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ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE BEYOND QUARANTINE: REFLECTIONS FROM SWEDEN ON COVID-19 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

During the years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021 thus far), nobody could remain in any real quarantine. The humans of the world were reminded daily of the global progress (or otherwise) of one virus, several vaccines, and numerous health systems. As always, archaeology could not escape its present.

The following are my reflections on some issues I had on my mind during the time of the 'corona crisis'. They reflect my perspective as an archaeologist working on heritage futures who normally travels a lot throughout Europe and beyond, but now remained put in Sweden, working a lot from home and, curiously, attending even more international meetings than before, albeit virtual ones.

Keywords: heritage futures; 'corona crisis'; global solidarity.

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ARQUEOLOGIA E PATRIMÔNIO CULTURAL ALÉM DA QUARENTENA: REFLEXÕES DA SUÉCIA SOBRE O COVID-19 E SUAS CONSEQUÊNCIAS

RESUMO

Durante os anos da pandemia COVID-19 (2020-2021 até agora), ninguém pôde permanecer em quarentena real. Os humanos do mundo eram lembrados diariamente do progresso global (ou não) de um vírus, várias vacinas e de vários sistemas de saúde. Como sempre, a arqueologia não poderia escapar de seu presente.

Seguem aqui minhas reflexões sobre alguns problemas que passaram pela minha mente durante a época da "crise do corona vírus". Eles refletem minha perspectiva como um arqueólogo trabalhando sobre os futuros do patrimônio, alguém que normalmente viaja muito pela Europa e além, mas agora permaneceu na Suécia, trabalhando muito em casa e, curiosamente, participando ainda mais de encontros internacionais do que antes, embora virtuais.

Palavras-chave: futuros do patrimônio; "crise do corona vírus"; solidariedade global.

ARQUEOLOGÍA Y PATRIMONIO CULTURAL MÁS ALLÁ DE LA CUARENTENA: REFLEXIONES DESDE SUECIA SOBRE EL COVID-19 Y SUS CONSECUENCIAS

RESUMEN

Durante los años de la pandemia del COVID-19 (2020-2021 hasta ahora), nadie podía permanecer en cuarentena real. A los humanos del mundo se les recordaba a diario el progreso global (o no) de un virus, varias vacunas y varios sistemas de salud. Como siempre, la arqueología no podía escapar a su presente.

Aquí están mis reflexiones sobre algunos problemas que cruzaron por mi mente durante la época de la "crisis del coronavirus". Reflejan mi perspectiva como arqueólogo que trabaja con futuros del patrimonio, alguien que normalmente viaja mucho por Europa y más allá, pero que ahora se ha quedado en Suecia, trabajando mucho desde casa y, curiosamente, participando aún más en reuniones internacionales que antes, aunque sean virtuales.

Palabras clave: futuros del patrimonio; "crisis del coronavirus"; solidaridad mundial.

In recent months, there has been a plethora of blogs and articles by many global authors on what the pandemic means for particular sections of society, including archaeology and heritage (e.g. COBLEY *et al.*, 2020; IJCP, 2020). ICOMOS (2020) also already published the results of a global survey providing an overview of the situation for cultural heritage worldwide, including, intriguingly, several positive impacts of the pandemic. They include in many cases improved tangible preservation, in other cases an increased interest and engagement in tangible and intangible local heritage strengthening communities, and often also an enhancement of digital accessibility. Although I read what I could, I had no aspiration to ground the following discussion on any kind of solid literature overview and I am not providing comprehensive references either. I did try, however, to put special emphasis on some of those ideas that maybe not too many others raised before me already. I should add at the outset that some of my thoughts have previously been published in a co-authored blog (HOLTORF; BOLIN, 2020), in a journal article (HOLTORF, 2020a) and as a keynote lecture for the European Association of Archaeologists (HOLTORF, 2020b).

HOW DID ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE STUDIES RESPOND TO THE CORONA CRISIS?

Archaeologists, like many other professions, have been thinking through the corona crisis from their own perspectives. Offering historical comparisons and suggesting lessons from the past, some hoped that knowledge of previous pandemics may help us in understanding and addressing the present virus (e.g. LARSEN, 2020, p. 6-15). Pointing out that *Homo sapiens* has always been struggling with infectious diseases, some archaeologists argued that the enormous growth of the human population on earth, coupled with sedentism leading to urbanization, co-existing wild animals, and increasing global mobility made our species more vulnerable to the impact of epidemics and pandemics (e.g. DEMOULE, 2020, see also GAMBLE *et al.*, 2020).

Museums and contemporary archaeologists quickly started documenting the crises and collecting relevant artefacts to capture a record of the pandemic. For example, the Viral Archive (2020) was a collaborative project by Irish and British archaeologists who announced that their “love and value for human spirit in its most creative form in the archaeological record” inspired them “to record the unfolding marks and signs seen during daily exercise”. More ambitiously, an archaeological survey of COVID waste was discussed in relation to environmental pollution and improving associated policy (SCHOFIELD *et al.*, 2021). In another line of research, heritage researchers discussed the emergence of COVID-19 memorials to understand the variety in which people around the world are remembering the covid-dead (SCHMITT; COLOMER, 2021).

Other colleagues have been making theoretical arguments based on political perspectives for the discipline. For example, Shadreck Chirikure (2020, p. 504) used the pandemic to reinforce the call for African archaeology to “shake off its antiquarian ancestry and be more relevant to the present.” By the same token, the members of the Editorial Board of the journal *American Antiquity*, emphasised in an extensive discussion of archaeological perspectives related to COVID-19 their concerns with inequality, social justice, and indigenous rights (GAMBLE *et al.*, 2020). In Heritage Studies, arguments have been made reinforcing the long-standing critique of heritage commodification and associated mass tourism, suggesting instead an emphasis on local approaches defining heritage in terms of “where people live, not where people visit” (e.g. SILBERMAN, 2020, p. 473). Concerning museums in particular, a recent collection of responses to the pandemic emphasised the potential and significance of museums in societies around the world but also their struggles in reaching audiences during the pandemic, leading to a

lack of resources as well as an opportunity to develop digital formats (COBLEY *et al.*, 2020). These discussions often appeared to confirm what archaeologists and heritage experts have already been saying before the pandemic, in other contexts (as my colleague Johan Höglund pointed out in a discussion we had in May 2020). Did the crisis have any genuinely innovative impact on thinking and policy related to archaeology and cultural heritage, reflecting a genuine change of perspectives? I suspect that evidence for that will take more time to emerge.

Thus far, the most original heritage paper I read is Megan Tracy's (2020) contemplations of tastes of the pandemic. Recalling the memory of newly started sourdough and other fermentation projects during the early days of urban shutdowns and quarantines, Tracy considers issues of microbial conservation and heritage. She opens our eyes for the ways in which microbes are cared for, managed, and consumed in particular, often inherited, social contexts, sometimes becoming a particular kind of cultural property. This relates to a micro-biopolitics which judges food practices, like bush meat, and human cohabitation practices with other species including bats who may carry new viruses. Although the absence of taste is a COVID-19 symptom, tastes of the resulting pandemic provide food for thought indeed!

'THE SWEDISH STRATEGY'

I happen currently to be living in Sweden. Early on during the pandemic there was much global discussion, both in the media and in social media, about the merits or otherwise of the so-called 'Swedish strategy' against COVID-19. This discussion was based on the relative soft measures that were taken to fight the virus in Sweden, compared with those of other countries. At the time of writing (May 2021), Sweden still has not had a general lockdown, nightly curfews, or a general requirement to use protective masks in public spaces. This caused disbelief among some commentators about what seemed to be a profoundly irresponsible lack of appropriate action. In one outspoken commentary, the 'Swedish strategy' was described as weeding out the most vulnerable, *i.e.* old and weak people, and explained in relation to a history of eugenics (as mentioned in Eriksen, 2020). According to Eriksen's own analysis, the Swedish state is built on a particular future-oriented perspective based on scientific and technological progress, economic growth, citizen loyalty and an instrumentalist view of society. Consequently, a deep recession and illloyalty with government advice run counter the values and practices of Swedish society (ERIKSEN, 2020). This is his best explanation for the unique Swedish measures to control the pandemic. But the evidence is weak, at least thus far, that the Swedish measures (or lack thereof) made the impact of the pandemic much worse in Sweden than in all those places where stricter measures were imposed. For 2020, we now know that excess mortality in Sweden was in fact less than in most other European countries. But we also know now that collective prejudices about entire nations, based entirely on a perception of difference can come to the fore very quickly, even within Scandinavia.

A few other interesting issues transpired in relation to the Swedish response to COVID-19. Until 2021, there was no law in Sweden that would have allowed the authorities to enforce strict rules to contain a health threat such as a pandemic. The Swedish Parliament had, quite simply, never thought of this potentiality before. This may in parts have been an oversight, which has now been rectified by passing a temporary pandemic law. But it may also reflect the strong belief in Sweden that the state must not unduly limit people's rights and freedoms. Unless Sweden's national security is threatened, there is in fact no emergency legislation available at all. This is something to celebrate and be proud of rather than to condemn and regret.

With rights and freedoms come responsibility. A second issue behind the soft approach taken by the Swedish government is that several areas of policy in Sweden are based on voluntariness and trust rather than enforcement and control. Although there was no lockdown, Sweden had plenty of recommendations and they became increasingly strict as the second and third waves began. Although with time, the newly available laws allowed some measures to be controlled, overall, the experts never grew tired of reminding people of the most important rule to keep their distance. Not everybody followed this advice all the time but overall, it worked. This long-established high trust in the population makes Sweden a country pleasant to live in, because most people tend to be responsible and do the right thing.

Part of the importance of trust is the strong belief in the population as well as in the government, that complex issues like the population's health needs to be governed by experts rather than by politicians. This is another reason why the Swedish response to COVID-19 followed the best scientific advice given by experts in the relevant authorities and was not subjected to much posturing and performances of forceful leadership by government leaders. The price paid for this was not so much in terms of increased casualties to the pandemic (based on evidence available at the time of writing) but psychologically in the way that many observers, even within Sweden, considered the government to be weak and undecisive, thus sowing doubts about its response.

Ultimately, a discussion about "The Swedish Strategy" is a discussion about what kind of state we want to live in and how we want to be governed. Mistakes were made in Sweden too, in particular insofar as the initial preparedness and capacity to deal with a pandemic were low even though its likelihood was known. But overall, I have been happy to be living in Sweden during the pandemic when sensible measures were taken on the advice of experts and largely followed voluntarily by the population so that society could continue to function relatively well under the circumstances, despite some restrictions and some pain.

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

As the virus spread across nations and within societies, some commentators and academics emphasized consistently and forcefully that disadvantaged and marginalized communities were more vulnerable to the pandemic than others (*e.g.* GAMBLE *et al.* 2020, p. 6-7). It is of course correct that not all groups were affected by the virus to the same extent. Some people could not work from home or were living in cramped conditions and therefore more likely to be exposing each other to an infection. Furthermore, pre-existing physical health varies between members of different groups in society and puts some in a worse position to fight off the virus than others. Later during the pandemic, not all countries could afford timely provision of vaccines for their population, and people were therefore protected against the virus at different rates, dependent on where they were based geographically. In some places, the wealthy may have been able to jump the queue too (though not in Sweden).

These asymmetries become significant because of what is precisely the problem with the corona virus. The virus doesn't know who may or may not be fortunate or privileged in society and will try to infect any humans it can reach. In that sense, although men and elderly and obese humans generally appear to have been somewhat more likely to get seriously ill than women and younger and slim people, all humans are *equally* vulnerable to be infected by the virus. That is why Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation, stated rightly that "we're in this together" (cited by Joanna Cobley in COBLEY *et al.*, 2020, p. 113).

There is, therefore, a strong need for solidarity, to see that the effects of any differences in exposure are compensated for in appropriate ways, e. g. through special protection, additional testing, or prioritised vaccination. Since some people have less resources to cover for loss of income, re-organize childcare, or organize school from home, there is a need for a range of social welfare provisions too. The same applies for global measures to minimise differences based on national wealth. But the need for social solidarity, both within and between societies, applies even at all other times and is not in any way distinct to COVID-19. People carrying the corona virus are no more or less privileged and exposed to various kinds of hardship beyond their immediate control than if they had been hit by some other adversity (like job loss, acute injury, or a natural catastrophe). That is why I remain sceptical about the focus on social difference that I heard many times during this pandemic. Emphasizing what separates different groups in society from each other rather than what they share amounts to a we-and-them thinking that makes solidarity between everybody in society — and indeed between all global societies — less rather than more plausible. Encouraging distinctions between “us” and “them” risks stimulating emotions like envy or pity but not necessarily empathy and a sense of social or global cohesion which is what I believe would be needed first and foremost.

Cultural heritage has in recent years been interpreted increasingly as a marker and manifestation of cultural diversity along ethnic lines (HOLTORF, 2017). But any kind of underlying “tribalism” is problematic as it foregrounds differences between people. A tribal concept of identity reduces personal identity to one single affiliation, often based on a perceived religious, racial, ethnic, or national essence that determines everybody’s fundamental allegiance for which it is worth to fight — and to die (MAALOUF, 2012). A global pandemic demonstrates in my eyes our panhuman likeness much more than the differences between people living in different circumstances. We need to see the enormous amount we share with each other before we see the differences that exist on a lower level. Genetically, all humans are practically identical and for the virus there appears to be (based on current knowledge) no discernible difference between different humans, other than in terms of age, certain underlying health conditions, and to some extent sex.

AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS CHANGING EVERYTHING?

Many observers asserted in recent months that there will forever be a time before the pandemic and one after that. Initially, it seemed ironic that our book *Cultural Heritage and the Future* (HOLTORF; HÖGBERG, 2021a) was published right in the middle of the pandemic, too late for it to have any impact on the content. But maybe in the long run, when the global situation has normalised again, this may not be seen as very significant at all. Although the time of the pandemic was a unique experience, I am not sure the long-term effects will be very dramatic, neither in terms of lives lost (compared with ordinary rates of mortality) nor economically or in many other respects. Yes, digital meetings and working from home may have become regular features of many people’s lives years faster than would otherwise have happened.

Having said that, what I am hoping for is that the pandemic may cause us to rethink some of our priorities in life. I have not heard many leaders referring to it but suspect that many individuals were giving some thought to questions such as these:

- What is most important in life and which values do we live by?
- How versed are we in ethical decision-making in our daily lives?
- In particular, how do we perceive the elderly, and can we take better care of them?
- Are our politicians always sufficiently prioritizing the welfare of their citizens?

Unfortunately, too much of the public discussion in 2021, at least in Sweden, was about playing the blaming game among politicians while the really profound questions, like those I just listed, were hardly raised. Some valuable opportunities appear to be lost already. But I do believe that the humanities, including archaeology, have a particular capability, and indeed responsibility, to raise fundamental questions about what it means to be human, how human lives should be governed, and generally what we should expect from each other during the short period while we are alive in the universe. This relates to Richard Sandford's (2020) contemplation whether the legacy of COVID-19 might be "a new sense of ourselves as moral actors," drawing, among others, on the heritage sector's values of care and stewardship, and thereby contributing to making future societies more sustainable.

Overall, the reaction of the cultural sector to COVID-19 was disappointing. Much attention was given to two aspects in particular (e.g. VRDOLJAK; BAUER, 2020; SARAH MAY *pers. comm.*, 2020). Firstly, cultural expressions provided much needed joy, relief, and escape during people confined to their homes, e.g. through the memorable concerts performed from balconies or through the sky-rocketing sales of digital entertainment. Secondly, the arts and culture sector was seen as particularly suffering economically because of the many closed facilities and cancelled events. What did not happen, however, was the cultural sector insisting that culture could—better than most other sectors and particularly in situations like the present crisis—make profound contributions to the fabric of society and address questions about values and meaning in life. The cultural sector at large did not cease the opportunity to provoking conversations and reflections directly relevant to the many deep concerns which were raised by COVID-19 and the various national and global responses to it.

One particular interesting contribution to an emerging discussion within the humanities about the significance of culture in relation to the pandemic is Astrid Erll's (2020) discussion of how it related to lived patterns of time and collective memory. Despite films like *Pandemic* (2016), the course of the pandemic and its impact was insufficiently anticipated, by politicians and citizens alike, because the Spanish Flu of 1918/19 had not entered the collective cultural memory in any significant way. Unprepared as we all were, COVID-19 came to challenge directly the rhythms of daily lives, affecting work, childcare, family visits and leisure activities. As Erll illustrated, the pandemic thus related directly to the cultural routines and the anticipated patterns and values in human living. Although everybody experienced some of these challenges, cultural patterns only peripherally informed the public discussions during the past one and a half years—with nearly all the focus on issues relating to the health sector, the economy, and relevant governance.

As I see it, we must recognise that notions of geographically delimited cultures and exclusive cultural heritage can stand in the way of promoting the kind of global international collaboration, solidarity, and trust we should like to see in the future. The UNESCO World Heritage may originally have been conceived with addressing this in mind. It turned out to have become yet another global playing field of the nations' dominance and a quest for national (and to some extent regional) pride, prestige, and profit. I have therefore begun to think whether a new kind of world heritage may be needed to meet the original aspirations. Some initial ideas in that direction were expressed in our blog (HOLTORF; BOLIN, 2020) where we asked whether it may be time to start identifying and promoting a new kind of world heritage, one that is not employed to bolster national pride and generate financial benefits for a limited group. Indeed, we might all be better served by a world heritage that reaffirms the many interconnections

and common interests between all humans. What that may mean exactly, is a question I hope to return to in another paper soon.

LET'S TAKE THE FUTURE SERIOUSLY

In my keynote lecture from August 2020 on post-corona archaeology (HOLTORF, 2020b), I mentioned several dimensions in which archaeologists could make a difference to society in the light of the pandemic. One is to start thinking already now what other anticipated process or event archaeology could address with human wellbeing in mind. I was arguing that archaeologists should systematically concern themselves with the likely needs of future generations and formulated this first lesson for a post-corona archaeology: Let's take the future seriously and do our best to ensure that archaeology actually contributes to sustainable development that will benefit future generations in concrete ways. But can we really know the needs of future generations?

Let's not forget that the risk of a new virus pandemic was well known in general terms, years before COVID-19. The most important thing to learn from the corona crisis is maybe to consider carefully which other significant challenges we can anticipate. Even though our societies and even our individual lives were affected a great deal and it seemed that the future might never be the same, the corona crisis has not really affected how we should look at many fundamental trends for the next 30-60 years. Technical progress concerning, for example, digital communication tools will persist or even accelerate, as will the global economy albeit perhaps in slightly modified form. Demographic trends as to population sizes in various world regions, people's life expectancies and health, patterns of urbanisation and migration are all likely to continue. It goes without saying that climate change will hardly stop now either. The goals of the Agenda 2030 will, even in the post-corona period, still stand as desirable aims to work for.

As for concrete risks humanity is faced with during the coming decades, it is informative to consult the bestselling account of the state of the world, entitled *Factfulness*, by Hans Rosling, with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund, published in 2018. Two years before COVID-19 hit the world, they pointed to five global risks the world should worry about (ROSLING, 2018, p. 237-40):

1. Global Pandemic (!)
2. Financial Collapse, possibly worse than the financial crisis in 2008
3. World War III
4. Climate Change
5. Extreme Poverty, causing health threats (like Ebola) and fuelling civil wars and terrorism

These risks we all recognise. We are in the middle of a pandemic. We already lived through a financial crisis a decade ago. We are aware of emerging nuclear capabilities in countries like Iran and North Korea, and many remember the Cold War. The climate emergency is almost daily news. Reducing extreme poverty is the first goal of the UN Agenda 2030.

Seldom have the relations between present and future societies felt more relevant than during the years when the corona crisis dominated our lives. There is a real prospect that the world of the next generation is one in which basic human rights are compromised more often, in which foreigners are met with suspicion rather than trust, in which increasingly local solutions are sought for global challenges, and in which societal resilience is built through achieving self-reliance rather than extended global solidarity.

But what, if anything, may archaeology be able to provide to reduce these specific risks or meet any of the underlying challenges? Archaeology can make important

contributions to providing relevant perspectives on human history, global heritage, and the value of international collaboration that can frame our thinking in addressing the challenges humanity faces and thus contribute to sustainable global development mitigating risks.

TOWARDS MORE GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The pandemic clearly demonstrated a need for enhanced global solidarity and international collaboration. It has been disheartening to see how peoples' sentiments in many countries turned inward rather than outward. Politicians talked about increasing economic self-reliance, put blame on other countries and placed the needs of their own populations over those of others. Many borders have been closed, even within Europe. Within Sweden, people from certain regions were on occasions no longer welcome as visitors for fear of bringing the virus with them.

As I said in my lecture, archaeology can contribute to promoting a culture of peace and understanding between the citizens of the world. One avenue to achieve that is through communication and collaboration between the many thousand archaeological professionals, practicing inclusiveness and curiosity about each other. Arguably, there is a need to capitalize even more on the many international contacts that already exist across global archaeology. I therefore proposed a second lesson for post-corona archaeology: Let's realise more often the value of culture, cultural heritage, and archaeological practice in being inclusive and bring people together, promoting peace among humans both in society and between societies. As it happens, this connects well with the agenda proposed by Hans Rosling and his co-authors (2018, p. 239) who suggested the following to counteract the risk of World War III: "We need Olympic Games, international trade, educations exchange programs, free internet—anything that lets us meet across ethnic groups and country borders."

I also mentioned in the lecture something else that is important in this context. Maybe, sometimes in archaeology, we have been overstating the value of emphasizing differences and recognizing diversity. Maybe the time has come to focus more on what people have been sharing with each other, how they have been collaborating, and in what ways we are all equal. A third lesson for a post-corona archaeology was consequently this: Let's go beyond the notion of cultural diversity and focus on what people shared and indeed share, promoting trust, solidarity, and collaboration between human beings on this planet (see Box).

Box: A global vision for culture

We need a vision of the future that appreciates the full potential of culture to address global crises. What makes us all most resilient, as human beings on this planet, is a culture (in the singular) of global peace, open dialogue, mutual understanding, and continuous collaboration. That is the culture that can bring us together and give us hope. There is a real risk that the world of the future is one in which increasingly local solutions are sought for challenges that remain global, in which suspicion spreads rather than trust, and in which resilience is built through achieving self-sufficiency rather than extensive solidarity.

In the light of the global spread and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is time to remind ourselves once more of the interdependences between all the people and communities on this planet. We are all part of an interconnected humanity. The pandemic has demonstrated a strong need for global solidarity and cooperation. As the virus spreads across the world's societies, many have realized the benefits of a speedy global exchange of accurate information, of mutual support and solidarity between people to address everybody's needs, and not the least of joint strategies of medical research and the development of a safe vaccine.

Over the years and decades to come, we can expect many other kinds of crises when similar collaboration will be important. The greatest crisis facing Homo sapiens as a collective—the climate crisis—is already here and demanding extensive global cooperation in response. Such cooperation has, to date, eluded us, in part because of the elongated timescale of climate change's effects and in part because of the perceived uneven burden placed on countries with fewer resources or less wealthy populations. We see arguments about the degree of urgency compared with other political priorities and about a fair system of distributing costs and responsibility in the world. In this respect, perhaps the demands of the response to Covid-19 can provide us with a roadmap for responding to even larger challenges: the need for collaboration and viewing all of our fates as intertwined, at the very least; the establishment of new routes for cooperation and information sharing; and openness to drastic but effective methodologies for mitigating large risks.

Impediments to cooperation, including failing to recognize the essential interdependence of human societies, have major impacts on our ability to work together to face the collective challenge of Covid-19—and other challenges to come. At the same time, the moment of crisis affords us an opportunity to think deliberately about how to respond to such situations, both with immediacy and in the future.

(slightly edited from HOLTORF; BOLIN, 2020).

Archaeologists could be telling a story of the many human beings that in a variety of global conditions led their lives together with other human beings, going through a variety of hardships but also accomplishing many feats. In this way, we would be able to share and celebrate commonalities in individuals' lives, past and present. Recalling the various challenges and achievements in making a living, bringing up a family, and conducting meaningful lives, we can come to realise that humans on this planet share a lot more than what divides them (HOLTORF, 2017, p. 10).

FOCUSSING ON THE ELDERLY

To these points I now would wish to add a fourth one. When COVID-19 hit our societies, I was struck, like many others, how poorly the elderly were protected from being infected, especially those living in care homes. Over many years, the Swedish system of care for the elderly had been driven by cost-effectiveness and also provided poor conditions for many of those employed in the care sector. The elderly appear to have been marginalized in Swedish society for far too long. They don't play many important social roles except, possibly, as loved grandparents and valuable customers. Many are living alone.

In archaeology and cultural heritage, too, much of the emphasis in education and engagement is directed at children and young people, whereas few initiatives are directed at the elderly. The point is not that elderly people would need to be equipped in various ways for their lives ahead, as children are, but rather that archaeology and heritage have the capability to contribute to everybody's quality of life and indeed facilitate learning between generations. Cultural heritage is a field in which older individuals are not only often interested but, at the end of a long life, also knowledgeable. People beyond retirement age also tend to have interesting life stories which they are keen to tell. This provides opportunities for meetings that can have many other benefits in society too.

A recent topical study (CORTELLESI *et al.*, 2018) pointed to several benefits of intergenerational learning for overcoming age segregation, improved age integration, and social cohesion and wellbeing. This is of particular significance in societies like Swedish society, where age groups are often isolated in same-age institutions (*e.g.* daycare, care homes), the population is gradually aging, and there is high cultural diversity in society. The advantages of improving the integration of older people into cultural heritage initiatives are thus benefitting all of society:

“By bringing young children and old people together to explore memories, experiences, and traditions, cultural heritage lives in the present and is constantly re-imagined and made relevant to diverse and fast-changing societies.” (CORTELLESI *et al.*, 2018, p. 430).

Increasing the significance of working with the elderly in society might be one worthwhile outcome of the pandemic, reflecting values of care and wellbeing—not only for individuals but also for society as a whole (SANDFORD, 2020).

NEVER WASTE A GOOD CRISIS!

What are archaeologists and others to take with them from the experiences of the pandemic? In daily life, we are likely to have more meetings with each other via Zoom and similar apps in the future, which can make some meetings more efficient and make participation across large distances so much easier.

There are also a few general lessons we can all take with us as societies are embarking on creating the 'new normal' in a post-pandemic world. As I discussed earlier, it is important to anticipate what lies ahead so as to be able to take better decisions now that will benefit people in the future. This applies in the world at large as much as concerning archaeology and cultural heritage (HOLTORF; HÖGBERG, 2021a). The benefits of foresight are being recognised widely and already addressed in the light of the pandemic by bodies such as the OECD (2020). As the biggest challenges and risks humans face are global, we need to extend global thinking and worldwide collaboration wherever we can, strengthening mutual understanding and solidarity across the planet. What many voices don't tend to mention is that in all questions involving human beings (and which questions don't?) we need to recognise the significance of culture, beyond merely its uses

for creating jobs and providing occasional entertainment. I suggested earlier that this may also be time to rethink the way we treat and care for the elderly.

But what are we all to make of the recent surge of national symbolism, when, for example, various kings and queens were addressing “their people” primetime in front of the respective national flag? What should we make of a long list of democratic governments around the world suspending civil and human rights and limiting parliamentary control? Or of politicians in many countries talking about a need to increase national self-sufficiency, with some making xenophobic or racist comments in this context? Archaeologists are well acquainted with the strong historical links of their discipline to National Romanticism, nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, racism, and indeed communism. Are there dangerous ideas in present-day societies that came to the fore during the pandemic and that deserve our critical attention now? Did COVID-19 bring about its very own set of populist strategies that rejected scientific knowledge, experts and the uncompromised respect for human rights and freedoms?

The pandemic and the measures taken to control its consequences, demonstrated that global societies are able to implement drastic changes affecting many aspects of human lives within a few months. We have all become aware that comprehensive change is possible provided it is considered necessary and urgent! Although from an archaeological perspective that is hardly surprising and thorough transformations of living conditions happened many times before along the human journey over the past few hundred thousands of years, the speed, scope and scale of changes due to COVID-19 was nevertheless very unusual. At the same time, we also learned that these changes, although in many cases causing extended suffering, did not lead to major resistance, general uprisings or even a collapse of society and governance anywhere. Although there were protests against specific measures taken by various governments, overall humans proved to be resilient and able to adapt to changes that they comprehend and accept as part of their realities. These are lessons that will have significance for necessary future change addressing other crises too, not the least because they are now fresh in human minds (see also HOLTORF, 2018).

Others have discussed a number of further lessons for archaeology and heritage studies that I find relevant and interesting. Peter Gould (2020, p. 26) identified a need to “re-engineer the discipline” of professional archaeology and heritage management to be more resilient and less vulnerable to crises. He also argued for more efforts to earn their keep in society, “reimagining the relevance of archaeology and heritage” for our age, when conditions and expectations may change (as they partially did during the pandemic). This includes in particular seeing opportunities in emerging technical innovations. As Gould (2020) observed: “Grandmothers are now fluent in Zoom and Skype. Children are attending virtual kindergartens and graduating from college online.” (GOULD, 2020, p. 32).

The appreciation and significance of heritage in society may change in future societies too. As De Luca *et al.* (2020) argued, COVID-19 has been revealing the crucial role of local natural and cultural heritage in rural communities (see also SILBERMAN, 2020). During the pandemic, heritage has been instrumental in rural areas for creating not only local development but also wellbeing, social cohesion, and resilience. They discuss the possibility that these factors and the perceived overall higher quality of life in rural areas, if combined with the opportunity to work from home using fast and reliable internet connections, may lead to a post-pandemic trend of rural regeneration and repopulation—with an associated risk of this “renaissance of rural areas” leading to unexpected rural gentrification (DE LUCA *et al.*, 2020, p. 127-30).

CONCLUSION: SO MANY QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

There may be larger transformations in society resulting from the pandemic too. I enjoyed during the past year attending some of the numerous topical seminars and reading texts speculating about such possibilities. For example, John Danaher (2020) asked on his blog whether COVID-19 will spark a moral revolution. His concerns encompass intriguing questions such as these:

- Adopting a hyper-utilitarian social ethic, are we going to classify sectors and people based on the extent to which they do work that is “essential” for society?
- Given the amount of unnecessary work being conducted in society, may there be a new discussion of reduced weekly working hours?
- Did the various government payments to support people in financial need in practice lead to something close to a guaranteed universal basic income for all citizens?
- Is there a risk that the widely perceived need to fight the pandemic through increased surveillance and control of various restrictions imposed on people will result in a loss of privacy?
- Given that the corona virus probably spread from animals to humans, will we reconsider our relations with animals in agriculture and the need to maintain natural habitats for wild species where they can thrive at a distance from human populations (see also HOLTORF; BOLIN, 2020)?

Nicklas Larsen (2020, p. 76-7) and his co-authors from the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies addressed a number of further issues, no less intriguing and relevant:

- Will universities be replaced by on demand online education?
- Will remote work make our geographic location irrelevant?
- Will the shift from reactive to preventive healthcare accelerate along with self-monitoring health?
- Are new forms of greetings like bowing or touching elbows going to replace the handshake for good?
- Can new technology such as virtual reality provide solutions for digital relationships and substitute for physical engagement when it is not possible in real life?

This is quite clearly a time for innovation and alternative futures, seizing opportunities, embracing emergence, and turn uncertainty into an asset rather than a risk (LARSEN, 2020, p. 80). In order to achieve this, we are advised that we need three key skills (LARSEN, 2020, p. 82):

1. Narrative capacity: the ability to tell stories that make sense of the future.
2. Collective intelligence: the ability to map out potential avenues of change.
3. Reframing capacity: the ability to imagine and make sense of different futures.

This is the agenda of ‘futures literacy’ which is of significance for archaeology and cultural heritage too. As we argued elsewhere, “[t]oday’s heritage practitioners need the ability to understand and navigate in a world of uncertainty and fast change” and there is thus a “need to build global capacity for future thinking among professionals, both in heritage studies and in heritage management” (HOLTORF; HÖGBERG, 2021b).

The post-pandemic period may be the time to reconsider in fundamental terms what it means to be a human being now and in the future. Post-corona, as pre-corona, there are grand human questions to be answered: of identity and belonging, well-being, interhuman relations, values and priorities in life. All these issues affect how we perceive who we are ourselves and who ‘the others’ are, what we expect and appreciate in our lives, and how we treat each other. After the pandemic, how do we want to live on this

planet, together with each other as well as with the many non-human occupants? What might a stronger focus on care and wellbeing entail in practice (see also SANDFORD, 2020)?

All these are interesting and important issues which I am sure archaeologists, heritage scholars and others will be discussing for many years ahead—and so they should.

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