemic". Certain websites use social media as a platform for contagious

misinformation, medical myths, and health-related false stories for political and corporate gains. Combating the spreading of false narratives and misinformation involves fact-checking on the part of media users, removal of misinformation, and fixing the complex algorithms involved in the rapid proliferation of such news.

The political narratives around Covid-19 are intense and fall along deep divisive party lines. Distrust and scepticism around vaccination, in general, has existed for a long time. In addition, mistrust around vaccination for Covid-19, in particular, is present also among some African American communities who carry scars and memories of prior racial experiments and unethical medical researches performed on their bodies in the past.

The voice of local newspapers, much needed for communities at this moment, has been in steady decline due to loss of funds. News headlines sum up the crisis and articles offer analyses:

* "Newspaper Revenue Drops As Local News Interest Rises Amid Coronavirus."
* "Local newspapers are facing Coronavirus crisis."
* "The Coronavirus is killing the local news."
* "Why 'withering' of local news landscape is dangerous for democracy."

The solutions for the crises rest with local communities, clues of change and transformation stemming from the grassroots. Covid-19 has also compelled one to see the plain truth of assessing and tapping into the strength of the vulnerable communities in decision-making, formulating policies, and their implementation.

For communicators of faith, especially, local journalism touches a range of delivery options starting from its basic role of offering news relevant for daily living to enabling the community to frame its compelling emotional, intellectual, moral, and spiritual vision of reality.

Memory of a just future

At the national level, recognizing the constantly evolving and complex nature of the Black-Lives-Matter protests in the U.S, amid the twin pandemic, the World Association for Christian Communication, North America, has sent out a press release recently, along with The Associated Church Press and Religion Communicators Council, condemning the "interference and abuse of journalists as they cover protests against police brutality and the extrajudicial killings of Black Americans," and the "repeated claims of 'fake news' and naming the press as 'enemies of the state' by the United States president."[6]

A core value of journalism is focus on truth, the search for it amidst the fog of competing ideologies and contradictory narratives, and the ethical commitment that accompanies this task. Communication is also a spiritual exercise – spirituality that is transformational. A transformative spirituality calls for resistance to everyday choices and systems and structures that promote injustices.[7] An upstream calling of this spirituality is speaking truth to powers and addressing the root causes of injustices.

Truth itself has been on trial time and again. The new communications environment in the midst of Black-Lives-Matter brings an old question to the forefront: objectivity versus taking sides. The present moment is a platform for communicators to encounter and interrogate the traumatic past and its legacy on the present.

* The origin story of the country itself, and how "Christianity" has been co-opted into powerful and imperialistic myths such as the "Doctrine of Discovery" and "Manifest Destiny" in the colonization of the Native Americans and slavery of African Americans leading to the legacies of structural and systemic injustices today.
* Free land and free labour for the building of a great nation made possible by the "Doctrine of Discovery," a philosophical and legal framework that gave authority to Christian governments to take possessions of "pagan" lands, and "Manifest Destiny," a belief that white Christians were divinely ordained to settle in the U.S., and expand their territories.
* The burden of the present where a persistent

strain of these ideologies still manifests itself as Christian nationalism and white supremacy.

Christian communication's challenge today, as it has always been, is speaking truth to power, especially when Christian nationalism colludes with the systems of power, when church communication itself may be co-opted by powers against Christian communication, and when the trauma-informed people in our midst speak for themselves and call for allies who can stand in solidarity with them in building a just future.

For Christian communicators, the present moment is also a platform to draw in the "memory of the future", a vision of peace and justice, hope and resilience for human flourishing and a mended and healed creation, in the midst of the current structural inequities, and to take sides with the marginalized who "hope against hope".[8] This convergence of the present, past, and future is an extraordinary platform. A "Kairos" moment. Acting NOW for transformative changes is a prophetic calling. ▪

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Covid-19: Aquellos efectos adversos de los que no se habla

David Morales Alba

En Colombia, las cifras sobre el número de personas infectadas con la Covid-19, los casos activos, datos sobre fallecimientos y el índice de recuperación se han convertido en el mensaje diario de los medios de comunicación, en relación con el impacto del virus. Pareciera que estos datos son el nuevo indicador económico.

Es necesario reconocer la utilidad de esta información, su relevancia, en el campo de la epidemiología. Permite identificar las posibilidades de respuesta de los servicios de salud frente a los requerimientos de la situación.

Las autoridades sanitarias de Colombia han señalado que el país está entrando en la etapa crítica y se han implementado distintas acciones de prevención para reducir el incremento en el número de casos. No obstante, los espacios periodísticos informan que en Bogotá los servicios de atención ya están cercanos al colapso.

Al observar el impacto del virus en el país se encuentran otras regiones con situaciones críticas: Antioquia, Atlántico, Bolívar y Valle del Cauca, son las que presentan un mayor impacto. Si a ese escenario se suman la falta de atención para otras condiciones de salud, el diagnóstico señala que se requiere una planeación y reacción intensiva.

La dinámica informativa que ha trazado el impacto de la Covid-19, por razones que no requieren explicación, se ha centrado en la atención en salud para quienes se han visto afectados por el virus.

Sin embargo, se tienen otros requerimien-

tos y situaciones que enfrentan las comunidades que deben estar en la agenda de los medios de comunicación y en la agenda ciudadana: falta de atención para tratamientos de personas con enfermedades crónicas, la entrega oportuna de medicamentos para quienes no pueden acercarse a los puntos de dispensación, la respuesta social que se gestiona desde la comunidades para enfrentar los efectos socio-económicos, las posibilidades que tiene a mano el gobierno para optimizar los recursos del sector salud y la inversión de los recursos destinados a la atención de la emergencia sanitaria, entre otros.

El acceso a la información financiera de la pandemia

El incremento del impacto del virus en las comunidades requiere de más equipos médicos, suficiente personal de salud y la expectativa de garantía de acceso a medicamentos que sean eficaces para el tratamiento de la infección, entre otros. En otras palabras, inversión en recursos.

Desde el Gobierno Nacional se han gestionado varios créditos internacionales para hacer frente al impacto de la Covid-19. El 31 de marzo, el Banco Mundial desembolsó US$250 millones para el país con tal propósito. Además, con el Fondo Monetario Internacional y la banca multilateral se tramitaron otros 14 mil millones de dólares.

En junio, Rafael de la Cruz, representante del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID) en Colombia, señaló a la revista Dinero que el BID le prestará a Colombia US$1.700 millones. Agregó que el Banco Mundial otorgará otros créditos por US$700 millones destinados a financiar la respuesta a la pandemia.

Estos préstamos llegan a los US$16.650 millones, deuda que tendremos que asumir los colombianos, a través de impuestos.

Ese paisaje económico incluye varias denuncias sobre corrupción en la celebración de contratos para brindar apoyo alimentario a las comunidades vulnerables, en sobrecostos de los productos que incluye el kit de ayuda, así como en la compra de implementos para los hospitales.

Al respecto, el Observatorio Fiscal de la Universidad Javeriana precisa que si antes no se sabía cuánta plata había destinado el Gobierno nacional para la atención en salud por la pandemia, ahora no se sabe en qué se está gastando el dinero destinado desde el Fondo de Mitigación de Emergencias (FOME).

Precisa el Observatorio que para el 27 de julio desde el FOME no se había girado ningún recurso al Instituto Nacional de Salud y que hacia el Ministerio de Salud se han girado US$269,3 millones, aunque el Gobierno ha expresado en distintos escenarios que para la atención en salud destinará entre US$1.881,5 millones y US$2.150 millones.

¿Por qué el Gobierno no le cuenta a los colombianos cuánto dinero ha gastado en la atención en salud y en qué se lo ha gastado peso por peso? ¿Por qué no es posible determinar hacia dónde se está yendo el dinero? Estas son las preguntas que hace el Observatorio Fiscal de la Universidad Javeriana.

En el informe "*La transparencia en el uso de los recursos para atender la emergencia*", del 21 de junio, el Observatorio señala que es difícil conocer la magnitud de los recursos destinados a Covid-19, no se tienen cuentas claras sobre el uso de esos dineros y hay una "ausencia total de un plan concreto de gasto".

El informe expresa que la cantidad de dinero destinada a la emergencia es distinta, según la fuente del Gobierno que se consulte. En el sitio Web del Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público se encuentran 58 declaraciones oficiales del ministro y el viceministro. Al menos en dos se hace referencia a los recursos dispuestos.

El Observatorio precisa en su informe que el 29 de abril en un debate de control político en el Congreso de la República, el Ministro de Hacienda afirmó que se han invertido US$8.062,5. El 27 de mayo, durante una intervención del Presidente de la República, el Viceministro dijo que se han invertido US$31.444 millones. Una diferencia de US$23.381 millones en un mes.

El informe concluye que se encuentra una gran diferencia entre las cifras que el gobierno

comparte en las declaraciones públicas y la información que se puede verificar. "La dificultad misma de hacer esta verificación – que requiere una dedicación de varios días por parte del analista, tiempo que la mayor parte de los ciudadanos no pueden tomarse – va en contra del espíritu del principio de la proactividad en la divulgación de la información sobre el gasto público consagrada en la Ley de transparencia", precisa el documento del Observatorio.

"Para intentar entender cómo se están usando los recursos públicos, es necesario consultar distintas fuentes oficiales de consulta pública, que están en formatos que dificultan su entendimiento por quienes no están familiarizados con la contabilidad del Estado", expresa el documento en sus conclusiones.

Una opción para optimizar los recursos del Sector Salud

El Gobierno tiene a su alcance una fuente de recursos para responder a la Covid-19 y también favorecer a las personas afectadas por la hepatitis C (VHC): Declarar de interés público los medicamentos requeridos para su tratamiento.

En 2015, la Fundación IFARMA solicitó al Ministerio de Salud declarar de interés público estos medicamentos y en 2017 el Ministerio informó sobre el inicio del proceso administrativo correspondiente. Tres años después del anuncio, la acción administrativa no avanza.

En 2017 el Ministerio realizó la compra centralizada de medicamentos a través del Fondo Estratégico de la Organización Panamericana de la Salud (OPS), operación que facilitó pasar de US$26.875 por tratamiento (2015) a US$4.703 / tratamiento.

En 2019, la OPS ofreció un tratamiento genérico equivalente y precalificado por la Organización Mundial de la Salud con un precio de US$129, costo 34 veces menor que el que se logró con la compra centralizada. Esto representa un ahorro de US$3.923 por paciente.

Al beneficio de la OPS pueden acceder los países donde los medicamentos para el tratamiento de la hepatitis C no tengan patentes vigentes, situación que no cumple Colombia y que impide ofrecer el tratamiento, con un menor costo y mayor cobertura, liberando recursos para atender a las personas afectadas por la Covid-19. Esta situación se puede corregir declarando de interés público los medicamentos y procediendo a expedir licencias obligatorias para uso público no comercial.

Los efectos colaterales de la Covid-19

En el marco de la emergencia sanitaria que el Gobierno decretó en marzo de 2020, el Ministerio de Salud estableció que los adultos mayores, las mujeres embarazadas, los habitantes de calle, las víctimas de la violencia, los grupos étnicos, la población con discapacidad y las personas que viven con una enfermedad crónica son grupos prioritarios para recibir atención telefónica, virtual y domiciliaria.

Al indagar sobre los efectos de la situación en la prestación de servicios de salud para los grupos considerados prioritarios, la realidad que se encuentra es algo diferente.

Las barreras para la entrega de medicamentos, demoras en la autorización de procedimientos y asignación de citas médicas para atender otras enfermedades, y la falta de personal especializado, son algunas de las situaciones que se presentan en las distintas regiones del país.

En algunos meses estaremos enfrentando los efectos de la Covid-19 en la población contagiada y recuperada, así como las consecuencias en la salud de quienes no recibieron la atención que requiere una enfermedad crónica.

En este sentido, la Procuraduría General de la Nación señaló que la atención de Covid-19 no puede ser excusa para la desatención de otras patologías que podrían convertirse en causas de mortalidad para la población de especial protección, tal como los adultos mayores, menores de edad y personas con enfermedades crónicas. ■

[1 de agosto de 2020]

Luis David Morales Alba dirige la Fundación Comunicación Positiva en Colombia, que promueve la información como forma de garantizar los derechos de los pacientes.

Covid-19 en la isla y sus repercusiones

José Luis Soto

Reportaje y saludos solidarios desde el Espacio de Comunicación Insular (Espacinsular) en la República Dominicana, 22 de mayo de 2020.

En nuestro país llevamos más de 2 meses y medios de confinamiento, de derechos suspendidos, debido al estado de emergencia y al toque de queda de 5 de la tarde a 6 de la mañana del día siguiente, medidas que buscan hacer frente al coronavirus. Muchas cosas han pasado, pero quizás una de ella ha sido el cambio en la forma de ver y continuar la vida. Los afectos humanos suspendidos hasta nuevo aviso, los saludos virtuales, las llamadas, el teletrabajo, la explosión de las redes sociales y la casi aceptación de parte de la población que desde el Estado se norme la vida de la gente, que violen los derechos humanos, por violar el toque de queda, por ejemplo. O que la única fuente de información oficial sobre el Covid-19 sea el Gobierno-Estado.

El tema central en la "cobertura periodística ha sido y sigue siendo la pandemia del coronavirus. Los grandes temas de la agenda nacional han sido relegados. Los temas de derechos humanos, los derechos a la salud, mujer y derechos reproductivos, inclusión social, migración, no han sido los de primera línea informativa.

El hecho de que el nuevo orden impuesto en las redacciones de los medios haya sido quédate en casa, trabaja en casa, también fue la realidad para los medios y los periodistas. No todo fue colorido y diverso en la cobertura mediática como antes del coronavirus. Esta situación merecerá el día después que se investigue y analice. Es parte de nuestro propósito.

Como organización nos hemos mantenido alerta ante el compromiso que tenemos con la defensa de los derechos ciudadanos en medio de la pandemia. Sobre todo de aquellas y aquellos más excluidos y empobrecidos.

Desde principio del mes de marzo cuando apareció el caso importado de Covid-19 y luego los casos de transmisión local de la pandemia, miles de inmigrantes haitianos por temor a infectarse comenzaron a retornar voluntariamente a su país de origen, Haití. En la medida que el virus se fue expandiendo por toda la nación, el medio se fue apoderando de los trabajadores migrantes haitianos, el retorno se fue haciendo más masivo. Al punto hoy día organizaciones de derechos humanos del vecino país calculan que entre 18 mil y 32 mil trabajadores haitianos y sus familiares se encuentran de "tránsito" en su país. Muchos dejaron todas sus pertenencias abandonadas en RD.

Al momento de escribir estas notas el Covid-19 ha impacto a la República Dominicana y en Haití es de la siguiente manera: 13, 657 casos confirmados, 448 muertos, 7,366 recuperados 47,673 descartados. En tanto que en Haití: 734 casos positivos, 21 curados y 25 muertes.

La República Dominicana inició una desescalada este miércoles luego de más de 2 meses y medio de casi toda la actividad económica pública y privada. La vuelta a la normalidad en un 30 por ciento, ha sido un caos, con la advertencia de que los casos de contagios pudieran aumentar debido a que la población no está guardando el distanciamiento personal, uso de mascarilla e higiene. En Haití el Gobierno dispuso la renovación del estado de emergencia por los próximos dos meses, mientras que en RD es por 15 días, sin posibilidad de aumentarlo por más tiempo debido a los enfrentamientos en el Congreso Nacional entre opositores y oficiales y la cercanía de las elecciones presidenciales y congresuales del 5 de julio.

Preocupación en dos sentidos.

Pasada la mayor parte de la emergencia por el Covid-19 en la República Dominicana los miles de haitianos que salieron hacia su país, intentaran volver al país. La frontera está cerrada y

ya se advierte que todo indocumentado que salió no volverá a entrar a RD.

La Organización Panamericana de la Salud y la Organización Mundial de la Salud han advertido de un gran brote de Covid-19 en Haití que pueda matar muchos miles de haitianos, debido a la situación de pobreza extrema. La directora general de la Organización Panamericana de la Salud advirtió de que existe un verdadero peligro de que se produzca un brote a gran escala de Covid-19 en Haití, al que seguiría una crisis humanitaria. Al mismo tiempo, señaló que se está doblando el número de casos del coronavirus en cuestión de días en muchas zonas de la región.

La propia agencia se hace eco de la vuelta masiva de haitianos viviendo y trabajando en RD Haití. "Ya han regresado 17.000 haitianos de la República Dominicana, donde hay transmisión comunitaria y se espera que este número llegue a 55.000 en dos o tres semanas", especificó.

> "El Covid–19 no conoce de fronteras."

La máxima responsable de la Organización señaló que no hay la suficiente conciencia en las comunidades sobre la amenaza que representa la Covid-19 y que es extremadamente difícil establecer el distanciamiento social adecuado en la nación caribeña.

Menos de un 10 por ciento de la población haitiana se está protegiendo del virus. El uso de mascarilla y el distanciamiento personal no se hace conciencia en estos momentos siendo el virus comunitario. Se estima que la población se está contaminando a un ritmo alto sin darse cuenta. Haití no cuenta con infraestructuras sanitarias suficientes ni tampoco con los insumos para enfrentar la pandemia, así lo advierten desde el país que comparte con la República Dominicana la isla de la española.

Ante esta situación del Covid-19 en la isla, el Espacio de Comunicación Insular, inició desde mediado de abril un proceso de incidencia pública a través de los medios de información llamando a los gobernantes de las dos naciones, a funcionarios de la sanidad pública para que se

aboquen a formalizar un plan conjunto para enfrentar la pandemia en el territorio, armonizando las políticas públicas de cada país, estrechando la cooperación y la colaboración entre los ministerios de salud de ambas naciones.

Después de varias notas de prensa, comunicados e intervenciones a través de entrevistas, este 19 de mayo, los presidentes Jovenel Moïse, de Haití y Danilo Medina, República Dominicana, sostuvieron una reunión virtual. Hablaron sobre el coronavirus en ambos países y la necesidad de armonizar la forma como se está enfrentando la pandemia. Además de conversar sobre la frontera y el comercio fronterizo.

Sin embargo, el diálogo entre ambos jefes de estado no ha quedado en nada concreto ni siquiera se emitió un comunicado conjunto anunciando acciones medidas en concreto para enfrentar la pandemia. Toca esperar, aunque pudiera ser demasiado tarde.

La gran preocupación es que en la isla se pueda producir una catástrofe sanitaria sin control que pueda matar mucho más personas que las que hasta ahora han muerto de ambos lados de la frontera. Seguimos llamando, desde el Espacio de Comunicación Insular, a que haya más diálogo y cooperación, y solidaridad entre las dos naciones fronterizas. ∎

José Luis Soto es periodista y Director del Espacio de Comunicación Insular (Espacinsular) en la República Dominicana.

Internet, una aliada para garantizar los derechos humanos durante crisis Covid-19

Article 19

Las tecnologías de la comunicación e información (TIC), entre ellas la Internet, son una pieza clave para el goce y disfrute de los derechos humanos. Es a través de estas herramientas que buscamos, emitimos y difundimos información, contenidos e ideas, y son también un espacio en el que debatimos, protestamos y nos organizamos, tenemos acceso a la cultura, ciencia y conocimiento, así como a información relevante para procurar nuestra salud y la de los demás.

El impacto de la crisis de Covid-19 ha reiterado la importancia de las TIC a nivel individual y colectivo. Ante el brote, algunos organismos públicos y privados de toda índole han solicitado a personas colaboradoras, empleadas y estudiantes, a replegarse en sus hogares para evitar la propagación del virus. A su vez, muchos de estos organismos también han sugerido el uso de Internet para laborar y educarse desde casa; al tiempo en que los canales de comunicación del gobierno, instituciones de salud pública y fuentes internacionales expertas en salud, son más accesibles mediante estas tecnologías.

Mientras que colectivamente abatimos el contagio del virus, recurriendo a medidas individuales -como seguir las recomendaciones sanitarias indicadas y el distanciamiento social-, resulta importante reconocer que Internet necesita defenderse como un derecho humano y una herramienta libre, abierta e incluyente , para que todas las personas puedan tener las mismas garantías de acceder a todos los derechos en el ámbito digital y ejercerlos por igual.

"El acceso a Internet constituye una condición sine qua non para el ejercicio efectivo de los derechos humanos hoy en día, incluyendo especialmente los derechos a la libertad de expresión y opinión, asociación y reunión, educación, salud y cultura".[1] En ese sentido, desde ARTICLE 19 advertimos una seria preocupación en términos de la brecha digital que sigue permeando en nuestra sociedad. Según los datos de 2019 del Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, más de 30 millones de personas -de seis años o más de edad- continúan sin acceder a Internet.[2] Una brecha que aumenta por razón de género y las características asociadas con la inclusión generacional y la pertenencia lingüística y cultural que impactan en el ejercicio efectivo de los derechos humanos de ciertas poblaciones. Sin el acceso a las TIC, los recursos disponibles para cotejar y disponer de información necesaria se vuelve particularmente difícil en situaciones de crisis. Por esta razón, dado el contexto ocasionado por Covid-19 donde la salud propia depende de las decisiones de las y los demás, la brecha digital no solo resulta en un elemento de exclusión y discriminación para ciertos grupos en particular -específicamente para aquellos que ya se encuentran en una situación de desigualdad social-, sino también en una amenaza a la situación sanitaria del país. Por ello, ARTICLE 19 hace un llamado al Estado para que éste diseñe las estrategias de conectividad necesarias para que todas las personas puedan acceder a todos los derechos. Algunas de estas acciones podrían incluir el fortalecimiento de las redes comunitarias que permitan distribuir el Internet en comunidades indígenas del país, aprovechar la infraestructura pública para ampliar la gratuidad del acceso a Internet, así como, incrementar la banda ancha en donde actualmente se desarrollen proyectos de conec-

tividad.

En contraste, la población que sí tiene acceso a Internet, enfrenta diversos riesgos y fenómenos que ponen en riesgo el disfrute de sus derechos humanos en línea como sucede con las campañas de desinformación y la propagación del discurso de odio, discriminatorio o de apología de la violencia que ponen en juego el bienestar y la toma de decisiones de la sociedad. Lo anterior supone una carga diversa de responsabilidades para todas las partes involucradas en el despliegue y uso de las TIC, ya que el Consejo de Derechos Humanos de Naciones Unidas ha establecido que los derechos humanos deben de ser protegidos de igual manera en el entorno digital que en el físico, haciendo especial énfasis en la libertad de expresión conforme a la normatividad internacional aplicable en la materia.[3]

El derecho humano a la libertad de expresión entraña que, como regla general, todas las formas de discurso están protegidas, independientemente de su contenido y de la mayor o menor aceptación social y estatal con la que cuenten.[4] La dimensión social de este derecho habilita a las personas a conocer todo tipo de expresiones vertidas por terceros, su protección no se limita únicamente a aquellos discursos, declaraciones, ideas u opiniones concebidas como "correctas", "verificadas" o "verídicas".[5] Reconociendo lo anterior, desde ARTICLE 19 advertimos una seria preocupación por la existencia y viralidad de desinformación asociada al Covid-19, la cual distorsiona y confunde a la población, entorpeciendo y afectando la manera en la que ésta toma decisiones. Desde ARTICLE 19 reconocemos el trabajo de las iniciativas ciudadanas y periodísticas para verificar información, trabajo que no solo nos permite conocer qué contenidos provienen de fuentes oficiales nacionales e internacionales, comunidad científica, y comunidad de la salud pública, y cuáles provienen de fuentes dudosas o no verificadas; sino que también nos permite experimentar Internet de una forma más efectiva al hacernos de información que puede ayudarnos a procurar nuestra salud.

En la lucha contra las campañas de desinformación, las cuales buscan injerir en el derecho de la población a acceder a información necesaria para el resguardo de su salud, es importante que todas las partes involucradas realicemos distintos esfuerzos.

Por esto, hacemos un llamado a las plataformas digitales, para que éstas aseguren 1) el apego de sus políticas de servicio, sobre todo en términos de acciones restrictivas, como la suspensión de cuentas y la remoción de contenidos en contra de la desinformación en torno al Covid-19, con los estándares internacionales de derechos humanos, 2) garantías mínimas de debido proceso para apelar decisiones contrarias a la libertad de expresión, y 3) transparencia en sus acciones.[6] También, exhortamos al Estado a divulgar información actualizada sobre Covid-19 en México y recomendaciones sobre las estrategias de prevención a través de distintos medios, incluyendo las TIC, considerando las distintas características de los grupos poblacionales que conforman el país. Toda política y plan de acción en respuesta a la propagación del virus debe incluir compromisos de transparencia y divulgación de información precisa. Asimismo, debe asegurar las condiciones estructurales y sanitarias para habilitar que periodistas y medios de comunicación realicen su trabajo de informar a la sociedad.[7] Además, hacemos un llamado a periodistas y medios de comunicación, con ánimo de asegurar un apego al ejercicio ético de la profesión, procurando el cotejo y análisis entre la distinta información que surge en torno al brote. De igual forma, hacemos un llamado a la población en general, apelando a que los distintos contenidos disponibles en las TIC no se propaguen con tanta facilidad, y más bien se consulten fuentes oficiales -nacionales e internacionales- para evitar la dispersión de contenidos que generen pánico, o un falso sentido de seguridad.

Por último, en aras de salvaguardar la manera en que usuarias y usuarios experimentamos Internet en esta difícil época, resulta importante que seamos conscientes de la información que compartimos con las y los demás. La seguridad

digital es necesaria para que el goce de Internet sea libre y seguro. En un contexto donde el SARS-CoV-2/Covid-19 se propaga aceleradamente por el mundo, los ataques digitales también se intensifican. Phishing, malware y ransomware son algunos de los mecanismos accionados para obtener contraseñas, historiales de navegación, o bien, para solicitar dinero a cambio de desbloquear el teléfono como la aplicación para Android Covid-19 Tracker que se anunciaba como un servicio para alertar sobre las zonas afectadas por la pandemia pero terminaba infectando el teléfono con un código maliciosos que impedía al usuario o usuaria acceder a la información de su dispositivo. Desde ARTICLE 19 exhortamos a la población a ser cautelosa y crítica frente a la información que recibe y comparte con las y los demás. ∎

Fuente: Ciudad de México, 25 de marzo de 2020.

ARTICLE 19 es una organización independiente de Derechos Humanos que trabaja alrededor del mundo para promover el derecho a la libertad de expresión.

Notas

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How innovative news outlets are meeting the needs of immigrant communities

Center for Community Media

The Center for Community Media at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY has been investigating how a select group of independent news outlets are finding ways to grow and effectively serve immigrant communities under threat. But they could not have foreseen that a pandemic would engulf the globe as they were working on this report.

These outlets are seeing record traffic, as they demonstrate the critical roles they play informing their communities in crises. Houston Online started covering the damage to local Chinese-owned businesses on the app WeChat well before most U.S. outlets were paying attention locally. Jambalaya News is broadcasting live multiple times a day, answering listeners' questions in Spanish with the most reliable information the editors are able to obtain from local official sources in Louisiana. And Punjabi Radio USA is broadcasting and sending out via WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook reports on how new trade and work restrictions impact truckers, one of their main listener blocks.

Yet, while their news business may be booming, these outlets, many of which were experiencing growth in advertising before this crisis, are now seeing massive cancellations of those con-

tracts. Tightly linked to their communities, they tend to depend on other small immigrant-run businesses to support them with advertising.

The coronavirus crisis has made even lean, well-run outlets financially vulnerable. Now more than ever, dynamic and innovative immigrant media outlets such as these should be supported and sought out as key information distribution partners by larger media outlets, local governments and public agencies. While the editors and reporters we spoke with come from around the world and have different strengths in radio, print and digital, we also found that they have been successful at converging around multiplatform digital practices. Together, they have been carving out new roles that suggest opportunities for others in three key areas:

* Social media as a tool for growth in the age of fake news: In recent years the internet decimated classified ads, shrinking revenues for many immigrant-serving newspapers, while social media that amplified rumors decimated their audiences. Now, successful immigrant-serving outlets are embracing social media as a way to provide verified and trusted information, and thereby grow their audiences.

* Rise of live streaming and the "micro-TV" station: Media outlets serving immigrant communities are usually small operations. Broadcasting over the internet cuts costs dramatically, and the immediacy and shareability of a live broadcast from a news conference, community festival, or even a drive-through coronavirus testing station allow small outlets to compete with much bigger operations.

* Global production and audiences: Outlets hire staffers overseas to cut costs, while stateside reporters serve both the diaspora in the U.S. and home country audiences. The geolocation of audiences has shifted dramatically in recent years, as reverse migration, press restrictions overseas and far-flung diasporas boost audiences for immigrant media based in the U.S. Dynamic outlets are becoming transnational enterprises. One Bra-

zilian newspaper in Massachusetts reported it has 60% of its audience in the U.S. and 30% in Brazil.

News outlets serving immigrant communities have existed since before the founding of the United States. In a country of more than 44 million people born in other countries, more than half of whom are not proficient in English, these varied outlets have played a key civic orientation and integration role, and for many years also helped their audiences to track developments in their countries of origin.

Today, though, a Korean student in Michigan can click the search engine Naver on her cell phone to navigate to Seoul-based Chosun. In cities such as Los Angeles, parallel internets in scores of immigrant languages offer food recommendations, housing or job listings. Brazilian immigrants on Martha's Vineyard today can check out the Brazukada Facebook group to learn how the local food pantry is functioning during the coronavirus crisis, as well as to hear jokes in Portuguese or news of the birth of triplets.

These shifts, as well as the broad decline of local news, threaten immigrant media's sustainability. The Center for Community Media has responded by redirecting its mission to help outlets develop survival skills – and this report is part of that effort.

Even before the latest crisis, immigrant media outlets have been folding: In New Jersey alone, at least 19 ethnic and community media outlets serving the state closed from 2009 to 2019, according to a study by Montclair State University's Center for Cooperative Media. Many of the outlets that remain are glorified classified papers or radio stations that fit in a bit of national programming between songs.

Yet, in the face of incredible challenges – before the pending economic disaster – a select group of media outlets serving immigrant communities were finding ways to grow. To identify them, we asked immigrant organizers, media specialists, journalists and others to nominate outlets that demonstrated:

* Delivery of local news to immigrants, not just

music and entertainment
* Growth in audience, revenue, and/or staff
* Engagement with the communities they serve

Further, we decided that to qualify for inclusion in the report a nominated outlet must be based in the U.S.; independent and not funded by large influential players such as Univision, or Sing Tao Daily; and unaffiliated with any advocacy organizations at the present time. We reviewed coverage from more than 50 nominated sites, and interviewed representatives of more than 30 of them as well as audience members and outside experts.

Social media as a tool for growth in the age of fake news

As soon as news of the coronavirus broke, so did rumors of local outbreaks on social media. For Michigan Korean Weekly, the questions poured in through the social media app KakaoTalk from community members who did not trust the official government reports; at WJFD, the country's biggest Portuguese radio station, based in Massachusetts, via phone lines and Facebook Messenger, listeners worried about how the market closure would impact their Social Security.

In mid-February, someone created a fake post saying that there was an outbreak of coronavirus at a Los Angeles area Seafood City, a popular Filipino grocery chain. Christina Oriel, the editor of the LA-based Filipino newspaper Asian Journal, checked with the county's Department of Public Health which said it was false, and then she posted about it on Facebook, where the post was widely shared. Their audience, said Oriel, is looking for fact-checked news that counters fake news.

Being a trusted brand on social media leads to reporting that better serves the changing interests of audiences, especially as new waves of immigrants often have different perspectives than the editors determining coverage. For Mundo Hispánico, in Atlanta, with a Facebook audience of nearly 5 million followers, the feedback loop

has transformed coverage. "Your community is telling you what they want," said María Bastidas, digital content director at Mundo Hispánico. "That inverted the process."

The important part, she said, is essentially doing good beat reporting digitally in order to get people to share the content. That includes "being out there every single day with sources," and "social listening," or responding to sent messages and tagging the person when you respond to a news tip they submitted.

However, there aren't nearly enough trustworthy news outlets operating effectively on the diverse social media outlets that immigrant communities frequent. And the platforms demand dedicated and continuous verification of news and information by editors, especially as they engage audience members who may be reporting rumors and offering unreliable information in their comments.

Furthermore, using social media may reward immigrant news outlets with enormous audience growth, but that doesn't necessarily translate into revenue growth. Broadcasting via Facebook Live effectively may increase reach at low cost, but securing advertising dollars remains challenging for all outlets, in particular on these platforms. Nonetheless, growing audiences at least support the case for selling more ads.

Rise of live streaming and "micro-TV"

Long before cocktail parties held via Zoom thanks to the coronavirus, immigrants in New York used video conferencing to connect with loved ones. About 15 years ago, immigrants from Ecuador flocked to special video centers in Queens, while Dominicans connected via video in Washington Heights. Today, immigrant communities continue to be early adaptors in their communication practices, with live streaming particularly widespread.

In mid-March, New Orleans' Jambalaya News took its audience along as it checked out a drive-through coronavirus testing station and offered a Spanish-language summary of the mayor's press conference, while Nguoi Viet also

visited a coronavirus testing station, in Southern California. These two outlets, as well as Gazeta News and Punjabi Radio, also produced regular live studio updates, some of which generated more than 100 comments.

Smaller passion project outlets can also have an impact by embracing low-cost video broadcasting. By day, Richard Vang is an "unassuming heads-down, loyal employee" at Harley-Davidson headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. But when he returns to his suburban home at night, he descends the stairs to his basement closet, selects one of his many suits and transforms into an internationally known news anchor for Suab Hmong International Broadcasting Co. Suab Hmong, the "Voice of the Hmong," is among the oldest and most important U.S. outlets for the Hmong ethnic minority community, a stateless people that arrived in the U.S. after the Vietnam War, mostly as refugees from Laos, Vietnam and Thailand.

Recently, Vang has ventured outdoors to discuss Covid-19 with local experts and Hmong guests, as well as share stories from Laos and run public safety announcements. Before the crisis, Vang would travel on weekends to different Hmong communities from Wausau, Wisconsin to St. Paul to Sacramento, then edit footage for broadcast during the following week.

In Seattle, where the coronavirus first gathered strength on U.S. shores, Salaxley TV has been offering the Somali community news and reassurance. Founder Mohamad Atma, who started experimenting with YouTube broadcasting after finding a dearth of math videos in his native Somali, expanded to produce local information videos in 2016. In mid-March, Atma, an Uber driver, joined with other app-based drivers in front of an image of the Seattle skyline to explain the implications of the virus for their safety and to explore ways to get financial relief to drivers and other Somali immigrants.

Global production and audiences

Nguoi Viet, the Vietnamese newspaper and digital powerhouse based in Orange County's Little Saigon, publishes multiple newsletters a day. Its YouTube videos have a larger audience outside the U.S. than in the U.S. As it tracks the coronavirus on its various platforms, including the newspaper it has published for four decades, it is not only informing its Orange County audience about what is going on, but also giving Vietnamese around the world a sense of what the community in the U.S. is experiencing.

And just as many immigrant-serving media outlets are globalizing their audiences, they are globalizing some of their labor inputs. Many take advantage of lower production costs abroad, using editors, graphic designers, or radio DJs located in home countries.

In the coming months, the globalization of both production and audiences may not be enough to save many news outlets that serve immigrants. The ad downturn is likely to be devastating, and shouldering the burden of lost revenues will be impossible for many. The five outlets profiled, though, show that immigrant-serving media can achieve greater relevance, responsiveness and impact, and can do so by being lean and nimble in adapting to changing and even difficult circumstances. Many of the platforms and strategies they've used can be tried by others, and may offer at least a chance of achieving sustainability during the very tough months ahead.

None of the five outlets profiled are non-profits. They do not receive grants. If we lose them and others like them, moving forward it will become even harder to keep our society as a whole, including our immigrant communities, informed. And that will hurt all of us. ∎

The Internet is becoming a battlefield

Daví Nelson Betts

The World Wide Web, the global digital telecommunication networks, the "Cloud", the wide spread availability of digital communication devices (computers, notebooks, tablets and smartphones) and the rapidly growing presence of IOT (Internet Of Things) are creating and accumulating a massive amount of data accessible to millions of individuals, corporations, social agencies and governments.

The way this data is used is an enormous challenge for Christian communicators, as well as for the public in general. One must note at this point that there are also millions who do not have any access to this digital environment and yet are impacted by it: the digital divide.

The accelerated use of Artificial Intelligence and the resulting capacity in generating valid information and knowledge – only possible by this large amount of data, which allows for computers to be able to learn and make decisions – raise significant concerns about privacy, security, and the legitimate use of data.

Social media and Artificial Intelligence will continue to impact, in an extraordinary manner, the current scenario of a globalized digital society. The consequences have both positive and negative aspects. They can build or destroy, they can unite or separate, they can include or exclude. Ultimately, they can result in a mix of all of these. If on the one hand knowledge itself is being used to manipulate people and foster *engaged ignorance and death*, on the other hand wisdom is bringing liberation and enrichment of life.

The challenge is to use this extraordinary potential of the digital transformation that society is undergoing to build community, quality life, and human wellbeing. But to do so it is necessary to understand the processes that are happening in the global communications network. This article will illustrate two generic, contrasting paths present in the digital communications environment, which in many circumstances exchange data, strategies and techniques with varied and diverse consequences.

Diversity and interaction

Media awareness has always been a key issue for Christian communicators and has become even more critical in the digital and connected world. Awareness programs, such as the TAT (Television Awareness Training) in the late 1970s, were developed in larger or smaller scale as new media formats appeared and matured. Print, radio and television were a one-way channel, with very little interaction possible, and with a limited number of players in the field.

The great change that the Internet initially brought was a growing number of different sources and the possibility of direct interaction through computers. However, it has been the wide coverage of wireless Internet and the arrival of touch screen cellular phones and tablets that have definitely changed the scenario. Communication is now many to many, thousands to thousands from wherever they are. The fast growing market for IOT devices is adding even more data to the already incredible amount stored around the world.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced the creation of strategies to allow the continuation of everyday life in the presence of a virus still to be better known and controlled. Implementing social distancing and the closure of social physical spaces forced people to find ways to interact in virtual environments and work and study from home, thus promoting and greatly accelerating the digital transformation.

Changes are visible in the demand for social, emotional and technological skills, as well
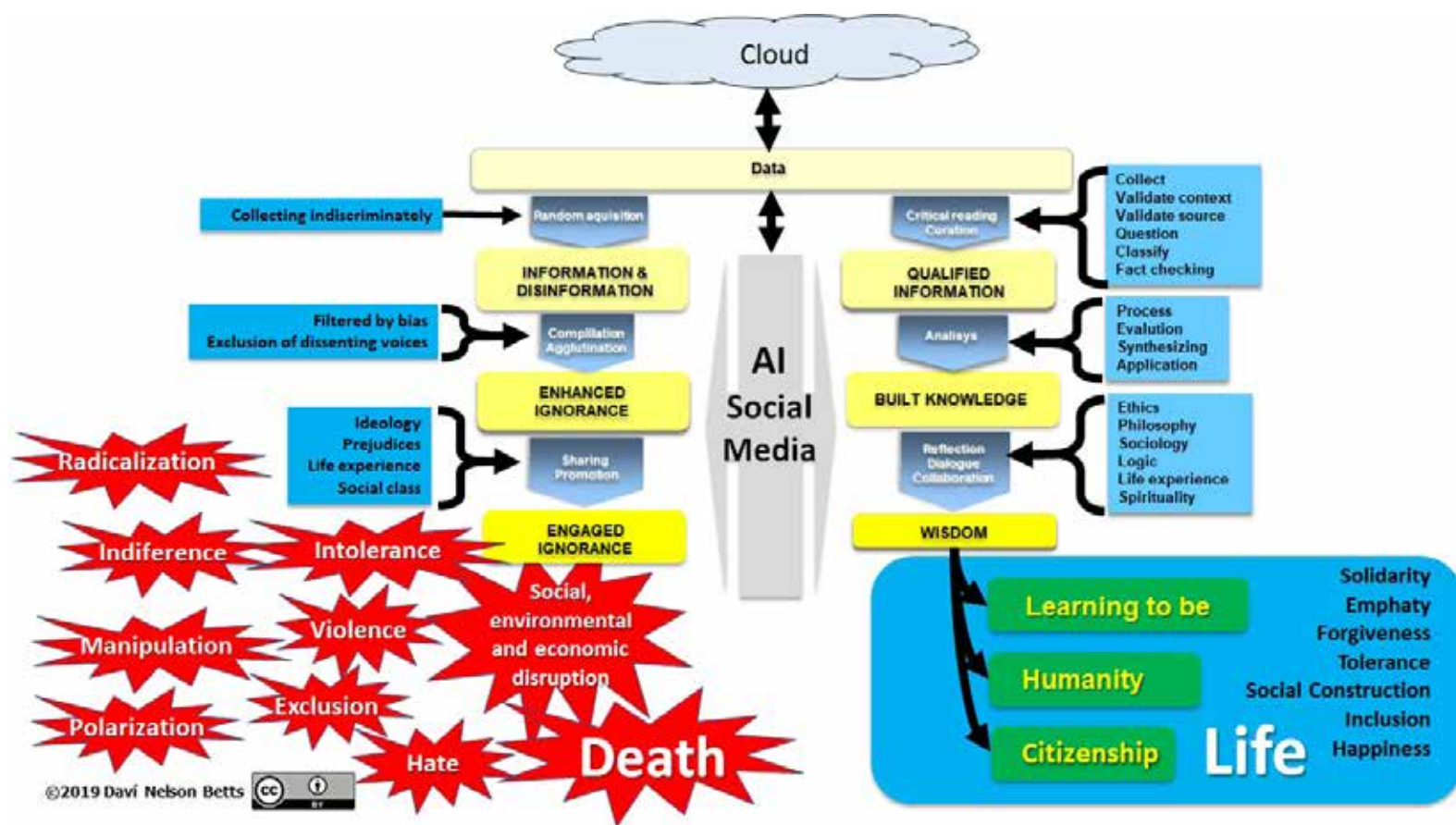
Fig. 1 Engaged Ignorance x Wisdom

as the development of a set of "administrative" skills such as knowledge management, time management, self-discipline, objectivity and productivity to name just a few. All these skills are interdependent with each other and with other competencies essential to persons being inserted into a context of accelerated transformation.

Critical reading and data collection

A recommended path for a healthy journey over the Internet includes *critical reading* and *data curation*, that is collecting, validating context and source, questioning, categorizing, classifying and fact checking. This should result in qualified information.

One of the most common dangers is the widespread consumption and impulsive sharing of fake news. We tend to accept as true the information that reflects our personal beliefs, but it is important to check the veracity of it before spreading it further on. One can find good advice about testing a piece of news to decide about its credibility at sites like this.

Use of the *5WH* rule of good journalism: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. A complete piece of news should answer these six questions.

Another element to consider is the issue of trust about information. Who do you trust? Four simple questions can help you decide whether to trust or not:

1. What do I want to know, and who is well qualified to answer me?

2. What is the reputation and history of that person or that source of information?

3. Did the person or source check the information it gave me?

4. Is my unconscious trust in something or someone being influenced by my personal opinions?

Building knowledge is a dynamic and often long process. At times tedious, but in many instances very energizing. It is a result of analysing qualified information, which involves processing, evaluating, synthesizing and application.

If the processes of reflection and dialogue are based on knowledge and follow guidelines such as ethics, philosophy, sociology, logic, life experience and spirituality, it will result in wisdom, which is the ability to use knowledge and

experience to make good decisions and judgement. Basically, learning to be, to know how to decide well, to exercise citizenship and to develop our humanity expressed in solidarity, empathy, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, inclusion, social construction and happiness, ultimately life.

A not so healthy journey over the Internet involves the indiscriminate acquisition of data, collecting it without validating, questioning or qualifying the data, resulting in a random mix of information and disinformation.

The compilation and lumping together of information and disinformation, filtered by bias, exclusion of "dissenting voices", in a systematic manner results in *enhanced ignorance*.

Accelerated sharing, indiscriminate replication and pushing, individually or in association with other sources, of the content of enhanced ignorance fosters *engaged ignorance,* which results in polarization, indifference, radicalization, intolerance, violence, social, economic and environmental disruption, manipulation, hatred and ultimately death.

The social media scenario is evolving in what might be called a digital polarization pandemic. As an example, the growing number of hate messages and persons being "cancelled", even within families, and numerous "internet media bubbles". The internet is becoming a battlefield for ideology, fanaticism, idealism, political and economic power. Yet it is also an opportunity to build community, hope, justice, quality life and human wellbeing.

The challenge for Christian communicators is how to be constructive and influential voices in this evolving scenario, which is having such a great impact on society and on the lives of persons. Both the connected and the connected-less in our world. Quality communication is not always an easy endeavour in this globalized and diverse reality with its glaring contradictions. Digital literacy for ethical and safe use of the Internet are critical in the globally connected world. Having well designed, continually updated, and effective digital media awareness programs can be a good beginning. ∎

Repensando la comunicación ecuménica desde el legado de las comunidades proféticas

Rolando Pérez

La crisis que vivimos hoy nos plantea nuevamente la urgencia de distanciarnos no solo de las lógicas mediatistas de la comunicación, sino también de las racionalidades etnocéntricas que nos impiden pasar de la cultura del individualismo para abrazarnos de aquellas prácticas que se construyen desde la lógica del "nosotros y nosotras", es decir de la construcción de comunidad. Este es un aspecto clave para nosotros los comunicadores y comunicadores ligados a la comunidad global de la WACC. Ha sido central en nuestro recorrido el hecho de asumir que la comunicación crea y construye comunidad. Este es uno de los puntos centrales nuestros principios como movimiento.

Iniciando esta presentación, me gustaría mencionar dos aspectos a manera de una lectura preliminar sobre el modo como las comunidades de fe están enfrentando comunicacionalmente su presencia en la sociedad y su incidencia en la esfera pública o, para decirlo en términos de Nancy Fraser, en las esferas públicas que se construyen en esta época.

En primer lugar, observo un sobredimensionamiento de la producción y el consumo

mediático que la virtualidad –en el contexto del confinamiento– ha acrecentado en este tiempo. La cultura de la hipervisibilidad y el hiperconsumismo empieza a conducirnos a una suerte de eliminación de la alteridad (Han, 2017). Y me parece un riesgo, porque si bien no es posible dejar de desenvolvernos en el escenario que han construido los medios, especialmente el de las redes sociales, al mismo tiempo el mediatismo difusionista y consumista puede llevarnos a colocar en segundo plano la dimensión del encuentro con el otro, la convivencia con lo distinto, del valor del rostro y la palabra construida desde la experiencia de la comunidad. Y este constituye uno de los desafíos que enfrentan las iglesias de cara al desarrollo de una pastoral en los escenarios de la sociedad digital y los territorios de la virtualidad.

La práctica comunicacional del mediatismo puede volver a reavivar la cultura del proselitismo religioso que animó el tele-evangelismo en los 80s en América Latina, y que no solo correspondió a una estrategia del uso de las tecnologías mediáticas para difundir y legitimar las creencias evangélicas sino también a una forma de concebir las estrategias de evangelización, que puso el acento en el conversionismo individualista y en el discurso evangélico mesiánico. Su estrategia puso en relevancia el mensaje y sus efectos, pero no las necesidades, demandas cotidianas y contextuales de la gente (Smith, 2001).

En general, este contexto mediatista nos invita a repensar no solo el lugar y el papel de los medios para construir nuestros vínculos y relaciones como sociedad, sino también en la recuperación de las mediaciones sociales desde las que se alimentan nuestras creencias, nuestras percepciones, imaginarios, sueños y utopías. Es importante tomar en cuenta que muchas historias, encuentros, interacciones y relatos de comunidad ocurren más allá de los medios, los cuales necesitamos reconocer y visibilizar. Hay un mundo que se construye en otras esferas que no necesariamente pasan por la agenda mediática, y que la cultural mediatista tiende a invisibilizarlo. El desafío es mayor en un contexto como el de la pandemia que nos imposibilita encontrarnos

cara cara, tocarnos y sentirnos presencialmente. Pero, como algunos analistas han mencionado, hace demasiado que convivimos con el virus y sus dispositivos de fragmentación, de disolución de lo social. "El virus nos ha servido como un mero amplificador de lo que ya sabíamos: habitamos una casa atravesada por fragmentaciones de clase, de raza y género producidas por un sistema basado en medidas extractivistas de los cuerpos, de la tierra y de todo lo comunitario" (Meloni, 2020).

En este contexto, la desterritorialización digital plantea a las iglesias el desafío de construir nuevos sentidos de comunidad y de repensar una estrategia de comunicación que supere el mediatismo difusionista para generar desde los medios y otros espacios de comunicación nuevas prácticas que acerquen a la gente para afirmar solidaridades y búsquedas del bien común, que contribuyan, como diría Ernesto Sábato, a construir aquellos relatos que ayuden a trazar las huellas de la historia de la que somos responsables.

Mayor presencia e incidencia religiosa

En segundo lugar, desde el campo religioso observamos una intensa disputa de las narrativas respecto a la construcción de poder en la esfera pública entre los que conciben la apropiación de lo público desde las teologías pluralistas y aquellos que se mueven desde la lógica de las teologías fundamentalistas (Sousa, 2014). Se puede percibir una mayor presencia e incidencia religiosa en los contextos y escenarios que se construyen más allá de la sociedad eclesial, entre la sociedad civil y la sociedad política. A diferencia del pasado se observa hoy la emergencia de una suerte de activismo religioso mediático animado desde el fundamentalismo, con una clara estrategia de apropiación del espacio público y conquista del poder político (Cunha, 2018). En este contexto, los fundamentalismos políticos y religiosos convergen cada vez más. Esta alianza está marcada por el común interés que ambos tienen respecto a la batalla por la regulación de determinadas cosmovisiones y prácticas morales integristas.

En el contexto de la pandemia, determinados grupos fundamentalistas han acentuado su discurso mediático etnocéntrico, desplazando la preocupación por el bien común y la solidaridad con las víctimas, y afirmando los discursos que legitiman la inminencia escatológica, sacralizan las teorías conspirativas y reviven las antiguas dicotomías entre fe y ciencia.

En el marco de estos aspectos que llaman mi atención, quisiera plantear algunas reflexiones alrededor del rol comunicacional que podemos jugar desde nuestras comunidades y organizaciones de fe en el contexto actual. Y dado que este tiempo de confinamiento y distanciamiento social nos ha vuelto un poco nostálgicos y nos ha llevado a valorar los espacios, relaciones, encuentros y momentos que en la presencialidad nos dieron tantas gratificaciones y nos traen a la memoria imágenes que renuevan nuestra esperanza ahora, estuve pensando en qué imagen del pasado reciente nos podría ayudar para extraer aprendizajes comunicacionales para este tiempo.

Entonces inmediatamente vino a mi memoria los años que me tocó ser parte de un grupo de jóvenes en mi país, el Perú, que decidimos entregarnos en cuerpo y alma al servicio del acompañamiento a las víctimas de la violencia política, durante el conflicto armado en mi país, entre 1980 y 2000). Y luego pensé que esta misma experiencia tuvieron muchos de mis amigos en sus propios países, quienes en esta misma época hicieron militancia desde la comunicación en favor de la justicia, la verdad y la paz en tiempos de dictaduras y violencias. Dicho sea de paso, esta lucha aún continúa. Aun acompañamos a las víctimas de las violencias y dictaduras que claman por verdad y justicia. La lucha por la memoria sigue siendo un eje central de nuestra apuesta por una sociedad más justa, más humana, más libre de las opresiones.

Entonces, quiero llevarles a repensar nuestras estrategias de comunicación para este tiempo desde el legado de las comunidades proféticas que desarrollaron estrategias de comunicación en favor de la vida y los derechos en aquellos tiempos en los que las comunidades de fe tran-

sitaban en medio de las disputas de las mismas narrativas teológicas y pastorales que resurgen en este tiempo.

En el caso del Perú, fueron los agentes de las iglesias que, especialmente en las comunidades rurales se enfrentaron a ambas huestes fundamentalistas, a las del movimiento Sendero Luminoso y a las de las fuerzas armadas, al terrorismo senderista y el terrorismo de estado.

El caso de las comunidades y organizaciones de fe que acompañaron a las víctimas durante las violencias y dictaduras debería constituir un modelo pastoral de la comunicación que puede ser útil para trabajar con otros sectores, que, por otras circunstancias, viven en situaciones de exclusión y son víctimas de otras violencias.

Planteo aquí algunos de los rasgos de este modelo que pienso que es importante considerarlo para repensar nuestras estrategias de comunicación ecuménica en este tiempo:

* Primero la experiencia de los agentes de la fe que se enfrentaron a los fundamentalismos en tiempos del autoritarismo y la violencia política tiene que ver con una dimensión ecuménica de la pastoral de la comunicación que se gestó y se construyó desde el acompañamiento a las víctimas de la violencia. Esta práctica ecuménica de la comunicación se generó desde la interlocución, desde la creación de espacios para el encuentro y desde el caminar con la diversidad. En medio del acompañamiento a las víctimas de la violencia, los agentes pastorales católicos y evangélicos nos enseñaron que lo ecuménico hay que construirlo desde el caminar con la gente, especialmente con aquellos y aquellas a quienes el sistema los y las excluye e intenta extinguirlos (Han, 2017).

* La experiencia de las comunidades proféticas durante el conflicto nos ofrece un modelo de práctica ecuménica en favor del bien común, de la justicia y de la promoción de los derechos, que nos invita a pensar que nuestros proyectos de comunicación en el ámbito público deben hacerse desde la lógica

del reconocimiento, el empoderamiento y la visibilidad de aquellos rostros de la exclusión. Y esto es vital en la comunicación profética porque, como sostiene Emmanuel Levinas (1993), el encuentro con el rostro del otro, de la otra persona me recuerda mi responsabilidad ética y me interpela a comprometerme con su situación de marginación

* El segundo rasgo de este modelo nos permite apreciar una perspectiva de la evangelización que se distanció del modelo conversionista mesiánico y de la lógica del proselitismo religioso que no construye diálogos ni promueve el encuentro ni la interlocución. Las comunidades cristianas que acompañaron a las víctimas de la violencia colocaron el sentido solidario y acogedor de la pastoral como un eje central. Ellos y ellas nos enseñaron que de lo que se trata es de construir comunidades de puertas abiertas, preocupadas por restaurar y reparar más que por adoctrinar y colonizar. Precisamente, la cultura de las puertas abiertas y del acogimiento sin fronteras hizo que muchos creyentes fueran asesinados, porque los violentistas e integristas no entienden el valor de la solidaridad y la búsqueda de la justicia y la verdad.

* En tercer lugar, este modelo de acompañamiento pone un énfasis especial en el empoderamiento y visibilización de los rostros y demandas de las víctimas. Esto fue posible observarlo en la estrategia que desplegaron los grupos vinculados a las comunidades de fe, junto con otros actores de la sociedad civil, en el sentido de lograr que el relato de las víctimas sobre lo que ocurrió durante la guerra constituyera un aspecto relevante durante el proceso de reconstrucción de la memoria. Este modelo podría inspirar a otros proyectos de comunicación que tienen el desafío de deconstruir comunicacionalmente las narrativas de poder que invisibilizan los rostros y las voces de las víctimas, de los y las que sufren por las violencias de los autoritarismos y se enfrentan a sistemas que legitiman la opresión y se constituyen

en cómplices de aquellos que trabajan para poner grandes muros que impiden la construcción de cimientos reales de paz –de Shalom – y justicia, de vida plena.

Al hacer memoria de este pasaje de nuestra historia, me puse a pensar que necesitamos construir un puente o varios puentes de comunicación entre esta experiencia profética del pasado con aquello que enfrentamos hoy en medio de las mismas disputas de las narrativas teológicas y comunicacionales, para seguir afirmando nuestra apuesta por una comunicación profética activa en contraste con los movimientos y lógicas comunicacionales integristas y anti derechos. Así como en el pasado, seguimos bregando porque el derecho a la comunicación no se quede en las declaraciones, sino que sea una realidad, especialmente para nuestros hermanos y hermanas, cuya palabra es constantemente anulada y cuyos rostros son permanentemente invisibilizados.

En el caso de Perú, es interesante observar que esa misma iglesia que se enfrentó al fundamentalismo cuasi religioso de Sendero Luminoso, y al autoritarismo de las fuerzas represoras desde el Estado, hoy fácilmente se abraza con los proyectos religiosos que inciden desde esa misma lógica en otras esferas y agendas que afectan la democracia, y socaban los cimientos de nuestra convivencia ciudadana.

Al enfrentar a los violentistas, de uno y otro lado, las comunidades de fe construyeron ciudadanía, afirmaron la democracia, resistieron la violencia, combatieron el terrorismo. Esta experiencia pastoral y ciudadana debería ser capitalizada para seguir construyendo modelos alternativos de misión y pastoral que se convierta en alternativa frente al neo-fundamentalismo religioso que hace alianza con el totalitarismo político contemporáneo, para incidir desde su agenda religiosa exclusivista en la agenda y las políticas públicas.

En el caso colombiano, ha sido evidente observarlo en el plebiscito sobre los acuerdos de paz, en el que estos sectores hicieron una abierta campaña por el NO, poniendo por delante su agenda religiosa mesiánica y etnocéntrica, de-

spreciando la oportunidad histórica para construir un modelo de ciudadanía que no concilia con las opresiones.

Desafíos para una pastoral desde la comunicación ecuménica

1. Cruzar las fronteras comunicacionales diversas

El nuevo contexto nos platea el desafío de cruzar las fronteras comunicacionales para transitar no solo entre los diversos medios y espacios de comunicación, sino fundamentalmente entre la pluralidad de sujetos y cosmovisiones para construir nuevos espacios públicos dentro y fuera de las iglesias, a fin de que podamos dialogar y escucharnos, dar visibilidad a las voces que reclaman comunidades en las que las opresiones, violencias e intolerancias sean eliminadas.

Este enfoque nos invita a repensar el valor de la alteridad y la otredad en nuestras prácticas comunicativas, que implica construir un discurso ético pensado no sólo desde nuestros presupuestos políticos, teológicos o culturales, tradicionalmente institucionalizados. Hace falta recrear, repensar y afirmar nuestros discursos de evangelización desde la interacción con los diversos actores de la sociedad, tomando en cuenta los nuevos lenguajes y relatos que la gente usa para expresar y canalizar sus demandas y propuestas.

2. Incidir desde las veredas ecuménicas más amplias

Un segundo desafío pasa por desarrollar estrategias de incidencia pública que trasciendan la lógica de la construcción de aquellas incidencias que se construyen desde la perspectiva de la afirmación de las agendas religiosas exclusivistas, para inaugurar una lógica de la acción comunicativa que conciba la importancia de abordar los problemas sociales y contribuir a las transformaciones estructurales junto y en diálogo con otros actores de la sociedad.

Esto implica construir una comunidad de cristianos y cristianas que estén dispuestos a insertarse en los espacios y movimientos que se construyen desde las fronteras y veredas ecuménicas y ciudadanas más amplias.

Aquí necesitamos revisar nuestras propias prácticas para reconocer que nuestros propios movimientos no logran aún transitar fluidamente en las veredas no eclesiásticas e insertarse en aquellos espacios donde las resistencias y las protestas se construyen aprendiendo a convivir con lo diverso. Sin embrago, es importante mencionar que observamos hoy una variedad de grupos, organizaciones y redes provenientes de las comunidades de fe que –desde la lógica de la disidencia y las prácticas contestatarias frente a los autoritarismos y fundamentalismos– vienen sensibilizando e incidiendo en el espacio público, abrazando la utopía de que otro mundo es posible. Pero, aun necesitamos construir más vínculos y esfuerzos integrados entre los actores de esta comunidad ecuménica y profética. Es estratégico superar la fragmentación de las iniciativas que se construyen desde la vereda del progresismo cristiano en la región.

En esa misma línea, es importante desarrollar una permanente y estratégica inserción en los espacios y procesos que se construyen desde la sociedad civil, así como en aquellas instancias estatales desde las que se conciben y desarrollan las políticas públicas. Esto requiere construir puentes permanentes de diálogo con los otros actores públicos. Por lo tanto, el esfuerzo por salir del gueto religioso para insertarse en la esfera pública, requiere el desarrollo de una pastoral de la ciudadanía que implique el involucramiento de los miembros de nuestras comunidades de fe en los procesos ciudadanos que se afirman de la defensa de los derechos. Esto implica reconocer que las iniciativas proféticas se construyen no solo desde la iglesia, por lo que el desafío de los colectivos, redes y comunidades de fe es el de construir caminos y proyectos con aquellos actores que no necesariamente se mueven en la vereda religiosa.

Esto supone construir un liderazgo público que exige que las iglesias y organizaciones cristianas generen sus propios espacios internos de diálogo y de discusión sobre las implicancias públicas y la trascendencia política de sus prácticas pastorales o misiológicas.

3. Visibilizar los rostros y narrativas proféticas

Necesitamos rescatar las historias que dan cuenta de las narrativas proféticas del pasado y el presente, y colocarlas en las plataformas que permitan no solo generar diálogo, sino también procesos pedagógicos que afirmen los derechos. Es vital que podamos conocer y reconocer las múltiples historias de hombres y mujeres que desde sus contextos han resistido y están resistiendo cotidianamente a los autoritarismos y opresiones. La visibilidad nos ayudará a hacer propias las alegrías, las luchas, las dudas y esperanzas de aquellos y aquellas que caminan diariamente en nuestra misma vereda y que requieren gestos solidarios en medio de su lucha.

La visibilización de las historias que se han construido o se construyen desde las comunidades de fe proféticas no solo contribuye a re-actualizar las fuentes teológicas fundantes de la lucha de agentes pastorales que decidieron hacer una opción teológica y pastoral en favor de la justicia y la no violencia, sino también da cuenta del modo como en medio de las memorias de colonización también se reactivan las memorias de resistencia cultural desde nuestras comunidades (De La Torre, 2013).

Esta visibilidad y empoderamiento público de los rostros proféticos de las iglesias y comunidades de fe es clave en un contexto en el que observamos una incidencia pública cada vez más creciente de aquellos sectores y actores religiosos fundamentalistas que desde su integrismo de fe y su agenda religiosa reduccionista buscan construir agendas públicas e incidir en la construcción las políticas públicas, desde una perspectiva que contrarresta no solo nuestras culturas democráticas, sino también los procesos de laicización en el continente.

Esta estrategia de visibilización de los rostros de las iglesias desde una lógica ciudadana puede tener un impacto pedagógico no solo a nivel de la comunidad política más amplia, sino también al interior de nuestras propias comunidades de fe e instituciones eclesiásticas en donde encontramos aún ciertas resistencias para construir una iglesia sensible al clamor de aquellos y aquellas que claman por más justicia e inclusión, más respeto a sus derechos y menos atropello a su dignidad.

Desde esta perspectiva, los comunicadores cristianos podemos construir un discurso teológico y una práctica pastoral profética en la esfera pública que sea alternativa, pero no marginal, y que al mismo tiempo desarrolle una pedagogía pastoral para una ciudadanía activa.

Apuntes finales

En un contexto en el que se legitiman los nuevos integrismos y totalitarismos político-religiosos, la experiencia de las comunidades proféticas durante los procesos de conflicto armado, violencia y dictaduras nos ofrece un modelo pastoral alternativo que se construyó desde la búsqueda del bien común, la defensa de los derechos y el acogimiento del excluido. Necesitamos mirar esta experiencia reciente para seguir encaminando la contribución reconciliadora y profética de las iglesias frente a los nuevos movimientos que alimentan e incitan las violencias, opresiones y discriminaciones de este tiempo

Este legado de la comunicación ecuménica nos desafía a trascender y superar la lógica difusionista y descontextualizada de la comunicación del Evangelio, alentada en el pasado principalmente por proyectos de evangelización vinculados al "tele-evangelismo proselitista" y el conservadurismo evangélico mediático.

En ese sentido, desde una perspectiva encarnada y humanizadora de la comunicación, necesitamos desarrollar iniciativas y proyectos pastorales que:

* Afirmen los valores del Reino de Dios desde la perspectiva de la interlocución y el diálogo inclusivo en las esferas públicas.
* Visibilicen las voces y rostros de las comunidades y personas silenciadas desde el poder político y mediático.
* Impulsen incidencias públicas proféticas, que contrasten con la lógica de la legitimación de agendas religiosas exclusivistas y discriminadoras. Se trata de incidir en las

esferas y las políticas públicas para fortalecer iniciativas plurales de ciudadanía, visibilizar narrativas que pueden ayúdanos a desarrollar propuestas de comunicación que construyan y crean comunidad, que celebren la diversidad cultural, que ayuden a construir vínculos comunitarios y que generen las condiciones para que disfrutemos del SHALOM, del bienestar, de la vida plena.

Esto implica, por un lado, recrear nuevas estrategias de comunicación tomando en cuenta los nuevos sujetos y escenarios que se construyen desde las nuevas redes y medios de comunicación, pero también desde los espacios de mediación social –tanto al interior nuestras congregaciones como en la propia sociedad –procurando construir procesos de comunicación a partir del reconocimiento de la pluralidad y la necesidad de afirmar sentidos más amplios y ecuménicos de comunidad. ∎

Presentado en el "webinar" sobre El impacto del COVID-19 en la comunicación ecuménica en América Latina, organizado por la Asociación mundial para la comunicación cristiana (WACC) América Latina, el 25 de agosto de 2020.

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Open letter against hate speech and incitement to discrimination and violence

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

On 23 September 2019, an open letter by 30 independent UN experts was published calling on all States and social media firms to take immediate action to contain the spread of hate speech and incitement to discrimination and violence.

We are alarmed by the recent increase in hateful messages and incitement to discrimination and hatred against migrants, minority groups and various ethnic groups, as well as the defenders of their rights, in numerous countries. Hate speech, both online and offline, has exacerbated societal and racial tensions, inciting attacks with deadly consequences around the world. It has become mainstream in political systems worldwide and threatens democratic values, social stability and peace. Hate-fuelled ideas and advocacy coarsen public discourse and weaken the social fabric of countries.

Through international human rights law and principles, States have committed to combating racial discrimination, racialized violence, and xenophobia. These international human rights standards guarantee equality and non-discrimination rights and require States to take strong action against racist and xenophobic speech and to prohibit advocacy of national,

racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

We are gravely concerned that leaders, senior government officials, politicians and other prominent figures spread fear among the public against migrants or those seen as "the others", for their own political gain. The demonization of entire groups of people as dangerous or inferior is not new to human history; it has led to catastrophic tragedies in the past. Around the world, we observe that public figures are attempting to stoke ethnic tensions and violence by spreading hate speech targeting the vulnerable.

Such rhetoric aims to dehumanise minority groups and other targeted people, and, in the case of migrants, fosters discriminatory discourse about who "deserves" to be part of a community. Furthermore, hateful calls for the suppression of non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities and a limitation of the human rights of LGBT people limit progress towards the eradication of violence and discrimination against LGBT persons in various countries around the world, and a number of discriminatory legal and policy initiatives have been put forward.

The rhetoric of hatred must be countered, as it has real-life consequences. Studies have established a correlation between exposure to hate speech and the number of hate crimes committed. To curb xenophobic attacks on migrants and prevent incitement to discrimination, hatred, hostility and violence against other marginalised groups, we call on public officials and politicians, as well as the media, to assume their collective responsibility to promote societies that are tolerant and inclusive. To achieve this, they must refrain from any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. They should also denounce swiftly those who incite hatred against migrants, minorities, or other vulnerable groups.

This is not a call for further restriction on freedom of expression, which is under attack worldwide; we call for just the opposite, the promotion of free expression. Freedom of expression serves as a vital tool to counter hate speech, and yet those same public figures who deploy hateful rhetoric often seek to restrict individual rights to speak and respond and defend themselves and their ideas. It is of crucial importance that States ensure that the three-part test for restrictions to freedom of expression – legality, proportionality and necessity – also applies to cases of incitement to hatred.

We are concerned about the abuse of "hate speech" as a term to undermine legitimate dissent and urge States to address the core problems addressed by human rights law while promoting rights to privacy, culture, non-discrimination, public protest and peaceful assembly, public participation, freedom of religion and belief, and the freedom of opinion and expression. We urge them to follow the standards adopted in the Rabat Plan of Action and to participate actively in the Istanbul Process to counter the intolerance we see worldwide.

We call on States to double their efforts to hold accountable those who have incited or perpetrated violence against migrants and other vulnerable groups. Traditional and social media companies should exercise due diligence to ensure that they do not provide platforms for hate speech and for incitement to hatred and violence. States should actively work towards policies that guarantee the rights to equality and non-discrimination and freedom of expression, as well as the right to live a life free of violence through the promotion of tolerance, diversity and pluralistic views; these are the centre of pluralistic and democratic societies. We believe that these efforts will help make countries safer, and foster the inclusive and peaceful societies that we would all like and deserve to live in. ∎

Source: OHCHR

Kyiv (Ukraine) 2020

At the 49th Molodist-Kyiv International Film Festival held 22-30 Augustr 2020, the prize of the online Ecumenical Jury in the International Competition of Full-Length Feature Films went to *Canción sin nombre (Song Without a Name)* directed by Melina León (Peru, Spain, USA, 2019).

Director Melina Leon's monochrome drama (still below) is set in Peru in the late 1980s at the height of the civil war. It is a true-life case of a young pregnant indigenous woman, who is preyed upon by baby traffickers setting up transient fake maternity clinics. Assisted by a journalist from Lima in the search for her baby and justice, the film uses frequent close-ups on Georgina's face and a lonesome guitar score to depict the worldwide suffering and struggle of mothers in a hostile surrounding.

In addition, the Jury awarded a Special Commendation to *Kuessipan* directed by by Myriam Verreault (Canada, 2019). The first narrative film by Myriam Verreault tells the story of Mikuan and Shaniss, two young Innu women in Uashat-Maliotenam, whose lifelong friendship is put to the test by several turns of fate. A story about friendship, courage, family background and carving your own path out of the solid rock that life can be. Set in a very specific community but with a universal appeal, this feature film sparks hope despite its dramatic events.

In the International Student Films Competition, the Jury awarded its Prize to *Elli* directed by Vivian Hartmann (Germany, 2019). Elli, techno DJane and mother of an 11-year-old daughter, is fully immersed in the modern society's dilemma to tackle professional ambition, passion (for music) and childcare. Elli and Toni struggle hard but their strong bond gives the viewer the trust that they will manage to overcome their difficulties together. A short film that nourishes the debate about women's life choices.

In the International Short Films Competition, the Jury awarded its Prize to *Bullmastiff* directed by Anastasiia Bukovska (Ukraine, 2020). With a strong leading male, Bukovska tells us a Ukrainian story of the timeless and universal dilemma of men returning home from war and having to carry the burden of their traumatic experiences. She also shows us a way out of the darkness of post-traumatic stress syndrome: building a loving relationship with "man's best friend".

The members of the Ecumenical Jury at the 49th Molodist Kyiv Film Festival were: Viktoriia Gosudarska, Kyiv (Ukraine); Rolf Deen, Heemskerk (The Netherlands); Barbara Schantz-Derboven, Lüneburg (Germany) – President.

Chemnitz (Germany) 2020

At the 25th Schlingel International Film Festival for Children and Young Audience held 10-17 October 2020, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *Le voyage du prince* (The Prince's Voyage) directed by Jean-François Laguionie and Xavier Picard (France, Luxembourg,

2019), (still above).

Motivation: This entertaining yet intelligent animated film sensitively uses a parable to illustrate different civilisations and behaviours. It takes us into a world of human-shaped monkeys. This allegory invites to a journey to question man as the crown of creation from one's own and other people's perspective. The film succeeds in inspiring all generations to reflect on universal ethical values.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *Sestrenka* (My Little Sister)directed by Alexander Galibin (Russia, 2019).

Motivation: This classically narrated, touching children's film leads into a remote Bashkir village at the end of the Second World War. The pranks of six-year-old Jamil reflect this time

and the longing for the return of his father from the Front. The loving reception of the frightened orphan girl Oksana in the family becomes a powerful image of friendship, trust, responsibility and confidence. Outstanding: the performances of the two young protagonists.

Members of the 2020 Jury: Anna-Maria Kégl (Germany); Josef Nagel (Germany); Eleonore Sladeck (President of the Jury, Germany).

Warsaw (Poland) 2020

At the 36th International Film Festival Warsaw held 9-18 October 2020, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *Muž se zaječíma ušima* (The Man With Hare's Ears) directed by Martin Šulik (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, 2020).

Motivation: The film shows that the history of a man's decisions has an influence on his personal life and milieu. Thanks to a deepself-perception and attentive listening to others, he is able to give meaning to his life despite his mistakes. The jury highlights the remarkable way in which the film tells us that every human being is capable of developing into a full-fledged human being throughout his or her entire life.

Members of the 2020 Jury: Jes Nysten, Denmark; Joanna Kazimiera Wawrzynów, Poland. ▪