



# R.E.M.S.

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Programme in Ethnic and  
Migration Studies

## Life During Covid-19: From Norrköping to the World

# R.E.M.S. Report from the Master of Arts programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies

is a publication series edited by the MA candidates in Ethnic and Migration Studies at the Institute of Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO),  
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# EDITORS' NOTE

*How does one write about a storm when one is swept by the wind and an impending thunder overhead, and lighting?*

We're writing whilst standing on moving tectonic plates; what we conclude today might be rendered obsolete by the discovery of a vaccine, or new outbreak on a so far, little-affected region. However, we can at least hope that writing from within the phenomenon of the Coronavirus pandemic we can construct a unique time capsule in what (we hope) will be a passing, though indelible, phase in history.

These reflections and observations of the present will be perhaps premature in gauging the situation or in making conclusions, but they will nevertheless be a record of a period that will be discussed and reconsidered for decades if not centuries to come. Therefore the texts that follow herein are a mixture of subjective reflections, popular scientific analyses and journalistic reports.

Ultimately, regarding the pandemic's effects on the economy, migration policy, healthcare, social ties within and between societies, on the family and the quality of our friendships, our capacities for compassion and support, only time will tell.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank REMESO for bringing us together, and undertaking the publication of this volume.

To our lecturers, we hope that this report stands as a testament to the quality of your teaching and as a suitable recompense for your support and encouragement this past year.

To Erik, who, despite the difficulties encountered during the course held online, was able to guide us in the production of this volume. To Rudeina and Asher, for your valuable advices and for taking care of our articles. To Hammam for the patience and the support.

To our tireless editorial team, Natasha, Kenna, Chloe and Katerina: the gift of your time is gratefully appreciated.

A thank you goes to Asia Della Rosa from all of us involved. She's been able to draw together many of her diverse skills and experience here, and develop a natural talent for organising a large group of people, despite being one of the youngest in the class. Her dedication has been the bedrock of this issue.

A special thanks to all the students who participated, directly or indirectly, in the realisation of this volume. These are difficult times, and the energy that each one of us has been able to cultivate will surely soon bear fruit.

*"The hell of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is that which is already here, the hell we live within every day, that we build being together. There are two ways to not suffer it. The first comes easily to many: to accept hell and become it, part such that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands vigilance and continuous learning: to seek and to know how to recognise who and what, in the midst of hell, is not hell, and make it last, and give it space."*

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*





# THE ROLE OF THE STATE

*Who do we turn to in times of crisis? In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, many have looked to the state for guidelines and support. Governments have responded to the pandemic in a variety of ways, from strict lockdown measures, to a more relaxed approach to physical distancing, to calling the virus a hoax. State actions have not been met without criticism. Many states have passed legislation to give them more power in this state of exception; this move for power, and the possible implications, should rightly be problematized. The pandemic has also further unveiled weaknesses in state institutions and policy, from healthcare to migration law. As the state aims to protect its citizens in these times, it's important to point out the cracks in its armour, as well as those who fall outside of its protection.*

## Forgotten: Sweden's Unaccompanied Refugee Youth

SHADI MOAZEN & NATASHA SMITH

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic makes visible some of the harsh realities and airy fantasies of our current labour market. At the centre of this development are those unaccompanied refugee youth, who, in a cruel way, can be seen as the guinea pigs in the societal experiment of precarisation in which Sweden excels.

In 2018 – in the name of good will – the Swedish government introduced a new upper secondary school law (gymnasielagen) aimed at helping unaccompanied youth, who had turned eighteen years old in the midst of their asylum application. This new law came as a result of the changing migration patterns witnessed in the latter part of 2015, which saw a large influx of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe and a subsequent shift in Swedish immigration policy to a more restrictive turn.

Due to the large number of applications for asylum, case processing time took on average two years for the first decision to be made. For many of the unaccompanied minors applying this meant that they turned eighteen while still waiting for a decision and subsequently risked deportation as they were no longer classed as children and therefore did not have the same protection. The aim of the new upper secondary school law was to grant temporary residency to allow these young adults, who received a rejection when they turned eighteen, the possibility to finish upper secondary school in Sweden. Upon successful completion they are giv-

en six months to find permanent employment for a chance at a working permit.

Now, due to the government's decision to enforce distance learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the flaws in this new law have become ever more apparent. Young adult asylum seekers, without hands-on teacher support, become increasingly anxious in the knowledge that if they do not graduate and do not – in the emerging labour market crisis – find a permanent job within six months, they face deportation back to a country they once fled. Current times prove difficult for anyone seeking employment let alone anything permanent, which barely exists in today's gig-labour market. Yet, in Sweden, unaccompanied youths are expected to pull this off in order to be valued the basic right to stay/reside. As a consequence of this unachievable goal comes a high risk to accept hyper-precarity or to enter the irregular labour market.

### Educational Woes

The majority of unaccompanied youth in Sweden are young Afghan males of Hazara origin having fled persecution. For them the sudden move to distance learning enhances already existing demands on student achievement. Helene Langborg – an advocate for unaccompanied youth, from Norrköping, and a host mother to a boy from Afghanistan for the past two years – points out that a large number come with a lack of previous education. A result, she



states, stems from them either having been denied the right as a child or from having had to take on the role of breadwinner at an early age as was the case for her 'bonus son' who began working at the age of eleven after the death of his father. Many, Helene believes, are now worried that by studying remotely they will not receive the appropriate education and that their teachers will only give 'approved' to compensate for the current learning situation, but that in actuality they do not learn what they should nor the practical skills they need for employment.

Helene explains that here in Norrköping most participate in practical training courses to become welders, plumbers, electricians, cnc operators (computer numerical control) or to work in the care or restaurant industry. Now done remotely, the risk of regression is twofold having to adapt to a different kind of study. According to Helene, when courses went distance the students were initially only given theory work to complete, which proved cumbersome. Spending so much time studying in this way was something they were unaccustomed to having previously had theory lessons for just one day a week and with hands-on teacher support. Such methods were also proving to be too abstract for them to be able to relate to practically. In addition, with the theory there also came a lot of new vocabulary, which they have had to learn themselves. As a result, Helene has observed an increasing lack of self-motivation amongst the students who find it hard to find the energy to sit for long periods of time in front of a computer. For those who live on their own or with friends there is the additional absence of parental support to encourage them in their studies.

Helen also points out that with remote learning and social distancing guidelines in place there are limited opportunities for these youths to practice the Swedish language. Different language cafes in town are more geared towards older people wishing to learn the language, she explains. She has tried certain integration activities in the past, but these have proved largely unsuccessful as native Swedish speakers seldomly attend. Instead Helene has observed that most of the youths tend to spend their leisure time together, and that they prefer to speak their own language when not "in school". As language proficiency is key to successful employment in Sweden, the question is how these youths, whose exposure to Swedish is currently reduced to one lesson a week online, shall obtain sufficient language skills. Without a general grounding in the language their job opportunities diminish and instead they move closer to deportation.



Helene Langborg became a volunteer family home in 2018. She has been engaged in running integration projects for many of the unaccompanied youth in the Norrköping area, such as futsal. She helps several of these migrant youths with homework, authority contacts, finding part-time jobs and accommodation, etc. Helene has also had a part in starting *Frivilliga familjehem* in Norrköping.



### **Career Uncertainties**

Precarity, flexibility and a weakening of social security, are characteristics of our neoliberal era. Difficulties finding a permanent job is a reality for any citizen and adds psychological stress for all. However, migrants are the largest and most vulnerable groups of the precariat which leaves them with the most insecure jobs and a higher risk of exploitation. In 2015 Lewis, Dwyer, Hodgkinson & Waite wrote that a situation like this “arises from the ongoing interplay of increasingly deregulated labour markets, characterised by employers’ demands for low-cost ‘flexible’ labour and highly restrictive immigration and asylum policies that variously structure, compromise and/or remove basic rights to residency, work and welfare”.

The upper secondary school law directs unaccompanied youths to highly precarious jobs in specific sectors where Sweden’s labour force needs more workers. If they don’t give way to these high demands, their application will most likely lead to a rejection. Researcher Guy Standing launched the notion of precarity in 2011. He describes that a labour market, resting on precarious jobs, is based on the idea of labour being opportunistic (taking what comes). In the ongoing pandemic, Sweden has made many policy changes to ease the pressure of this crisis – mostly for businesses – but no adjustment has been made on the demands put on these youths. The Covid-19 pandemic shows more clearly than ever that they are expected to quick-

ly help boost some of the most vulnerable, and already migrant dominated, sectors in this time of crisis such as in the care sector.

As the labour market is not only precarious, flexible and quick, but also highly racialised, Helene explains that these youths are worried to enter a sector where they must compete with Swedes for the same jobs as their chance of being hired would be greatly reduced. Now, this concern has increased as many of Sweden’s workers have lost their jobs, and the competitiveness on the labour market has intensified. As these unaccompanied youths have no protection in this crisis, the large burden put on migrant individuals to establish themselves in Sweden is clear. As Helene points out, these expectations are very discriminating because “if you are Swedish and eighteen you’re not treated as an adult, but if you come from another country you are supposed to be fully grown up and stand on your own”.

Furthermore, those who applied for temporary residency under the upper secondary school law had their application for asylum written off by the migration agency, leaving them without any financial or housing support. In connection to this, according to Helene, those unaccompanied youth who are male face more difficulties than their female counterparts, particularly when it comes to finding accommodation. She points out that people are less likely to hire out to them while girls have no trouble finding a family home to take them in.



When asked what she thought would happen to those who receive a rejection after they have graduated, Helene answered that it will be similar to those who were not qualified to get a permit to finish upper secondary school in the first place – they will end up working in the black market. Here, they will most likely be subject to highly exploitative and cheap labour. Restrictive policies that force people into the black market fuels the informal economy. As researcher Stephen Castles states, it is essential in capitalism that human labour works as a commodity and that it can be bought and sold like any other commodity. These young adults who become undocumented workers are essential, and counted for, in a state's economy, due to the cheap and flexible labour they are forced to provide. Yet, when needed, they can be conveniently labelled as “criminal” or “illegal”. The overlapping disadvantages for these youths show the importance of an intersectional perspective to understand their situation. As shown in this article, they are discriminated against due to ethnicity, age, gender and class. Sweden's move to distance learning for all its upper secondary schools, together with the subsequent changes in the labour market, has therefore only exacerbated an already tense situation, making them more vulnerable and susceptible to mental stress.

At the time of assembling this article many of the unaccompanied refugee youth, who were contacted, were hesitant in coming forward to share their experiences, which is somewhat indicative of their situation. After numerous attempts to make contact with someone personally affected, two Afghan males – one nineteen and the other twenty-one – have since volunteered to share their thoughts on the topics discussed in this article. Remaining anonymous, the first concludes that if given the right tools, such as a computer, distance learning may not prove too problematic. However, he also states that “it is different to study. You have to do a lot yourself; you do not get the same help you get in school; you are busy with other things when you are at home. You sit alone and maybe get anxious and feel mentally ill”. The other, who has one year left on his temporary residence permit, adds that being alone at home now, without the regular routines of school where it is easy to focus on studies, makes your thoughts wander more easily on to negative ones. He thinks back to his first asylum rejection and explains that he is “starting to feel the stress again, headaches, stomach aches, so tired and worried about how things are going for me in the future”. Both express great concern, with

## UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL LAW REQUIREMENTS

Here are the requirements for applying for temporary asylum under the upper secondary school law (gymnasielagen). Note that an application could only be submitted between July 1st – September 30th 2018:

- You must have applied for asylum for the first time on November 24th 2015 or earlier.
- You were registered as an unaccompanied child upon application and were assigned to a municipality.
- You waited for more than 15 months to receive a decision.
- You must have received a rejection and at the earliest from the day you turned 18 years old.
- You got your deportation decision on July 20th 2016 or later.
- You study or intend to study at the upper secondary level in Sweden.
- You were already in Sweden when you sent in your application.

one stating that “during the Corona pandemic many have lost their jobs, many companies have gone bankrupt and it has become extra difficult for us to meet the demands of the upper secondary school law. It will be very difficult to find a permanent job right now. Covid-19 has definitely had a negative impact on my future in Sweden”.

### Suggested further readings

Standing G. (2011) *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic

Lewis, H., Dwyer, p. Hodkinson, S. (2015) *Hyper-precarious lives Migrants, work and forced labour in the Global North*, *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 39(5)

Castles, S. (2011). *Migration, Crisis, and the Global Labour Market*, *Globalizations*.



# Healthcare for ~~All~~ Sale!

AYDAN CAKIR, DANIEL CLARK, XINYI MI

Equity in healthcare has always been a universal debate. Although countries have different regulations in terms of their national medical services, with the unexpected crisis of Covid-19, they all struggle with providing necessary help to the people. We have seen lockdowns as the most common precaution to take pressure off the healthcare system in general. Yet, despite common practices, countries have nonetheless differed in administering various remedies based on their situation. Countries who have been recognized for their privatized health sector have been under heavy scrutiny from the global field, thus supporting the argument that countries with “healthcare for all” are better equipped for a pandemic such as this one.

However, countries like Sweden that claim equal healthcare are now being questioned due to the clear discrepancies brought forward due to Covid-19. This article does not claim which health care system is better or worse but questions the generalizing rhetoric of “healthcare for all” and presents the hidden similarities in countries that claim majorly different stances on healthcare.

Two countries that have marketized their healthcare sector are the USA and China. Essentially creating a new age of health care for sale. In both countries there is a clear discrepancy between those who can afford health insurance or comfortably cover the direct costs of medical bills whenever the time arises. In the latter group, it has

become even more stratified in the face of this pandemic.

The outbreak of Covid-19 in the United States has highlighted the growing inaccessibility of health care for US citizens. With the highest number of positive cases, it has become apparent that the health care infrastructure cannot handle this pandemic. Nor can individuals pay the physical or mental cost of being treated properly. Many individuals who risk illnesses because they cannot afford to spend a month’s rent on a doctor’s visit are now enduring more hardships due to the massive job layoffs happening in most countries right now. There has also emerged a general concern of visiting medical institutions in fear of being exposed to individuals who are positive with Covid-19. Even if



you are willing to be tested in a facility, you cannot simply ask to be tested. There are limited tests in the United States and very rarely is the average citizen tested if they do not have immediate reason to be put ahead of someone else. Only with the right connections and excessive amounts of wealth can you receive proper care during this pandemic.

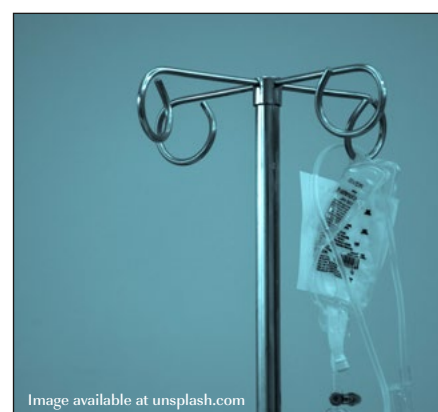
When Covid-19 spread in China, the government declared to pay the full cost of treatment. The average medical cost of each patient was 23,000SEK, and the medical insurance payment covers 65% of the fee and subsidizes the rest. This seems to have given people a lot of consolation during the pandemic, but it is far from enough. The medical system in China will still be controversial post Covid-19. Nearly 95% of people in China are covered by public medical care insurance. However, according to different types of work and the “hukou” system, people are divided into the different classification of medical care insurance. Hukou is the

registration of individuals in the national system, which distributes benefits according to the status of agricultural and non-agricultural residents. Most state benefits are linked to your hukou, and the two types of hukou regulations are treated differently. Therefore, enterprise employees can receive a labor insurance medical system. The staff of government agencies and institutions can access the public medical system; and rural residents can access the cooperative medical system.

After the economic reform policy in the 1980s, the government would marketize the medical system. Therefore, medical and health resources would go to big cities. Medical investment in rural areas was minimal. Even after the medical reform in 2009, real changes were difficult to see. There is a saying in China that reflects the current dilemma, “difficult to see a doctor, too expensive to see a doctor.” Due to the limited number of primary care physicians in rural areas, many patients go to city hospitals, which leads to over-

crowding in large hospitals and few patients in small hospitals. This phenomenon has resulted a group of scalpers who resell appointment tickets, at inflated prices.

There are nearly 200,000,000 migrant workers from rural areas searching for job opportunities in precarious fields. They usually find work in construction, manufacturing, or logistics. They have become the builders of the city. However, cities have failed them. Because of the high turnover rate, most of them chose the cooperative medical plan (83%) which is only accessible in their hometown,





away from the city. And with the travel restrictions stemming from Covid-19, many of these individuals are stuck in the city forcing them to pay medical costs that are not covered by their insurance. Making it extremely difficult to get qualified health care, which is a fundamental right for human beings.

Sweden has been considered as one of the countries with the best national healthcare systems which is funded primarily through taxation. According to The Health and Medical Service Act, residents in Sweden have equal access to healthcare services. Leaving patients with zero or few fees for medical visits. However, such practices only run so smoothly for those who are born in Sweden or registered to the national healthcare system.

Though it might not be as publicly known, Sweden's "health care for all" is objectively exclusionary, making it quite the oxymoron. For instance, the Swedish health care system does not cover asylum seekers' medical needs entirely because they've not been granted a residence permit. For refugees

(as residence permit holders), there are considerable inequalities for accessible health care due to language barriers, cultural factors, and other external factors that come with finding home in a foreign land. Even migrants who have received their migration card, a government-issued ID requiring an application fee, have been denied service because they then lack a Swedish ID, which has an additional cost. Or one might be denied service because they don't have Swish, a bank transfer app that only transfers through Swedish banks. Then on top of that, you need the Mobile Bank ID, which can't be opened without the Swedish ID and personal number. The list goes on and on, and becomes more intricate the further down you dive. So, even if Sweden is recognized as a welfare state that possesses health care for all, it becomes apparent that it's just health care for all Swedish citizens or those who successfully overcome the various challenges and obtain all the Sweden exclusive documents, finally, proving their right to receive proper health care.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, debates on equality in health-care access has become more prominent than ever. Like everywhere, there has been a large influx of patients and worried individuals seeking proper health care services. This is no exception for the migrant population in Sweden; and because of the increasing demand for medical examination and Covid-19 tests, those without necessary documents are being denied service at an alarming rate. Of the plethora of consequences we're witnessing from Covid-19, one that has become almost global, is the stratification of health care recipients, despite governments' stance on health care. In an era so infected by neoliberal ideology, equality has become a pipe dream. Hierarchies are deemed necessary and accessibility is bought and sold to the highest bidder.





# The Role of the State during and after the Corona Pandemic

KATERINA SPATHIA

Let's adjust our lenses for a moment to the political-economic scene into which the current Corona pandemic has made its entrance. In this scene, the state had gone from "taking an active role to being impartial arbiter" over the last few decades, according to Anton Jäger writing in 'Damaged' magazine. Supposing the role of 'impartial arbiter' – the state as a neutral referee – had been misleading though; maybe the *laissez faire* attitude toward the economy espoused by neo-liberalism, gave citizens in capitalist societies the world-over the impression that '*laissez faire*' applied to them too in terms of civil liberties they were left to seize. However, the corona pandemic has highlighted that the state's role is rather that of a sleeping dragon, that when it wakes, can claw and breathe its flames at citizens' mobility, consumption, through securitisation, privacy, curfews and so on, whenever it sees fit, without any checks and balances, or public scrutiny. If it is possible to reign in people through systems of control in times of crisis, then it is certainly possible at a later point.

The current 'state of exception' should also draw our attention to the fact that incrementally, our freedoms and rights have been threatened and impinged upon in the last decades. Jäger goes on to write: "The left waited for ten years for someone to finally bury the neoliberal settlement; no one arose, and now an extra-human agent will take care of it [...] the 2010s are the product of the 2000s and everything happening today was prepared in the previous decade". It is certainly hard to pinpoint the emergence of an Orwellian dystopia; what once seemed unimaginable can be normalised by events such as the current pandemic, and what's more, used as a precedent for restrictions on civil liberties in the future, and a steering of the political machinery towards the markets' and governments' ends, undetectably. Even "dictatorial tendencies" have been detected by the Swedish former state epidemiologist, Prof. Johan Giesecke, who cited them as a good reason to avoid lockdown in Sweden. According to him, Eastern Europe is showing dictatorial tendencies currently which he named as his fear: – a medical professional's fear was political rather than existential, which is telling. As usual, those not fully immersed in state apparatuses, such as those in transit, are left exposed



to the sharp end of restrictions: in Lebanon for example, Syrian refugees' movement is limited to just five hours (between 9pm and 1pm), whereas for Lebanese nationals it is from dusk till dawn. Those even more marginalised by society, are off the radar altogether; such as the refugee camp of Moria on Mytilene where their residents remain in limbo, and the refugees straddling the Turkish-Greek border in early March of this year.

The thinker Roberto Esposito writes "emergency decreeing pushes politics towards procedures of exception may in the long run undermine the balance of power in favour of the executive branch. But to talk of risks to democracy in this case seems to me an exaggeration to say the least." We need to do more than merely talk about risks to democracy, we should at least keep a check on those risks and acknowledge them as a 'testing of the waters' for future tolerance and habituation on the part of the public. Police with 'body-worn-cameras' (BWCs- "The police do not have to stop recording you if you ask") and robot dogs with fitted loudspeakers roam

the parks from London to Singapore, warning people not to sit on benches or get too close to each other. They represent more brazen and explicit versions of what most in both in the Global North, as well as South consent to already through use of bank cards and smartphones, location finders and data usage. If Esposito can sleep soundly with the thought that democracy is not at risk – seeing that governments have that capacity to mobilise these measures within weeks – and assure himself that they will only ever be used for peoples’ ‘own good’, I want to know what his night-cap is. Bear in mind, the residual powers of 9/11 (of 2001!) are still defining of airports, as Brian Eno pointed out last month in a surreal interview match with his lifelong fan, Yiannis Varoufakis. Emergencies are an expanding waistline on to which the new garbs of decrees, surveillance, regulation can be fitted onto people at large. Once the market-driven governments have that new waist measurement, they know how big they can go and how quickly. Jäger argues that “the pandemic will show there to be no masses”, and that movements such as ‘Occupy’ were mere simulations of the mass movement, however, could the pandemic not also have a mobilising effect? It is not a given that dictatorial tendencies will spread further in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Already there seems to be a sentiment of corporation like waves of musicians and actors ad hoc performances and appearances with the purpose of boosting morale, and a climate of armistice, of putting certain disagreements or grievances aside. The caustic philosopher Slavoj Žižek points out how much organised ‘crime’ or, as he puts it, “organisations we like to dismiss as ‘crime,’ has turned to assisting and “distributing food freely” to the poor en masse. The mafia and the notorious ‘Camorra’ in Southern Italy, and gangs in Rio De Janeiro’s favelas have been reported to be providing for the underprivileged in their localities. Meanwhile “the market can no longer provide or protect, the state will have to cushion the blow” claims Jäger. Could these be seen as an emerging acknowledgement of the need for access to, and availability of care and provisions, that are simultaneously a safety net and a social gel? For this to be acknowledged in an impactful way, this view needs to be taken on by the financial elite and leaders (in the USA these are one and the same group), not merely those who benefit directly from it. That is, universal care needs to be acknowledged universally in order to be enacted.

There is an equal band of pessimists to rival the hopeful with a view to what kind of ‘opportunities’ Corona pandemic presents. Marco d’Eramo discovers that

“Rulers are also taking advantage of the pandemic to push through policies that would cause outrage in normal times. Trump has given American industry a free pass to break pollution laws during the emergency, while Macron has dismantled one of the main achievements of the labour movement by extending the maximum working week to 60 hours.” (in the New Left Review)

The tragedy is that a sleepy, ‘soma’-dazed populous has now been rudely awoken – not to political realities such as these – but awoken only to be distracted by the panic for survival, and, ill-equipped and inexperienced in pandemics, they turned to any guidelines offered in desperation. This distraction and dependency has meant that governments can bypass checks and balances, or scrutiny, unfettered to an even greater degree than they are hitherto accustomed. Instead of taking any ‘spare time’ during corona to plan for sustainable ways of co-habiting peaceably on this planet they are getting their way through the back door. D’Eramo goes on to comment, “The epidemic will increase top-down control and surveillance; it will remake society as a laboratory for disciplinary techniques.” No doubt also the dependency on technology, social networks and conference-call technology will facilitate surveillance: most people who have the luxury, will have embraced online communications to the maximum since early March of this year. Like any dependency, they might see no need to wean themselves off, when lockdown and social distancing are over. Not only does this facilitate surveillance and uncritical media consumption, but the influence of online mass media will undoubtedly grow, as it has been applied like a hay-bag, globally, on a bigger scale than ever. The windows of opportunity are many, and for all sides and players.

Those with a social consciousness, activists, and certain academics and artists, as well as people who express their stance through alternative lifestyle choices, have been waging a struggle for ages. What remains is for those who’ve had their attitude towards their own role and the role of the state reshaped by the corona pandemic, to articulate the need for systemic change; What remains is for leaders who were shaken by the pandemic to shift their attitudes toward societal change, the importance of cooperation and to what is understood by ‘core needs’, so as to then address those needs in a collaborative way.

“First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of all stray animals; the division of the town into distinct quarters, each governed by an intendant. Each street is placed under the authority of a syndic, who keeps it under surveillance; if he leaves the street, he will be condemned to death. On the appointed day, everyone is ordered to stay indoors: it is forbidden to leave on pain of death. The syndic himself comes to lock the door of each house from the outside; he takes the key with him and hands it over to the intendant of the quarter; the intendant keeps it until the end of the quarantine. [...] If it is absolutely necessary to leave the house, it will be done in turn, avoiding any meeting. Only the intendants, syndics and guards will move about the streets and also, between the infected houses, from one corpse to another, the “crows”, who can be left to die: these are “people of little substance who carry the sick, bury the dead, clean and do many vile and abject offices”. It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment.”

**Michel Foucault**

From *“Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison”*.





# EXCLUSION

*The outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic do not occur in a vacuum, but they are a reflection of pre-existing social inequalities based on gender, race, class, sexuality, migration status, and more. As states have scrambled to gain control over the virus through new policies and legislation, people in all areas of society have felt the effects. For some, the pandemic has been merely a ripple, a temporary inconvenience that will soon pass. For others, it has been a tsunami, tearing them between life and death, safety and precarity. Ultimately, these unequal outcomes ask an important question: Who matters in a global pandemic?*

## Violence in the Midst of the Virus

BIANCA LANGE

The outbreak of Covid-19 changed our spaces, both public and private, into zones of social distancing and isolation, but are we facing the same threats, or are we hit differently? In the public spaces, there have been reports of harassment against Black people wearing face masks. Hate crimes against Asian people have also increased. In the private spaces, women's organizations have warned about the increase in violence against women and children. Has Covid-19 brought out violent behavior, or is this pandemic only exposing violent structures that were already there?

Our bodies are just not meat on bones but political fields of historical memory. The colonial past is not an isolated event without connection to our bodies, the colonial past is carried by our bodies. Internalized racism lives within our bodies; white bodies as racially superior and black bodies as racially subordinated. The colonial violence of the past is also here in the present, and even though the slave trade has stopped, racial violence took new forms of continued



oppression. NBC News reports that Black people are the most frequent victims of hate crimes since the FBI started to collect such data in the early 1990s.

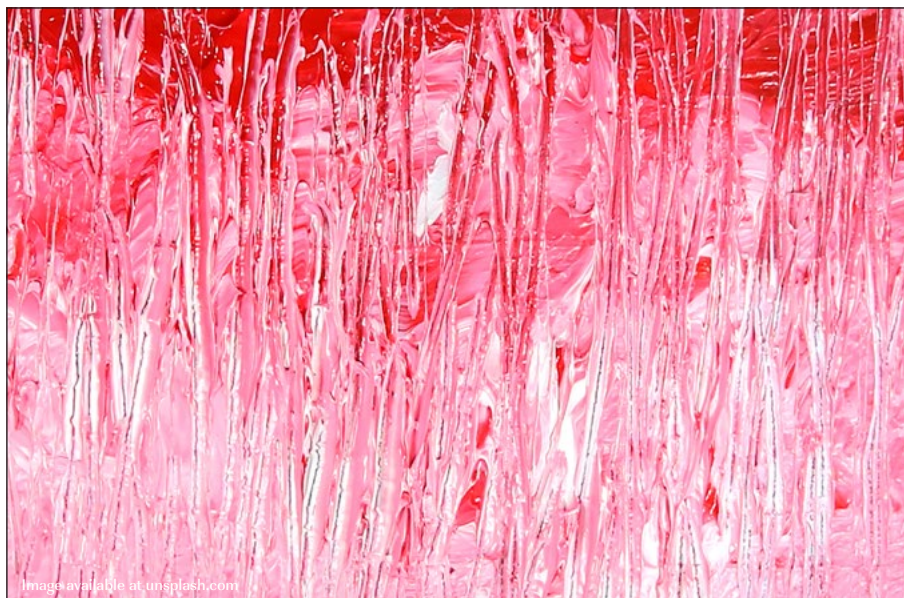
Violence to racialized bodies is not only expressed through beatings or killings, but also through psychological violence as, for example, in the form of harassment or through institutionalized violence such as not having access to the health care system. In the United States, black bodies are denied health care due to lacking financial resources, as the Black community is more economically disadvantaged, doing low-paid jobs and living in poor housing conditions.



Racial violence cannot explicitly be divided into colour; it must be problematized with gender, class, ableism, sexuality and religion, to name some important factors, that also dictate violence and oppression. Nico Lang for Vice magazine reports that Black LGBTQ people in the US are facing extra risks of catching Covid-19, as they are as a group lacking resources both to access health care and housing. This is in addition to the risk of being overlooked by medical professionals, as queer identities or transsexuals are groups often dismissed by the health care system. The killings and hate crimes against Black transsexuals are overrepresented in statistics of hate crimes against transsexuals.

To prevent the spread of Covid-19, France made it compulsory to wear face masks. At the same time, the veil is forbidden. The motivation for banning the veil was that it hindered facial recognition and communication in schools, but with face masks against Covid-19 this does not seem to be a problem. At the same time, reports from the US show that racialized bodies wearing face masks have been facing violent behavior, such as being denied entry while grocery shopping. This type of violence also points to how racialized bodies are controlled in what they are allowed to wear, but also that wearing recommended protective gear can be met with violent repercussions. To be controlled in behavior is a common strategy for perpetrators of interpersonal violence against women, and here the perpetrator seems to be the state. State violence against racialized bodies can also be seen in the most topical police killings of Black people in the US.

Violence on racialized bodies is also targeting males of colour in specific ways as Black men are overrepresented in prisons.



Throughout the crisis, prisons and other densely populated spaces have been vulnerable for Covid-19 outbreaks. The closed in spaces puts another layer on racialized violence. Migrant camps are seen as some of the most threatened spaces for Covid-19 outbreaks, as preventative actions as washing your hands or keeping distance is just not possible. The access to health care is also minimal at best.

Our homes are another closed-in space during this pandemic, and according to statistics the most dangerous place if you are a woman. Looking at transgender hate crimes, statistics point out that the most likely place for such crimes to occur is in the private sphere. These figures are important when connecting it to Covid-19 because with social distancing spending more time in the private sphere is the new normal.

Violence against women and children (VAW/C) is a global problem. In the working paper by Peterman et al. on pandemics linked with VAW/C written for the Center of Global Development, it is stated that one in three women of reproductive age have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) at some point during their lifetime. Let's take a minute to take in these figures of how many women are living or have experienced violence as a part of their life experience. Peterman et al. draw from research on previous pandemics, such as Ebola/Zika and HIV/AIDS, to show how they led to an increase on IPV.

Pandemics may result in the breakdown of infrastructure which can be compared with a disaster or conflict related context. Such contexts have been proven to increase VAW/C, as basic supplies may now be harder to get a hold on, such as food. This supply shortage can lead to exploitative relationships when parents or other key support persons previously responsible for gathering resources die in a pandemic, which has been the case with the Ebola virus. Further, victims of VAW/C might be blocked from seeking help by their perpetrators as a punishment, or their movements may be restricted. Victims might themselves choose not to seek help when being abused, out of fear of catching the virus. Isolating victims of VAW/C is a known tactic of perpetrators, and victims might be isolated further during Covid-19 because of social distancing measures. Perpetrators might also withhold safety equipment such as face masks, soap, or hand sanitizer. Women are not an equal group, and

just as racial violence is connected to gender, gender is connected to racial violence. Together with sexuality and class, we can start to map out the vulnerability for certain groups and the effects they face because of Covid-19.

One thing is clear, Covid-19 is not an equal virus where we all face the same consequences or threats. Without looking at the intensified violence faced by vulnerable groups, the future consequences of this virus will be overlooked. The preventive measures by states should be more concerned about these social effects hitting groups already at risk, as Covid-19 is foreseen to lead to deepened social inequalities. It is important to understand how Covid-19 will affect different groups in societies differently and apply the right preventive measures. Finally, the intensified violence for racialized people, women, children, and LGBTQ people in the midst of the virus exposes a larger structural apparatus of violence embedded into the very core of our societies. A violence that is interwoven on all levels of society in all spheres. In the personal as well as the political, in the private as well as in the public.

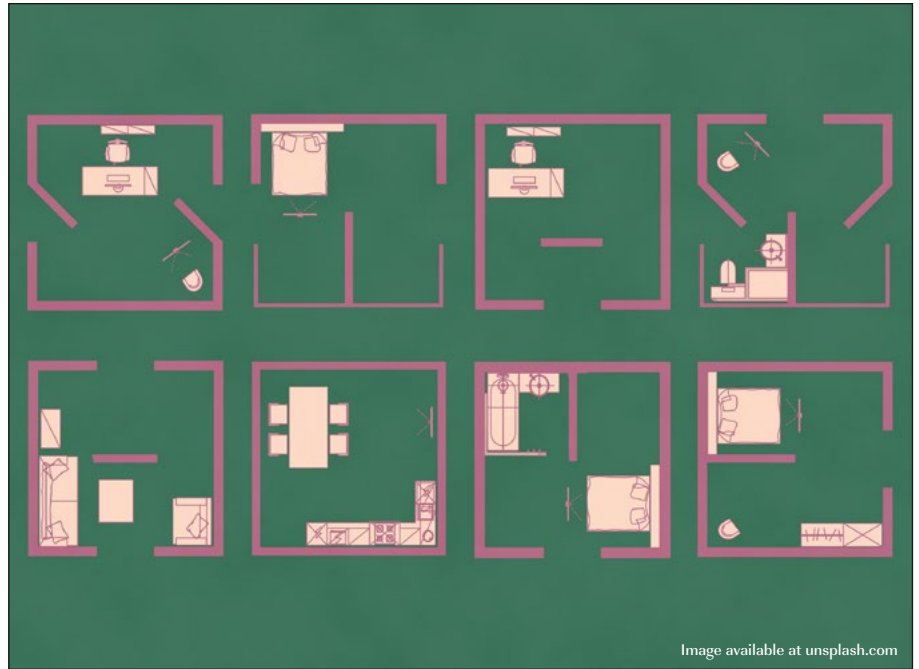


Image available at unsplash.com



Image available at unsplash.com

#### Suggested further readings

Blacklivesmatter, Website

Lang, N .(2020). In survival mode the pandemic is hurting black lgbtq people the most?

Peterman, A, et al.(2020). Pandemics and Violence against Women and Children, Working Paper, Center for Global Development

# Emergency Practices for Whom?

## The daily exclusion of Non-Citizens

ASIA DELLA ROSA

Catchy background music can be heard playing. In the foreground the State Police official logo is in view. Twenty – maybe more – policemen move compactly, taking care to maintain social distance; all of them wear masks and gloves. A well calculated meter separates them from each other as they occupy the entire square and invite four young men to stand against the wall of a building.

One of the policemen guides a dog, which sniffs men with their back against the wall. One of the migrants is caught red-handed; the camera frames the crime - a small amount of light drugs wrapped in plastic film. The proud policemen arrest the dangerous subject and then head back to the cars, keeping the ranks tight and in the same way socially distancing themselves from each other.

This is not a scene from a famous director's movie, but a short video documenting police activity in a well-known Italian city during lockdown. The video has been published on the official police headquarters Facebook page of the city in question. The aim? To show Italian citizens how well the police forces do their job during the pandemic crisis. The title speaks for itself: "Anti-aggregation controls". There is an element of humor in it, if we dwell on the real content of the video. If the controls are in fact necessary to avoid the moments of aggregation, in the video the only aggregate of people we see is the group of policemen, intent on frisking four black men. We cannot ignore the ethnicity of



Image available at [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

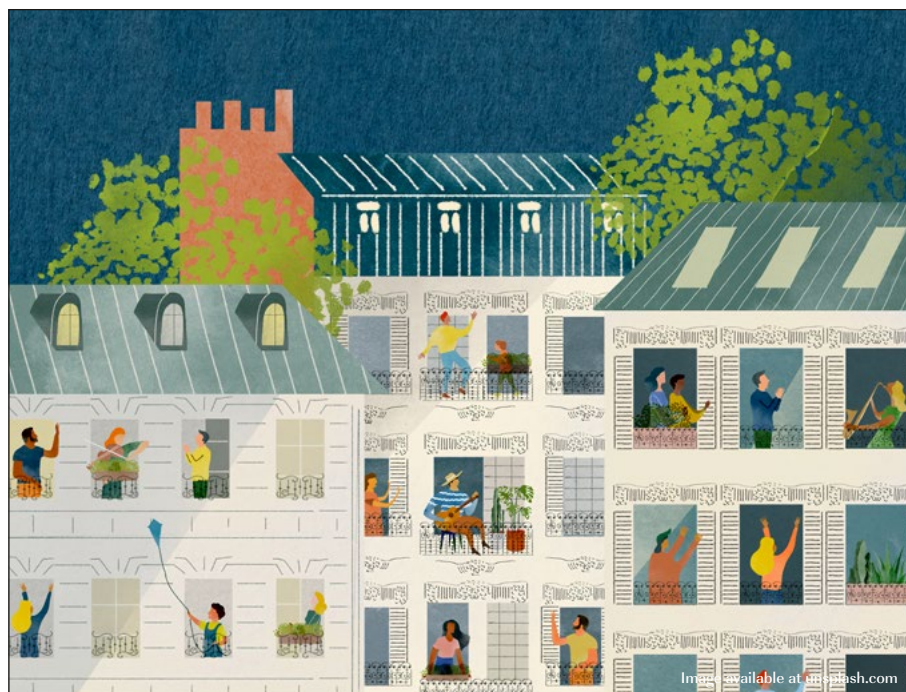


the people arrested because that would mean to be surprised in front of the selective practices of institutional control agents – aka State Police: it goes well with the structural and ideological components of penalties in capitalist societies.

But one may wonder what was normal before this emergency. Unfortunately – or fortunately, it depends on the points of view – in Italy we have been playing with the binomial fear/safety for years. The Minniti Decree in 2017 and the Security Decrees in 2018, have contributed to the construction of an absurd logic; the need of security measures is born out of the need to feel less afraid. But afraid of what? This is the right question. Fear of all those we could group into the category of non-citizens: migrants, homeless, prisoners, precarious workers.

This fear of the other, which has been effectively built up in recent years and not only in Italy. Another that must be kept at a distance – even before the Covid-19 became a contagious threat. A non-citizen who must be hidden from view, through safe and decorous practices in the cities. But what is this decorum? The word derives from Latin, and means ‘dignity that in appearance, in manner, in action, is appropriate to the social condition of a person or category’. The use of this word – literally – in the decrees introduced in Italy in recent years, has made decorum a mere fiction of identity. Fiction of identity necessary to put a distance between those who belong to the system, who are consumers, and those who are voluntarily excluded from the system, the non-citizens.

We can therefore say that among the consequences of the pandemic crisis, there has certainly been an alarming and widespread increase in the practices of state control and securitisation, and this video is a clear example



of this. During the state of exception, emergency decrees, state recommendations or common sense apparently are not enough. In cities now deserted after the imposed lockdown, there is still the need to regulate public spaces, to track movements, to punish those who do not respect the rules. Rules imposed from above, to avoid a contagion; rules not always clear, which leave room for the discretion of police officers. Rules that, once again, affect mostly those who even before Covid-19 had been kept at a distance.

The emergency situation we are facing is therefore in itself a justification for everything - violence, racism, abuse of power. The spread of the virus must be controlled, that is the premise. The individual in most cases has been left alone to manage the emergency – in their home – and there is a need for widespread monitoring by the state government. And in implementing emergency and security measures, no consideration is given to issues such as class, gender and race. And this, specifically, means that in imposing the lockdown throughout Italy, no account has been taken, for example, of those who do not have a house, and who have been stopped and arrested on the street for failing to comply with the new emergency regulations. No account has been taken of migrants who live in ghettos, who stay in such places not because of a personal choice, but because they are exploited in the Italian countryside – and who, incidentally, harvest a quarter of the fruit and vegetables we eat during the year. Neither has there been an account of those who have been excluded from the national asylum system. We can call them *sans papiers*, and who are condemned to live in irregularity in informal camps close to the borders with France. The list of excluded could go on forever.

It is not intended here to call into question the emergency measures put into practice by the Italian Government to deal with the emergency of recent months. The lockdown imposed, as well as the controls and restrictions on freedom of movement, seem in retrospect to have been effective in limiting the number of contagions. There is, however, a need to reflect on the emergency practices adopted in recent months,



which favor a few and exclude too many. Especially if the emergency in question is a health one. One cannot ignore the fact that all those who are kept at a distance and forgotten in the new decrees do not have guaranteed access to the national health system, or fear to access it because this would lead to repatriation, or live in precarious conditions where the virus – given the practical circumstances – proliferates easily.

**Are we happier now that the cities are deserted, controlled, and the diktat of decorum reigns?**

There was a before, and now we live our after, locked in our houses. We experience for the first time reclusion, and the restriction of our freedom of movement. We have internalised command, we respect the rules and we stand in solidarity – always among ourselves as citizens with rights and privileges. We even sing songs, sharing concerts from the balcony at home. But we cannot forget who literally or metaphorically does not have a house.

A positive note, in this moment of fictitious and exclusive solidarity are the collective realities that have not forgotten about non-citizens. Associations, cooperatives, social movements, which have concretely implemented mutualist practices by providing assistance to those who have been excluded from the emergency decrees. “The virus alone does not discriminate”, Judith Butler rightly said, “but we humans surely do, formed and animated as we are by the interlocking powers of nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and capitalism”.

And precisely for this reason, if the pandemic is indeed a portal, we must rethink the decisions taken in crossing it: the risk is to find ourselves on the other side without what has always characterised us, our humanity.







threatening at present, potentially turning into death traps, providing contagion rather than cure.

Adding to this, limited access to reliable information, as reported by residents and solidarity initiatives, makes for the spread of fear and anxiety, with the risk of exacerbating psychological stress, re-traumatisation, and an escalation of tensions in situations already characterized by isolation, loss of control and desperation. The smallest provocation within these confined spaces could create circumstances potentially as harmful as the virus itself.

### **Abandoned by the state**

Despite this, avoiding a potential outbreak of a humanitarian disaster within these inadequate housing structures has seemed to be the last concern for authorities over the last months. So far government responses have involved further restrictions on mobility, cutting of services and banning incoming visitors, extending detention, and enforcing strict quarantines on entire camps when infected cases have been detected, such as in the refugee camps of Ritsona and Malakasa in Greece, and Hennigsdorf in Germany, thus isolating these populations even further. In the notorious Moria camp on Lesbos residents have not been allowed to leave the camp, in order to seek legal advice or submit an appeal to a negative decision – a requirement to not face deportation – without a permit, or have been fined when doing so, as reported in the Guardian. This is an obvious violation of their rights as asylum seekers.

While in Sweden, the Migration Agency continues to issue deportation decisions, formerly detained migrants have been released into a state of precarity, both to prevent contagion and due to the impossibility of executing deportations. The NGO Stadsmissionen reports a rapid increase of people being forced into so called “involuntary undocumentedness”, leaving them in a position where they are not able to leave, while at the same time lacking the possibility to “legalize” their stay in the country. Thus, they fall between the cracks of the system, not being entitled to any kind of social or economic assistance.

Instead of protection and emergency counter-measures, such as immediate release of detainees *and* the provision of safe alternatives, these populations seem to be even more marginalized and, to a large extent, left to fend for themselves. This further demonstrates how the exclusionary border regime extends its reach beyond national borders, by trapping migrants in extended limbo-situations and denying them inclusion into social and economic support structures. How can the failure to protect the most exposed in society



Quarantine containers, camp in Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany. Photo by Women in Exile & Friends

be regarded as anything else but organized abandonment and violence sanctioned by the state?

The solution could be easy though, for example by temporarily turning empty hotels and abandoned buildings into emergency housing. In Minneapolis in the US, the former Sheraton hotel currently functions as a self-organized sanctuary for the unhoused. Just as before the current crisis there is no actual shortage in housing, instead the problem is one of accessibility and affordability.

### **Politics of separation**

The restrictions imposed in order to contain the virus blatantly expose what interests governments prioritise. In Germany for example, the government keeps the borders open to seasonal and precarious migrant workers, exploiting their “essential” labour, while at the same time denying them full access to the national healthcare system. And as lockdowns and other restrictive measures now begin to ease for the “general population” within the EU, the Greek government plans to “restart tourism” for EU citizens, while at the same time extending the confinement of those in overcrowded and unsanitary camps, as well as planning for mass-evictions of recognized refugees, starting from 1st of June

This neglect by governments, if anything, demonstrates the “double standards” inherent in the treatment of those considered “other”. Whereas some of us, in following the guidelines of “social distancing”, for our own safety, is to be protected from contagion from “outside”, others are strictly sealed off from the outside world and forcibly quarantined *with* the virus, in order to protect the “outside” from it. This raises questions of whether all lives are equally worthy of protection, and, if not, what the rendering of some human beings as less worthy of saving does to our common humanity.

With the violent border regime still hunting, imprisoning and attempting to deport people, and



official narratives defining “others” as a social security problem – or even as a threat to public health – governments seem to cling to the idea of separation until the last breath, when what actually poses a threat to public health is keeping people in these inhumane conditions. Maintaining the deplorable states of mass accommodations, and forcing people into “undocumentedness”, puts society as a whole in danger, with the risk of more people contracting the virus, thus potentially overburdening the healthcare system. Providing adequate and safe housing solutions for everyone, would thus be beneficial for us all, in saving crucial resources and lives.

Still, maintaining the separation towards “others” seem to be more important for the security state, than furthering an effective system to contain the virus. This politics of separation is one of the main features of the violent border regime, with camps often located outside of the city centre, keeping migrants separated from the rest of society and away from public view.

#### **Towards a politics of care**

Instead of perpetuating this regime, and in so doing, making the horrific and inhumane conditions it causes a continued normalcy, there is a need to create a new normality. Rather than authoritarian responses and divisions based on notions of the “nation”, and whom does or doesn’t belong to it, rational and effective safety measures are needed. This calls for the abolishment of borders, immediate granting of unconditional and unlimited



Quarantine containers, camp in Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany. Photo by Women in Exile & Friends

residence permits for everyone, evacuation of all camps, an end of mass accommodation and provision of safe and dignified living conditions for all.

**There is an urgent need to realize that the politics of separation and exclusion is inherently unsustainable. Instead of more confinement and concentration of people, focus needs to be on how to practice the art of care for each other, making sure to leave no one behind in this process.**



#### **Suggested further readings**

Medical and Homeless Community Statement on the Increased Mortality of Unhoused People Published on [www.medium.com](https://www.medium.com) May 28

Minneapolis residents commandeered a hotel for homeless – Published by the Minnesota Reformer on June 2

Women in Exile & Friends [www.women-in-exile.net/en/](https://www.women-in-exile.net/en/)

Greece ready to welcome tourists as refugees stay locked down in Lesbos – Published by the Guardian on May 27

11,000 of recognized refugees in Greece face eviction as of June 1 Published on [www.keeptalkinggreece.com](https://www.keeptalkinggreece.com) May 28

Sveriges stadsmissioner: Allt fler hamnar i ofrivillig papperslöshet - Published at [www.sverigesstadsmissioner.se](https://www.sverigesstadsmissioner.se)

# CAPITALISM

*In the wake of the pandemic, part of the working force was allowed to work from the comfort of their homes while others were deemed sacrificable. This reflects how capitalist economies thrive on the exploitation of labour. Indeed, those who have lost their jobs now find themselves in a limbo as they try to find ways to survive. In this sense, the Covid-19 pandemic is a crisis of capitalism as much as it is a public health crisis.*

## Hostages, not Heroes: War-rhetoric and Workers' Exploitation

GLORIA GEMMA & JULIA HARMGARDT

In current political speeches, tweets, commentaries and the discourses surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, war-like metaphors have again become a recurring phenomenon. "Doctors and nurses are at the frontlines of this war and are true American HEROES! With their help, America will WIN", Donald Trump tweeted recently. The use of a militarised language of such as "being at war", of "threats", "invisible enemies", "frontlines and "duties" projects not only a structure of false security allowing decision-makers the opportunity to seize control, protect their territory and create an alien enemy, but also instils fear in society, in turn increasing anxiety amongst its citizens.

### Forced acts of Generosity

Performing what is mostly invisible labour, crucial for society to function, essential workers are often among the most precarious groups on the labour market. The fear of missing pay checks or losing their job, no longer being able to provide for themselves or their families, forces many workers to continue working in highly contagious environments despite a lack of adequate protection.

Simultaneously, the war rhetoric is showing an inherent paradox. Despite the work of those employees being highlighted as courageous and essential, the axiom is seemingly not applied to their lives. As essential and health workers are demonstrating and striking worldwide against the low-level work conditions they are facing during the pandemic, protective equipment is a rationed commodity inadequately and insufficiently distributed to them, putting them at a greater risk of exposure





and at a high risk of getting infected. The war-rhetoric hence mystifies what is a public health crisis, caused by decades of neoliberal political choices made by negligent governments, as an exceptional emergency and the consequent loss of life as an unpredictable tragedy.

Recalling war-time rhetoric and applying it to a pandemic implies the mass scale death of health- and essential workers to be part of the inevitable collateral damage. The “hero narration” celebrates these workers’ immolation and self-sacrifice for the higher collective cause, linking their supposed generosity to the society’s gratefulness. This in turn puts health and essential workers in an emotionally overwhelming situation in which they are forced to perform their jobs, stripped of their right to raise their legitimate criticisms. The “hero narration” hence helps to construct a justification for the eventual (and statistically foreseen) death of these categories of workers, exonerating the governments from their political choices.

### Race, Gender and Class

Race, gender and class play a significant role in shaping the effects of the Covid-19. What started as a “visa-virus” that was spread worldwide by the international business class, quickly turned out to have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalised communities, as well as disadvantaged social groups. The risk of exposure is affected by gender relations too. In Sweden and indeed worldwide, the healthcare system is largely female dominated, foreshadowing gender-shaped disproportionate consequences on the population at risk to contract the virus. While the healthcare system can be described as female-dominated, Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities with a working-class background constitute the majority of essential workers. Current data confirm that the death rate is disproportionately affecting these vulnerable social categories, as well as discriminated communities such as Afro-Americans and the indigenous Navajo Nation in the USA. We must hence bear in mind that this disproportionate impact is not a casual randomness, but rather the outcome of the structural racism and economic inequalities on which the Capitalist system is based.

### Precaution as a Privilege

For precarious workers, as well as for people who are living in poor or overcrowded households, self-isolating and social distancing is not a choice, but rather constitutes a class privilege. Having access to healthy environments and adequate individual protection gear for their own safety, and the safety of their relatives and communities, is an un-



Image available at [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

affordable privilege for some. For precarious workers, the risk of losing their jobs or their professional licences if they choose to #stayathome represents working conditions that cannot be described as truly voluntary, as long as the alternatives worsen their personal situation.

As some New York nurses recently stated during a protest; essential- and health workers are not heroes, but hostages of the Capitalist system. In this context, invisible essential workers are shamelessly exploited, and their lives and communities’ survival put at risk under a radically racist, colonial perspective that looks at them as the easiest sacrificial resource. To add insult to injury, the representation of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities





in the hero-rhetoric is absent, instead exclusively portraying the national heroes during the pandemic as white and middle-class health workers. The fact that capitalism is an inhuman system is not a surprising revelation.

The political mismanagement during the Covid-19 pandemic has however yet again exposed the intrinsically exploitative and discriminatory nature of Capitalism, namely that people are sacrificable over profit. The pandemic has thus emphasised which socio-economic groups are more vulnerable, more affected by Capitalist exploitation, and less cared about.

#### Suggested further readings

- Butler, J. (2016) *Frames of war: when is life grievable?* London: Verso Books.
- Farmer, P. (1999) *Infections and inequalities: the modern plagues.* University of California Press.

# Working with a Psychological Burden

AYDAN ÇAKIR

Migrant workers' lives have never been easy in terms of their working conditions and labor rights. They are always faced with adaptation struggles since their "new home" does not always welcome them very well. In addition to such unequal but unfortunately normalized circumstances, they now have to deal with the negative outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic as the most affected group on the labor market. Migrants' struggles in Sweden vary, but I will present here two stories from Linköping about migrant workers, who are in different positions in terms of both their working situation and life struggle in Sweden. For ethical and confidentiality purposes they will be mentioned by their initials and no personal information will be exposed. By carrying their individual stories here, I try to highlight the psychological warfare of migrant workers during Corona time and reveal what is already known.

## \*N.Ö.- Turkey

Not only is N. Ö. a successful master's student at Linköping University, but he also must work part-time at a restaurant to cover his living expenses. Since he is a student from a non-EU country, his family pays a huge amount of tuition fees to the university. For this reason, he cannot ask for an additional allowance from his parents. He also needs to show a certain amount of money in his bank account to be able to renew his residency permit each year.

He stated that finding a job is, interestingly, easy for him. He described his adaptation process with the following words:

“I found this job two months after I came to Sweden. I got used to the heavy workload of work and school together in time. The monthly salary was not too much but enough for the basic expenses. I need to work more to earn more since I have an hourly rate contract. Before the pandemic, it was all good. The classical story; I need money, they need labor. It was not a problem for me to work overtime.”

His normal life changed dramatically with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. He was told that it was a gradual but hard-hitting turn.

“First, we were joking about the virus, like when there was only one case in Sweden. Then things started to get serious. One day, when I looked at the schedule, I couldn't see my name. Only two-three people continued to work as usual since they have a full-time employment contract. But all of the hourly workers were gone.”

He stated that since Sweden did not go into lockdown and close restaurants, he was able to return to his work. However, he also said that it did not go as I expected.

“I was the lucky one. After two weeks they started to put my name in the schedule again. The number of customers decreased to a great extent but they still kept coming. So they needed me. I started to work two days a week. It was four or five days before, but I thought it's better than nothing. It was a huge relief when they called me. I thought they were ghosting but it turned out that they needed me. At first, I was really happy. Then I understood what was going on. Yes, it is a fact that customers are fewer than before, but not completely gone. During the weekend this number is actually increasing. But to cut their expenses, they do not call as many employees as they did before. Six or seven employees were able to take care of 500 people in one day. Now there are two or three people for 300 people in total. I have never felt so tired.”

He also mentioned that the waiting period was really stressful for him since he worried about his daily expenses.

“I heard that many of my friends got fired during this period. They are also students that have to deal with their payments. It was very stressful, I even started to look for another job, but the crisis hit all of the restaurants. No one was hiring. Even if they were, I am an immigrant I don't speak the language, so they wouldn't prefer me.”



It was not just working conditions that changed for N. Ö. but also his salary has decreased considerably.

“ They used to pay for those extra hours. Now they just enter my regular hours even if I stayed more than that (for cleaning and closing). I tried to talk to the boss several times. He always said that he is going to fix it, but he did not. Now every month, before the paycheck arrives I have to check my hours and ask him to fix it. Now I have to track the money that I earn. I am currently looking for another job, but I cannot resign from my current job because I need that monthly income even if it is less than usual. It is already hard to go to work with the fear of infection. I am interacting with around 150 people just in one day. Plus, I cannot get the money that I earn... It is a psychological burden.”

#### \*G.S. – India

G.S. has been living in Linköping for four years now. He came here for study purposes and after he finished his master's studies in mechanical engineering he started to work at a private company in Linköping. In November 2009, he was laid off from this company due to the company's financial issues but within a month he was able to find another job in the same field.

He stated that he felt lucky to have found this job. When I asked him to give more details about the path to his lay off due to the Covid-19 crisis he said that;

“ The profile was exactly what I wanted, and I enjoyed working there. I am an employee of an X company and this company rents me out as a service to a Y company. In the first week of April, the Y company realized that they too were facing an economic crunch due to the shutdown everywhere else, or more importantly, in their supplier and customer site/countries. Hence, they decided to cut down on expenses. The first step was to cancel all the contracts with consultants like me. Also, since I was on provänställning (meaning, trial employment or probationary employment) the X company laid out a rule specifying that if I do not manage to find another task by the end of task Y, they will have to lay me off.”

Due to the immigration law in Sweden, people who lost their jobs have to find another job within three months. Otherwise, they will be deported. This lay off happened to G. S. twice in six months, so he felt

he had had quite enough stress in a short time. He expressed his feelings with these statements;

“ This crisis due to Covid-19 has occurred everywhere in Sweden and finding a job in this time is almost impossible for an expat with limited Swedish language skills. Due to this, my employment ended in the first week of May. I have been living in Sweden for almost 4 years now, away from home, family, and friends to pursue higher professional growth. But after being laid off in twice in six months, it simply does not seem worth it and now I am planning to go back home, India.”

Throughout his working permit struggle for all these years, his dreams and professional goals seem to have gradually come to a halt. And Covid-19 has played an important role in his radical decision to go back home as the last resort.

“ I wanted to stay here and build a career since I would not have the same conditions in my country. India is quite competitive for engineers and, at the end of the day, you cannot earn much. Here, after I finished my master's study, I believed that I had a chance. But today, after all these stressful situations it makes me nervous that my life in Sweden is on a knife-edge, just a matter of crisis. Now I feel like I cannot handle the psychological burden. I need a break from all this stress.”





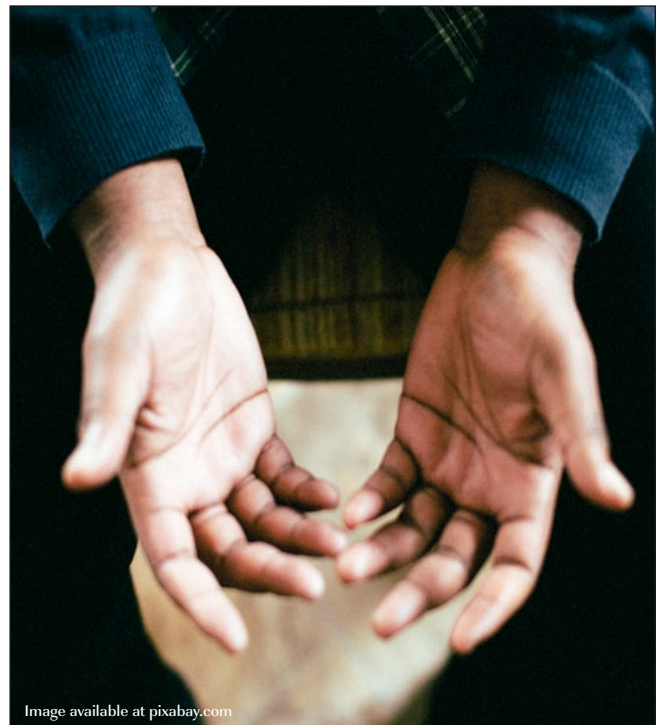
# Diasporic Dependence

DANIEL CLARK

**C**hristina, a 25-year-old Filipina, was recently dropped off along with seven of her prospective co-workers soon after arriving in the United States for a Traineeship with a prominent US hotel company. The preparation for the relocation was organized between US and Filipino governments, who issued valid work permits, temporary visas, and flight tickets. Due to the allegedly unforeseen outbreak of Covid-19 in the US, the program was hastily suspended. Leaving Christina, and seven others stranded in a new country with no support from either government to return home.

While there are a multitude of factors that make Christina's situation such a precarious one, we often overlook the consequences dealt to those who are obliged to secure her well-being and livelihood in a foreign country. The silver lining of Christina's situation is that she is part of an existing community in the United States because she is Filipino. Ethnic ties reaching back to shared origins often produce diasporic communities in highly developed countries. However, due to the strong neoliberal ideology present in these countries, diasporic communities face various hardships including low pay and few benefits from the state. This compounded with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have put even more stress on those who make up an already marginalized group. With siblings and cousins who have successfully migrated from the Philippines to the US, and the strong family values that are embedded in Filipino culture, their community hardly ever refuses to help each other out in such unsecure circumstances. This obligation that comes with being a part of the community extends to individuals who may not be biologically related but are nonetheless treated as a family member. This perspective does not diminish the consequences of Covid-19 that have caused many migrant workers to lose one or more of their jobs. Depending on the individual, some are more capable of housing an additional member. Organizing between friends and family, they coordinated where Christina would stay and for how long, so she would never be truly abandoned in the US.

Though this story could be read as a specifically difficult case overcome by a community of people who never turn their back on one another; the fact stands that this is a scenario created by faulty programs organized on state levels to exploit temporary migrant workers. This experience does not belong to Christina, alone. Migrant workers around the world have been suffering from unequal positions in foreign states and now in the face of Covid-19, their hardships have only increased. As an observer, it is important to always look at the factors that make such a case possible. The state along with private entities such as hotel corporations initiate work programs to obtain second class citizens as temporary workers in OECD countries, but when this fails for whatever reason, they have no problem abandoning the project along with the people involved. Leaving them to survive in a new country with limited resources and anxiety of prospective deportation.



# Remittances:

## Lifelines at Risk for Migrant Families

MARIA ANGELICA RODRIGUEZ DELGADO

**M**igrant workers globally send money to support the family in home countries. The money transfer provides financial assistance to Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) and is vital to the survival of vulnerable households. Remittances link migrants and non-migrants in ways that go beyond dependency or development and are part of the social obligations that migrants have in their countries of origin.

Kameela normally transfers \$700 monthly to support her mother in Zimbabwe; now she sends \$200 because the Covid-19 pandemic affected her income and she has not been able to send more money back home. Kameela is worried about how her mother is going to get food or how she will survive.

Sergio usually sends \$200 every two weeks to El Salvador, where he supports his wife and two children. Lockdown measures left him unemployed; he got his last paycheck more than two months ago and since then has not been able to wire his family cash.

Migrants transfer money despite the precarious circumstances in which they sometimes find themselves; the money brought out from host countries creates tensions between the aim of promoting remittance contribution to development and the same entailing more migration from developing countries. Also, it is like immigrants live in some form of modern slavery where their incomes belong to the country in which they work, but they earned that money, and if they desire to spend it on loved ones, so be it. Remittances are a private expense that has proven to be a lifeline in origin countries, and the Covid-19 pandemic has put at risk this source of economic aid for poor people or in need. The fall in the wages and employment of migrant workers through lockdowns and isolation measures due to the Covid-19 pandemic caused a drop in the money that migrants send to secure the livelihood of family and friends in difficult circumstances. According to a new report from the World Bank, Global remittances to LMIC are projected to decline sharply by about 20% to \$445 billion, compared to \$554 billion recorded in 2019. The large decline

### FACTS. Remittances

Remittances are generally defined as that portion of a migrants' earnings sent from the migration destination to the place of origin. Although remittances also can be sent in-kind, the term remittances refers to monetary transfer only.

Source: Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, 2005

in remittances comes in a time of crisis where disadvantaged households and communities are even more vulnerable. Remittances in war-torn societies or where the social welfare system does not function, serve to the immediate alleviation of poverty and are used for survival, shelter, food, education, and health.

Remittances are thought to fill an aid gap and have an impact on development, but this attribution tends to be over-emphasized. On the one hand, remittances mitigate poverty, but on the other, they decrease the demand for public goods. Research data analysis shows that remittances affect public expenditure negatively when they become a substitute for labor income or when they pay for education or health while the state relinquishes responsibility for the provision of social welfare and leave it to family. Likewise, although remittances increase the consumption of families at home, and perhaps create financial assets, in some cases, they also provide funding for homeland conflict.

The direct cause for the expected 20% decline in remittances is the fall in wages and the employment of migrant workers in host nations. Crises affect immigrants more negatively than natives given the type of work they do, often with less secure employment contracts. Education, experience, and language skills, besides the exacerbated discrimination and the anti-immigrant sentiment in crises, also make immigrants more sensitive to economic downturns than natives. Migrants are usually more flexible in the labor market and ready to take low-



er-paying jobs to avoid unemployment, but lockdowns and travel bans make things harder.

Remittances go through formal and informal mechanisms of money transfer. Financial operators include banks, credit unions, and credit card companies. A typical international remittance of \$200 to LMIC, is on average, 6.8% of the transaction, according to the Remittance Prices Worldwide Database. One notable innovation in international remittance operations is the use of mobile phones to transfer money. According to GMSA, mobile money transfers reduce the costs of sending \$200 to 1.7% of the transaction and is more convenient for users in terms of location and hours. Informal mechanisms, in contrast, include the carrying of money by hand on a return visit or by asking friends or relatives to carry the cash. Irregular migrants with lower, or no access to digital payment instruments are more likely to use informal methods, but the closing of borders affects the dynamic. In general, the cost of transactions and exchange rate regimes have a decisive impact on the amount sent as well as the channels used for money transfers.

The propensity to remit, the value of remittances, and the usage patterns depend on culture, gender, status, destinations, and the like. Three factors can broadly affect remittance flows: migrant stocks, incomes of migrants, and to some extent, incomes in migrant-sending countries. The Covid-19 pandemic causes a decline in remittances within the migrant stock, that is, in the amount of money transferred per migrant by a loss of income. The problem, in the present scenario, is not a reduction in the number of migrants as this will not be seen immediately. Migration flows will continue, as some sectors are prompting essential migrant workers. Travel bans can reduce the number of newcomers, but the number of migrants still stands because many are stranded in destination countries, facing unemployment and uncertainty in labor markets.

The reality is that although remittances may decline, they remain critical for the survival of households and communities that would otherwise perish in the present moment. In the past, the behavior of remittances in times of crisis stood out for being countercyclical, meaning that, while economies slow and labor markets contract, they provided a stable income and even increased in response to emergencies or disasters. Nevertheless, this resiliency is challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic because it intensifies previous unfavorable social, political, and economic conditions and affects remittance senders and recipients at the same time as never before. The Global Financial Crisis resulted in a 5.2% decline in remittances flows in 2009. The outlook for 2020 remains uncertain, but the



Photo by Maria Angelica Rodriguez





estimated decrease is expected to be sharpest in Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, and Sub Saharan Africa, according to the World Bank.

Remittances help weather the storm during crises, and the debate over their impact on development is ongoing. Economist Dilip Ratha suggests that “it is best to think of remittance practices as the outcome of the failures of national economic policy to address public needs”. In fact, without coming from public money, remittances have proved to be a lifeline for people in vulnerable situations. International money transfers are a measurable benefit, a channel for solidarity, transnational influence, and even a way to express feelings to parents, children, or friends left behind. The Covid-19 pandemic challenges the financial support provided by migrants in countries where the welfare state fails to provide the basic needs of a large portion of society.

### FACTS. Remittances

In 2019, flows to low – and middle – income countries (LMIC) reached an estimated record USD \$554 billion (approximately SEK 5,461 billion).

The figure for the Swedish part is estimated just over SEK 32 billion annually.

#### SWEDEN

Annual remittance inflow (\$ billion)  
for 2019: \$ 3,259

Annual remittance inflow (\$ billion)  
for 2018: \$ 3,146

Remittances as percentage of GDP for  
2019: 0,6%

Source: World Bank

### KEY TRENDS.

Remittances flows in 2020 to LMIC are projected to fall by around 20% to US \$445 billion. This fall is largely due to the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and shutdown.

Across all regions the projected decline is:

Europe and Central Asia (-28%);  
Sub-Saharan Africa (-23,1%);  
South Asia (-22%);  
Middle East and North Africa (-20%);  
Latin America and the Caribbean (-19,3%);  
East Asia and the Pacific (-13%).

Source: World Bank



# WE have the Right to go Home

CHRIS BUNYARAKSH

**T**he Covid-19 Pandemic is affecting every corner of the world; the pandemic first spread in China and then slowly to the neighbouring countries such as South Korea and Japan. A few months later, Covid-19 has officially become a global pandemic that has spread worldwide.

The group of people that suffer the most is migrant workers, since they are already a group with fewer rights to stay in the designated country and in terms of their healthcare. This time is going to be the worst for undocumented workers, since they risked and gave up everything (namely rights and access to healthcare) from their country of origin just to go and work for a richer country where they will get paid more than they would at home.

In South Korea the undocumented workers from Thailand are referred to as “Phi Noy” (‘Little Ghost’). The reason they are being categorised as “Phi Noy” is because of their living situation in South Korea – that they have to live in hiding from the authorities and receive no rights at all when it comes to healthcare. The graph shows how many foreigners entered South Korea in 2018 and the number of illegal foreigners there (Pulse, 2019). We can see that the number of undocumented foreigners keeps growing. Thai people account for around 140,000 of a total of 160,000 people who work in South Korea illegally (Thairath, 2020). How did these people do it? First they will have traveled to South Korea as a tourist, but then they will overstay their permitted time, so becoming an undocumented migrant.

Most of the jobs that these workers are doing can be categorised



as the 3Ds jobs, which are Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult. These jobs include agricultural, construction, manufacturing work and the service industry; the jobs that South Korean people don't want. That is why it is such a golden opportunity for lower class people in Thailand, because they are easy jobs in the sense of how easily they are accessible for them since no South Korean wants to do these jobs but they get paid more than in their home country in the same categories of jobs. The minimum wage that they receive at home is around 300 THB/hr (90.92 SEK/hr), while what they'd get paid in South Korea would be 2,000 THB/hr (606.16 SEK/hr). That is why a lot of people are willing to risk everything to go and work in South Korea.

The majority of people that went there to work illegally are people from rural areas in Thai-

land where it is difficult for people to find work, especially for those who don't have the resources and means to receive an education in order to improve their credentials and so their chances of a decent job. Hence they rely on getting a minimum waged job which pays very little when they need to feed their family and children. Consequentially they are willing to risk their lives by giving up their rights and going to South Korea to work illegally. A big motivator is to be able to send back remittances to be able to support their family at home, a concept that has been explored elsewhere in the current REMS issue; Remittances: lifelines at risk for migrant families. Colonialism also plays a major role in the movement of people, in that the West is perceived as the land of opportunity, mostly for the people who came from poor backgrounds



and are willing to risk their life to go to the West.

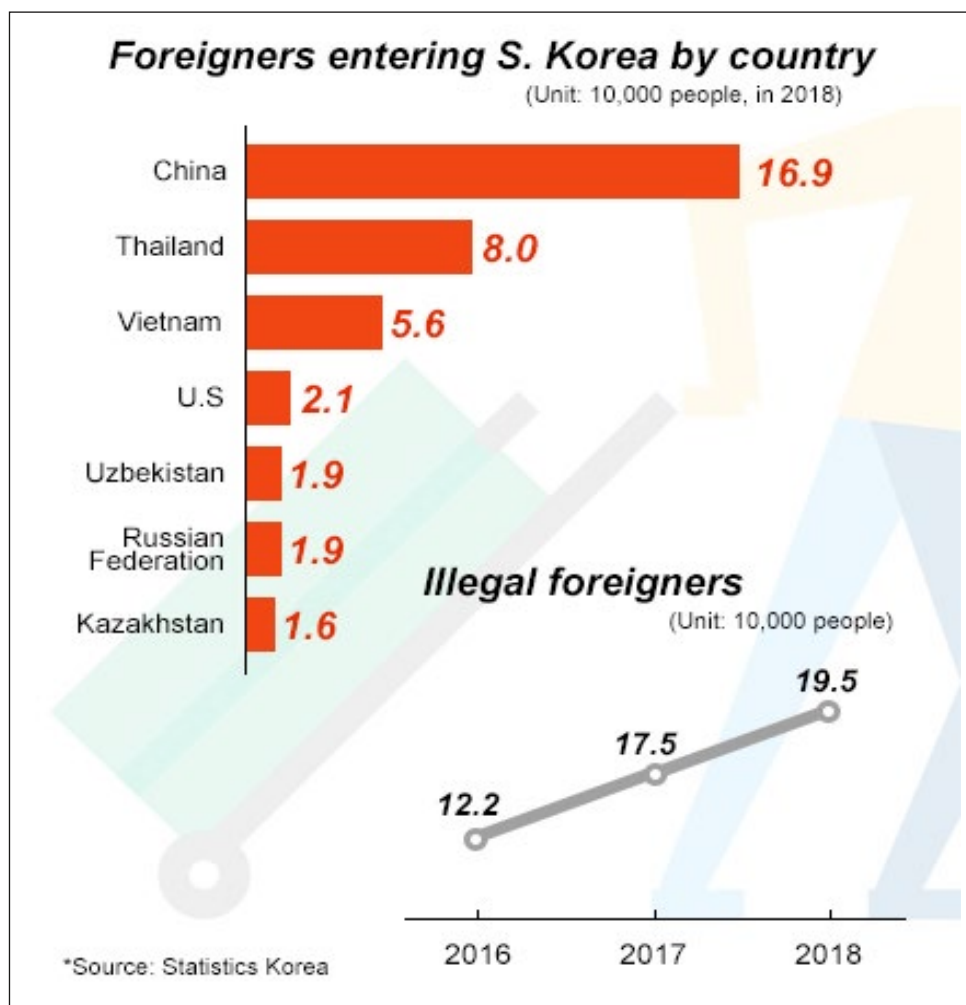
The “Phi Noy” or ‘little ghosts’ have attracted much media attention and afforded many news headlines in recent months. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic undocumented workers are asking the Thai Government to bring them home, which has sparked a debate between people, based on the fear that the pandemic would be spread to Thailand by bringing those people back. There are even some commentators who lament “Why do we even bother to care about them, they are going there to work illegally, so they should stay there” (Anonymous, 2020). The main reason they are coming back to Thailand is because their status as “Phi Noy” in South Korea whereby they do not have the right to necessary healthcare in South Korea since they are living in hiding from the authorities. They have

to go back to their home. As mentioned in the article on Healthcare for All Sale!, each countries have their own way to deal with healthcare in this pandemic, but each healthcare system tends to ignore the minorities so these groups of people will receive less rights of access to healthcare. Another reason is pretty basic which can be summed up with the question “Who does not want to go home?” To live abroad is already a challenge for most migrants, especially in this crisis where it will be even harder for migrants to travel back due to the lockdown policy of each country. Making migrants around the world wanting to go back to their home.

In short, the “Phi Noy” are willing to go to South Korea illegally to work because they will get paid more to be able to send back remittances to be able to take care of their family and chil-

dren at home. But because of Covid-19 they have to come out and go back to their home, unable to stay in South Korea due to fear of Covid-19 and lack of rights to healthcare. But back at home they are also being faced with hatred for fear of spreading Covid-19 in Thailand.

**In my opinion everyone should have the right to go back to their home regardless of their status, especially in the midst of a crisis, but on the other hand I do understand the fear the people have that these people “might” be the carrier of these disease. Hence Thai citizens are all opposed to the idea of bringing those people back to home. But I personally still believe that everyone should have the right to move, we are the citizens of the world where the world is OUR home.**



# RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

*Make no mistake, the world before Covid-19 was not a utopia. It was a time of growing inequality and exploitation, and these injustices have only been further exacerbated in light of the pandemic. In 2019, we saw a number of social and political movements emerge from all parts of the globe, from Chile to Sudan and from Lebanon to Poland. While these movements had varying successes and outcomes, one thing was clear: the status quo is no longer enough. The Covid-19 outbreak has posed a number of challenges for resistance movements. How can we protest when gatherings are limited to fifty persons? How can matters of inequality maintain visibility in a news cycle that is hyper-focused on the pandemic? Movements are adapting to these challenges in a variety of ways; resistance has not gone away, but it is changing.*

## Covid-19: Whose Story?

CHLOE LAWSON

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic spread chaos and uncertainty throughout the United States. This was due to experts and politicians who presented, at times, conflicting information. For example, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, stated at a press conference that a vaccine against this virus would not be available for 12 to 18 months. In response, the President claimed a vaccine come "relatively soon." His noble lie may have been an attempt to ease the public's fears as he encouraged for a return to "normalcy" by encouraging states to reopen. In contrast, Dr. Fauci continues to emphasize the severity of the pandemic, even suggesting that the US could avoid a second wave if it takes more precautionary measures. Despite—and perhaps because of—these contradictory messages, the American public's response has varied from rushing grocery stores to stockpile essential items give stay-at-home orders to carefree spring breakers crowding beaches to enjoy the warm weather.

An important role of news media is to keep the public informed of current events. Its ability to strike a balance between "bad" news stories, which highlight the severity of this pandemic and "good" news stories, which spotlight acts of kindness, is re-

flected in headlines. More specifically, a sensational choice of words helps attract the audience's attention, such as the one the National Post's entitled "It's Official: 'Deeply Concerned' WHO Declares the Covid-19 Outbreak A Global Pandemic." This tone has not dissipated as seen with the headline from CNN, "The epidemic that may never have a vaccine."

Readers can easily buy into this distorted version of reality unless they manage to uncover inspiring stories such as "A 10-year-old girl has sent more than 1,500 art kits to kids in foster care and homeless shelters during the coronavirus pandemic." However, these stories continue to be overshadowed by headlines like "As Hot Spots Shift, Pandemic Enters a New Phase" from The New York Times.

However, the story of Covid-19 is not homogeneous because not everyone will weather this storm in the same boat. Social media accounts like Some Good News and Good News Movement highlight uplifting stories rather than ones of despair in order to emphasize that even in the midst of a crisis, humanity can find and provide joy.

Indeed, as the public was told to stay at home, essential workers, including healthcare and postal



workers continued to put their lives at risk in order to provide the labor upon which society depends. When FedEx driver Justin Bradshaw went above and beyond by disinfecting a package because he knew a member of the household was immunocompromised, NBC Miami ran a story titled “Signed, Sealed, Sanitized: FedEx Driver’s Heartwarming Act Goes Viral.” However, the article does not address Bradshaw’s own obstacles as his daughter’s autoimmune disease also puts her at high-risk of contracting Covid-19, which he later shared on The Ellen DeGeneres Show.

These “feel good” stories should not hide the underlying persistent inequality and privilege that leads to these heartwarming moments. For example, Forbes’s story “Michael Che Says He’ll Pay Rent for 160 Apartments in Honor of Grandmother Who Died of Covid-19” highlights a gesture that is only a drop in the bucket to New York’s larger public housing crisis. Alternatively, the headline from CBS News’ 60 Minutes reads “Addressing the Strain the Coronavirus Has Put on America’s Food Supply Chain with José Andrés.” While Andrés’ disaster relief organization manages to rally the necessary resources to help those in need, Andrés equally recognizes that food security is the greater issue.

**When one looks at the bigger picture, the story of Covid-19 is not one-sided, as presented in the news media. Everyone is suffering together, but the sources, context, and scale of this suffering are vastly different and thus immensely unequal. For example, those who live paycheck to paycheck and do not have access to health-care cannot simply ignore the headlines that depict their harsh reality in this pandemic. Yet, despite our differences, there are untold stories of communities coming together to help each other in times of need.**



Image available at unsplash.com

# ¡Adelante! Transnational Activism in times of Pandemic: Chile Despertó Norrköping

GABRIELA MARTINI DOS SANTOS & HILARIAN DEMIO BUCK SILVA

It was a typical gloomy autumn Sunday afternoon. What was supposed to be a usual walk to the grocery shop was interrupted by a known Latin American revolutionary song playing in the background. Following the chants of “el pueblo unido jamás será vencido!”, we were led to the square in Prästgatan. The closer we got, the more familiar we felt. The music, the faces. Suddenly, our Latin American eyes recognized some familiar symbols: the Mapuche and Chilean flags, signs in both Spanish and Swedish with supporting statements such as “Norrköping stands for the Chilean people” and “1973 again? No, thanks”. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect was the various generations singing common anthems in a cold day together: elders, youth, parents with toddlers... all united in a distant land for the same purpose.

On October 19th, 2019, an event called “El estallido”, which can be translated as “the outbreak” took place in Chile. Millions of students went to the streets to protest against the increased subway fare. That event led to a general uprising against the increased cost of living, privatization of basic services and continuous precarization of basic human rights, with highlights to the considerable presence of the Mapuche (for more information, see the box one). The reaction of the government, represented by the police force, was pretty brutal, leading to many human rights violations that closely resembles the dictatorship times. Several protesters lost their eyes by shots of rubber bullets, students were arbitrary detained and also accused of crimes they did not commit. These events caught the attention of millions of Chileans, living abroad, as many left the country during the 1970s and 1980s due to a coup d’Etat which was followed by an authoritarian regime and its consequences.

The events of October 2019 were a turning point for the union of Chileans in Chile and abroad. Yayo, one of the Chileans at the demonstration in Norrköping, points out: “We were watching the riots happening in Chile on the television and thought of organizing a demonstration here to show solidarity. After that, we gathered in the theater to debate and the group was formed.” And so the rest

of the demonstration took place: a collective fika, discussions on the next steps to be taken, and the formation of the Chile Despertó Norrköping group.

The presence of such community debating politics in such space is not unusual for our eyes. Latin Americans in Norrköping have a track record for occupying communal spaces in order to organize for a shared cause. The Solidaritet och Kulturhuset Gjuteriet, ABF, and the Latino Teater are some of the venues that groups from this community have gathered at (see more in box two). Regarding the Chilean part of the Latin American community, Marta, one of our sources, asserts: “When we arrived, in the 1980s’, we used to gather at Gjuteriet with others to advocate for democracy. It has been 35 years, and since then I never stopped. We are a product of political persecution in Chile. Situations like this only strengthen the bond, we were never disconnected from there.”





Another respondent, Scarlet, adds: “Back then, we used to do what we do now: spread information about what happens in Chile, denouncing all the human rights abuses the State perpetuates.” When comparing the impact of the advocacy from 35 years ago and now, both of them point out that “It was easier [to convince people and Swedish Institutions] back then, once it was recognized a dictatorship was taking place and that the government kidnapped, illegally arrested, tortured, and killed people. Today, Chile is known as a democracy. This makes it much more difficult to point out that the same authoritarian practices are happening. Our role as a movement is to support the people back there, because the government declared war against its own population. El estallido highlighted this.”

The exiled Chileans from the 1980s were not the only generation to be impacted by the flames of El estallido. Roberto, a first generation Chilean-Swedish asserts: “I always knew that the minimum wage in Chile was bad and that people strive for the basics. But I only realized how rough the situation was when I saw the images of students who lost their eyes by the police shots in the protests. That really got me.” When listening to Roberto’s words, it is noticeable that the internet and social media had a key impact on spreading the news. Pictures and videos shared by the protesters caused a stir for some members of the Chilean community, not only in Norrköping but all around Sweden. Tania complements: “Rodrigo, who was our first spokesperson had contacts with others from other cities in Sweden such as Stockholm, Gothenburg, Uppsala and Södertälje, that are our bridge to the frontline movements in Chile. Through them we get to know which are the main demands and how to help. It’s all through the internet”.

When listening to their testimonies, it is evident how the social networks and the internet were key factors to mobilize in a coordinated way. After the October 2019 uprising, local committees were formed in cities across Sweden to organize nationally, forming the Mesa Nacional en Suecia (MÁS) (National Board in Sweden, free translation). The National Board holds virtual meetings every week to discuss the actions to be organized. The purpose is to coordinate a unified front at a national level between the committees in Sweden, strengthening the work to get more visibility to the situation in Chile.

Some of the actions mobilized by the “Chile Despertó Norrköping” committee were demonstrations and a campaign to boycott Chilean products in Sweden in order to put economic pressure on Chile; a feminist performance to shed light to the



situations of abuse suffered by women while protesting; crowdfunding campaigns to finance the medical needs of people who were seriously injured due to police violence, and to support the defence of political prisoners; and, campaigns to assist the most vulnerable with basic needs such as food and toiletries, especially after the Covid-19 outbreak.

With regards to the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the group’s dynamics, two aspects appear. Tania pointed out that “the virus somehow helped us to reach people in Chile, because the ones who were not used to communicating through the internet were forced to learn it”. Now, it is possible to access documents and make reports online, so the pandemic did not affect the movement’s organization itself. On the other hand, Scarlet highlights that “The government benefited from the pandemic and social distance. It’s very easy to get rid of prisoners – burn a body and claim this person died due to Covid-19, no one will question it. Also, when the government doesn’t feel the pressure from the streets, that weakens the movement” [...] “The dictatorship never really ended in Chile [...] That is why we fight for” claims Yayo.

The political spirit of the members of “Chile Despertó Norrköping” is grounded in a history of resistance that surpasses generations and borders. The spirit took shape 35 years ago and has since gained the support of different movements, such as cultural spaces and labor organizations. Decades later, the internet has strengthened the networks of solidarity in distance mode, enabling three different generations to rise for the same cause. The spaces people like Marta occupied in the 1980s, now witness young people like her Swedish-born granddaughter Celina taking over. Together, their hands and voices are an extension of millions of others that were – and are – violated. Voices that are somehow being amplified all over Sweden through the seeds that were planted decades ago, for the sake of the same goal than before: justice, dignity and equality.



Chile Despertó Norrköping meeting partially online during the pandemic

The coup d’Etat upheld by Augusto Pinochet in 1973, that deposed the first socialist elected President (Salvador Allende) in the world, was also accompanied by deep neoliberal reforms that made Chile a “laboratory” for neoliberalism. Led by economists from the Chicago School, “the Chicago Boys”, the goal was to counter inflation through the privatization of the public sector. The consequences of those regulations are now strongly felt by millions of Chileans: the education rates were never as high as before the 1970s; the Health System is in a precarious state and unaffordable for the people; and there is no pension system. Pinochet also annulled the agrarian reform done by Allende, which has directly affected indigenous peoples. In this context, they are represented by the trans-Andean indigenous nation Mapuche, that is one among the Aymara, Diaguita, Atacameño, Quechua, Colla, Kawésqar, Rapanui, Changos, Chonos, Selk’nam and the Yámana/Yagán. Chile is the only South American country that does not recognize indigenous peoples in its Constitution, which can explain their strong engagement in *El Estallido* as well.

The Latin American community in Norrköping is strongly connected through spaces that foster the construction of collectivity, and artistic and cultural activities. After the end of the Gjuteriet concession, the Chilean community has been reuniting at the Latino Teater, a place with over 20 years of history. They organize certain activities including music and theatrical performances to assist people in Chile. The Latino Teater also hosts the Radio Amiga (radionorrkoping89.se), which operates as a communication channel that spreads news to the Latin American community in Norrköping. To access the Latino Teater’s schedule: @LatinoTeaterNkpg





# Resistance and Resilience during Covid-19: The Wet'suwet'en Story

KENNA SIM

We are living in a period of mass restrictions, whether it be restrictions on where we can go, who we can meet, what we can do, or how many of us can be in one place. For some, this is not a new development. We can look to refugee camps in Greece, to detainment facilities in the United States, or to those living in authoritarian states and see that for some, lockdown is the norm. For the more privileged in society, this is a new state of being.

These restrictions are part of what some have named the 'state of exception', wherein governments give themselves more powers and authority in emergency situations. We are in combat against a biological enemy, and so our movements are limited.

For social and political resistance movements, the Covid-19 crisis, and the governmental responses to it, have thrown a wrench in building and sustaining momentum. What's more, those on the front lines of such movements are at a risk for increased repression from the state in the name of public safety. In a time when public gatherings are both illegal and potentially dangerous to people's health, how can we continue political resistance? How can social and political movements maintain visibility in the state of exception? The story of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation in Canada is an example of resiliency and resistance in the era of Covid-19.

The Wet'suwet'en are an Indigenous First Nation in Western Canada who have always been active in defending their traditional territory and fighting for Indige-

nous land rights. They, like many other Indigenous communities in Canada, never surrendered their land to the Canadian government, and to this day the land remains unceded. In more recent times, members of the nation have made international headlines over their continued resistance against the TC Energy's Coastal GasLink pipeline, which will run through Wet'suwet'en territory.

Under Wet'suwet'en governance, hereditary chiefs are entrusted with holding the collective will of the people, and their consent is needed for decisions on how land will be used. After the hereditary chiefs unanimously rejected the Coastal GasLink pipeline proposal, TC Energy filed an injunction through Canada's court system in order to gain access to the land. The Canadian government, while giving shallow platitudes about respecting Indigenous sovereignty and reconciliation, has ultimately supported the injunction by using the police and military to subdue protestors. This move by TC Energy and the Canadian government shows a blatant disregard for Indigenous land title and decolonial modes of governance.

Just a month before the Covid-19 crisis hit Canada, the country was in the midst of a social and political crisis because of the Wet'suwet'en issue. Footage of the Canadian government's brutal reliance on military power, combined with the Wet'suwet'en people's dedication to resistance work and public outreach, triggered solidarity protests across the nation, including rail blockades. The Wet'suwet'en struggle was being fiercely debated across media

outlets and social media, and the federal government found itself torn between its commitments towards sustainability and Indigenous rights on one end and supporting an economy that is largely reliant on resource extraction on the other. Once Canada began implementing measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the Wet'suwet'en story disappeared from the public consciousness.

While media coverage and public discussion of Wet'suwet'en has plummeted, the issue is by no means at a standstill. On April 3rd, Wet'suwet'en people reported that Coastal GasLink was continuing pipeline construction on their territory, against their consent and despite the provincial government declaring a state of emergency. There is concern amongst community members that construction workers coming into the territory could potentially bring and spread the virus, especially after workers at the nearby LNG Canada work camp tested positive for Covid-19. Furthermore, Wet'suwet'en residents have reported an increased police presence during the pandemic, despite Canadian police stating they would stay off Wet'suwet'en territory.

For the Wet'suwet'en, like many other First Nations in Canada, preventing the spread of Covid-19 in communities is extremely important. According to the Yellowhead Institute, the 'infrastructure deficit' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada is estimated at around \$25 billion. Disparities in housing, food security, water quality, and access to healthcare and other services create the perfect condi-



Land defender holds iconic solidarity art at Wet'suwet'en solidarity rail blockade near Pioneer Village Station, Toronto. Photo by Jason Hargrove

tions for a virus to quickly spread. By continuing pipeline construction, TC Energy and the Canadian government are signaling that economic security is more important than the health and safety of Indigenous communities.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the Wet'suwet'en nation has continued their resistance work despite public visibility of their struggle being at a low. April 12th to 18th was Wet'suwet'en Solidarity Week of Action. Originally meant to include public demonstrations, the events moved to being all online and included things like encouraging people to email their political representatives, screenings of documentaries over Zoom, art challenges, and online discussions and webinars. Wet'suwet'en representatives have remained active on social media, particularly Twitter and Instagram, and have started a number of online campaigns, such

as #ShutDownKKR, which seeks to encourage global investment firm KKR to divest from Coastal GasLink. Wet'suwet'en community members are also continuing to document the continued construction of the pipeline, as well as interactions with police and posting them to social media.

In May, Alberta's Energy Minister Sonya Savage said during an interview that it is a 'great time' to build a pipeline because social distancing rules have hindered protests. As some in government will exploit the state of exception to push through their political goals, resistance is much needed. Continued Wet'suwet'en resistance is also a fight against systematic forgetting. Canada's colonial past, which rests on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and genocide, is often not talked about. If Canada is to seek reconciliation with Indigenous peoples,

As the pandemic illustrates how social inequality takes on a biological element, as governments impose restrictions that affect people unequally due to their social positioning, and as media outlets lessen their coverage of topics not related to the pandemic, resistance and solidarity are more important than ever.

it is imperative to confront this historical amnesia and recognize the ways the colonial past bleeds into the present. The longer the Wet'suwet'en story is out of the public consciousness, the more it will be viewed as a thing of the past. But the Wet'suwet'en struggle is not just a fleeting moment in time; it is part of a continuing narrative of how colonial relations still exist in our current world.





Drummers making music for crowd during the solidarity blockade near Pioneer Village Station, Toronto. Photo by Jason Hargrove

Once the Covid-19 crisis ends, there may be a desire to return to 'the way things were'. However, we shouldn't look at our pre Covid-19 world through rose-coloured glasses. We should demand better. Another world, a more just world, is possible. It won't be easy, but through continued resistance, resilience, and solidarity, it can be achieved.



Red Dress displayed above crowd for missing and murdered indigenous women. Red dresses were hung in Wet'suwet'en Territory, later taken down by the RCMP. Photo by Jason Hargrove

# STUDENT MIGRATION

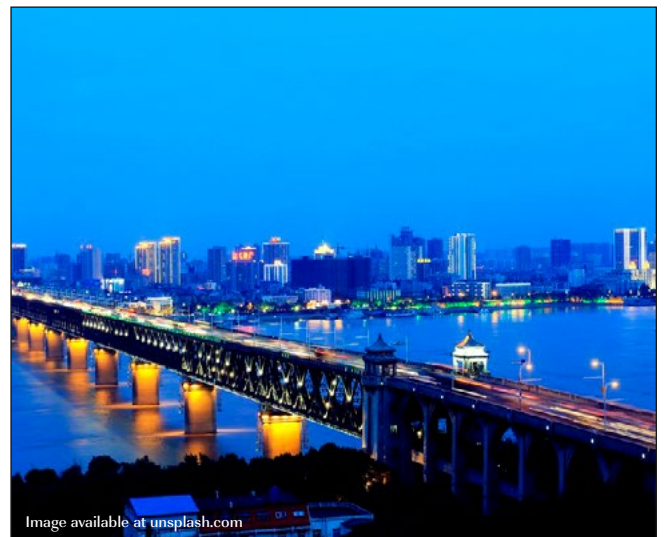
*International students find themselves in a dire position in the midst of Covid-19. In their host countries, they are increasingly isolated as courses are in distance mode, tightening their already limited social networks. Meanwhile, they watch from afar as their family and friends back home also face the pandemic. Many, think of returning home, but that may not be easy as many countries have closed their borders. If they could go home many might find that they cannot return to their studies. Additionally, their studies, finances, and migration status have been thrown into a state of uncertainty.*

## Caught between two Worlds: The Dilemma for International Students in Neo-Colonial World under Covid-19

XUE XIAO

Covid-19 has made the whole world fall into chaos. For some international students, heightened isolation and discrimination has shattered their illusions about the West. In this process, international students seem more pendulous and uncertain than before, since cultural differences are exaggerated during the pandemic. During this period of increased isolation and rapid change, it is harder to adapt to the local community while they also feel distant from their own countries. I conducted interviews with three Chinese international students, Mike, Doria and Sabrina, who are studying in the United States, United Kingdom, and Sweden, respectively.

Chinese students studying abroad have faced several challenges and increased marginalization since the Covid-19 outbreak. First, with the outbreak of the pandemic, masks have become an exclusive symbol and an image bound with the implied meaning of masks—the people wearing masks are the sick, the vulnerable, and the Chinese. Along with the mainstream media's propaganda on the theory that masks are useless, masks have become a driving force for the marginalization of Chinese students. Many Chinese students want to wear a mask, but they feel like they can't because of the attached stigma.



Navigating a healthcare system in a new country is always challenging, and it became even more difficult during the pandemic. Doria, a Chinese student from the University of Manchester, admitted that she had a fever when Covid-19 broke out, "I was too terrified at that time. But when I tried to apply for the test, I was rejected by the hospital because they thought that my symptoms were not very strong, and my required documents were unqualified. I don't know what that means...it just



angers me, especially when I know that I can have a thorough test and better treatment in China.”

Third, some universities in the US and UK have no option but to close schools, including dormitories, in response to Covid-19. Mike, a student from Harvard University, said, “The university asked all students to move out before Sunday, March 15, which meant I needed to pack all my necessities in 3 days.” With disappointment, he kept complaining that “schools are a little too hard on international students. While Harvard allows international students from countries currently on the CDC’s tier 3 alert to submit their applications to stay before 9 a.m. local time on March 11, there’s no guarantee about the approval”. Indeed, not all Chinese international students hold such attitudes towards the countries where they are studying. Sabrina, a student from Linköping University, said, “I feel lucky that I can still move freely, even though I’m still careful about that. The point is that we’re given choice. However, even though life here hasn’t been changed much and is still convenient, I still have some worries and feel that it’s not safe, especially people around me seem to not care about this virus”.

In fact, some students feel that China has done a better job at containing the virus. In this case, “going home” becomes the common dream for Chinese students overseas. General strategies taken by China include active surveillance which quickly detects, diagnoses, and isolates cases. It is compulsory to take a test for the virus, even after lockdown when everyone can go back to work, and they still need to take a test every month. Close contacts are strictly tracked through a tailored app named “Jiankang bao”, which will check one’s information and condition every time before they go to the public. For many, China’s strategy of containing the pandemic has presented a picture of order, unity, with the government playing a responsible role.

“Returning home makes me feel like master, since China is my country. While staying here, I’m only regarded as weird, unwelcomed guest”, Mike said. With hope and eagerness for returning, these students would never expect that the welcome from their homeland is not hugs and kisses, but criticism and resistance, describing them as spoilers and traitors. Cyber-nationalism became the last straw that broke down Chinese overseas students, after their struggles with scrambling for airline tickets and landing China safely amid sudden changes to travel regulations.

Stigma is a concept put forward by the sociologist Erving Goffman. In the Internet era, stigma is created and spread more quickly, often with uncontrollable results. The phrase “You are the best



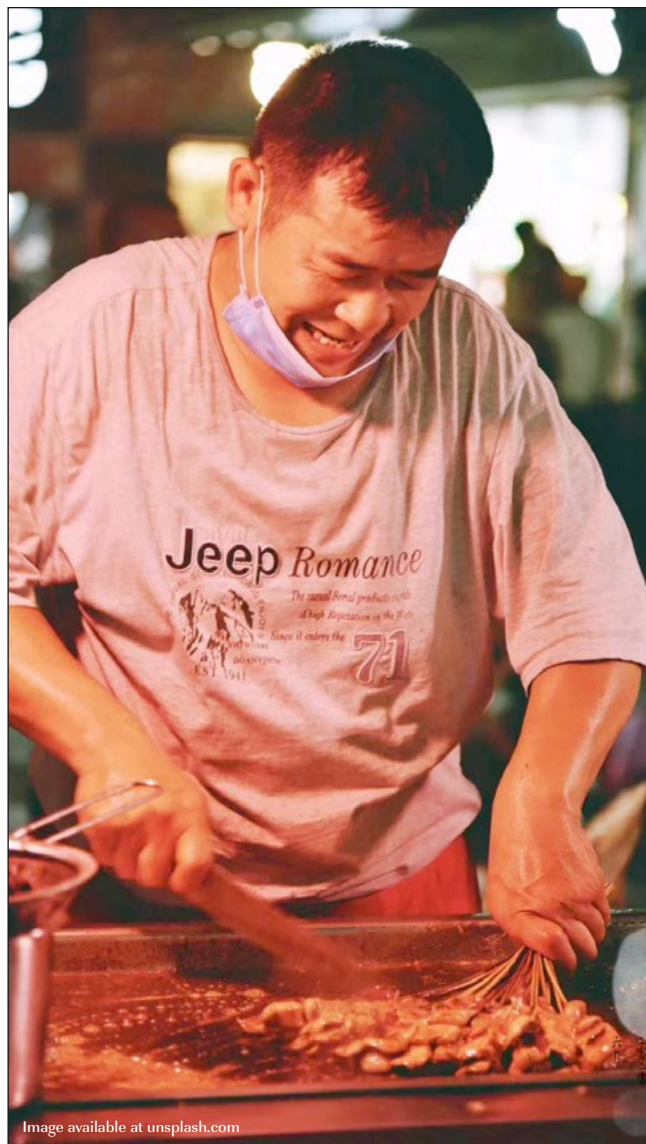
at bringing virus back to your own country thousands of miles”, which often appears in Chinese headlines, almost left overseas students powerless to speak out and resist. In addition to that, some critics even go as far as complaining that overseas workers deserve more assistance since they’re more valuable than overseas students. In response to these unfair comments, Doria said, “I’m now disappointed with both the British and the Chinese. It gives me an unprecedented feeling that I’m being rejected by both sides—foreign land and my mother land, even though I felt that I kept closely with these two before.”

“What is the position of overseas students? We’re not even migrants,” Doria asks. Yes, they are different from other migrants since they don’t have a job and they may return home after their studies, but they’re now experiencing the same marginalization and inequality as other migrants. In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, these Chinese students find



themselves caught between two worlds. Outside of China, racist and xenophobic attitudes portray Chinese students as walking vectors and bat-eating barbarians, which arises from discrimination and misunderstanding of their culture. Within China, they are portrayed as traitors and are left with little support.

**For these students, they chose to study abroad for brighter prospects. But now they're stuck, not only geographically but also psychologically. For some, Covid-19 has made them fully aware of their rooted connection with Chinese culture. However, going back is no longer easy...**





# Advice for and from International Students:

## A Survival Guide to the Pandemic

HENGAMEH HABIBI KHORASANI

With the outbreak of Covid-19, international students studying around the world have faced various concerns on how to manage their academic life, pursue fun activities and make plans for an uncertain future. Faced with a difficult situation, students around the world have had to cope with this unfamiliar situation. In an interview conducted with three non-EU international students in Sweden, the participants shared their advice and life lessons from their circumstances during the pandemic. Not only are these tips useful for adjusting to live during Covid-19, but they are also healthy habits that we can continue to practice further into the future.

"Despite carrying the pain of losing my internship due to Covid-19, I decided to stop feeling miserable, I wanted to continue my life with hope"

(Nasim, Master's student from Iran)

I found Nasim few months ago on social media through a mutual friend. I was fascinated by her stories and adventurous experiences after settling in Sweden. We could not meet each other in-person, but we managed to have a good conversation on Skype. Nasim is a first-year master's student in sustainable tourism. She was going

to do her internship in Spain this summer as part of her program, but then the borders closed. With this unexpected situation, Nasim went into a deep shock and did not know what to do or how to cope with the burden of losing an important part of her academic plan. Such a situation is frustrating for all students who are in a similar position like Nasim because non-EU international students undergo a long process preparing for their academic goals in another country. Nasim mentioned that in her deepest sorrows, there was one thought giving her hope to continue and that was her dreams. She finally overcame her frustrations and disappointments by creating a scheduled routine:

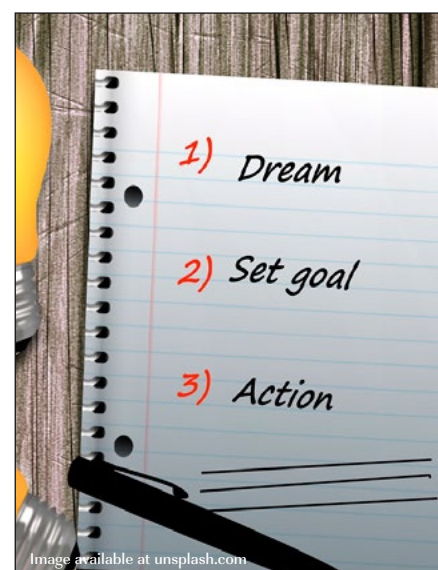
"I want to work and live in Sweden, I started learning Swedish, I made a schedule and followed a routine for all my daily programs. I worked on my resume, practiced writing cover letters for different job positions. I practiced yoga and meditation. Then something changed, I started to see things differently. I want to tell students who are abroad at this time to not lose hope and never give up, we can use the time for learning new skills and still have lots of fun moments."

Based on Nasim's story, we realize that despite facing barriers in such a difficult time, students can still plan for their goals even when on-campus classes are cancelled and there are no regular study meetings or gatherings with

friends. Students can start scheduling a new plan to continue learning by making use of available online resources.

Although the switch to distance learning has made it hard for students to be productive, there are some tips that can help students. If you had a favorite studying space on-campus, or any other place, it can be good if you try to find a similar spot in your new setting now that you are forced to study more by yourself in isolation. This helps keep you engaged with your studies like before. Another important aspect is that if you live with other people and they are distracting you because they think you are no longer in an academic environment, try to be firm and make boundaries to let them know that you are in your study time just like when you were in class.

Prioritize your goals as this helps you realize what is more important to focus on. For instance,



an international student like Nasim that is living in a non-English speaking country decides to prioritize learning Swedish as her most important goal, while another student needs to update his or her skills in a specific field of knowledge. It can be hard to follow a structured schedule during this time, but once you take the first step you will start to see progress and improvement that will motivate you more. However, as a student take into consideration not to be too ambitious by doing multiple tasks at the same time. Multitasking reduces efficiency and distracts you from performing your best.

Besides focusing on academic plans, students should not forget to exercise regularly during this time to reduce the stress and anxiety of the crisis and preserve the well-being of their physical and mental health. This physical activity can be whatever you desire that aligns with your interests. To remain motivated, create variety and fun by changing the exercise routine and adding different activities to your schedule. The good thing is that there are lots of useful apps and online resources that guide and encourage you, step by step, to enjoy doing exercises by yourself and even with other people as groups by attending virtual classes. Try this, it is fun!

Don't forget to relax and enjoy your leisure time by doing fun activities with your friends and family. Although the activities might be done differently and in a limited scope, like having virtual coffee with friends or playing games with others online, this is what makes life interesting because you learn to break from your old habits and become more flexible and open to approach things in a new way and from a fresh perspective. Finding what we like to do for fun that can bring us joy as students prevents us from having negative thoughts caused by the stress of the crisis.

Remember that lock-down does not mean that you are a prisoner who must hide from the outside world. As long as you follow the guides of physical distancing, you are safe to go out for a walk and enjoy wandering in nature or to just sit in a cozy place outdoors and enjoy breathing fresh air. These small things can really make a change and bring you happiness.

Nasim proposes that apart from planning for our current life, as international students we have a big responsibility to think about our career after graduating. This can only be done if students consider various options and paths, as no one knows what might happen in the future. In this regard, Nasim mentioned her plans after graduating, "I will apply for PhD positions and search for jobs at the same time, another crisis like corona might happen that can cause problems in our lives. I want to think of different paths to establish a secure position." Nasim thinks that we can no longer rely on one strategy or one specific goal and this can be good because in case the first plan fails, there will be other alternative back up options.

**"Students struggling with mental health need to reach for help"**

**(Ajmal, Master's student from India)**

Ajmal is an Indian student studying his master's degree in Sweden. He lives in my accommodation building, and I met him a couple of times in the hallway exchanging few words. He was happy to contribute to my project. Ajmal believes that students who are mentally in a good condition and can adjust to undesirable situations can better survive the pandemic.

He talked about his own condition during this time, "Before corona, my life was already a mess. I was battling with depression, adding to that I was not happy with my current program here in Sweden, then corona came, I had all the excuses to get mentally ill." This means that Ajmal's mental condition was already in crisis, and the pandemic intensified his condition. This can be true for many students who already struggle with mental disorders and now with the unexpected outbreak of Covid-19 that has put the whole world in a shocking situation, such students will suffer more. The best solution is to reach out to the university's counselor and get therapy even if things will be carried online. Ajmal did not have a good experience in this regard, as he wanted to see someone in person during the pandemic:

**"**I went to the counselor's office at my university, I was emotionally in pain, no one was there to help me, I was told to book an online meeting through the website, I am not comfortable talking to a counselor virtually but I had no other choice, students like me should get proper help from a psychologist because we can't deal with everything by ourselves."

During this time, psychologists recommend students to refrain from constantly reading negative news as it impacts their mental health. Also, students must not keep to themselves but immediately get therapy and help when they are in mental distress. Psychologists also recommend students to show flexibility and patience because the usual procedure to approach and handle mental issues by meeting a therapist in person might not happen due to restrictions caused by the pandemic.



"I know how it feels to have no financial support. I am in a good position that allows me to help some of my fellow human beings during this time. I am happy to contribute and take real actions"

(Sarah, PhD student from Syria)

While I was searching for a third person to participate in my interview, I was introduced to Sarah. Sarah is from Syria, studying her PhD in Sweden. She was very concerned for the economic situation of some non-EU students studying in the master's program of her department because they did not have any funds, scholarships or savings and were economically hit by the crisis. Sarah advises that all non-EU students who decide to study outside their own country must plan for their financial life very carefully, "Non-EU students coming abroad must always have financial savings or at least have the support of a reliable person who can temporarily help them when unexpected situations like corona causes economic crisis." Sarah's advice can be useful for all students to handle their financial plans before coming abroad. Sarah also mentioned that there is a big lesson to learn from the pandemic and that is to look out for each other in any possible way: As Sarah mentions, assisting others can be a good strategy at this time, especially for students. Helping others circulates positive energy and changes both the person helping and the person receiving the help. Through supporting one another, students realize that this is a difficult time for everyone and as students they are not alone in their burdens. This reali-

zation helps students manage their emotions, and they learn not to be indifferent to their surrounding community. This assistance can be achieved by doing simple tasks like providing emotional support to classmates and friends, such as listening to their issues and by trying to find mutual ways to remove barriers and distract the mind from negative tensions.

Most international students studying abroad at the time of Covid-19 pandemic feel that their dreams and student life has reached to a dead end. Three non-EU students shared useful advising points and preparation plans as part of their experiences that can help students move forward. First, students can better adjust to the new situation by making and following a schedule for their goals. Second, it is important that students do not neglect the well-being of their mental health condition and to immediately reach for professional help when they are in mental distress. Third, students learn to cope with difficulties when they assist others as they start to realize that all human beings have hardships in life; thus, people need each other and must rely on each other to be strong and stay strong.

**This isn't forever.  
It's just right now.**

Image available at unsplash.com



Image available at unsplash.com



# Second Home

CHRIS BUNYARAKSH

In this time of crisis, a lot of people are distancing themselves from other people, and with each day that passes, the situation does not seem to get better. For us international students, the main problem that we are facing is the same as others, which is self-isolation that later can turn into depression. Another problem that we face is that we are far away from home, and in a time like this, home is what we need. Even before the crisis, each of us missed our friends, family, and the comfort of being close to someone you love. I myself also feel the same way wherein I miss my loved ones.

In a desperate time like this, I have found a place where I can go and meet people that I can call brother, sister, uncle, or auntie and

see them smile. Seeing products from my country that remind me of the days when I am at home. The taste of home. This place I can confidently call "a second home".

This place is one of the small Thai communities called "Asian Market" located in Stockholm. Everyone who works there is really friendly and shows a lot of Thainess towards their customers and colleagues.

What is "Thainess"? The concept of Thainess can be easily explained in one sentence: We treat each other like a family. These are not just words, but a symbol of how we treat one another as family members through giving respect and exchanging smiles.

Another reason why I consider this to be my second home is because of the products sold in the market remind me of "the taste of home". With products such as a ready-made powder for my favorite meals to snacks from my childhood, I can find almost anything that I crave and reminds me of what it's like back in my home country.

Thailand is often referred to as "the Land of Smiles", where the locals are, for the most part, helpful, courteous, and kind. The same can be applied to Thai communities here in Sweden; we are a very open community, regardless of where you come from. Especially in a time like this, we need to feel that we are a part of a community that gives us a sense of belonging.



People from all around Stockholm, from all different backgrounds, come to “Asian Market” to enjoy the warm, welcoming feeling of the Thai community that can be felt throughout the store. For many Thai people, the market is the central hub for Stockholm’s Thai community. “There are so many Thai people here who came to our shops. It makes me feel like I am in Thailand and not in Sweden... We are really happy to see our brothers and sisters, and we really do enjoy the conversations that we have together.” said Namtan, who has been a shopkeeper for one and a half years.

An old woman, who I call Auntie, is shopping while I’m at the market to take photos. “It is really nice to see some of the products from home, especially in this time,” she tells me. Both employees and shoppers seem very happy to see each other and always greet one another with a warm welcome, since we treat each other like family. As a Thai international living in Stockholm, I have never felt like I’m alone in the city. There will always be a place that makes me feel right at home here in Stockholm.

I believe that in times like this we need things that bring us comfort, especially for those who are far away from home. I recommend visiting your local Thai market to experience hospitality from “the Land of Smiles.” Perhaps you will find something that fills you with the reassuring feeling of familiarity, or maybe you will acquire a new taste for Thainess.



# Social Distancing and Online Learning: The New Reality

FRANKLINE SENHNGWI MOFOW

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic has forced everyone to adapt to a set of measures to prevent the spread of the virus, ranging from physical distancing in public to quarantine. Universities across Sweden, and the rest of the world, have quickly shifted to distance teaching in accordance with social distancing rules, resulting in moving their activities from campuses to various online platforms.

These measures have of course affected the lives and well-being of all students. However, it can be argued that this situation has been especially stressful and discomforting for international students who, in many ways, already had to come to terms with the experience of isolation, since they are in a new place with a different culture and language and often without a network of social relations in their new home. On top of that, the outbreak of this virus seems to have propelled an outbreak also of increased hostility to strangers, resulting in a kind of pandemic-driven xenophobia.

There has been reports of Africans who have faced hateful and suspicious treatment in China, as well as international students in South Africa who face social exclusion from governmental aid. In some countries, international students have been left with no choice but to return home, as dormitories and campuses have closed. But what is the situation of international students in Sweden where there have been relatively few restrictions compared to the rest of the world?

Through phone calls and Zoom interviews with non-EU international students in Sweden, I have found that their experiences of studying during the pandemic were connected to feelings of loneliness, alienation, fear that in turn are linked to financial problems, increased homesickness, concern over academic performance, and more.

Fred, an international student at Uppsala University, reported that he had troubles adjusting to the “new normal” presented by online learning: “I feel very frustrated with the implementation of social distancing, especially when it comes to online learning, as I find it very difficult meeting my course mates directly to share our academic ideas together. I feel bad studying at home, as my studies are basically on calculation. At times it’s hard to follow my lessons and lecturers. I can’t be corrected im-



Photo by Frankline Senhngwi Mofow

mediately and when I write to my lecturers through their email for help, it takes them a couple of days before they ever respond. This makes me feel isolated since I can’t get help from people whom I know, consequently my academic plans have been shattered here completely.”

For students who rely on the services and facilities on campus, switching to distance learning has been a hard nut for them to crack.

Robert, an international student from Linköping University shared his experience: “The biggest hurdles that I am facing during this period with social distancing and online learning is a lack of access to good Internet and a laptop to permit me access to the virtual classroom”. While some facilities on campus are still open, he reported not wanting using them due to not knowing if an infected person had previously used them. This has left him, and many other students, with few options for attending class. “I distance myself from campus computers and use my phone to do the Zoom lessons and meetings, which is quite challenging, and when I contacted my school administration for help till date nothing has been done.” However, online learning seems to be the other way round for Colin from Lund University and Jonson from Stockholm University. They don’t really see distance learning as a big problem. As Colin explains:



During online learning, my teachers are always few miles away from me though still right in front of me digitally where I discuss with them almost the same way like in a normal classroom. My lecturers always upload their notes to us using online portal where I can have access to it every time I want and can even skip ahead of the lessons when coming to material that I fully understood. But I missed the classroom culture and extra-curricular activities with my friends.

As suggested initially, the pandemic seems also to have propelled an aggravated hostility towards people from Asia and Africa. This follows the logic of xenophobia and a colonial gaze, in which the racialized body and colonial ties are connected to different kinds of disease. Articles both internationally and on social media there has been people witnessing about instances of maltreatment due to their origin.

Wung, an international student from China studying in Europe, shared her experience during this period. "I have become a prisoner in my room in a foreign land where I can't go out to carry my daily activities normally," she tells me, her new daily routine included wearing a face mask and gloves every time she left her room. This caused people in grocery stores to treat her differently, as she noticed people kept more of a distance from her. Additionally, friends told her that she is frightful for wearing a face mask. It is difficult to be on the receiving end of such treatment, which led to a lot of mental stress. "All these reactions made me traumatized and lose concentration with my studies," she says.

These feelings of isolation and alienation were further complicated by her university not giving her sufficient support when it came to her graduation. The desire to return home has entered her mind as a possible solution: "I am thinking of going back to my country to avoid these social exclusions when borders open, and to live happily with my family and continue my studies."

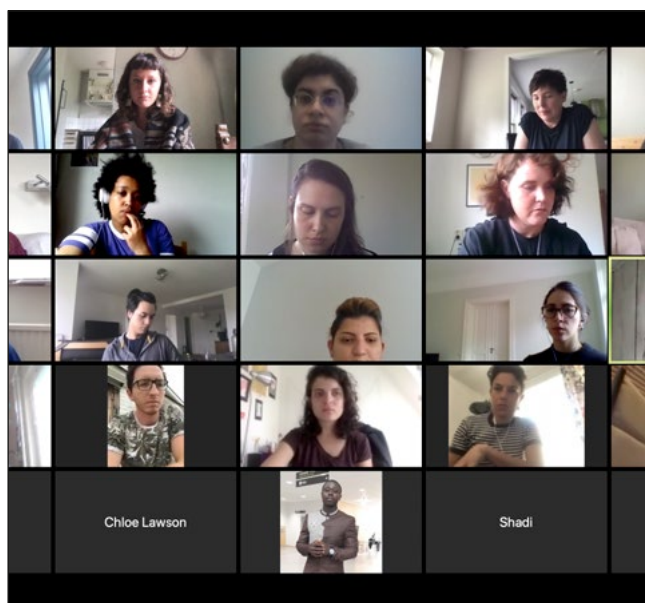
**There is no doubt that the lives of international students have changed with the outbreak of Covid-19. Like many others, they are now in a riskier position as they are exposed to a pandemic that has also brought aggravated challenges of exile, as well as increased suspicion of foreigners from many in their host countries. As a result, the way universities and governments treat international students during this hard time will shape their future choices.**



Photo by Frankline Senhgwí Mofow



Photo by Frankline Senhgwí Mofow



# The Border and the Pandemic: International Students at Swedish Universities

MARTHA GEBEYEHU & SHAKEEL ASIM

International students deserve to be heard and granted an education uninterrupted, was the heading of the petition campaign from 'Education Uninterrupted', in the time we took to prepare this article 2342 people signed the petition.

This, at a time when the corona virus pandemic has affected not only the lives of the people but also the economy of the country. Even if, unlike other western countries, Sweden did not order a strict coronavirus lockdown, most workplaces' activity has slumped. As a result, many part-time workers have been fired from their workplace. In Sweden, students from outside the EU pay tuition fees, but students from EU countries do not generally pay fees for higher education here. Most international students, especially from outside the EU, have faced economic burdens to carry on their life during the corona pandemic. Before the pandemic, international students had one or two part-time jobs that covered their tuition fees, accommodation, and living expenses. Now, due to the corona pandemic conditions,

these students have lost their jobs and live under stressful conditions.

A movement has been created by international fee-paying students Sarah De Arruda and Mohammad Mafizul. Besides a petition, they also created a solidarity Facebook group 'Education Uninterrupted', of over 800 members, in which they offer up-to-date information, and organize for those who are bound by tuition fee students and need to participate in the movement. "We are requesting solutions from the Swedish government and migration agency" they wrote on behalf of the international student body. This made up the first attempt to draw attention to the plight of international students affected by Covid-19 in terms of tuition fees and study residency permits. Based on this letter which addresses the issues of fee-paying international students in Sweden, we can see that there is urgent concern requiring practical moves from higher authorities, the migration agency, politicians and the government as a whole, to be flexible with the amount of fees students must pay

as a requirement to obtain their temporary residency permits.

It is a very difficult time for everyone, and especially for fee-paying international students. During this pandemic situation how does the virus affect the students in financial terms? What was their experience before and after the virus? Many fee-paying students during this pandemic, haven't the capacity to pay tuition fees and subsequently face visa problems from the Migration Agency. A student from Gothenburg University shared his experience regarding the Migration Agency

“I have received a letter from the migration office ordering me to leave Sweden within 21 days. I feel depressed, angry and disappointed with the Swedish government. My parents are quarantined in Pakistan, I cannot reach them. I am lonely and helpless here. I regret even applying to study here in a country that lacks love and understanding for migrants in a deadly crisis like this one.”

Like him, many students are entering a dangerous situation during this pandemic. Another student from Linköping university was working part-time at a restaurant as a means to cover her expenses but is no longer working now. Since she was not permanently employed, she was among the first to be laid off.

“I live with my partner who used to work at a cleaning company. So, we both share our expenses together, but now he is also out of work. Now the situa-





tion is different, we are both out of work, and this also affects our permit to stay in Sweden. We are now searching for another job.”

This is another problem for international students because they haven’t been able to find a job in this pandemic situation. Even in cases where the students can get the money from their family, their families have also been affected, as the situation is worldwide, and the economic impact also affects everyone. A Linköping University student explains this situation on her own words

“ I was working while studying and now still working in the same company. My income did not depend on my job, but the pandemic affected my income back in my country.”

For her, the living situation is worse than before, because the salary is terrible for an international student who needs to pay tuition fees and does not have any support here. They must pay all the bills on time; because there is no supportive way that the government can help international students in this difficult time. A Bangladeshi man studying in Stockholm reported that he couldn’t pay his tuition fees right now, and the Migration Agency sent him a letter;

“ I received a letter to justify why I have not paid the fee. I explained that because Covid-19 I cannot withdraw money from my bank at home. And that I even lost my part time job here in Sweden where I got small amount of money for food, health and to pay my rent. In the letter, I indicated that I need help as an international student. Shockingly after two weeks, I received a letter of revocation of my study permit. How am I going back home when the borders are closed, where am I to get money now to pay for my flight?”

Due to pandemic, borders are closed, and some students want to go back to their home country, but they couldn’t even do that. A student at Jonkoping university from the USA pointed out that

“ the Swedish system is anti-migrant. The policy makers from every reasoning and analysis rely on international migrants’ tuition fees to run the higher education sector. Honestly, I wish the border would open so I go back to my country. What I heard about this country before coming here is not true.”

Again, in addressing tuition fees, one of the students at Linköping University, even though she had already paid her tuition fees, is not happy about distance mode.

“ We pay our tuition fees for on-campus learning, not distant learning. So therefore, part of our tuition fee should be refunded to us.”

International students, who already paid the tuition fees for the coming semester, but not happy with the distance-learning mode, even if they request the return of the tuition fees, the university did not agree to refund the money. And their reason is that, if there is no serious circumstance outside of the student’s control, they cannot refund the money. Here, we want to ask the question, if the pandemic is not enough of a circumstance, then what is? Covid-19 affected many international students’ finances. Even though they are still working a part-time job despite the outbreak of the pandemic. But the work is not the same as before, because working hours are reduced.

“ In Sweden my basic source of income is my job, that is why [the pandemic] affects me so badly. My living situation in Norrköping before the corona virus was better because we had more than enough jobs; now with the outbreak of the pandemic, I do not get enough money to pay for my accommodation and other expenses.”

köping before the corona virus was better because we had more than enough jobs; now with the outbreak of the pandemic, I do not get enough money to pay for my accommodation and other expenses.”

**All participants emphasized that the pandemic affected them in one way or another, and the system has worsened it in that it has not been modified in such a way as to ease pressure on International students. Covid-19 has affected international non-EU students negatively with regards to studies, tuition fees, and reissuing of students’ study permits. We believe that it is time for Sweden and other countries in the world to look at this issue carefully. The Swedish Educational Administrators and government should give attention to, and look into, the problems of international students. Hence there is a need for all authorities, researchers and policy makers to sit down for a dialogue and take a reasonable humanistic approach in handling the plight of international students.**

# Personal Experiences of City Dwellers

FERDAWS AHMED

**N**orrköping is a medium-sized Swedish city. On a normal summer's day the city dwellers are commonly found everywhere in the city, such as in the parks, restaurants, pubs, and bars. Weekends and holidays are enjoyed to the fullest here. However, all of this has changed with the outbreak of the Coronavirus. It has disrupted the common and daily lifestyle of people in an unprecedented way, which until now was hard to imagine. I took a walk around town and gathered some voices telling of how the Coronavirus has impacted their lives.

"The summer is just showing itself up but the enthusiasm I had before, have vanished this year because of COVID-19. I feel like I lack something now"

says Evelina (21), a shift leader. The outbreak of the virus has given birth to a terror among us. Meeting friends, shopping, outings; everything has to be done in a restricted and social distancing way, she added.

"I have been in Quarantine for 21 days and away from my wife and work for 44 days"

says Imtiaz Ahmed (25), a spouse of an international student. He was hit by the virus himself. He tells me that everyday felt like the last day for him. His parents have been in constant worry about their son. He wanted to fly back to his parents but the closed border made this impossible. He reflects sadly upon how he was confined within four walls and how his freedom was taken away. He senses also that even now when he has recovered, his close ones are maintaining a distance from him. It is as if some people think that being affected by the virus is like being cursed.





"I work around 100 hours in a week. My hospital has become my home and patients my family members"

said a senior consultant at Vrinnevisjukhuset. To him, the situation has become a suffocating one. Since he deals with Corona infected patients, he has to maintain a strict social distancing while at home. The situation is very risky. Rumman Uz Zaman, one of the founder members of Norrköping Cricket Club (NCC) and a sports organizer, tells me.

"I am a man of outdoor entertainment. I live in sports, especially cricket."

As Mr. Rumman finds pleasure in sports, he is taken aback by the unprecedented influence of the pandemic. He was unable to organize sports events and visit schools and engage people in cricket. The number of matches that were expected to be played have been halved and many projects have been cancelled. Sabbir Hussain who works in a freight company, sadly explains.

"My marriage ceremony that was supposed to be celebrated in my country has been cancelled."

For him, Covid-19 is a nightmare. Everything was planned and even plane tickets were booked last April. He has been waiting for the situation to improve so the celebration can commence. But all is uncertain still. To Sabbir, this virus has also hit him hard emotionally.

"For me, as for thousands of people, the Coronavirus keeps me in limbo."

Alex, who works in a warehouse in Norrköping, explains. Since the pandemic has brought an economic crisis, his company like many others has cut down working hours for employees. As a result, it has been tough to handle daily expenses as the costs are still the same, but the income has shrunk.

He also says that he is suffering from the mental pressure of having the possibility of losing his job.

Another individual who prefers to remain anonymous comments that "Corona has affected us all badly now," although adds it's tougher for some more than others. He holds a work permit here in Sweden and states that it has been terribly difficult to maintain the monthly salary that is a requirement for him as per rules of the Migration Agency as his working hours have been reduced as a result of the virus.

"The Migration Agency put it outright that 13000 kronor should be earned before tax (as it was before the virus) no matter if one's workplace or hours are affected by it or not" he adds. For him the coronavirus has been just another means to expel some unskilled workers.



Photo by Asia Della Rosa



Photo by Asia Della Rosa

Keep your  
to reduce  
of infection

- A maximum of  
present in this
- Please form a  
the markers on
- Eat your heated  
from other people

# ART PROJECT

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Our lives and daily routines have changed a lot with Covid-19. Most of the countries took strict measures such as lockdowns, travel bans, and so on. Sweden has come to the fore among other countries with more relaxed measures throughout the whole process. Yet it still affected people who are living in Sweden, since they experienced social distancing and self-isolation.

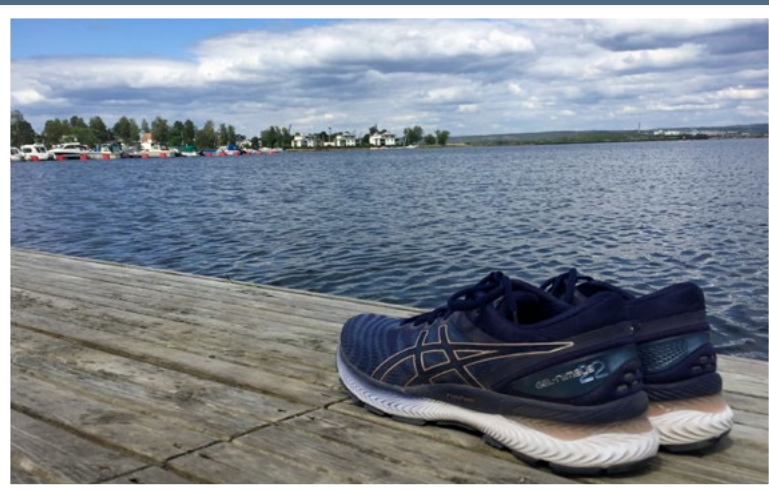
In this project, we aim to show the stories behind such individual changes with photos provided by our fellow students which are about the things that make them relaxed during this anxious time, things that they miss, or a new hobby.





“ When I was feeling really anxious about the pandemic, the flowers were at their nicest. Walking around and looking at them was very calming, and it gave me something positive to look forward to. By the time the petals fell, I was more at peace.”

“ Running has helped me with my mental health.”



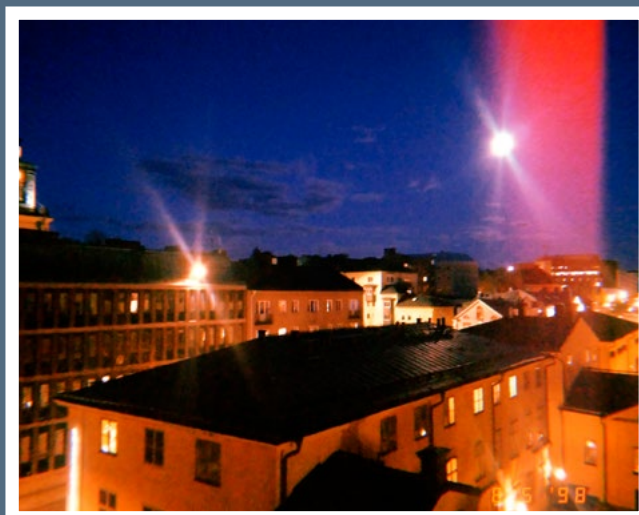
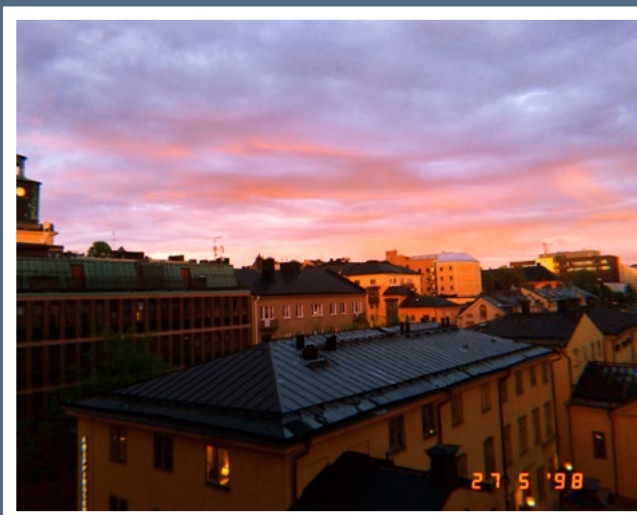


“ Me in Norrköping after doing my ballet barre at home.”



“ My home is so far away but now it is even further. I miss it a lot.”

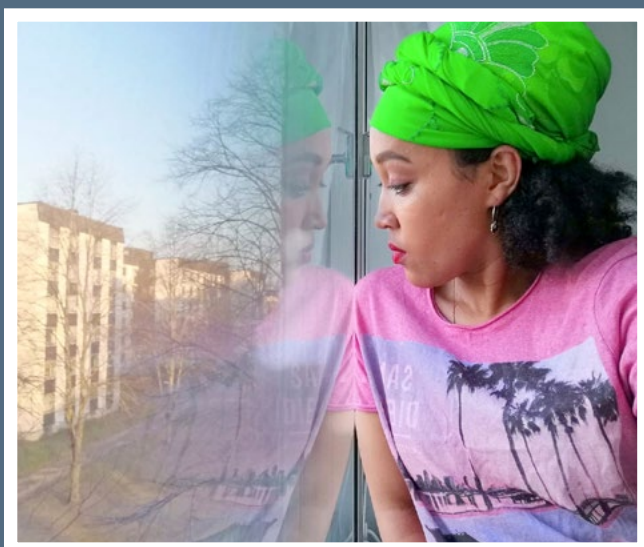
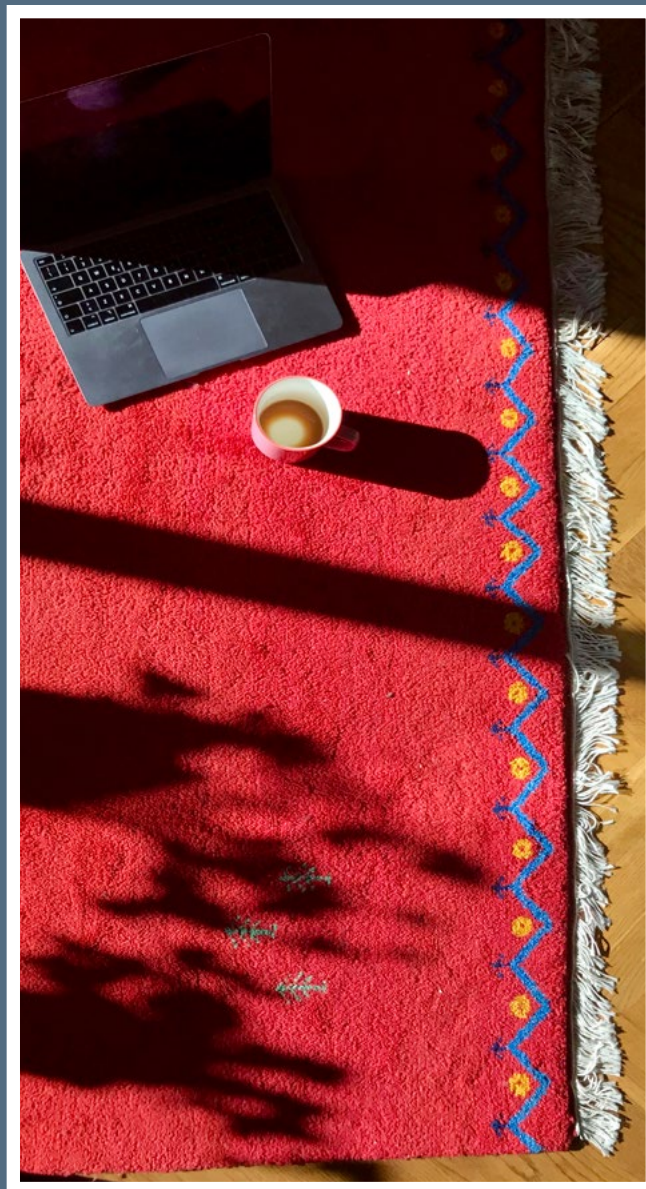
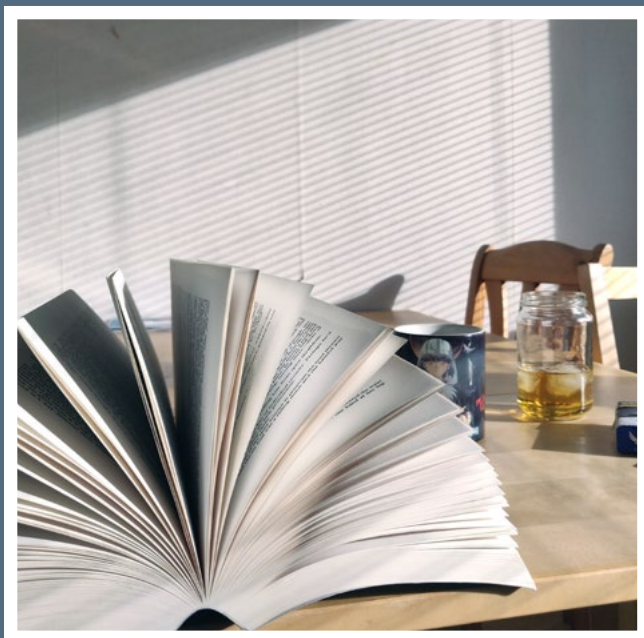
“ This is the view I have of Norrköping from my room windows. In stressful days, looking at the sky helps me to calm down and breathe.”





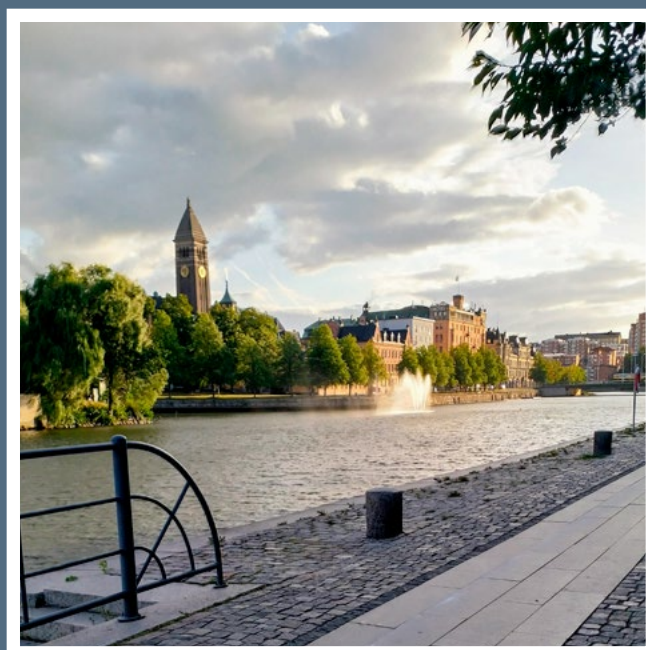
“ This red carpet has been my refuge during this strange moment in my life.”

“ This photo sums up my hobbies during the quarantine.”



“ I think windows have become our friends at this time.”

“ My relaxing spot during the pandemic.”



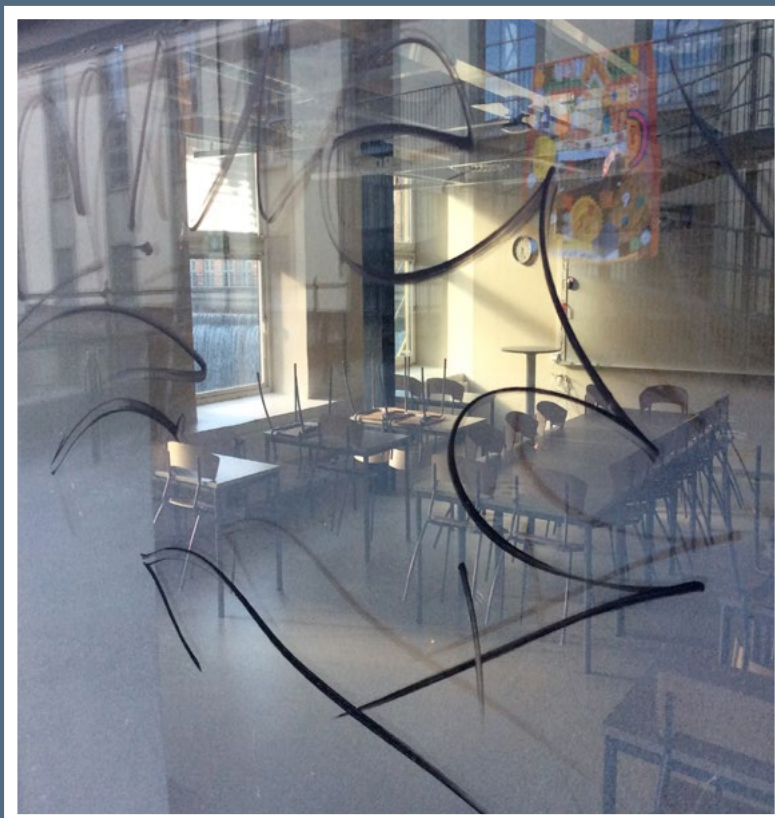




“ Time seems to have stopped. I feel like I haven’t done anything these months, yet everything around me has changed.”

“ *Bare classrooms, empty seats.* Most countries closed schools at all levels while Sweden closed only senior high schools. Many think that keeping children at home would have repercussions on the family’s working lives.

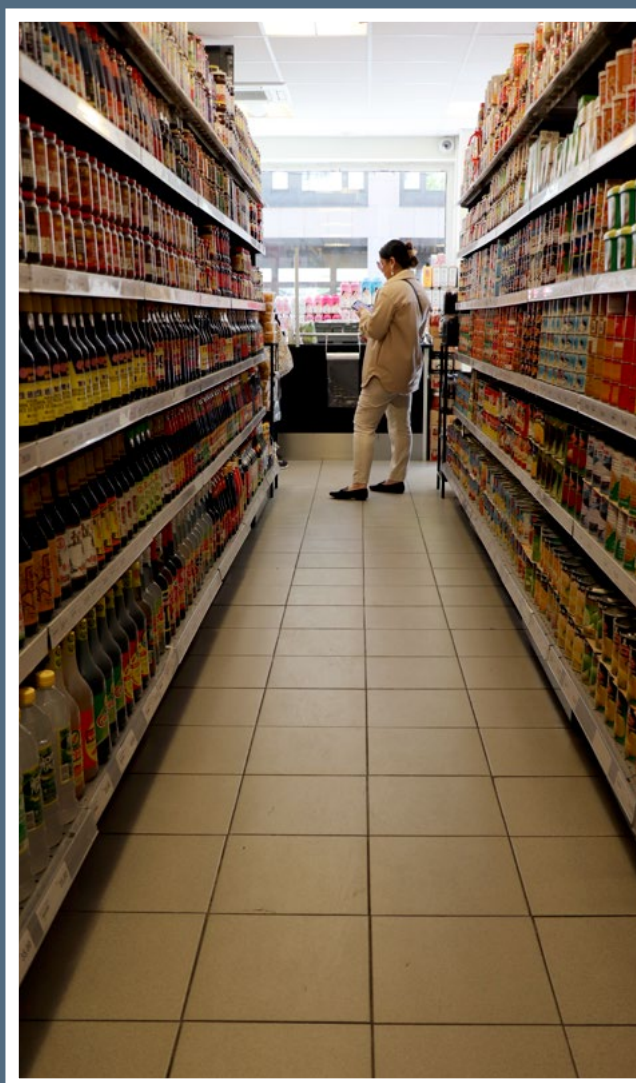
Whether this was considered undesirable because of the predicted breakdown of households’ life and family dynamics, or the predicted the downfall of the economy is unknown...”







“New habits and a new discovery: I love oats with yogurt.”

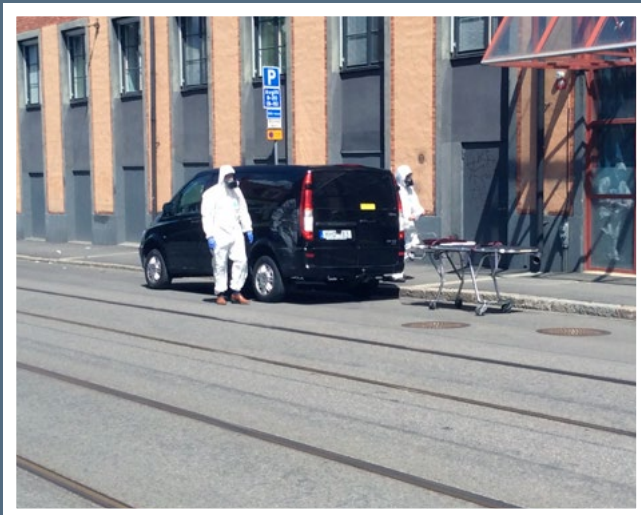


“Once a busy shop in Stockholm on Friday afternoon.”



“New routines for a meeting – Friday lunches outdoors.”



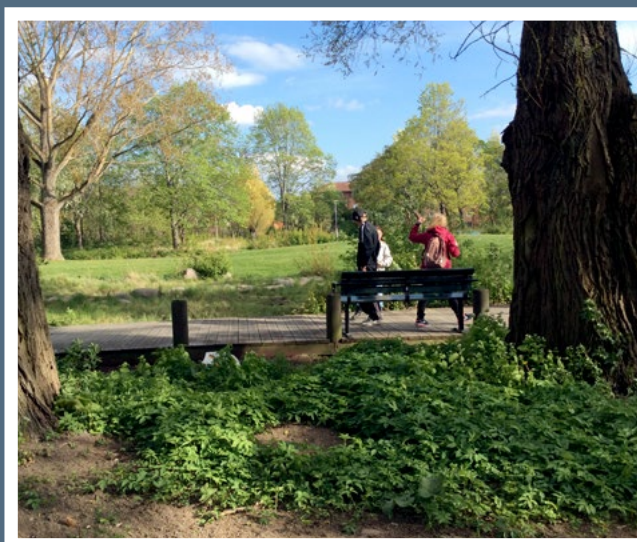


“ Does this scene unnerve you?  
Would have it unnerved you  
more, or less, before the pandemic  
arose?”

“ *Nordic countries naturally practice social distancing* was what I heard being bandied around on the internet among discussions on the ‘Swedish approach’.

Not a bit of it! People in Sweden may be harder to get to know and break the ice with, but that doesn’t affect how they scramble through a supermarket door or graze you on the woodland path as they jog past, as much as with any culture. Nor did the Corona pandemic seem to prevent them from expressing their affection towards their nearest and dearest given the opportunity.

*The sun’s arrival brought people to the parks. Those of us who spent Spring here in Östergötland can at least be thankful that there was no formal lockdown.”*



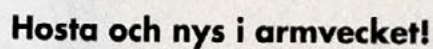


Undvik att bli smittad och att smitta andra

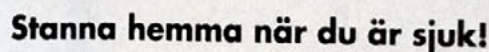


Smittämnen fastnar lätt på händer och andra ytor som till exempel dörrhandtag. De sprids vidare när du tar någon i hand. Tvätta därför händerna ofta med tvål och varmt vatten.

Tvätta alltid händerna före måltid, mathantering och efter ett toalettbesök. Handsprit kan vara ett alternativ när du inte har möjlighet till handtvätt.



När du hostar och nyser sprids små, små droppar som innehåller smittämnen. Genom att hosta och nysa i armvecket eller i en pappersnäsduk hindrar du smitta från att spridas i din omgivning eller från att förorena dina händer.

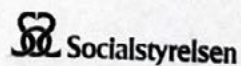


Stanna hemma när du är sjuk. På så sätt undviker du att smitta människor på bussen, ditt arbete eller där du är nära andra.

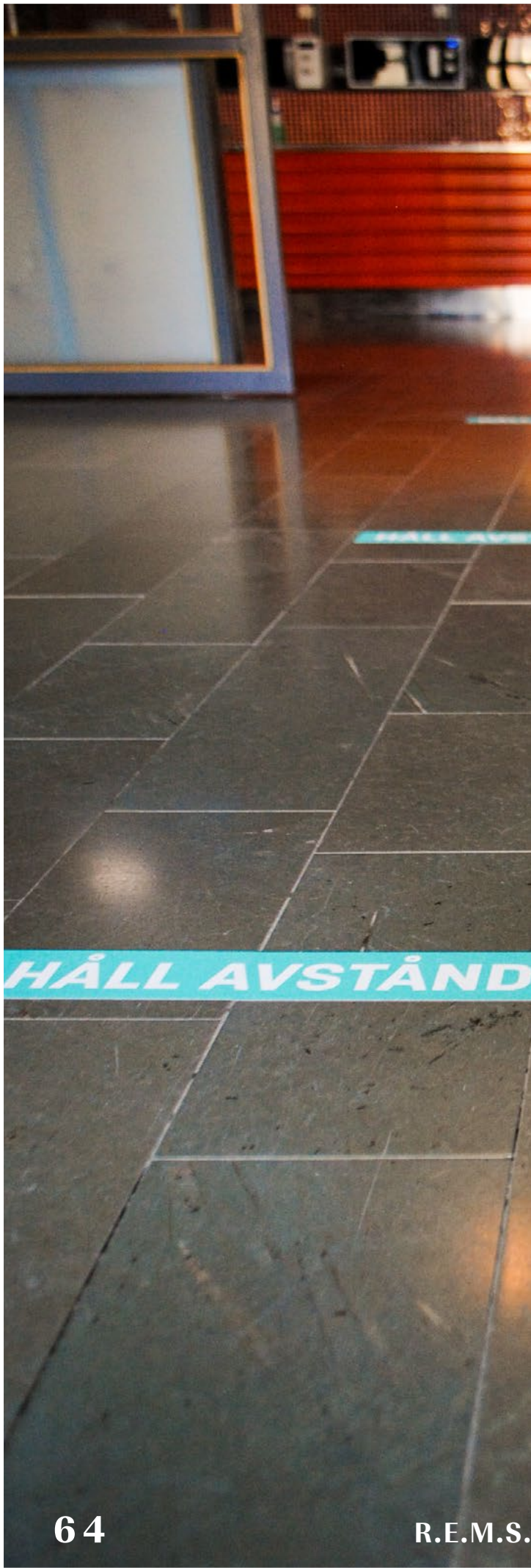
**Smittsamma mikroorganis-**  
**mer finns överallt i vår om-**  
**givning.**

**Den vanligaste spridningen sker via våra händer.**

**God handhygien är ett enkelt sätt att skydda dig själv och din omgivning.**







# Statements of

As Master's students in Ethnic & Migration Studies with the privilege of bearing knowledge and moving in an educational space, our reflections on the Covid-19 pandemic have led us to envision changes on a global level; a 'normality' that is different. In conclusion to this process, we would like to take on our responsibility as critical beings to put together our visions for changes in the areas of borders, gender relations, health systems, education systems, discriminatory policy, capitalism, and inequalities. These are our thoughts on the possibilities that arise from the new reality we find ourselves in.



# Hope for a Post-Pandemic World

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We hope that this pandemic, which has turned a part of the capitalist system upside-down, largely unmasking its inhuman logic, can be a starting point for re-framing the economic, social and political system into a more equal, collaborative, solidarity- and community-based system. In all dimensions of society, people in subordinated positions have been exposed to insecurity and exploitation because of the pandemic.

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Resistance is essential in order to bring these injustices out into the open. While Covid-19 and governmental responses to it have challenged social and political movements, the current situation has also sparked new ideas, innovations, and methods of resistance. Our hope is for people to not accept the previous 'normal', but instead demand a more just society for everyone. All over the world, it is noticeable that the virus' victims are heavily racialised and belong to the lower classes. Therefore, the aftermath of this global pandemic should be directed towards quelling the root causes of inequality, and this is only possible with the engagement of individuals, social movements, and local organisations. Governments and policymakers should prioritise community approaches aiming for an effective collective result, so no one is left behind, no matter what their race, class, religious or gender identity. Hence, supporting and giving visibility to advocacy groups over economic interests is key to a dignified and more equal society after the Covid-19 crisis.

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Security practices must be geared towards safeguarding everyone, not just the privileged few. Monitoring compliance with the rules must not be an exclusionary practice, which foment fear of 'the other'. Although it is necessary to alleviate the most urgent suffering, we do not believe that governmental aid solves the root causes of inequality. It only treats symptoms of an underlying crisis, thus preserving and strengthening the existing order. We therefore believe that there is a need to move beyond the state, and its authoritative and coercive "security" policies, and replace it with solutions shaped to meet local community needs.

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Gender-based violence (GBV) have increased during the pandemic due to pre-existing patriarchal social norms and gender inequalities. The limited movement and social isolation rules have led to a rise in GBV. Many women are in 'lockdown' at their residences with their abusers while being hindered from normal support services. Therefore, strengthening the dissemination of information regarding GBV prevention and channels for reporting it through civil society organisations, local governments, and community leaders should be a priority of this Pandemic's aftermath.

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We hope the pandemic will alert universities, as well as migration agencies, to the need to make changes in support of non-EU students that have faced severe economic burdens, rather than discarding them at the convenience of host countries. We wish that non-EU students will be treated in a manner equal to European students by removing tuition fees and the demand for proof of funds.

Furthermore, we hope the corona aftermath will usher in a new era of solidarity and awareness of the need for international cooperation in the area of health. Those who live under the pressure of policy changes such as Sweden's upper secondary school law could easily receive help and support in dealing with this crisis, but instead the unaccompanied refugee youth/young people are subjected to far too high and unreasonable demands while society is put on pause. Since there are only about 7500 individuals affected by this law, it is not a so called 'burden' for a nation to help those young individuals who came to its borders as minors, alone to seek asylum.

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Even though "healthcare for all" is considered an essential human right, we are far from achieving this aim. The devastating effects of the pandemic highlights the normalised practice of "healthcare for sale.". It must come to an end and all people should enjoy their basic human rights; living a healthy and bountiful life. We hope more money will be directed towards the health sector, as opposed to the stockpiling of arms and ammunitions.

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As the unequal redistribution of income persists, the need for support from abroad will continue within some segments of the population; and remittances will continue to be indispensable to migrant families where the welfare state fails to fulfill the role assigned to it. We hope for changes of the negative connotations and stigmatization of immigrants who send money to their families in the countries of origin. People should be free to spend the income they earn any way they see fit, even as migrant workers.

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We believe technological advancements will be on the rise, as people have adopted new technology, leading to increased demand for free internet. We call for the abolition of borders (physical as well as imaginary) with their reproduction of inequality. This entails closing of detention centres, immediate granting of unconditional and unlimited residence permits for all, free access to healthcare, education, guaranteed housing, and safe working conditions for all, and the promotion of safety and protection for everyone. We envision a world of global borderless solidarity.

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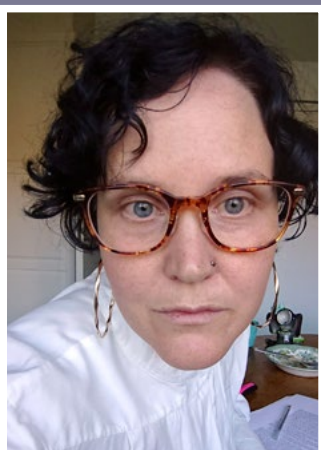
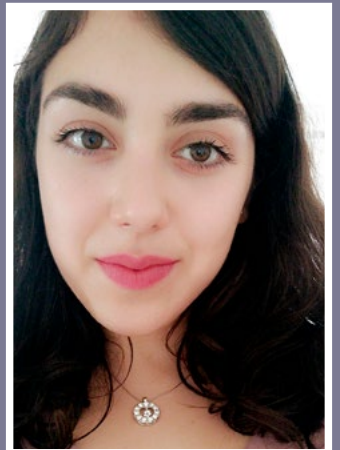
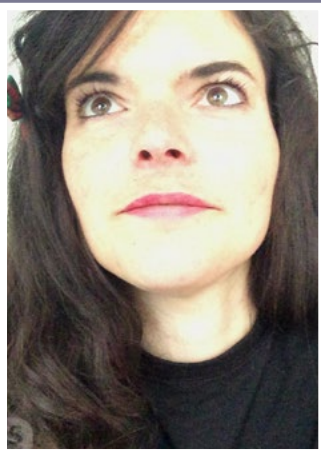
We've heard the term 'essential' thrown around for the past months like wildfire. So, what is essential? Is it the corporate businesses left open to operate during the global lockdown? Or is it the locally owned restaurant that recently went under due to the immediate withdrawal of customers? We must assume the term 'essential,' was purposefully left ambiguous. Essential is not the livelihood of your neighbor and it's not the second job your mom works to pay overdraft fees. In Althusserian terms, what is essential is the exploited's (lower/middle class) subjugation to the ruling ideology, manipulated by the exploiters (capitalists), and protected by their auxiliaries (law enforcement). Essential is whatever keeps the cogs turning in our neoliberal world. The hard truth we must all face, is recognizing this oppression. In the words of the late revolutionary Malcom X, "We have a common enemy. We have this in common: We have a common oppressor; a common exploiter; and a common discriminator. But once we all realize we have a common enemy, then we unite – on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy."





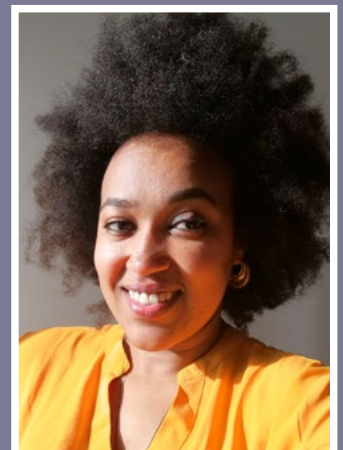
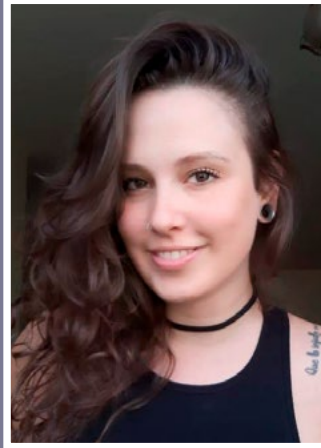


# ABOUT THE





# CONTRIBUTORS



**Shakeel Asim** holds a Bachelor's of Law and Master's in Political Science from Bahauddin Zakariya University and University of Punjab, respectively. He came from Pakistan where he has worked as a lawyer for the Lahore High Court, Lahore. He is also a member of the Punjab Bar Council and Lahore Bar Association, Pakistan.

**Sataporn Bunyaraksh**

Hej my name is Chris. Why Chris? Because it is easier than my real name.

**Aydan Cakir** is from Turkey. In her free time, she likes watching movies and she is a huge Marvel fan. She also has a comic-book collection of her favorite Marvel heroes.

**Daniel Clark** can cut his own hair. Prefers physical books over PDF files.

**Lali Demio Buck Silva**, before starting the MA in Ethnic and Migration Studies at LiU, she has participated in social movements, worked for NGOs and UNHCR in Brazil where she is from. Her latest work experience was in the context of the Venezuela emergency situation as she was involved in building the strategy for sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response in the border. Her main interests are issues related to class, gender, race and whiteness studies, with a focus on intersectional and decolonial perspectives.

**Xinyi Mi** is from China. She is interested in labour rights and post-human society.

**Shadi Moazen** has a background in sociology. She is fond of plants, Persian pop, and olives.

**Gloria Gemma** has a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology with a specialisation in Sociology of Migration and Qualitative Research Methodology. Before starting the Master's Program, she worked in refugee camps, mainly in the Balkan Region. Her academic interests surround mainly Decolonial Epistemology and Critical Border Studies.

**Hengameh Habibi Khorasani** is from Iran. Coming abroad and pursuing her studies in Sweden has been one of the memorable and challenging experiences of her life. She likes to expand her worldview by meeting different people and by listening to their stories. She enjoys Swedish fika and likes to hang out with friends in cozy coffee shops and restaurants.

**Julia Harmgardt** is from Sweden and holds a BA from Lund University in Social Anthropology with a focus on gender studies, migration and human geography. Currently attending a MA in Ethnic and Migration Studies at Linköping University, she directs her focus towards issues related to gender, class and migration with a particular interest in decolonial and intersectional perspectives on political and social discourses, urban planning and housing segregation.

**Ferdaws Ahmed**, holder of a Bachelor's and Master's in English Language & Literature from SUST, Sylhet, Bangladesh. The thematic aspects of post-war and post-colonial literature and post-modern literature motivated him to carry out an academic endeavour in the EMS program.

**Bianca Lange** is a creative seeker who is passionate about social justice, nature, and yoga. In the future she is hoping to be able to put into life some of the many projects she is bearing as seeds right now.

**Xue Xiao** is from Wuhan, China. She studied culture and theatre in Beijing. She likes reading, writing and dancing.



# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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**Gabriela Martini dos Santos** is from Brazil and holds a BA in International Relations from the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Before starting the MA in Ethnic and Migration Studies, she worked with migrant labor integration at the Immigrant Reference Center of Santa Catarina State. Her research and career interests surround local policy-making for the inclusion of refugee women within an intersectional framework.

**Asia Della Rosa** recently discovered her obsession for oat, yogurt and peanut butter. Enthusiastic reader, illegally-downloaded-books supplier, dreams of a career as a university researcher, maybe in Sweden (but only during summer).

**Martha Gebeyehu** is from Ethiopia. She graduated from Addis Ababa University with a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts. She is known for her love of smiling and books!

**Frankline Mofow** studied law and political science at Dschang University in Cameroon. Before coming to Linköping University, he had been working for more than 3 years in the humanitarian field under Plan international Cameroon-Administrative and field worker, Cameroon Red Cross Association-Volunteer, Cameroon National Civic Center and Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society. His engagement with humanitarian issues increased his interest to enhance his academic background for a better understanding of the global and local problems in relation to ethnicity and migration.

**Alva Nissen** was born in Linköping and has a Bachelor's degree in social work from Stockholm University. She is involved in the housing rights movement and in struggles in solidarity with migrants.

**Maria Angelica Rodriguez Delgado** is a Colombian political scientist, currently studying for an MA in Ethnic and Migration Studies at LiU. She is a former ballet dancer and a mother of two children.

**Kenna Sim** is from traditional, unceded Secwepemc territory in what is now called Canada. She is interested in examining social issues through a decolonial and intersectional lens. She has baked approximately ten loaves of banana bread since classes changed to distance mode.

**Natasha Smith** is originally from England, but has called Sweden her home since 2003. She strongly believes in an equal education for all and has been a passionate English teacher for 22 years before taking a break to pursue her Master's in Ethnic and Migration Studies at LiU.

**Katerina Spathia** was split down the middle between the UK and Greece and hasn't remained intact. She's resided in Crete, England, Israel, Switzerland, Italy and most recently, Sweden. Her interests include traditional music, critical theory, languages and sea swimming. (Dancing, singing and fellow species go without saying). Her hopes are to contribute to Médecins Sans Frontières' mission, to redress some of the world's imbalances, and to explore more.

**Chloe Lawson** is from the United States but also calls Canada and France "home." When she is not studying for classes or socializing with friends, you can find her outside, enjoying the outdoors.

# REMESO AND THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME

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This report is made by students on the International Master's Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies, the Norrköping campus at Linköping University (LiU). Every spring we give the first-year students a difficult task: to portray and analyse how migration and ethnic relations shape the social, economic and cultural life of Norrköping. The report is produced over several weeks by the students themselves. As everybody knows, Covid-19 has changed almost all aspects of life. What used to be normal practice, now takes place in a state of emergency of sorts. This is also true of research, teaching, and studying. Working together has become working apart, and the feeling of distance is both intrusive and desolate. As teachers, we are in awe of what the students have accomplished during these stressful, difficult, and, often also, boring times. Our seminars and workshops, out of which this report has grown, have been lively and inspiring meetings, albeit only on our screens. To work with the students in their efforts to learn about different aspects of life for migrants and ethnic minorities during Covid-19, and to watch them articulate a popular yet scientifically grounded reflection about this, has been to watch agency, determination, and curiosity happen.

The authors themselves make up a global team, with backgrounds in at least five continents. Their interest in how migration transforms the world and how ethnic boundaries are dissolved or recreated in this transformation, which has inspired their look at Norrköping and Sweden from within and without at the same time. The report contains many voices that reflect the struggles people face in making Norrköping, Sweden, and beyond, their home while also now coping with a pandemic that draws up new boundaries between people and fuels old worries about closeness, distance, and the familiar/unfamiliar. The effects of the pandemic and measures to combat it have often left migrants and minorities particularly vulnerable. However, what also shines through are the pockets of solidarity, the extraordinary strength everywhere, and, as this report itself is indicative of, the dogged resilience to help, try to understand, and move forward. It is our hope that this will be a lasting lesson. Maybe the Covid-19 pandemic can help us shake up some of the inertia in politics, economy, and social life, and thereby help us move towards a more egalitarian, inclusive, and just society. For it has forced many of us to re-evaluate our lives and positions and to rethink what is really important. It has shed an unforgiving light on the flaws, lies, and anomalies of the current state of social affairs. Hence, it offers a chance to look at the world and our fellow human beings with sober eyes again.

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The International Master's Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies is part of the Institute for Research in Migration, Ethnicity and Society, REMESO, at the Department Culture and Society (IKOS) at LiU. REMESO is an internationally renowned centre for research and education in migration and ethnic relations. We study problems of immediate societal relevance: labour and refugee migration, integration of migrants, migrants' access to citizenship, discrimination, nationalism and racism, EU migration and asylum policy.

This report is produced in the series "REMS – Reports from the MA Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies". This is one of the ways in which we train students to identify and resolve key problems related to migration, integration, and diversity. This is also how Linköping University and REMESO seek to make research and education useful to a larger audience.





# Master's programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies 120 hp

Addressing some of the most challenging issues in today's world, this programme relates ethnicity and migration to global economic and cultural change, as well as to systems of domination and movements of resistance.

**[liu.se/ethnic-migration-studies](http://liu.se/ethnic-migration-studies)**



**EMS COMMUNITY**  
ETHNIC AND MIGRATION STUDIES

The **EMS Community** is a study-social committee that represents the interests of MA in Ethnic and Migration Studies' students, and promotes social and cultural activities for them. The main aim of the EMS Community is to build relationships between the programme, its students and the Norrköping Community more broadly. It is our beliefs that community engagement and collaboration benefits both students and the municipality.

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