

the Post Corona World

A Backwards
Corona Forecast:
Or how we will
be surprised
when the crisis
is 'over'

by Mathias Horx

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“When will the Corona be over” and “When will everything return to normal” are questions often asked of me at the moment. My answer is: never. There are historical moments when the direction of the future changes. We call them bifurcations. Or deep crises. These times are now.

The world, as we know it, is dissolving. But behind it comes a new world, the formation of which we can at least imagine. For this, I would like to offer you an exercise with which we have had good experiences in vision processes at companies. We call it the **RE-gnosis**. In contrast to the **PRO-gnosis**, we do not look ‘into the future’ with this technique. Instead, we look back from the future to today. Sounds crazy?

Let’s try it:

The RE gnosis: Our world in autumn 2020

Let us imagine a situation in autumn, say in September 2020. We are sitting in a street café in a big city. It is warm, and people are walking down the pavements again.

Do they move differently? Is everything the same as before? Does the wine, the cocktail, the coffee taste like it used to? Like it did before Corona?

Or even better?

Looking back, what will surprise us?

We will be surprised that our social distancing rarely led to a feeling of isolation. On the contrary, after an initial paralysing shock, many of us were relieved that the constant racing, talking, communicating on a multitude of channels suddenly came to a halt. Distancing does not necessarily mean loss but can open up new possibilities. Some have already experienced

this, for example, trying interval fasting — and suddenly enjoyed food again. Paradoxically, the physical distance that the virus forced upon us also created new closeness. We met people who we would never have met otherwise. We contacted old friends more often, strengthened ties that had become loose. Families, neighbours, friends have grown closer and sometimes even solved hidden conflicts.

The social courtesy that we previously progressively missed increased.

Now in autumn 2020, there is an entirely different mood at football games than in spring when there was a tremendous amount of mass rage. We wonder why that is.

We will be amazed at how quickly digital cultural techniques have suddenly proven themselves in practice. Teleconferencing and video conferencing, which most colleagues had always resisted (the business class flight was better), turned out to be quite practical and productive. Teachers learned a lot about internet teaching. The home office became a matter of course for many — including the improvisation and time juggling that goes with it.

At the same time, outdated cultural techniques experienced a renaissance. Suddenly you got not only the answering machine when you called, but real people. The virus spawned a new culture of long phone calls without people juggling a second screen. The ‘messages’ themselves suddenly took on a new meaning. Humanity communicated again, with nobody kept waiting or stalled, creating a new culture of accessibility and commitment.

People who never came to rest due to the hectic rush, including YOUNG people, all of a sudden went for long walks (an activity formerly unknown to them). Reading books suddenly became a cult.

Reality shows unanticipatedly seemed awkward,



and the whole trivia trash, the garbage for the soul that flowed through all channels, seemed ridiculous. No, it didn't completely disappear. But it was rapidly losing value.

Can anyone remember the political correctness debate? The infinite number of cultural wars? What, we will ask ourselves, was all that?

Crises work primarily by dissolving old phenomena, making them superfluous...

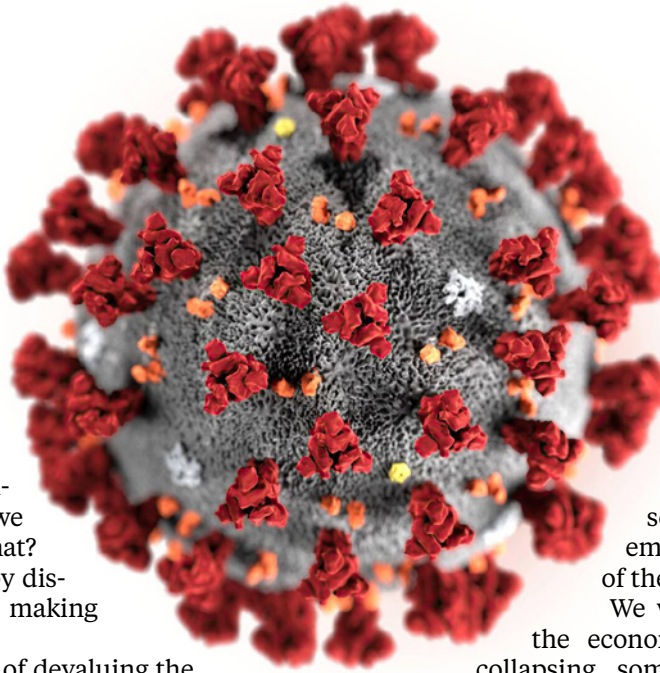
Cynicism, a casual way of devaluing the world, was suddenly out.

The exaggeration and culture of fear and hysteria in the media were limited after a short first outbreak.

Besides, the infinite flood of cruel crime series reached its tipping point.

We will be surprised about the drug development during the summer that increased the survival rate. It lowered the death rate and made Corona into a virus with which we have to live. Much like the flu and many other diseases. Medical progress helped. But we also learned that it was not so much technology, but rather a crucial change in social behaviour. The decisive factor was that people could have solidarity and be constructive despite radical restrictions. Human-social intelligence has helped. The much-vaunted artificial intelligence, which promised to solve everything, has only had a limited effect on Corona.

There has been a shift in the relationship between technology and culture. Before the crisis, technology seemed to be the panacea, the bearer of all utopias. No one — or only a few hard-boiled people — still



believe in the great digital redemption today. The big technology hype is over. We are once again turning our attention toward altruistic questions: What is humanity? What do we mean to each other?

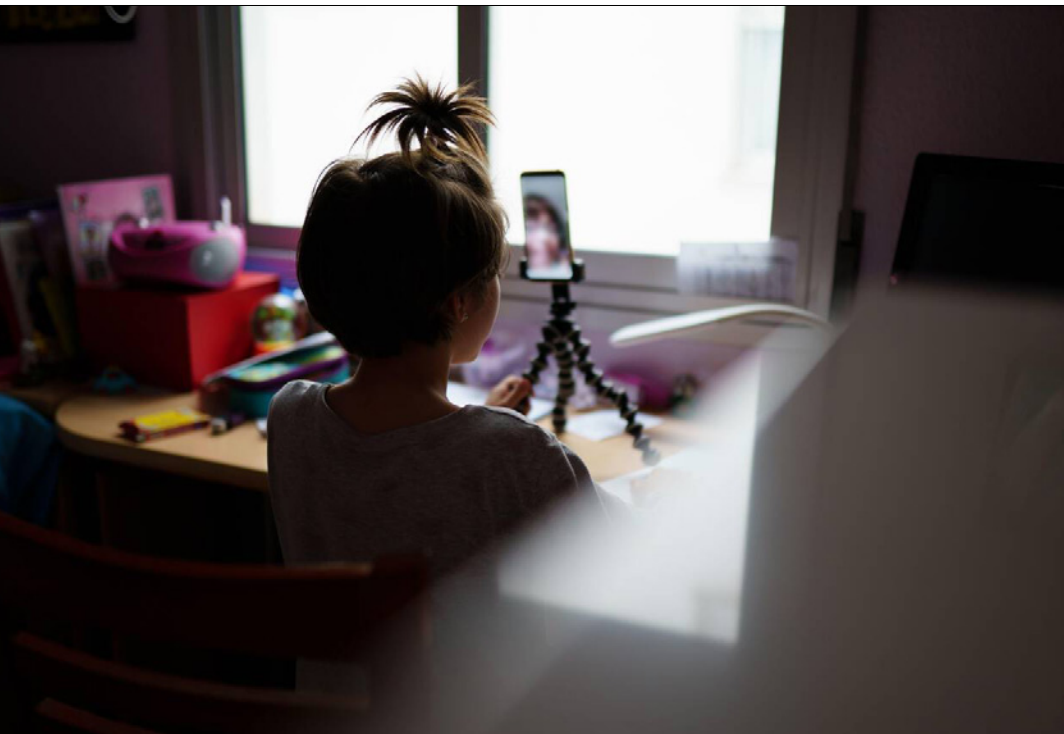
We are astonished to see how much humour and empathy emerged in the days of the virus.

We will be amazed at how far the economy could shrink without collapsing, something prophesied during every pre-Corona tax increase and every government intervention. There was a 'black April' and a deep economic downturn with a 50 per cent drop in the stock market. There was an agglomeration of bankrupted companies or ones that shrank or mutated into something completely different. Even so, the economy never flatlined. As if it was a breathing being that can also nap or sleep and even dream.

Today in the autumn, there is a global economy again. But global just-in-time production, with substantial branched value chains carting millions of individual parts across the planet, has survived. It is currently being dismantled and reconfigured. Manufacturing and service are growing again for interim storage facilities, depots, and reserves. Local production is booming, there is a pinpointing of networks, and crafts are experiencing a renaissance. The global system is drifting towards GLOCALisation: the localisation of the global.

We will be surprised that even the loss of assets due to the stock market crash does not hurt as much as it





We all know the feeling of successfully overcoming fear. When we go to the dentist for treatment, we are worried a long time in advance. On the dentist's chair, we lose control, and it hurts before it hurts. In anticipation, we bathe ourselves in fears that can completely overwhelm us. Once we have survived the treatment, there is a feeling of coping: the world looks young and fresh again, and we are suddenly full of drive.

Neuro-biologically, fear adrenaline is replaced by dopamine, a type of endogenous drug of the future. While adrenaline leads us to flee or fight (which is not productive in the dentist's chair, and just as useless in the fight against Corona),

felt in the beginning. In the new world, wealth suddenly no longer plays a decisive role. Good neighbours and a blossoming vegetable garden are more important.

Could it be that the virus has changed our lives in a direction that we wanted to change in any way?

RE-gnosis: coping with the present through a leap into the future

Why does this kind of 'from the future scenario' seem so irritatingly different from a classic forecast? Because it relates to the specific properties of our sense of the future. When we look 'into the future', we typically only see the dangers and problems that pile up into insurmountable barriers coming towards us - like a train that runs us over. This fear barrier separates us from the future. That's why horror futures are always the easiest to depict.

RE-gnosis, on the other hand, forms a loop of knowledge through which we include ourselves and our change in the future. We connect with it internally, creating a bridge between today and tomorrow. It is the creation of a form of 'Future Mind'.

If done correctly, it may allow for the creation of something like future intelligence. We can anticipate not only the external 'events' but also the internal adaptations with which we react to a changing world.

That feels very different from a forecast that always has something dead or sterile in its anticipatory character. We leave the stiffness of fear and return to the vitality that belongs to every real future.

dopamine opens our brain synapses. In essence, we become curious, foresighted, and excited about what is to come. When our dopamine level is healthy, we make plans, and we have visions that lead us to the forward-looking action.

Surprisingly, many experience precisely this in the Corona crisis. A massive loss of control suddenly turns into a veritable intoxication of the positive. After a period of bewilderment and fear, inner strength arises. The world may seem to 'end'. But with the experience and acknowledgement of our remaining, a new kind of 'being' arises from within us.

In the middle of civilisation's shutdown, we run through forests or parks, or across almost empty spaces. It is not an apocalypse, but a new beginning.

How does it turn out? Change begins as an altered pattern of expectations, perceptions, and world connections. Sometimes it is precisely the break with routines, the familiar, that releases our sense of the future. It is the idea and certainty that everything could be completely different — and possibly even better.

Trump voted out of office in November may come as a surprise. Then there is the *AfD* (Germany's right-wing/far-right political party). It is losing popularity and attention because a malicious, divisive policy does not fit into a Corona world. The Corona crisis made it clear that those who want to incite people against each other have nothing to contribute to real questions about the future. When things get serious, the destructiveness that lives in populism becomes clear.

Politics — in its original sense as the formation of social responsibilities — received new credibility and



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legitimacy through this crisis. Precisely because it had to act in an ‘authoritarian’ manner, politics created trust in society. Science also experienced an astonishing renaissance in the disaster. Virologists and epidemiologists became media stars. ‘Futuristic’ philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, all previously left on the side-lines of polarised debates, regained their voice and value.

Fake news, however, rapidly lost market value. Conspiracy theories also suddenly looked ridiculous.

A virus as an accelerator of evolution

Deep crises also point to another fundamental principle of change: the trend-countertrend synthesis.

The new world after Corona — or better with Corona — arises from the disruption of the megatrend CONNECTIVITY. Politically and economically, this phenomenon is also called ‘globalisation’. The interruption of connectivity — through border closings, separations, seclusions, quarantines — does not lead to the abolition of the connections. But it enables the reorganisation of those things that hold our world together and carry them into the future. There is a phase jump in socio-economic systems.

The world to come will appreciate distance again — and this will make connectedness more qualitative. There is a rebalancing of autonomy and dependency, opening, and closing. These can make the world more complex but also more stable. This transformation is

mostly a blind evolutionary process — because one fails, the new, the viable, prevails. It makes you dizzy at first, but then it shows its inner meaning: and what connects the paradoxes on a new level is sustainable.

This process of complexation — not to be confused with COMPLICATION — can also be consciously designed by people. Those who can, who speak the language of the coming complexity will be the leaders of tomorrow. The hope-bearers. The up and coming Gretas.

“Through Corona, we will adapt our entire attitude towards life — in the sense of our existence as living beings amid other forms of life.”

Slavo Žižek (Slovenian Philosopher)
at the height of the Corona crisis in mid-March

Every deep crisis leaves a story, a narrative that points far into the future. One of the most potent images left by the Coronavirus is of the Italians ‘making’ music on the balconies. The second was sent to us by satellite imagery that suddenly showed the industrial areas of China and Italy free of smog. In 2020, human CO₂ emissions will drop for the first time. That very fact will have a tremendous impact on us.

If the virus can achieve this, is it then possible that we can also? Maybe the virus was just a messenger from the future. The drastic message is: Human civilisation has become too dense, too fast, and overheated. It is racing too fast in a direction in which there is no future. H EDITION