

From Humiliation to Dignity: For a Future of Global Solidarity

The Coronavirus Pandemic as Opportunity in the Midst of Suffering

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Painting by Lisbeth Vilkan Glad created for the cover of Evelin Lindner's book
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Allow me to begin with expressing my deep compassion with all those who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic. My heart goes out to them. I am particularly worried about the slum dwellers of this world and the refugees in refugee camps, all the people caught in war zones, in sum, all those who live under circumstances that make their protection virtually impossible.¹

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Abstract

Where do we stand, as humankind? We have dug ourselves into a multitude of perilous crises, both despite and because of what we call progress or economic growth. In service of profit, we practice strategies of development that shred our social fabric while simultaneously plundering our planet – fuelling a toxic combination of *sociocide* and *ecocide* that leads to intractable cycles of systemic humiliation. The coronavirus pandemic is one manifestation of this dire predicament.

At the same time, there are also immense windows of opportunity waiting for us to use. The pandemic reminds humanity that it can and must change. It reminds us also that we can change quickly. And, it reminds us that we can change for the better.

Unfortunately, however, instead of recognising the depth of the crises at hand and grasping the historic opportunities to exit, it seems that too many may choose to stay short-sighted and myopic. Consequently, humanity risks missing a momentous opportunity that could ultimately save countless generations of life on this planet.

This article offers reflections on the predicament we as humankind face, as well as offering a way forward, a way that transforms debilitating humiliation into life-giving dignity. As the heart-breaking coronavirus pandemic unfolds, the hope is that it works as a wake-up call for us to answer the following question together: How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?

Keywords

dignity, humiliation, global, coronavirus pandemic, crisis, ecocide, sociocide, *Homo amans*, blue planet, future

The predicament: Crises despite and because of what we call progress

The list of anthropogenic-induced tipping points that are being crossed or growing nearer on our planet is long. Biodiversity is lost, fisheries collapse, the ice caps melt, and the sea acidifies and rises, while, ‘we are also in an era of riots, revolutions, local experiments, and social movements from left to right that ... may look insane, but that are very real’.²

Now we have also a coronavirus pandemic. We are fortunate that this particular virus is not as deadly as the Ebola virus, because in this way the pandemic can work as a wake-up call rather than a death sentence.³ If we think of social factors such as dignity and humiliation, then the pandemic highlights both in unprecedented ways. The more the world interconnects, everything spreads out farther and faster, be it the nemesis of new viruses, the promise of shining ideals such as equal dignity, or the pain and anger that emerges when dignity is felt violated.⁴

Present-day’s most definitorial systemic humiliation is a world-system that gives priority to profit maximisation rather than common good maximisation, a state of affairs that sends humiliation into every corner of the world. Not least, the coronavirus pandemic was a ‘predicted crisis’ due to this predicament.⁵ The coronavirus pandemic throws into stark contrast the fact that global care for the common good is paramount, while the profit motive is destructive when it takes the lead rather than being of service.⁶

In 2018, we learned something interesting. Media theorist Douglas Rushkoff reported that a group of billionaires had invited him to talk, and he describes how he realised, to his astonishment,

that they believed that something they called *the event* was unavoidable. ‘The event’ was a euphemism for ‘the environmental collapse, social unrest, nuclear explosion, unstoppable virus, or Mr. Robot hack that takes everything down’.⁷ Rushkoff reports what happened in the meeting:

They were not interested in how to avoid a calamity; they’re convinced we are too far gone. For all their wealth and power, they don’t believe they can affect the future. They are simply accepting the darkest of all scenarios and then bringing whatever money and technology they can employ to insulate themselves – especially if they can’t get a seat on the rocket to Mars.⁸

In 2018, some readers might have thought that expecting ‘the event’ was unfounded paranoia by a few neurotic princes.⁹ I am among those academics who have designed their research outside the ‘ivory tower’, I have been in touch with reality on the ground on all continents for more than forty-five years, and I see ‘the event’ happening soon, too, or, most probably, a number of events. Indeed, in 2019 and 2020, the coronavirus pandemic reminds us of those predictions.¹⁰

As I see it, humanity is travelling down many dead-end roads simultaneously. For example, when we look at environmental collapse, global climate degradation is perhaps not the most significant threat, let alone a coronavirus. The ‘alarming loss of insects will likely take down humanity before global warming hits maximum velocity’.¹¹ Three-quarters of flying insects in nature reserves across countries like Germany have vanished in the last two decades.¹² In North America, three billion birds have disappeared since the 1970s.¹³ These silent catastrophes have serious implications for all life on Earth. Indeed, highly responsible scientists have already predicted the possible extinction of the human species within one decade’s time, around 2026.¹⁴

All this is part of *ecocide*, or the killing of our ecosphere. The Earth Overshoot Day has been earlier and earlier each year – in 2018, it was on the 1st of August and in 2019 on 29th July – it is the day on which humanity’s resource consumption for the year exceeds Earth’s capacity to regenerate those resources during that year.¹⁵

As to *sociocide*, or the killing of our sociosphere, inequality is at obscene levels, so much so that to the word ‘inequality’ is a cynical trivialisation.¹⁶ People in countries like Germany, proud of their monetary wealth, are usually unaware that each of them, statistically, holds what would be the equivalent of sixty slaves in other world regions, a fact that indicates that their affluence may be related to enslavement, at least partly, and their pride may be naïve and misplaced.¹⁷ At the same time, the social web of relationships has weakened also in the West to the point that a minister for suicide prevention¹⁸ and a minister for loneliness had to be appointed in Britain.¹⁹ These are the wounds that ‘monopoly capitalism’ inflicts on psychological well-being, as foreseen long ago – the system fails ‘to provide the foundations of a society capable of promoting the healthy and happy development of its members’.²⁰ Humanistic philosopher Erich Fromm wrote in the 1970s:

A person who has not been completely alienated, who has remained sensitive and able to feel, who has not lost the sense of dignity, who is not yet ‘for sale’, who can still suffer over the suffering of others, who has not acquired fully the having mode of existence – briefly, a person who has remained a person and not become a thing – cannot help feeling lonely, powerless, isolated in present-day society.²¹

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

It is always a shock when limits are reached that hitherto were imperceptible. Sudden tipping points change conditions so fast and drastically that it is difficult to bring about equally drastic adaptations. Humanity stands at a sweeping turning point now, at a historically unparalleled crossroads, and even though adequate responses will be extremely difficult to forge, this must be done. Today, we, as humankind, have the choice of proceeding unimpeded with ‘business as usual’

towards the global depletion of planet Earth's last resources, or we can rethink and shape our future path by inventing new ways of arranging our affairs on this planet. Never in our species' history have we encountered challenges that are more serious.

After millennia of hierarchical domination, the practice of subjugating people and nature now transmutes into a collectively suicidal strategy. The new *Zeitgeist* asks those who regard themselves as superior 'dignitaries', as entitled to exclusive privileges, to learn dignified humility and stop exploiting, oppressing, and humiliating allegedly 'lesser' fellow human beings and non-human species. The *Humilocene* waits to manifest, the 'epoch of humility'.²²

The coronacrisis is a perfect test case. So-called *myth-symbol complexes* can lead to violence if given the opportunity to mobilise around them.²³ Examples for such codes, blocks, or complexes are 'militant, aggressive or violent customs and norms of action, connected to patriarchy and honour codes',²⁴ connected to the idea of being part of a cosmic Manichaean struggle between good and evil.²⁵ As long as the coronavirus is treated as an 'enemy', as long as it is being approached with a mentality of war and crusading, as long as we look for villains to blame, we overlook our responsibility to do something about the conditions that make society a fertile ground, conditions that we are complicit with. Ecocide and sociocide is nothing to war against.

Linda Hartling chimes in: 'Framing the problem as a *war* serves to keep the hierarchy, the dominator system in place. It diverts attention from finding the most ecological and socially sustainable solutions, when, for example, environmental protections are rolled back, watered down, or discarded, rather than sustained and strengthened for the welfare of future generations'.²⁶

Human activity has robbed wild animals of their habitat and brought them into too close contact with humans,²⁷ a problem of which indigenous peoples have been aware for a long time.²⁸ This is just one more reason for why indigenous habitats need protection against the currently practiced resource extraction, one more proof for why it is dangerous that this extraction is driven by the profit motive instead of the care motive.²⁹ How could we think that 'we would stay healthy in a world that was sick'?'³⁰

The future will bring answers to the many questions and speculations that presently occupy many people's minds about the particularities of the coronavirus crisis and its origins. What the crisis highlights here and now, and in numerous ways and at all levels, macro, meso, and micro levels, is the deadliness of the profit motive. Acute danger comes from 'disaster capitalism'³¹ and from the abandonment of important environmental protections under the cover of the crisis.³² On top of this, money-driven right-wing hate entrepreneurship poisons all levels of society.³³ At micro levels, people risk death when ventilators and masks are more lucrative when they are a scarce resource.³⁴

The crisis also exposes chronic deep-seated misconceptions of health, misconceptions that literally 'sell out' health. Health is not the successful suppression of symptoms, particularly not when these symptoms are expressions of healthy defence strategies of the body. Many people have grown accustomed to placing the ability to function in a workplace above their health. The coronavirus pandemic requires people to refrain from such strategies. It requires them to strengthen their immune system – as basic as getting enough sleep – most of all, however, it requires them to be aware that over the counter drugs such as Paracetamol/Tylenol (acetaminophen) only alleviate symptoms rather than dealing with the underlying cause and that they can easily be overdosed. The opioid epidemic that began in the 1990s was a stark expression of this problem,³⁵ yet, also acetaminophen can be poisonous: 'Acetaminophen toxicity is the most common cause of hepatic failure requiring liver transplantation in Great Britain. In the United States, acetaminophen toxicity has replaced viral hepatitis as the most common cause of acute hepatic failure and is the second most common cause of liver failure requiring transplantation'.³⁶

The coronavirus crisis highlights the need for heroic collective redirection of all attention and all forces, redirection towards sustainable communal care rather than towards individual profit.³⁷ The crisis calls for the strengthening of dignifying institutions of care rather than institutions dependent on corporate entities, privatisation, or individual charity.³⁸ Naomi Klein, the author of *The shock*

doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism, spotlights attitudes about care brought to the forefront by the pandemic:

...one of the things I really feel is being unveiled here has to do with care, has to do with the labour of care which is so systematically ... denigrated and devalued... We do not value the work of care because under capitalism we don't want to admit that we are interdependent. We don't want to admit that our success is never just our own... Overwhelmingly the people who do the work of care of propping up the whole structure are women, women of colour, people of colour.³⁹

To illustrate her point, Klein notes images of nurses wearing trash bags as personal protective equipment in New York City during the virus outbreak.⁴⁰ She urges humanity to move in a new direction: 'I think the pivot here, the transformative moment here, has to do with grounding whatever is next in a valuing of that labour of care. We can never discard and devalue that labour ever again'.⁴¹

The crisis calls for an 'economy of life' rather than an 'economy of death'⁴² – it calls for a *dignity economy*.⁴³ It calls on us to remember that humans are capable of solidarity and can find it fulfilling and meaningful to stand together. Linda Hartling sums up:

Rather than underreacting with half measures or overacting with aggressive protection, moving towards a dignity economy will create a new space for creative, collaborative, effective global action. Working together, humanity can move in a life-replenishing direction. It can develop systems and institutions that support the long-term, regenerative, and mutually beneficial health and well-being of all people and planet.⁴⁴

'Today's emerging pandemic could help catalyse an urgently needed tipping event in humanity's collective moral values, priorities and sense of self and community. It could remind us of our common fate on a small, crowded planet with dwindling resources and fraying natural systems', says political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon. 'What is possible through fear must also be possible through trust' say others,⁴⁵ and 'united in our diversity and accepting our differences instead of dividing us into races, we may, in any future, acquire a Consciousness of Civilized Beings – and act on it'.⁴⁶

What I call *big love* in my book on gender, humiliation, and global security is meant to be more than just a personal experience.⁴⁷ *Big love* is the manifestation of *Homo amans*, of the 'loving being' – *amans* is the present participle of Latin *amare* 'to love'. Even more, *big love* manifests what I call *Homo amans relationis*, or the 'loving relational being', the only model of human nature that I see fit to become a global culture if we, as humankind, wish to overcome the trappings of the security dilemma, the endless build up of military protection. This model, if realised, can manifest the knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviours, which, if shared by the entire global community, can create a world worth living in for all of us now and in the future.⁴⁸ This might sound like pie in the sky – unfortunately, we humans have managed to degrade our world to the point that this, I fear, is the only way towards survival.

The way out: Immense windows of opportunity waiting for us to use

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

that most of us choose to stay short-sighted and myopic.

For the first time in its history, humankind is now in a position to succeed in bringing about the kinds of adaptation that are needed. For the first time, humanity can fully appreciate its place in the cosmos. Unlike our ancestors, we can see pictures of our Blue Marble from the perspective of an astronaut.⁴⁹ Unlike our forebears, we have the privilege of experiencing the *overview effect* with respect to our planet,⁵⁰ which helps us understand that we humans are *one* species living on *one* tiny planet, so that we can embrace *biophilia*.⁵¹ We can feel ‘the ecology of the living’ taking place within *one* circumscribed *biopoetic* space that is shared between all beings.⁵² We have access to a much more comprehensive knowledge base about the universe and our place in it than our grandparents ever had. History does not go in circles.

We have research showing that human nature is neither ‘good’ nor ‘evil’ but social, and that much of human action depends on the ways constitutive rules frame relational contexts. As it stands now, current systemic frames incentivise selfishness and cast suspicion on selflessness, in the belief that Adam Smith’s invisible hand will come to rescue. As a result – and I observe this all around the globe – people are being morally and psychologically crippled to the point that they lack the courage to envision and create systemic frames that would invite pro-social behaviour with ‘visible hands’.

Feminist economists have long reminded us that our economies depend entirely on ‘invisible’ work, particularly that of women, and they warn that personal autonomy is a myth while dependency is the reality. One economist asked a fitting question: ‘Who cooked Adam Smith’s dinner?’⁵³

The big hope is that enough people will wake up to understand that in an interconnected world it is not only practical, but essential to our existence to move towards a world-system that enables trust to emerge both locally and globally. The hope is that enough people understand that it is feasible to attenuate the security dilemma, as global disarmament is far from impossible, because we, as humankind, make global armament possible.⁵⁴ As the coronavirus explodes around the world, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres pleads for an ‘immediate global ceasefire’ to ‘end the sickness of war and fight the disease that is ravaging our world... That is what our human family needs, now more than ever’.⁵⁵

We can also overcome the commons dilemma – when people’s short-term selfish interests to exploit resources are at odds with long-term group interests.⁵⁶ In an interconnected world, long-term demise for all is the result when a few strong-men elites strive for domination over the rest and engage in the exploitation of humanity’s common planetary resources.

We do not have to make do with a world where ulterior interests capture all aspects of our lives, and even charitable NGOs turn into ‘missionaries of the new era’ of economism.⁵⁷ We do not have to make do with world where equal dignity is mistaken as equal entitlement to profiteering, a world where this even informs the institutions of the world-system and legitimises free-riding on the common good at all levels. This is nothing but world-wide systemic humiliation. There are more options on the table than big or small government, namely, good governance. Good governance means shaping constitutive rules with the help of the subsidiarity principle, thus dignifying both local and global governance.⁵⁸

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

The Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship (HumanDHS, humiliationstudies.org) aims to convene a global dignity community since 2001. Together with Linda Hartling and a

dedicated core group of scholars and educators, I have the honour of nurturing this collaborative fellowship of people who walk the talk of dignity.⁵⁹

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

We come together for two conferences per year, one at Columbia University in New York every December, and the other conference each year in a different location in the world. Incidentally, the conference we held just a few months before the coronavirus pandemic broke out was directly related to this crisis. In August and September 2019, we had our 33rd Annual Dignity Conference in the Amazon of Brasil, in Marabá and Belém in the State of Pará.⁶⁰ We learned about the disastrous consequences of overlooking, neglecting, and eradicating indigenous peoples and their knowledge of how to live sustainably in dialogue with nature rather than slaughter it. The coronavirus crisis is but one expression of this neglect. Around 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic – transmitted from animals – and are linked to human activity.⁶¹ The Amazon fires were complicit.⁶²

Our dignity fellowship is a fluidly evolving cooperative community rather than a monolithic organisation that speaks with one voice – neither do we wish to be a monolithic organisation.⁶³ Rather, we wish to manifest dignity by holding space for unity in diversity. In this context, I wear two ‘hats’: When I gather our global dignity family, I am a unifier who strives to protect the diversity of our members and supporters so that everyone can forge their own path to dignity in their lives. On the other hand, I am also part of the diversity of our network, namely, when I write books, articles, or give lectures. In this text on the coronavirus pandemic, for instance, I speak only for myself as an individual researcher – with a background as medical doctor and psychologist – and it is important for me to make clear that my views do not define any ‘official’ view of our dignity movement.

As I hail from a displaced family who was deeply affected by the two world wars of the last century, I am particularly aware of the vulnerabilities of our human arrangements on this planet. All my life, I have been preparing for the next ‘Eleanor Roosevelt moment’, like in 1948, when a window of opportunity stood open for dignity to get the attention it deserves. Linda Hartling and I, together with our close collaborators, we are helping to nurture another moment like this through our dignity work, and we hope to be among the co-authors of this moment, contributing with our approach of what we call *big love*.

When Rachel Carson published her book *Silent spring* in 1962, many were full of hope for a substantial turn-around.⁶⁴ The Brundtland Commission of 1987, the Earth Summit of 1992,⁶⁵ the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and former US Vice President Al Gore,⁶⁶ and the 2016 Paris Agreement concerning global warming,⁶⁷ all these were moments of ‘yes we can turn around’ enthusiasm. Yet, in the end, corporate interests won out. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly set Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, and goal number eight shows an exponential economic growth curve, a curve that is absurd in a finite context.⁶⁸ We went from ‘Earthrise’ in the 1960s, to ‘profit versus planet’ around 1970–1987, we turned environmentalism into ‘sustainability’ around 1987–1997, and finally into ‘market environmentalism’ from 1998 to 2018. In 2019 came Greta Thunberg, and in 2020 the Covid-19 virus. They question us why we, the human family, have missed so many invitations to unite in response to our global challenges. They ask us why we let grim and kind invitations pass alike: We let the invitation of the September 11 attacks pass in 2001 and the enormous financial crisis in 2008, and we even turned down the kind invitation of the end of the Cold War.

As the world watches the heart-breaking coronavirus pandemic unfold, we are still full of hope

for an exponential change of heart so that global unity in respect for our local diversities becomes possible. When a new Eleanor Roosevelt moment finally comes, we hope to be ready for a Universal Declaration of Human Vulnerability.⁶⁹ We hope to be ready to answer the following question together with you: How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?

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¹ See, for instance, 'Greek island refugee camps face coronavirus "disaster", aid groups warn: "We have not seen a credible emergency plan to protect and treat people living there",' by Sarah Soulie, *The New*

Humanitarian, 27th March 2020, www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/27/greece-island-refugee-camps-coronavirus.

² Wakefield, 2018. Wakefield conceptualises the Anthropocene as having a front loop and back loop phase.

³ Lindner, 2020a.

⁴ See the work of Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 2016a on overheating. See also Eriksen, 2016b. We thank social anthropology professor Eriksen for nominating us for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, 2016, and 2017. See <http://humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/142.php>.

⁵ Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland is the former Prime Minister of Norway. On 27th March 2020, she is in the Norwegian media explaining that the Corona crisis is ‘a notified crisis’. Since 2018, she is co-chair of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB, <https://apps.who.int/gpmb/>). In 2018, she was asked by the World Bank and WHO to lead the work on a report on how the world would deal with a global infectious and deadly epidemic. Together with the head of the International Red Cross, she brought together international experts and health politicians. The report came in September 2019, and she said: ‘For too long, world leaders’ approaches to health emergencies have been characterized by a cycle of panic and neglect... It is high time for urgent and sustained action. This must include increased funding at the community, national and international levels to prevent the spread of outbreaks. It also requires leaders to take proactive steps to strengthen preparedness coordination mechanisms across governments and society to respond quickly to an emergency’. See *World at risk from deadly pandemics: Expert group outlines steps to prepare for – and mitigate – the effects of a widespread global health emergency that could kill millions, damage global economy*, World Health Organisation, 18th September 2019, https://apps.who.int/gpmb/assets/annual_report/GPMB%20Press%20Release_Final.pdf.

⁶ ‘Hotspot Ischgl: Gier und Versagen in Tirol: Von einer Après-Ski-Bar im „Ballermann der Alpen“ gingen vermutlich dutzende Infektionen internationaler Skiurlauber mit dem Virus aus’, by Thomas Mayer, *Der Standard*, 16th March 2020, www.derstandard.de/story/2000115776404/hotspot-ischgl-gier-und-versagen-in-tirol.

⁷ ‘Survival of the richest: The wealthy are plotting to leave us behind’, by Douglas Rushkoff, *Medium*, 5th July 2018, <https://medium.com/s/futurehuman/survival-of-the-richest-9ef6cddd0cc1>.

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⁹ ‘Super-rich prepare for doomsday in Dh180m American bunkers: Underground apartments in a former missile silo are attracting buyers preparing for the worst’, by John Dennehy, *The National*, 19th December 2018, www.thenational.ae/uae/super-rich-prepare-for-doomsday-in-dh180m-american-bunkers-1.804263.

¹⁰ ‘We wish to inform you that your death is highly profitable: To trump, our illnesses and deaths are a necessary cost of doing business’, by Douglas Rushkoff, *Medium*, 25th March 2020, <https://gen.medium.com/we-wish-to-inform-you-that-your-death-is-highly-profitable-22c73744055c>.

¹¹ ‘Insect decimation upstages global warming’, by Robert Hunziker, *CounterPunch*, 27th March 2018, www.counterpunch.org/2018/03/27/insect-decimation-upstages-global-warming/: ‘The worldwide loss of insects is simply staggering with some reports of 75% up to 90%, happening much faster than the paleoclimate record rate of the past five major extinction events’. Without insects ‘burrowing, forming new soil, aerating soil, pollinating food crops...’ and providing food for many bird species, the biosphere will simply collapse. Also, the rainforests are currently being destroyed at the rate of 80,000 acres each day, and the oceans are being degraded, with 200 species (plants, birds, animals, fish, amphibians, insects and reptiles) going extinct each day, and another 26,000 species already identified as ‘under threat’: ‘Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signalled by vertebrate population losses and declines’, is the title of an article by Ceballos, et al., 2017. All this is not counting the damage of Earth’s biosphere through war and other military violence, for example, through the toxic remnants of war (www.toxicremnantsofwar.info/). Also so-called peaceful technology damages the biosphere, such as radioactive contamination being released. The radiation from the TEPCO nuclear power plant Fukushima in Japan, for instance, has contaminated the entire Pacific Ocean.

¹² ‘Warning of “ecological Armageddon” after dramatic plunge in insect numbers’, by Damian Carrington Environment editor, *The Guardian*, 18th October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/18/insect-decline>,
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www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/18/warning-of-ecological-armageddon-after-dramatic-plunge-in-insect-numbers: ‘Three-quarters of flying insects in nature reserves across Germany have vanished in 25 years, with serious implications for all life on Earth, scientists say’.

¹³ ‘We’ve lost 3 billion birds since 1970 in North America’ by Jonathan Lambert, *Science News*, 19th September 2019, www.sciencenews.org/article/3-billion-birds-lost-since-1970-north-america. I thank Linda Hartling for forwarding this article to me.

¹⁴ ‘Will humans be extinct by 2026?’ *Arctic News*, <http://arctic-news.blogspot.com/p/extinction.html>. See also ‘Human extinction by 2026? A last ditch strategy to fight for human survival’, by Robert J. Burrowes, *TRANSCEND Media Service*, 13th August 2018, www.transcend.org/tms/2018/08/human-extinction-by-2026-a-last-ditch-strategy-to-fight-for-human-survival/. See, furthermore, ‘Climate collapse and near term human extinction: A speech by Guy McPherson, the global research news hour episode 70’, by Michael Welch, *Global Research*, 14th June 2014, www.globalresearch.ca/guy-mcpherson-on-climate-collapse-and-near-term-human-extinction/5386102. See also ‘The climate change solution that could spark global war: Superpowers will control geoengineering and all the damage that comes with it’, by Alexander C. Kaufman, *OneZero*, 16th January 2019, <https://onezero.medium.com/the-climate-change-solution-that-could-spark-global-war-bd1cc9cce1a3>: In case world governments fails to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, in an effort to provide some relief, global superpowers may decide to block out the sun, with the world’s most powerful militaries taking the lead in deploying aircraft to go up 32 miles into the stratosphere and spray particles that reflect sunlight:

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

¹⁵ Earth Overshoot Day is an initiative of Global Footprint Network, an international research organisation that is changing the way the world measures and manages its natural resources. See www.overshootday.org. The date of Earth Overshoot Day is calculated with data from Global Footprint Network’s National Footprint Accounts, which are available at the Ecological Footprint Explorer Open Data Platform at data.footprintnetwork.org.

¹⁶ *Breaking the wall of displacement: How social analysis sheds light on the edges of society*, Saskia Sassen, Falling Walls Foundation, 9th November 2015, <http://falling-walls.com/videos/Saskia-Sassen-3780>. Saskia Sassen is a sociologist and professor at New York’s Columbia University, scholar of urban and globalisation studies, and of migration and mobility. See Sassen, 2014, *Expulsions – Brutality and complexity in the global economy*.

See also the People’s Policy Project, www.peoplespolicyproject.org, and ‘Climate change: Where are our economic elites headed?’ by William Mebane, *Wall Street International Magazine*, 10th December 2019, <https://wsimag.com/economy-and-politics/59463-climate-change>:

The top one percent had real income after transfers and taxes, 225 percent greater than that in 1979 as compared to 41 percent for the middle class. From 1989 to 2018, the top 1 percent increased its total net worth by \$21 trillion. The bottom 50 percent saw its net worth decrease by \$900 billion over the same period, in 2018 dollars.

¹⁷ ‘Jeder von uns hält 60 Sklaven – und zwar durch ganz normalen Konsum. Eine BWL-Professorin erklärt, warum’, interview with Eva Hoffmann, professor for supply management, *Jetzt*, 22nd February 2016, www.jetzt.de/politik/interview-mit-einer-professorin-fuer-supply-management. ‘Modern day slavery rated world’s largest single crime industry’, by Thalif Deen, *Inter Press Service*, 25th February 2019, www.ipsnews.net/2019/02/modern-day-slavery-rated-worlds-largest-single-crime-industry/.

¹⁸ ‘World Mental Health Day: PM appoints suicide prevention minister’, *BBC News*, 10th October 2018, www.bbc.com/news/health-45804225. See also ‘Brexit is just the latest way the UK government is inflicting “unnecessary misery” on the poor’, by Eshe Nelson, *Quartz Media*, 10th November 2018, <https://qz.com/1468271/brexit-is-just-the-latest-way-the-uk-is-inflicting-unnecessary-misery-on-the-poor/>. See also, the *Fact sheets on mental health*, Geneva: World Health Organization, 2017, <http://who.int>.

¹⁹ ‘Britain appoints minister for loneliness amid growing isolation’, by Lee Mannion, *Reuters*, 17th January 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-politics-health/britain-appoints-minister-for-loneliness-amid-growing-isolation-idUSKBN1F61I6. See also the book *Loneliness: Human nature and the need for social connection* by Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008.

²⁰ Baran and Sweezy, 1966, p. 285. See also ‘Capitalism and mental health’, by David Matthews, *Monthly Review*, 1st January 2019, <https://monthlyreview.org/2019/01/01/capitalism-and-mental-health/>. See also Ungar, 2019, and: ‘Put down the self-help books. Resilience is not a DIY endeavour’, by Michael Ungar, *The Globe and Mail*, 25th May 2019, www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-put-down-the-self-help-books-resilience-is-not-a-diy-endeavour/:

The science of resilience is clear: The social, political and natural environments in which we live are far more important to our health, fitness, finances and time management than our individual thoughts, feelings or behaviours. When it comes to maintaining well-being and finding success, environments matter.

We thank Salman Türken for making us aware of these articles. It is a privilege to have Salman Türken in our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship. See, furthermore, ‘How life under predatory capitalism traumatized a nation: Why Americans are (even) more stressed out than Venezuelans, or why happiness and capitalism are incompatible’, by Umair Haque, *Eudaimonia*, 25th April 2019, <https://eand.co/how-life-under-predatory-capitalism-traumatized-a-nation-c90969df042d>.

²¹ Fromm, 1974–1976/1992, p. 65:

He cannot help doubting himself and his own convictions, if not his sanity. He cannot help suffering, even though he can experience moments of joy and clarity that are absent in the life of his «normal» contemporaries. Not rarely will he suffer from neurosis that results from the situation of a sane man living in an insane society, rather than that of the more conventional neurosis of a sick man trying to adapt himself to a sick society. In the process of going further in his analysis, i.e. of growing to greater independence and productivity, his neurotic symptoms will cure themselves.

²² Like me, also cultural ecologist and geophilosopher David Abram, et al., 2020, feels the responsibility to create new vocabularies to make clear that we live in world where all earthly organisms are connected in an interbreathing vital flux. He has introduced the term *Humilocene* or ‘epoch of humility’ to foster ecoculturally inclusive ways for addressing the environmental and cultural crises of our time and to stimulate more-than-human conversations, opportunities, and actions that are humble and holistic. In 2014 Abram held the international Arne Næss Chair of Global Justice and Ecology at the University of Oslo, in Norway. I thank Arturo Escobar for reminding me of Abram’s work.

²³ Kaufman, 2001, p. 212.

²⁴ Lindner, 2000, Lindner, 2006a, Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, quoted in Vambheim, 2016, p. 20. Peace researcher Vidar Vambheim draws on the notion of memes, introduced by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, 2006, analogous to genes, to characterize cultural codes. Memes are seen as cultural replicators that survive, reproduce and proliferate in a meme pool. It is a privilege to have Nils Vidar Vambheim as esteemed member in the global advisory board of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

²⁵ See LeShan, 1992. See also Galtung, 1996, Galtung, et al., 2000. See also Galtung’s description of the Dichotomy-Manicheism-Armageddon (DMT) syndrome at “Cultural Peace: Some Characteristics,” by Johan Galtung, *Transcend articles*, October 12, 2003, www.transcend.org/files/article121.html. See also “Expert Colloquy – Dialogue Serving Intercultural and Inter-Religious Communication – Strasbourg,” Council of Europe, October 7–9, 2002, interview with Johan Galtung, www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Events/2002-10-Intercultural-Dialogue/Interview_galtung.asp.

²⁶ Linda Hartling in a personal communication, 30th March 2020. See, for instance, ‘USA: Immediately revoke COVID-19 suspension of environmental protections’, *Amnesty International*, 27th March 2020, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/usa-immediately-revoke-covid-19-suspension-of-environmental-protections/.

²⁷ *Jane Goodall on Coronavirus*, 3rd March 2020, https://youtu.be/gQ4CI14K_Ow. I thank Linda Hartling for making us aware of Jane Goodall's message.

²⁸ 'Could the Coronavirus pandemic have been avoided if the world listened to indigenous leaders?', by Samira Sadeque, *Inter Press Service*, United Nations, 19th March 2020, www.ipsnews.net/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemic-avoided-world-listened-indigenous-leaders/.

²⁹ See, among others, *Resource efficiency and climate change – Material efficiency strategies for a low-carbon future*, by the International Resource Panel (launched by the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, in 2007 to build and share the knowledge needed to improve our use of resources worldwide), 11th December 2019, www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/what-passenger-cars-are-made-key-issue-climate-change. This report was commissioned by the G7 countries, showing 'that natural resource extraction and processing account for more than 90 per cent of global biodiversity loss and water stress, and around half of global greenhouse gas emissions'.

³⁰ *Pope Francis' Urbi et Orbi address on coronavirus*, 27th March 2020, www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/03/27/read-pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-address-coronavirus-and-jesus-calming-storm.

³¹ 'Coronavirus is the perfect disaster for "disaster capitalism": Naomi Klein explains how governments and the global elite will exploit a pandemic', by Marie Solis, *TRANSCEND Media Service*, 16th March 2020, www.transcend.org/tms/2020/03/coronavirus-is-the-perfect-disaster-for-disaster-capitalism/.

³² The US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) announced it would indefinitely suspend enforcement of environmental laws due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Richard Pearshouse, Amnesty International's Head of Crisis and the Environment, protests: *USA: Immediately revoke COVID-19 suspension of environmental protections*, Amnesty International, 27th March 2020, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/usa-immediately-revoke-covid-19-suspension-of-environmental-protections/.

³³ 'New polls show effect of right-wing media's dismissive and conspiratorial Coronavirus coverage', by Oliver Darcy, *Other News*, 19th March 2020, www.other-news.info/2020/03/new-polls-show-effect-of-right-wing-medias-dismissive-and-conspiratorial-coronavirus-coverage/. Note the role of the Heartland Institute: 'Naomi Seibt: "anti-Greta" activist called white nationalist an inspiration: German teenager spoke at an event at US rightwing conference CPAC', by Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Emily Holden, *The Guardian*, 28th February 2020, www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/28/naomi-seibt-anti-greta-activist-white-nationalist-inspiration. The Heartland Institute, in the 1990s, 'worked with the tobacco company Philip Morris to attempt to discredit the health risks of secondhand smoke and to lobby against smoking bans. Since the 2000s, the Heartland Institute has been a leading promoter of climate change denial. It rejects the scientific consensus on climate change, and says that policies to fight it would be damaging to the economy'. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Heartland_Institute.

The Identitäre Bewegung (IB), or the 'identitarian movement', is Europe's version of America's alt-right. See, among others, 'Christchurch shooter's links to Austrian far right "more extensive than thought": Emails show Brenton Tarrant was invited to meet Identitarian leader Martin Sellner, according to reports in Europe', by Jason Wilson, *The Guardian*, 16th May 2019, www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/16/christchurch-shooters-links-to-austrian-far-right-more-extensive-than-thought. The aim of the 'identitarian movement' is 'Themeninvasion' to achieve 'Meinungshoheit' in the Internet, or the invasion of Internet to achieve 'opinion sovereignty' through repeating and normalising their ideas and through aggressively trolling all disagreeable initiatives.

³⁴ 'The U.S. tried to build a new fleet of ventilators. The mission failed', by Nicholas Kulish, Sarah Kliff and Jessica Silver-Greenberg, *New York Times*, 29th March 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/03/29/business/coronavirus-us-ventilator-shortage.html?auth=login-email&login=. I thank Linda Hartling for sharing this article.

³⁵ In the United States, an extensive overuse of opioid drugs, both from medical prescriptions and from illegal sources, began in the 1990s.

³⁶ Farrell, 2020.

³⁷ ‘Congress should immediately give \$100 billion to cities and states to fight Coronavirus, opinion by Jeffrey Sachs, *CNN*, 20th March 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/19/opinions/congress-needs-to-urgently-give-money-to-states-and-cities-for-covid-19-sachs/index.html>.

³⁸ Millions of children in the United States of America are losing the meals they depend on as the Corona virus closes schools. Charitable organisations call for help, see, among them, www.nokidhungry.org/ or, for New York City, www.cityharvest.org/. See also ‘Why I’d rather be in Italy for the Coronavirus pandemic’, by Alice Speri, *The Intercept*, 12th March 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/03/12/italy-coronavirus-united-states-preparedness/>.

³⁹ ‘*Coronavirus capitalism*’: Naomi Klein’s case for transformative change amid coronavirus pandemic, by Naomi Klein, published on 19th March 2020 by Democracy Now! <https://youtu.be/IFqNAEx1lm4>. I thank Linda Hartling for making me aware of this video.

⁴⁰ ‘Coronavirus Nurses forced to wear trash bags at hospital where worker died from Covid-19’, by Gino Spocchia, G. (2020). *Independent*, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/coronavirus-nurse-death-new-york-hospital-trash-bag-doctor-a9427406.html. I thank Linda Hartling for making me aware of this article.

⁴¹ ‘*Coronavirus capitalism*’: Naomi Klein’s case for transformative change amid coronavirus pandemic, by Naomi Klein, published on 19th March 2020 by Democracy Now! <https://youtu.be/IFqNAEx1lm4>.

⁴² Star chef Franz Keller, 2020, speaks of the industrial production of food as ‘death industry’, in German ‘Sterbemittelindustrie’ (rather than ‘Lebensmittelindustrie’). He calls for a ‘kitchen revolution’. See Keller, 2020. Likewise, we could call for a ‘life revolution’.

⁴³ Lindner, 2012.

⁴⁴ Linda Hartling in a personal communication, 30th March 2020.

⁴⁵ *Learning from Corona: What is possible through fear must also be possible through trust*, Tamera Peace Research and Education Center, Portugal, March 16 2020, <https://terranova.tamera.org/civicrm/ mailing/view?reset=1&id=a71f7ea8f4909c6f>.

⁴⁶ ‘Civilized, barbarians, savages’, by Antonio C. S. Rosa, Editor of *TRANSCEND Media Service*, 23rd March 2020, www.transcend.org/tms/2020/03/civilized-barbarians-savages/.

⁴⁷ Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

⁴⁸ Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010. See also the book *Loneliness: Human nature and the need for social connection* by Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008.

⁴⁹ *Space exploration – A powerful symbol of global cooperation*, Jim Zimmerman, NASA, interviewed by Susan T. Coleman, The Peacebuilding Podcast, 13th December 2016, <http://us11.campaign-archive1.com/?u=e5c2110f5cc4fe346c79bf3d1&id=06298a46ca&e=e7c4dd8362>. I thank Judit Révész for making me aware of this interview.

⁵⁰ White, 2014.

⁵¹ Anderson, 2016.

⁵² Author Andreas Weber, 2016, develops a creative ecology of the living – a *biopoetics*. This is the book description:

Meaning, feeling and expression – the experience of inwardness – matter most in human existence. The perspective of biopoetics shows that this experience is shared by all organisms. Being alive means to exist through relations that have existential concern, and to express these dimensions through the body and its gestures. All life takes place within one poetic space which is shared between all beings and which is accessible through subjective sensual experience. We take part in this through our empirical subjectivity, which arises from the experiences and needs of living beings, and which makes them open to access and sharing in a poetic objectivity. Biopoetics breaks free from the causal-mechanic paradigm which made biology unable to account for mind and meaning. Biology becomes a science of expression, connection and subjectivity which can understand all organisms including humans as feeling agents in a shared ecology of meaningful relations, embedded in a symbolical and material metabolism of the biosphere.

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⁵³ Waring, 1988, Fineman, 2004, Marçal, 2012/2015. I thank Linda Hartling for making me aware of these publications.

⁵⁴ 4th June 2019: Nobel peace laureates Jody Williams and Leymah Gbowee joined fellow laureates Mohamed ElBaradei and Denis Mukwege, Master of New College of Humanities Anthony Grayling, and President of SFG Sundeep Waslekar, to issue the Normandy Manifesto for World Peace. The statement calls for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and a new conception of security based on universal human rights and rule of law. See www.strategicforesight.com/downloads/EN%20Normandy%20Manifesto.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3DXB2cwtXpRAF2PrsAKwUTwB_gz0PNUtCyYBjCaG3d0fUkhnJuxad0r_w.

⁵⁵ ‘COVID-19 UN chief calls for global ceasefire to focus on the true fight of our lives’, António Guterres, *UN News*, 23 March 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972>. I thank Linda Hartling for forwarding this article to me.

⁵⁶ Hardin, 1968, 1998, 2007.

⁵⁷ Merz, 2012.

⁵⁸ ‘The “Washington Consensus” is dead. But what should replace it? We need a new vision for global economic governance that is guided by the principle of subsidiarity’, by Laura Basu, *Open Democracy*, 13th April 2019, www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/washington-consensus-dead-what-should-replace-it/. See, furthermore, ‘Alternative finances’, by Susan George, *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 2007, <https://mondediplo.com/2007/01/03economy>, and ‘The virtues of deglobalization: Has the time finally come to reverse and end globalisation?’, by Walden Bello, edited by John Feffer, *Foreign Policy In Focus*, 3rd September 2009, https://fpif.org/the_virtues_of_degloabalization/. See also ‘World Bank dispossessing rural poor’, by Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Anis Chowdhury, *Inter Press Service*, 16th April 2019, www.ipsnews.net/2019/04/world-bank-dispossessing-rural-poor/:

EBA best practices point to a very different agenda based on promoting large-scale industrial agriculture at the expense of family farmers, pastoralists and indigenous peoples. It is biased towards industrial agriculture and agribusiness, and the intent of the new indicator makes it even more urgent to challenge the EBA initiative.

See, furthermore, my book *A dignity economy* (Lindner, 2012).

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Lindner and Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network members, 2006–2017, Hartling, 1995/1996, Hartling, et al., 2013a, Hartling, et al., 2013b, Lindner, et al., 2011, Chowdhury, et al., 2019, Hartling and Lindner, 2016, 2017, 2018b, a, or Lindner, 2006b. See for Lindner’s books Lindner, 2000, Lindner, 2006a, Lindner, 2009, Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, Lindner, 2012, Lindner, 2017, and Lindner, 2020b. See an overview over publications of network members on www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php, and an overview over publications by Lindner and core members on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php.

⁶⁰ We held our 33rd Annual Dignity Conference in the Amazon of Brasil, in Marabá and Belém in the State of Pará, a ‘Caravan’ conference titled ‘Cultivating Good Living Amazon: Nurturing Solidarity with Mother Earth’, 28th August – 7th September 2019. The forest had been set on fire, and school children gave to us a ‘cry-for-help’ letter to bring it to everyone in the world who might be interested, downloadable from www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/33.php#letter. See the situation through my eyes at <https://youtu.be/fBY2TOIXILU>, and see our Dignity Letter in October at <https://conta.cc/2p9oKfG>.

⁶¹ *Six nature facts related to coronaviruses*, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 8th April 2020, www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/six-nature-facts-related-coronaviruses: ‘Did you know that around 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic, as are 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases, in other words they come to us via animals? Zoonoses that emerged or re-emerged recently are Ebola, bird flu, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), the Nipah virus, Rift Valley fever, sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus, Zika virus disease, and, now, the coronavirus. They are all linked to human activity’. See also *For better or for worse: The delicate relationship between people and the wildlife around them*, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 23rd April 2020, www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/better-or-worse-delicate-relationship-between-people-and-wildlife-around.

⁶² ‘Human impact on the environment may make pandemics more likely, experts warn’, by Jeff Berardelli, *CBS News*, 2nd April 2020, www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-environment-pandemic-infectious-diseases/.

⁶³ See also www.humiliationstudies.org/intervention/declarations.php.

⁶⁴ Carson, 1962.

⁶⁵ Greta Thunberg had a forerunner, her name was Severn Suzuki. As a twelve-year-old, she spoke at the Earth Summit Rio92 to the leaders of the world. Her speech was hailed by everyone as deeply touching. Twenty years later, she came back to the Rio+20 Summit and her message was the following: nothing has happened! See *Severn Suzuki's speech at Rio92*, 1992, published on 28th February 2007 by Evandro Barboza, <https://youtu.be/5g8cmWZOX8Q>. See also *Severn Suzuki's speech at Rio+20*, 2012, published on 20th June 2012 by ONU Brasil, <https://youtu.be/1FmSxmpitBA>: ‘After 20 years, the 12 year-old-girl, who made a speech in front of the Chief of States at RIO92, came back to Rio de Janeiro to tell what she wants for the future of the planet’. See what she said twenty years later here: *At Rio+20, Severn Cullis-Suzuki revisits historic '92 speech; Fights for next generation*, published on 21st June 2012 by Democracy Now! <https://youtu.be/z5qcFpPlsYI>.

⁶⁶ The Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 was awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and former US Vice President Al Gore. See www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2007/gore/facts/.

⁶⁷ For the Paris Agreement, see <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

⁶⁸ For the Sustainable Development Goals, see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>. If goal number eight were to be taken seriously, it would undermine the success of more or less all other goals.

⁶⁹ Michael Britton in a personal communication, 1st April 2020:

If Eleanor Roosevelt were here today, instead of the universal declaration of human rights we might be ready, in one of Evelin and Linda's Eleanor Roosevelt Moments, we might be ready for a Universal Declaration of Human Vulnerability, or a Declaration of Universal Human Vulnerability – premising a need for pulling together, universal cooperation as the foundation of planetary life.