



# Sustaining Normative Horizons, Grappling with Elusive Effects: Governance and Sociality Under the Litmus Test of COVID-19

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## Abstract

The text aims at opening a space for discussion on the problems of governance under the strain of uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic is a testing experience for contemporary liberal democracies and their underlying governance paradigm. The article concentrates on three main issues. First, it explores how the crisis challenged authorities and their ability to sustain an overarching societal agenda, a normative horizon of governance, in view of an uncertain future. Second, it focuses on the driving logic of governance mechanisms and problematizes the preoccupation with the management of effects when dealing with social problems. Last but not least, it points to two particular dangers for democracy that emerge from the failures of the current governance paradigm in the face of the pandemic: legitimizing the imbalance of powers and normalizing social distance as the new crystal lattice of public and social interaction.

**Keywords** Governance · Uncertainty · COVID-19 · Social distance · Imbalance of powers

The global spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the local attempts by national governments to contain the virus produced a myriad of discourses of the pandemic as a test. The notion of “testing” underlies accounts and articulations that delve into the unusual way the societal realm is functioning while in “pandemic mode.” The COVID-19 crisis is narrated as a test for national healthcare systems, for national economic resilience, for the notion of good governance, for citizens under the strain of social isolation, for businesses’ creativity, for the environment, for the R&D sector in coming up with pharmaceutical solutions, and so on and so forth.

All these narratives on testing the capacities of entities and individuals are fed by overwhelming anxiety as to the necessity, adequacy, and timeliness of global and local institutional reactions in response to an unexpected process. More importantly, they touch upon a crucial question with immense politico-philosophical significance that will shadow the current text all the way, namely, how can we think about governance in the context of uncertainty?

The COVID-19 crisis, as any other crisis that is rendered a major event by the public, inevitably stimulates yet another discussion on the problems persisting in contemporary liberal democracies and their upholding governance paradigm. There are many issues that need profound analytical attention, but I will outline three main challenges that test current governance mechanisms and open room for re-negotiating the tenets of the latter.

## The Normative Horizon of Governance

The first problem concerns *the normative horizon of governance*. As the COVID-19 pandemic made societies function under the strain of uncertainty, the latter brought about two very interesting effects when it comes to the normative drive behind governance structures and processes. First, it made political leaders announce some basic politico-philosophical postulation giving justification and meaning of governance in a situation of public anxiety and unpredictability. At the beginning of the crisis, this was very important and a much-needed gesture to consolidate societies in the face of the threat. Uncertainty and disorientation have entailed reviving and reiterating the constitutive normative tenets of when the normal functioning of the polity is challenged. President Trump, not surprisingly, reconfirmed the primacy of

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economic rationality and clashed with some state governors on his hasty insistence for *Opening up America Again*, while local authorities were under the plight of an uncontrollable spread of the virus.<sup>1</sup> It must be acknowledged that economic cost was and still largely is the interpretation angle through which the current situation and the post-pandemic future are most frequently considered. On the other side of the Atlantic, the UK prime minister Boris Johnson advanced rhetoric emphasizing the liberties of English citizens against the prospects of restrictions, thus arguing the primacy of freedom over governmental interference with the normal course of life in the country.<sup>2</sup> Then, on the northern end of Europe, Sweden, which became a prominent occasion for discussions on the efficiency of restrictions, counted on individual responsibility as the organizing principle in the collective tackling of the pandemic. Sweden advanced an approach, whose normative horizon is social trust and collective mobilization.<sup>3</sup> Going even further, at the South-Eastern corner of the European Union, societies like the Bulgarian were initially consolidated under the banner of protecting the physical life of the populace and imposed strict social distancing measures quite early on.

Uncertainty and ignorance (ignorance understood as deficits in knowledge as to the pathogen and the far-reaching societal effects of its spread) gave occasion to societies to resort and appeal to the very meaning of governance, to its politico-philosophical justification against the backdrop of key societal goals. In a situation of trepidation as to the disruptive potential of a pandemic, the fundamental question of the profound rationale of “being together” in a polity surfaced again. Later on, in the light of growing data as to the dynamics of the virus and the versatile effects of governmental measures to slow down its spread—visible and not so visible (such as rise in violence at home, deteriorating mental health, and so on)—the stability of the initially announced normative horizon was undermined. We witnessed a disjunction between different governance levels and political subjects both in the US and the European Union when it comes to overarching values guiding decision-makers in their responses to the crisis. Is it imperative for economic growth or protecting the physical lives of the citizens? Saving lives or saving livelihoods? Is it about supporting businesses in trouble or about providing care for the sick and the vulnerable? Is it about civil liberties and individual responsibility or about governmental control and state paternalism? So here, we witnessed the second effect of uncertainty on authorities’ reactions. It pertains to difficulties

in grappling with the complex interaction of effects. And, these effects, as I will try to point out in the next sections, pose serious problems as to governability and democracy altogether.

Running into these difficulties, many state leaders changed their respective positions in the direction of either tightening or relaxing the restrictions while maneuvering between public resentment and various group interests. The American public had to face the consequences of the insistent and vocal denial of Donald Trump as to the severity of the problem. Boris Johnson made a turn from his initial abstention from action, following the exponential curve in the spread of the virus and the rising human cost. The Swedish chief epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, admitted the country’s early response was flawed.<sup>4</sup> On the other side of the pandemic response spectrum, the Bulgarian prime minister Borisov forsake the overarching goal of the physical survival of the nation and initiated a series of inconsistent measures following fluctuations in public opinion and the demands of different business sectors thus loosening the initially gained control on the spread of the virus.<sup>5</sup>

It must be recognized, however, that the COVID-19 challenge re-activated debates on the original normative underpinnings of governance. At the very first moments of the crisis, it gave political leaders the chance to perform their otherwise fading role of laying and articulating a shared normative horizon for their societies. And they actually did that by taking a preliminary firm stance on overarching goals such as economic prosperity, political freedoms, collective action, or physical survival of the nation. However, scientific uncertainty, complexity, and the impossibility for stable projections as to the societal effects of the virus all made it more sensible to step back from sustaining overarching normative horizons—to recede instead to their role of public mediators trying to strike the right balance between bargaining sectorial interests in a trade-off mode of governance. Most governments returned to a juggling mode of public management trying to reconcile particularistic social agendas of sectors and groups affected by the pandemic: employers, different industrial sectors, unemployed, people with other vulnerabilities, parents of schoolchildren, service sectors, hospitals and medical staff, transport, etc.

In view of all that, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the COVID-19 crisis was and still is a testing experience for authorities. First, it is a test for their ability to sustain an overarching societal agenda in view of an uncertain

<sup>1</sup> John Kruzel, ‘Trump set for clash with governors over reopening economy’, *The Hill*, March 26, 2020, <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/489592-trump-set-for-clash-with-governors-over-reopening-economy>

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Earle, ‘Boris Johnson Cares About ‘Liberty’ More Than People’s Lives’, *The New York Times*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/24/opinion/boris-johnson-coronavirus.html>

<sup>3</sup> Marta Paterlini, ‘Closing borders is ridiculous’: the epidemiologist behind Sweden’s controversial coronavirus strategy’, *Nature* 580, 574 (2020), April 12, 2020, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01098-x>

<sup>4</sup> Laurenz Gehrke, ‘Swedish epidemiologist admits to flaws in country’s coronavirus response’, *Politico*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/swedish-epidemiologist-admits-to-flaws-in-countrys-coronavirus-response/>

<sup>5</sup> ‘Bulgarian doctors critical of government over inconsistent anti-epidemic measures’, *Bulgarian National Radio*, October 24, 2020, <https://bnr.bg/en/post/101362202/bulgarian-doctors-critical-of-government-over-inconsistent-anti-epidemic-measures>

future. The pandemic puts on trial the unconditional adherence to well-known politico-philosophical beacons such as economic freedom or health security while the complexity of the epidemic's effects prompts normative fragmentation and bargaining on societal values. Second, the pandemic put on trial the normative content of the notion of *good governance*. The latter is usually understood in light of creating an institutional environment conducive to economic development. But can this be sustained vis-à-vis the pandemic challenge? It became clear that societies need strong and resilient healthcare, welfare policies, and emergency response measures and that growth-preoccupied government shall henceforth pay more attention to this crucial public infrastructure for supporting people in distress. In sum, the COVID-19 crisis opened room for debate on the meaning and the politico-philosophical justification of governance in the context of the global age of interdependence and vulnerability.

## Reverse Governance Mechanisms

The second challenge that the COVID-19 pandemic elucidated concerns *the driving logic behind the current governance mechanisms*. One of the frequent lamentations in the course of the crisis was “Why did it catch us by surprise?” Indeed, how has this not been foreseen and acted upon much earlier, even before the pandemic hit the globe? Can we talk about flawed political foresight? After all, global connectivity with all its attributes and driving mechanisms makes pandemics inevitable, irrespective of their source (questionable bioengineering practices or nature itself). It does not take a professional futurist to grasp the plausibility of such developments. There are many publications that convey worrying messages for the prospects of dangerous global contagions (ex. Allen et al. 2017; Jones et al. 2008; Morse 1995). When it comes to the future, it seems that we are still under the spell of old forecasting practices with their underlying attitude of expecting the future to come upon us and react accordingly, instead of acting in advance to mitigate or detour what is “reasonably expected.” But still, is there something *reverse* in the current governance paradigm that makes possible such shortsightedness and could explain the witnessed foresight failure? Why do we talk about early warning systems, screening protocols, testing capabilities, tracking mechanisms, and critical resources mainly after the fact?<sup>6</sup>

The answer may not be that simple as the question. But in trying to outline some of its contours, I will resort to a remark on modern societies once made by Giorgio Agamben, a well-known theorist on the notion of the state of exception

(Agamben 1998; Agamben 2005).<sup>7</sup> He noted that we had experienced an epochal change in the mere idea of governance, which becomes evident in the reverse of the traditional hierarchy between causes and effects.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary politics is predominantly orientated towards ex post management of effects instead of ex ante attention on the causes and roots of social problems. This tension between the temporal vectors of policy-making, between prevention in advance and a follow-up reaction, underpins all governance sectors. Take for example the realm of security and treating the problem of terrorism. After 2001 and the announced Global War on Terror, one of the major governance debates on the matter was over the direction of anti-terrorism strategies—whether to be preemptive in the sense of trying to impact and change the conditions that lead to radicalization, or punitive, in the sense of focusing on identifying and neutralizing already radicalized individuals. Attention on causes or management of effects?

Let us take another pressing issue, this time related to our acute interest in health. Many prognoses of global trends emphasize the worrying increase in socially significant non-communicable diseases. There is an “epidemic” of diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, addictions, and mental illnesses. They are all “governmentally processed” as social problems mainly through measures devoted to mitigating the effects of those diseases. We can acknowledge that a direct targeting of the root causes that produce unhealthy lifestyles, stress, deteriorated physical and mental conditions, illness, and death is not very feasible. A cause-centered approach would probably impinge on issues with significant regulatory ambition such as setting higher “healthy” standards for the food industry, alternative urban spatial configurations, transforming environmentally problematic sectors of the economy, reconsidering working conditions, and other things that do not sit well with the current political and ideological context. We can see, for example, that cancer, as a public health issue, is the operating arena of economically thriving sectors providing pharmaceutical (drugs, chemotherapy, pain management) and non-pharmaceutical (for example, psychological counseling) solutions to manage one's life *after* the diagnosis, to the extent possible. Radical restructuring of social and economic domains that precipitate the emergence of the disease is not very plausible. As is the case with many other societal challenges, governmental thinking seems to be preoccupied with administering an ever expansive net of activities *following* the multidirectional set of *consequences*,

<sup>6</sup> David Blumenthal and Elizabeth J. Fowler, ‘It's Not Too Early to Prepare for the Next Pandemic’, *Harvard Business Review*, April 17, 2020, <https://hbr.org/2020/04/its-not-too-early-to-prepare-for-the-next-pandemic>

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Giorgio Agamben and his work became the epicenter of intellectual clashes problematizing his critique on the response to the pandemic as yet another, this time much profound, manifestation of the tendency to use the state of exception as a normal paradigm for government thus further denigrating and reducing human life to its purely biological condition.

<sup>8</sup> Giorgio Agamben, ‘For a theory of destituent power’. Public lecture in Athens, 16.11.2013, *XPONOS* 10 (02.2014), <http://www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/g-agamben-for-a-theory-of-destituent-power.html>

instead of boldly targeting the heart of the matter. Can this situation be explained only with the triumph of von Hayek-inspired social philosophies, the primacy of market-produced social outcomes, and the widely discredited legitimacy of large-scale governmental interventions? Or with the deep crisis of governability due to the pluralization of social problems that demand an ever-expansive net of regulatory responses (so well described back in the 1975 report for the Trilateral Commission)? This text cannot provide the answer. But, it can offer an occasion for discussion on the suspicion that it also has to do with a deeply embedded mentality concerning *the legitimate locus* of governmental intervention, or in other words, with the topography of political intention and action.

In the light of this, we may hypothesize that the initial reluctance of Western democratic authorities to act decisively when confronted with the emerging COVID-19 pandemic wave has something to do with these tensions within the contemporary governance paradigm. Grappling with the current crisis continues to be discursively and actually regarded as an effort devoted to handling its undesired effects: How can we manage the process in terms of hospitals, medical staff, and equipment so that the pressure be successfully absorbed by the system and does not collapse? How can we prepare for the coming economic recession? How can we cope in view of the stalled engines of a highly interdependent global economy? How can we manage to reorganize our production processes and achieve a sufficient extent of autarky as regards key supporting sectors concerning food, energy, medicines? How can economic sectors sacrificed as “non-essential businesses” be supported during a lockdown? How will schoolchildren catch up with their education while being at home? And so on, and so forth.

In response to this, governments started crafting strategies to mitigate the *consequences* for the citizens—measures to compensate affected businesses and laid-off individuals, helping families with social benefits during the periods of lockdown, community support in terms of food and services for the lonely and the vulnerable, additionally subsidizing and supporting national agricultural and food sectors. Behind the dominant public discourse becomes evident the abovementioned *governance* logic. It concentrates on acting upon a problem by dealing with its already manifested *effects and repercussions* instead of preemptively focusing on its roots and, as is the case with a coming contagion, on decisively blocking its spread in a timely manner. We can speculate now, in hindsight, that we have failed to address promptly the problem of the link between deforestation in some regions, which can precipitate the emergence, the mutation, and the transmittance of new pathogens onto edible animals, domestic animals, pets, and people. Another problem that seems to have evaded the authorities’ attention is the proper regulatory measures that concern the work of “dangerous science.” This includes issues such as highly sensitive experimental practices

like manipulating the genetic code of pathogens, the availability of ethical dumping zones (where research free of fundamental rights considerations is conducted), and the actual enforcement of biosafety regimes when it comes to research institutes dealing with highly contagious and fatal diseases. We can also speculate that we have failed to address in a timely manner the problem of the current state of healthcare systems, which under the auspices of commercialization are becoming less about care and more about financial sustainability. Unfortunately, many governments are occupied with thinking about how to rearrange the available resources and what trade-offs and moral choices to make so that the healthcare systems withstand the COVID-19 pressure. Fewer discussions serve to problematize the architecture, the normative tenets, and the operating principles that made the system unprepared to provide medical care and healing for all those in need during an unexpected health challenge.

In sum, the COVID-19 crisis could be regarded not only as a testing experience but also as a chance to reconsider the temporal schemes behind governance mechanisms, and the specific relation between governance and the future in terms of treating causes and effects of social problems. This will help in confronting the impediments to the adequate foreseeing and handling of surprising (but inevitable) events such as the current pandemic.

### **Hypertrophy of Executive Powers and Stretching of the Social Fabric**

In the context of such governance paradigm, the danger that is lurking for democracy is grave and that danger has to do with two significant effects that the abovementioned reverse direction of the governance process produces in response to an event like the COVID-19 crisis. The first one concerns the readiness with which governments imposed extraordinary measures for controlling social and public life with the announced aim of containing the virus. The fact that the contagion turned out to be elusive only exposed the shortcomings of the current governance paradigm, which as we already noted, is more focused on catching up with the impacts than aiming at the sources of social challenges. Counterintuitively, within such a policy-making matrix, the evident governmental impotence in the face of a very complex network of pandemic repercussions could only be compensated by a sheer expansion of executive powers. In other words, impotence led to hypertrophy of governmental power. *The more the societal effects slip away from governmental ability to comprehensively and effectively grasp and manage, the more plausible become governments’ demands to expand the area and the force of their potential interventions.*

In addition, the exponential spread of the virus also highlighted the need for dynamic regulatory reactions, of

significantly accelerated decision making with the least possible restraints from the legislature and the judiciary. “Act now, act fast!” becomes imperative for dealing with the problem. This opened a vast room for additionally empowering the executive (be it federal, state, or regional) by the means of “extraordinary measures” and “states of emergency.” A preliminary overview of the matter shows that this opportunity was readily grasped by some governments as an occasion to ensure for themselves operational powers undisturbed by stringent checks and balances.<sup>9</sup> Dangerously, the *imbalance of powers*, in times of turmoil, appears as a suitable model of the functioning of authorities so they can meet unexpected complexities produced by globalization and administer the widening net of effects on the public. And, this is not unprecedented. Much of what happened after the 9/11 attacks was under the same banner. In light of this, we can argue that the COVID-19 crisis is yet another testing experience for democracies and their ability to embed limitations in such state of affairs, and somehow preserve the principle for checks and balances even within the “emergency mode” of societal functioning. We witnessed cases in which the legislature, the Hungarian for example, voluntarily receded and endowed open-ended emergency powers upon the executive.<sup>10</sup> This puts on trial some of the main tenets of democratic governance.

The second effect produced by the current governance paradigm in its inability to effectively contain the virus is that it turned its attention from the behavior of the pathogen to the behavior of its potential hosts. Not being able to control the effects on society, it shifted the locus of governance action much deeper—onto reconfiguring sociality. The six feet/two meters rule of staying away from each other, most often with masks on, becomes the *new crystal lattice of human interaction*. Social distancing is legitimized as a temporary sanitary principle that needs to be enwoven in the social fabric. It calls for restrained sociality. It appeals for staying away from fellow citizens. Not surprisingly, various technological applications (social distancing and contact tracing wearables) were readily deployed to ensure the invisible borders between individuals and to enforce the accurate lines of these novel spatial configurations of being with others in the public (and even the private) sphere. They all aim to ensure “safe space” turning the question of human interaction into a problem of health safety (see Furedi 2020).

As a consequence, the spirit of staying *apart* has been imprinted on the public reflexes. We inhabit urban spaces with

“keep a safe distance” lines—in the store, in institutions, in banks, and in cafes. Sellers are communicating with us from behind plastic screens; schools and classrooms are spatially reconfigured so they can reproduce this new crystal lattice of sociality in education; restaurants are reorganized into coupés of specially created bubbles to ensure the isolation of their clients—funny hats are given to clients to ensure the safe space between them at a table and between tables. In the pandemic mode of the social, public life is predominantly transferred on the terrain of information and communication technologies: working from home, distance education, telemedicine, e-government, and social media communication with close friends and relatives. Technology once again triumphed as a solution and was evoked as a remedy for the same social problems it itself created (like isolation and actual social disengagement). Of course, in the course of the 2020 spring lockdowns and the rising indignation among citizens, the prolonged stretching of the social fabric proved not to be a sustainable regulatory endeavor. It did, nevertheless, create reflexes of voluntary withdrawal, of uneasiness, anxiety, and shivering at the mere thought of the possibility that you can catch something potentially causing death when being in close contact with people. Publications on how to negotiate a comfortable distance with other people in view of the pandemic are emerging.<sup>11</sup> This is telling for the changes that affect our perceptions on sociality and undoubtedly deserves further analytical attention.

As regards the spatial reconfiguring of the social fabric, the COVID-19 crisis was a litmus test as to the acceptability of a regime, in which the sanitary distance became the matrix of interaction between individuals. *First, it was and still is a test on how much social deprivation the public and the private sphere can handle. And second, it is a test on how much virtualization social life can accommodate.* We witnessed some results. It became clear that prolonged spatial stretching of the social fabric and the virtualization of the public sphere is fraught with problems. Physical distancing and isolation not surprisingly caused some “prison cell” effects—psychogenic health problems, exacerbation of mental illness,<sup>12</sup> domestic violence,<sup>13</sup> deterioration of chronic and terminal diseases, etc. Different researchers started to direct the attention to social isolation, low social engagement, lack of social interaction, and their effects on the brain, such as cognitive decline,

<sup>9</sup> Tom Ginsburg and Mila Versteeg, ‘States of Emergencies: Part I’, *Harvard Law Review Blog*, April 17, 2020, <https://blog.harvardlawreview.org/states-of-emergencies-part-i/>

<sup>10</sup> ‘Hungary’s Orban handed open-ended powers to fight coronavirus, alarming rights groups’, *France 24*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/20200330-hungary-s-pm-obtains-open-ended-emergency-powers-to-fight-the-coronavirus>

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Laura Rees, ‘How to calmly navigate personal interactions during COVID-19’, *The Conversation*, August 16, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/how-to-calmly-navigate-personal-interactions-during-covid-19-143669>

<sup>12</sup> Sujata Gupta, ‘Social distancing comes with psychological fallout’, *ScienceNews*, March 29, 2020, <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-covid-19-social-distancing-psychological-fallout>

<sup>13</sup> Nazia Parveen and Jamie Grierson, ‘Warning over rise in UK domestic abuse cases linked to coronavirus’, *The Guardian*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/26/warning-over-rise-in-uk-domestic-abuse-cases-linked-to-coronavirus>

dementia, depression, and anxiety. It was realized that the discursive conflation of “physical distancing” and “social distancing” has troubling repercussions, manifested in the prolonged retreat from social contacts. As a result, some researchers started looking for new configurations that would mitigate the problem. Abel and McQueen (2020) note that the COVID-19 pandemic calls for “spatial distancing and social closeness: not for ‘social distancing.’” The authors combine physical distance with the possibility of social support. A recent technical report by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2020) acknowledged that social distancing measures have a negative impact on the general well-being of the population, on the functioning of society and the economy. The report advises that people consistently meet with the same people in “social bubbles,” whether with friends or co-workers, thus keeping contact and reducing risk.

It also became clear that prolonged isolation would not obviate citizens’ need to activate the public sphere as a sphere of a physical encounter. In some countries, such as Israel<sup>14</sup> and Greece<sup>15</sup>, this provoked the activation of creative spatial patterns of protesting—not the classical mob, but a stretched, by sanitary distance, network of individuals with masks. In other countries, it was demonstrated that a significant social problem cannot escape a classical public reaction (entailing physical presence), ensured by constitutionally inscribed rights.<sup>16</sup> This was the case with the Black Lives Matter movement with all its global support rallies; this was the recent case, too, of Poland and the public reaction to the anti-abortion legislation; this was even the case with Spain and Italy where citizens were protesting against anti-virus restrictive measures in the fall of 2020. COVID-19 is testing the resilience of crucial components of democratic governance such as the right of assembly, of public gathering, of protest, and civil disobedience.

When governance rationality is focused on catching up with the unfolding and constantly evading effects of the crisis, that is, when it pushes the reverse governance logic up to some extremes, two dangers emerge. First, in compensating for the deficits of handling the situation, it could aim for unchecked hypertrophy of executive powers. And secondly, it could resort to reconfiguring the spatial

patterns of the social fabric, thus blocking the exercise of key civil rights and not satiating innate human needs (of physical gathering and immediate communication).

On a final note, the overall pathos of this text is that we need to think about the COVID-19 pandemic not only as a healthcare or economic challenge. It puts on trial the mere notion of governance, its normative lining and organizing logic, and the extent to which public life can accommodate contactless sociality. These are profound questions that speak not only of the crisis of political leadership but of the pains of contemporary democracies altogether.

## Further Reading

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<sup>14</sup> Bel Trev, ‘Thousands rally in ‘social distancing’ protest accusing Netanyahu of destroying democracy’, *The Independent*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/tel-aviv-bibi-social-distancing-coronavirus-protest-netanyahu-a9473976.html>

<sup>15</sup> Gregory Pappas, ‘Even During Protests, Greeks Observing Social Distancing Guidelines’, *π*, May 1, 2020, <https://www.pappaspost.com/greeks-observe-social-distancing-during-protests/>

<sup>16</sup> An interesting example of this point is the position of some American medical professionals on the protests following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor: “We believe that the way forward is not to suppress protests in the name of public health but to respond to protesters demands in the name of public health, thereby addressing multiple public health crises” (see Mallory Simon, ‘Over 1,000 health professionals sign a letter saying, Do not shut down protests using coronavirus concerns as an excuse’, *CNN*, June 5, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/health-care-open-letter-protests-coronavirus-trnd/index.html>).