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2030

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Preface

by Sarah Orlando

At the time of writing, due to COVID-19, an unprecedented health, economic and social crisis is continuing to threaten lives and livelihoods, making the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals even more challenging. Due to the pandemic, existing inequalities and injustices have been exacerbated, especially at the expenses of the most vulnerable – including those employed in the informal economy, older people, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, migrants and refugees.

Despite writing from the privileged observatory of Beijing, one of the safest cities in which to pass the pandemic due to China's strong protective measures, it is very clear and painful to see how most of the world is still fighting to keep COVID-19 at bay (the latest devastating cases being India and Brazil).

Lots of vaccination plans have been rolled out in many countries and the situation has indeed brought to the international stage an even more important discussion on global healthcare and health poverty.

Being too early to debate this extremely crucial issue, still under the scrutiny of scientists and governments alike, we have decided not to deal with it in the present issue, saving the topic for a stage when a more critical discussion will be possible.

Creativity 2030 Journal (C2030) is a journal launched by the International Centre for Creativity and Sustainable Development (ICCSA) under the auspices of UNESCO, an editorial venture to promote the achievements of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through creativity.

Due to the pandemic, the 2030 Agenda took a strong hit in this past year, and many areas of intervention need an even more urgent collective attention and response.

It is for this reason that we chose to focus this issue of C2030 on Goal #1: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere".

Eradicating poverty in all its forms remains one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. This was in fact the first concern when the SDGs were laid out in the UN Agenda in 2017, and poverty is the target that, already off-track before COVID-19 hit, has been most significantly exacerbated by the pandemic: "COVID-19 has caused the first

increase in global poverty in decades" stated The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 (SDG Report 2020).

More than 700 million people, or 10 per cent of the world's population, still live in extreme poverty, struggling to fulfil the most basic needs like health, education, and access to water and sanitation, to name a few. The majority of people living on less than USD1.90 a day live in sub-Saharan Africa. Worldwide, the poverty rate in rural areas is 17.2 per cent—more than three times higher than in urban areas.

While the number of people living in extreme poverty dropped by more than half in the last 30 years, new research published by the UN World Institute for Development Economics Research warns that the economic fallout from the pandemic

could increase global poverty by as much as half a billion people: it would be the first time that poverty has increased globally since 1990. The pandemic has in effect cancelled years of efforts and undermined the impact of strategies to be rolled out in the forthcoming 10 year "Decade of

Action".

Poverty has many dimensions, but its causes include unemployment, social exclusion, and high vulnerability of certain populations to disasters, diseases and other phenomena which prevent them from being productive.

Natural disasters – which we will keep experiencing due to the climate emergency – exacerbate poverty, and in 2018 alone they have caused direct economic losses amounting to USD 23.6 billion in 63 countries. To be sure, the environmental migrants featured in the long-term photographic project started by Alessandro Grassani in 2011 which we have portrayed in the section Visualize Me, are destined to represent earth's next humanitarian emergency.

According to the SDG Report 2020, using the words of Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, "Forecasts indicate that the pandemic will push 71 million people back into extreme poverty in 2020, in what would be the first rise in global poverty since 1998. [...] Older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees are more likely to experience severe effects from COVID-19 due to their

specific health and socioeconomic circumstances. Similarly, the pandemic is taking a toll on the world's women and children."

Ensuring social protection of all, especially vulnerable groups, is critical to the mission of reducing poverty. Nonetheless, more than half of the world's population (4 billion people in 2016) are still not benefiting from any form of social protection, many of whom are workers in the informal economy whose incomes dropped by 60 per cent during the first months of the crisis.

And this phenomenon does not only concern vulnerable groups in developing countries: according to a recent report by the International Labour Organization, working poverty also affects digital workers who often do not have access to social protection (which has been particularly concerning during the pandemic).

The pandemic has also turned back decades of progress in gender equity: if it is true that the gender gap in working poverty had almost been bridged, evidence is emerging that women are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic. This is why we have decided to deal with an issue strictly connected to poverty and gender equity: period poverty.

The disparity of treatment for different age groups is also increasing: since the pandemic, young workers are exposed to poverty more systematically than older adults.

An important angle fostered by COVID-19 that we have tried to portray in this issue of the Journal is the importance of and need for data and data innovation, a key topic also raised in the SDG Report 2020, stating that "data are critical in understanding, managing and mitigating the human, social and economic effects of the pandemic. They are also essential for designing short-term responses and accelerated actions to put countries back on track to achieve the SDGs." For this reason, as examples of data innovation, we have picked among selected case studies Novissi, an experiment implemented by Togo for its integration of geospatial and statistical information, and the Building Blocks project by the World Food Programme, for its

innovative use of blockchain in the aid of refugees fighting hunger issues (among others).

There is another important aspect: the definition of poverty.

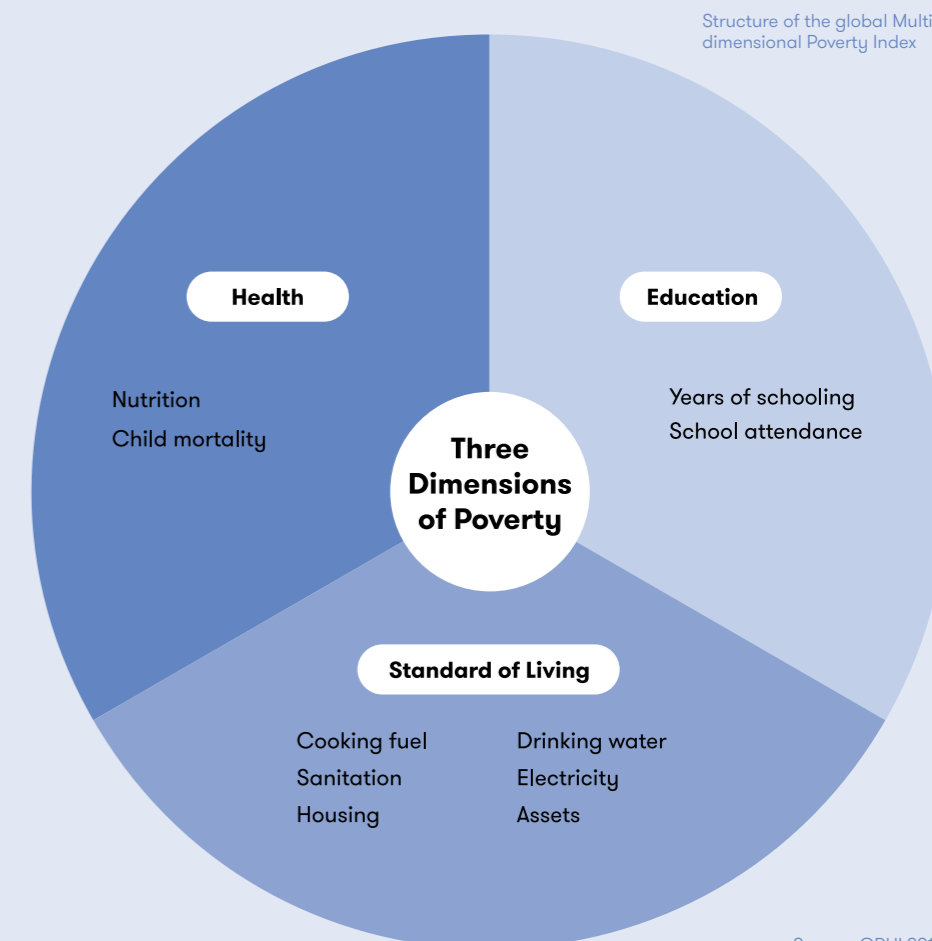
Although previously defined only in monetary terms (USD1.90 a day is the international poverty rate), in selecting the contributions to this issue we have chosen to take into consideration the global Multi Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

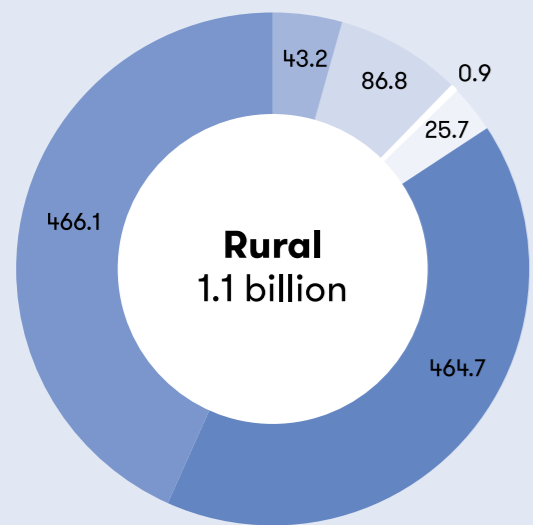
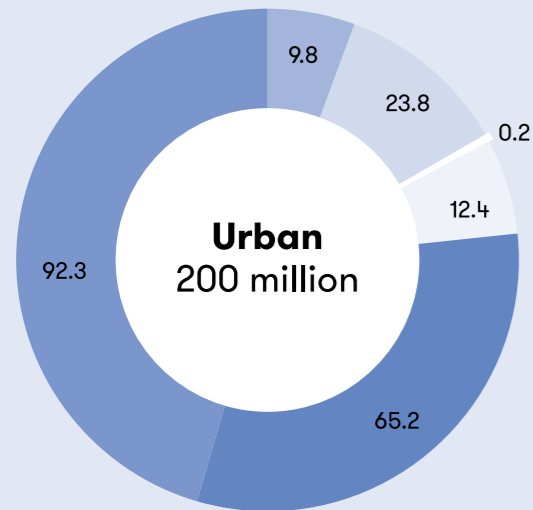
Launched in 2010 by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford and the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme, the MPI measures the complexities of poor people's lives, individually and

collectively, each year, examining each person's deprivations in three equally weighted dimensions— health, education and standard of living, and offering a high-resolution lens to identify both who is poor and how they are poor.

The 2020 MPI Report's key findings show how across 107 developing countries, 1.3 billion people — 22 percent — live in multidimensional poverty. Half are children under the age of 18 (644 million): one in three children is poor compared with one in

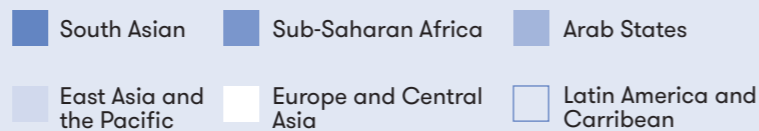
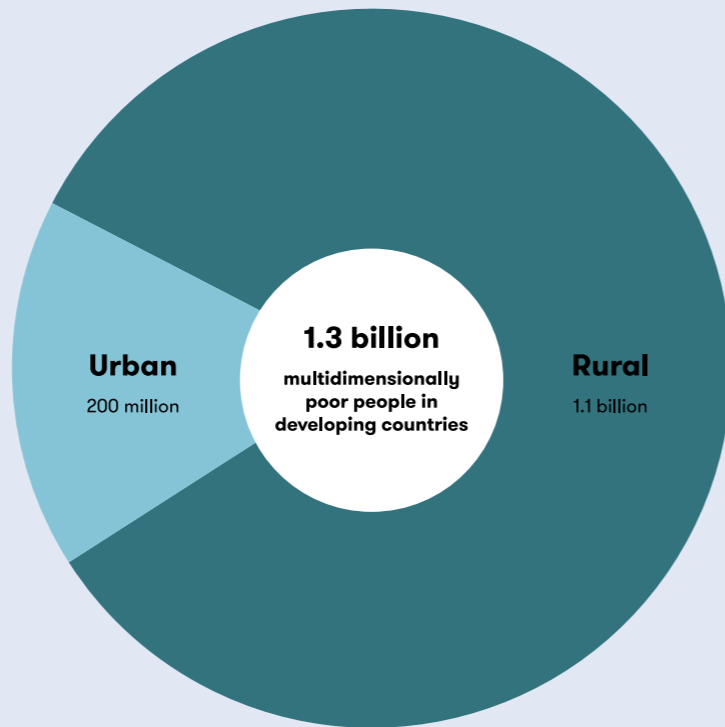
MORE THAN 700 MILLION PEOPLE, OR 10 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, STILL LIVE IN EXTREME POVERTY





Of the 1.3 billion multidimensionally poor people worldwide, 84.2 percent live in rural areas. Population in multidimensional poverty (millions, unless otherwise specified)

Note: Aggregates include 106 countries. Seychelles is excluded because disaggregated data by urban-rural area were not available.
Source: Human Development Report Office calculations.



six adults. 107 million multidimensionally poor people are aged 60 or above — a particularly important figure during the pandemic as older people are more seriously affected by the infectious disease. About 84.3 percent of multidimensionally poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa (558 million) and South Asia (530 million). Ten countries, including China, came close to halving their MPI value. The “MPI shows that 65 of the 75 countries studied reduced their poverty levels significantly within the last decade” underline Santos and Alkire in their article in The Big Picture section.

Furthermore, of the 1.3 billion multidimensionally poor people worldwide, 84.2 percent live in rural areas and are thus more vulnerable to environmental threats.

In this issue of C2030, we have tried to tackle rural and urban poverty alike, being urban poverty a topic that will become more and more relevant in the future, as people swell city populations.

Most of the articles chosen for this issue deal with critical thinking on actual poverty alleviation experiences, local communities’ empowerment

developmental projects, or highly innovative digitally driven applications and attempts that would drive the debate and possibly practical solutions in the decade ahead.

Year 2020 was many things, but it was also an important milestone for China: the year the population billionaire eliminated absolute poverty. Many contributions in China Logs are focused on showing impactful actions and projects aimed at targeting poverty alleviation. “Poverty reduction has stimulated overall development of China’s rural areas” as stated in a White Paper released by the State Council Information Office in April. Some of the fundamental case studies we have selected deal precisely with the question of rural poverty.

Finally, a striking image has steered us in guiding this issue of our journal towards publication: inequality. Borrowing the words of United Nations Secretary General António Guterres: “While we are all floating on the same sea, it’s clear that some are in superyachts while others are clinging to the drifting debris.”



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Creativity 2030 创意2030特辑

PRODUCER 出品方

International Center for Creativity and Sustainable Development under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2)
联合国教科文组织国际创意与可持续发展中心



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Graphic Design 平面设计

LAVA Beijing LAVA北京

lavabeijing.com

Translations 翻译

Today Translation (Beijing)

北京今日华美翻译有限公司

Editorial Supervisor 编审

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Cesamedia International

Advertising (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.

祺山广告传媒(上海)有限公司

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The Big Picture

大背景

Eco-Civilization and the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Hans d'Orville and Mehri Madarshahi

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced a reflection of the world's geopolitical future, including global collaboration, global governance, globalization, science, technology, research, and ultimately multilateralism in all its forms. Beyond, we are pressed to reflect about our relationship with nature and all planetary resources and ecosystems. The COVID-19 crisis has brought to the fore how societies, economies and human wellbeing are affected by the destruction of nature and how fragile these linkages are.

Has our broken relationship with nature led to a pandemic like COVID-19? We have encroached on our planet by eliminating our forests to enlarge our food productions, by ignoring the ecosystem of the earth and drilling for more petroleum, coals and other harmful substances, by polluting our waters and our air and by destroying habitats leading to the extinction of species. Over-population and the necessity to house people and fight hunger and poverty have led us to increasing physical closeness and contact between humans, livestock and wildlife. As a result, humans became exposed to animal pathogens which led to several emerging zoonotic diseases.

The COVID-19 pandemic was superimposed on already unresolved societal tensions. The world was already facing a looming environmental and a climate crisis, it was battling with food and water shortages, energy volatility, natural disasters, economic downturns, massive unemployment and financial uncertainties and was surely unprepared to battle the emergence of such a major global health crisis.

Unlike the two previous global recessions in this century, COVID-19 implies a supply shock as well as a demand shock. Indeed, COVID-19 is the sixth pandemic that has arisen over the past century (measles, different types of influenza/flu, SARS, Ebola and MERS) and it demonstrates that such crises are becoming more complex in a globally interdependent and increasingly fragmented world.

Globalization has reached a crossroads. While it is true that globalization has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, it has also led to



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We are on the threshold of a new revolution, the eco-civilization (r)evolution

significant inequality and now untold suffering and numbers of deaths due to the new infections.

The pandemic has shown the importance of being prepared when crises hit. It has also shown that postponing bold decisions can have huge costs. As it became obvious, there was scant preparation for such a massive health crisis. A parallel could be drawn with the absence of proper preparations in dealing with challenges such as warming up the climate above 2 degrees Celsius, biodiversity collapse, excessive air pollution, and ocean acidification.

The Chinese concept of ecological civilization (or: eco-civilization) could provide one direction for a way forward. This concept is quite similar to the notion of ecologically sustainable development that is a key element in UN resolutions and programmes since many decades. Both formulations refer to the fact that human use of the Earth's natural resources must be within the physical carrying capacity of the environment and its long-term sustainability.

Eco-civilization refers to a society that enshrines as its core aspiration the pursuit of a form of sustainable development emphasizing the harmonious co-existence of humans with their surrounding ecosystems. China has included this concept into its Constitution. Yet, its implementation must be enhanced not only

in China but in all other countries and societies as a whole.

The new pandemic has underlined how critically important the practice of eco-civilization is for the future of humanity, by striving for harmony between human beings and nature. New approaches are required as the precepts of global collaboration, solidarity and trust are not being applied. At its core, eco-civilization attaches intrinsic value to all living things and the ecosystems that support them - irrespective of their usefulness or importance to human beings. All people and nations must strive to live in harmony with each other AND with nature and the life-supporting eco-systems. Today's ecological crisis is rooted in our civilisations and exhibits a more profound human crisis. Humans must regard themselves as but one part of the living organism that is planet Earth, suffering as it does from ecological stresses and strains across.

Eco-civilization presupposes that economic and social development can be advanced in a manner that protects the natural environment rather than destroying it. Eco-civilization means total transition with coherent choices - moving towards a circular economy and a sharing society. Eco-civilization seeks to induce a change in consumption and production patterns and to take advantage of science and technology innovation affecting

ecology and the environment. Revolutions in digital technology, communications, and energy have been fueling the industrial revolution 4.0 with its comprehensive digitization, the internet of things, use of big data and recourse to robotics and artificial intelligence. These could bring about technological and economic advances and reshape fundamentally our thinking and actions. This new approach seeks to integrate economic, ecological, environmental and social needs in a holistic manner. We are on the threshold of a new revolution, the eco-civilization (r)evolution.

The pandemic presents an opportunity for change, if we design a recovery that heals our relationship with nature. It is virtually unthinkable to go back to people's behaviour or activities of the pre-pandemic "normal". Mere adjustments will not suffice. The problem is systemic. Ecological transition and social equality are at the core of an economic restart in order to

UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND COORDINATED ACTIONS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR ECO-CIVILIZATION DEVELOPMENT.

reinforce the global resilience to health and climatic threats.

The current pandemic has shown that we can be more frugal in our consumption patterns, to be better aligned with environmental goals. It has helped to put a temporary break on CO₂ emissions, along with a reduction of air pollutants from transportation and industrial activity. Governments have now a unique chance to opt for a green and inclusive recovery that they must seize - a recovery that not only provides income and new jobs, but also has broader goals for well-being at its core, integrates strong climate and biodiversity action, and builds resilience. Stimulus packages need to be enhanced with punitive measures aligned with ambitious policies to

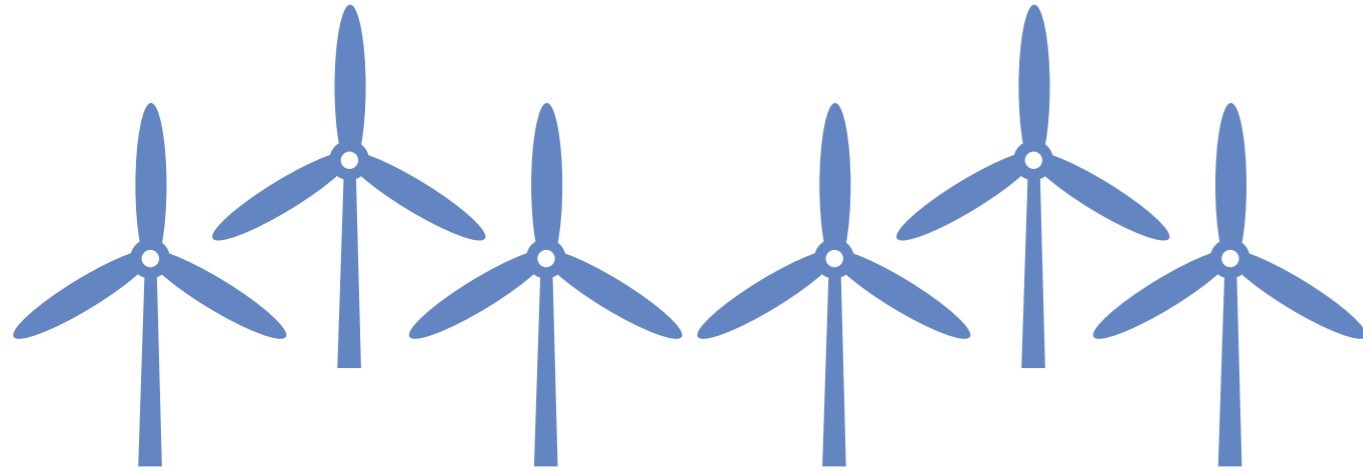
tackle climate change and environmental degradation. Such an approach can deliver win-win-win policies for people, planet and prosperity.

Unity of knowledge and coordinated actions are essential for eco-civilization development. Green development is a crucial part of it, so as to attain the foundation for harmony between humanity and nature. To this end, we must continue to uphold and strengthen international cooperation, especially in the ecological and environmental fields. We must work towards an evolving global green development alliance. We must align all our activities with the UN's 17 sustainable development goals, and demonstrate how no individual, no community, no city, no country and no continent can and should be left behind. Yet, the pandemic has shown how countries and communities are sliding backward - and suffer seriously in terms of human and economic costs.

The objective of green transformation and transition predicates harmony between the economy and society driven by the quest for sustainability across the entire development spectrum. It must be inspired by a set of universally shared values that is imparted from birth to pre-school age and preserved and refined through life-long learning through education and creation of societal awareness. People must learn to respect each other, seek common ground in the face of planetary threats and live in harmony.

Green growth is promoting economic development and human wellbeing without degrading nature. Green growth recognizes that nature and the quality of environment are critical to economic wellbeing and social progress. Green economy requires decoupling growth from the depletion of nature. This may require investing in protecting, restoring, and sustainably managing ecosystems so as to ensure their full potential to





contribute benefits to people. When successful, green growth produces economic opportunities and benefits to people while maintaining and improving natural capital on which current and future human prosperity depends.

Rather than viewing environment and economic development as competing goals, green stimulus must consider them as complementary and supportive of one another. For example, in restoration of degraded ecosystems such as forests or coastal and agricultural ecosystems one can generate near-term employment and income while at the same time contributing to longer-term economic development and environmental sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic is susceptible to green stimulus, in both the scale of investment needed to reignite the global economy and the need to transform to environmentally sustainable economies through an inclusive, low-carbon emission and resilient recovery, buttressed by cultural considerations.

Global solidarity is of paramount importance, as we cannot defeat the pandemic with a divided world. We must seize the opportunity to forge a common future that belongs to all – irrespective of age, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity. Protecting the planet is the most important inter-generational responsibility we have today.

A global ecological or biodiversity collapse will have immeasurable and irreparable consequences. To prevent this from happening, we need to reset our life in a way that benefits the planet as a whole. We must promote a planetary conscience and mindset.

As a basic step in global cooperation, all stakeholder ought to share best practices, inventions, innovations and incubation

GREEN TRANSFORMATION AND TRANSITION PREDICATES HARMONY BETWEEN THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

approaches. In this way, challenges and opportunities can be linked together. We need to build the foundations for a new, stable and resilient normalcy. This requires research, the sharing of knowledge, the joint building of capacities, the conclusion of national and international partnerships and alliances between governments, businesses, research institutions

and academia. A particular focus should also be on cities and city alliances so as to bring about the transformations needed.

We will not succeed, unless we tackle the root causes of the sickness upon us – a mere tinkering with symptoms or

temporarily curing the sickness will not do. We must respect togetherness of human and nature as well as development and conservation. We need systemic reforms and policy adjustments in all fields. Above all, we must create an ecological society based on eco-civilizational precepts! For all this, the world and every single country needs effective, open-minded and accountable leadership so as to help save our – only – planet. Protecting the planet is the most important responsibility humanity has today, requiring creative solutions and innovative measures in all areas. ■

What is Stakeholder Capitalism?

By **Klaus Schwab and Peter Vanham**

Klaus Schwab: Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum

Peter Vanham: Head of Communications, Chairman's Office, World Economic Forum

History

The stakeholder concept goes a long way back: more than 50 years. I first wrote about it in 1971, when I was a young business academic. But its roots go even further. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was quite natural for a company and its CEO to consider not just shareholders, but everyone who as a “stake” in the success of a firm.

That is the core of stakeholder capitalism: it is a form of capitalism in which companies do not only optimize short-term profits for shareholders, but seek long term value creation, by taking into account the needs of all their stakeholders, and society at large.

This approach was common in the post-war decades in the West, when it became clear that one person or entity could only do well if the whole community and economy functioned. There was a strong linkage between companies and their community. In Germany, for example, where I was born, it led to the representation of employees on the board, a tradition that continues today. And, as sourcing, production, and selling took place mostly locally or at least regionally, there was a connection with suppliers and clients as well. This fostered a strong sense that local companies were embedded in their surroundings, and from that grew a mutual respect between companies and local institutions such as government, schools, and health organizations. It led to a constellation of stakeholders that I visualized in my 1971 book *Modern Company Management in Mechanical Engineering*.

In subsequent years, the stakeholder concept was adopted most prominently in the social democracies of Northern and Western Europe, including Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. It led there, among other effects, to a tripartite system of collective labor negotiations including company management, employees, and government. And it contributed to the welfare state in which companies and

employees paid their fair share of taxes to fund public education, health care, and social security.

This system did adapt as decades went by, and it lives on to various degrees in these countries.

But as a global organizing principle for business, the stakeholder concept competed head-on with Chicago University economist Milton Friedman's notion of “shareholder primacy”. It held that “the business of business is business” (or, as he literally wrote: “the social responsibility of company is to make profits”) —and the stakeholder approach ultimately lost out.

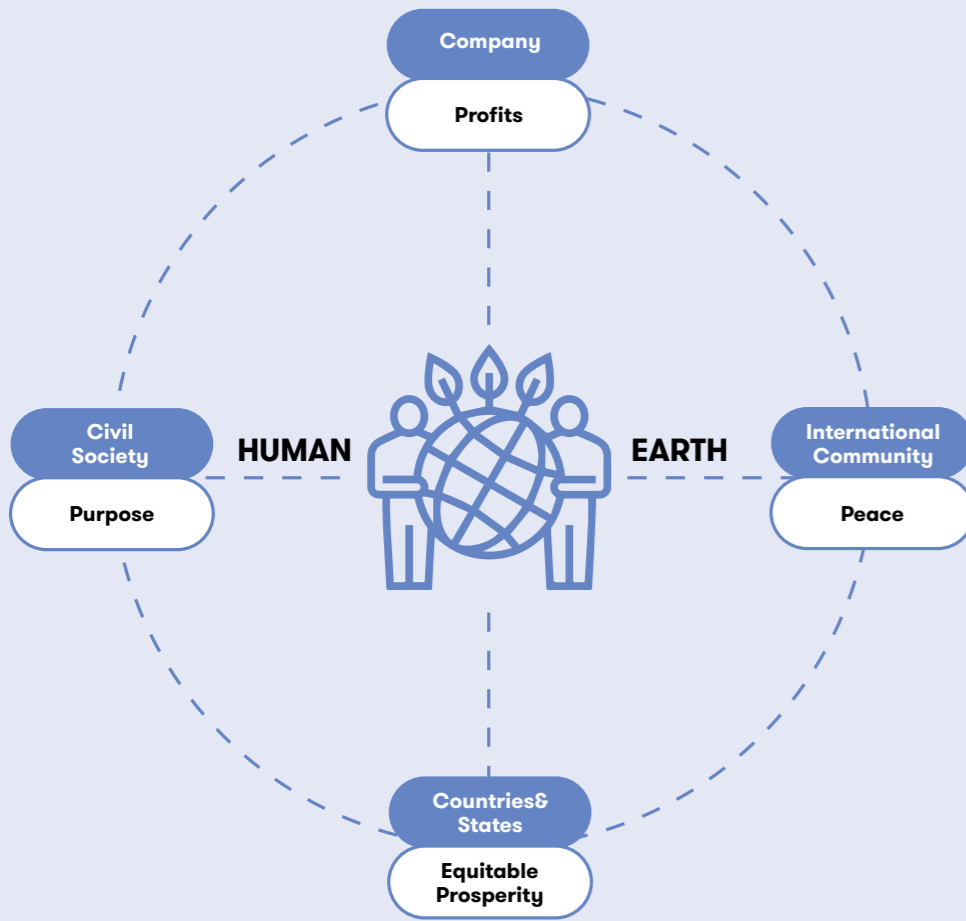
Shareholder capitalism became the norm across the West as companies globalized, loosening their ties with local communities and national governments, and focusing instead on maximizing short-term profits for shareholders in competitive global markets.

At the same time, labor unions, governments, and other civil society stakeholders lost a lot of their power and influence, further weakening the fabric in which a stakeholder model could prosper. It meant that even in those countries that did adhere to the stakeholder concept as a governance principle, other actors got weaker, as companies, and specifically those who prospered in the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolutions, got stronger.

The Stakeholder Model today: People and Planet at the center

Today, the stakeholder concept is ready for a comeback, albeit in an updated, more comprehensive form. We are facing a whole set of social, economic, and health crises, and the best response to these challenges, would be for all actors in society to consider more than their narrow and short-term self interest. So what could stakeholder capitalism look like today, and how does it differ from the stakeholder management my father's generation intuitively implemented in the 1960s and 1970s?

The most important characteristic of the



The Global Stakeholder Model
Image: "Stakeholder Capitalism",
Klaus Schwab and Peter Vanham,
Wiley 2021

stakeholder model today is that the stakes of our system are now more clearly global. Economies, societies, and the environment are more closely linked to each other now than 50 years ago. The model we present here is therefore fundamentally global in nature, and the two primary stakeholders are as well.

This is true first and foremost for the planet. The planet's health, we now know, is dependent not just on individual or national decisions but on the sum of decisions made by actors from around the world. If we are to safeguard the planet for future generations, every stakeholder will therefore need to take responsibility for its part in it.

What was once seen as externalities in national economic policy making and individual corporate decision making will now need to be incorporated or internalized in the operations of every government, company, community, and individual. The planet is thus the center of the global economic system, and its health should be optimized in the decisions made by all other stakeholders.

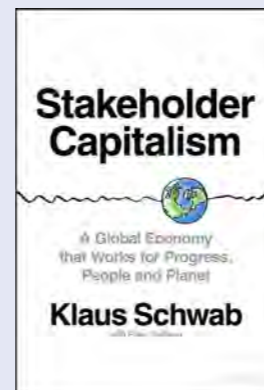
The same interconnectedness can be observed for the people who live on the planet. The well-being of people in one society affects that of those in another, and it is incumbent on all of us as global citizens to optimize the well-being of all. Failing to do so will inevitably come back to haunt us.

COVID-19 was just one reminder of this global

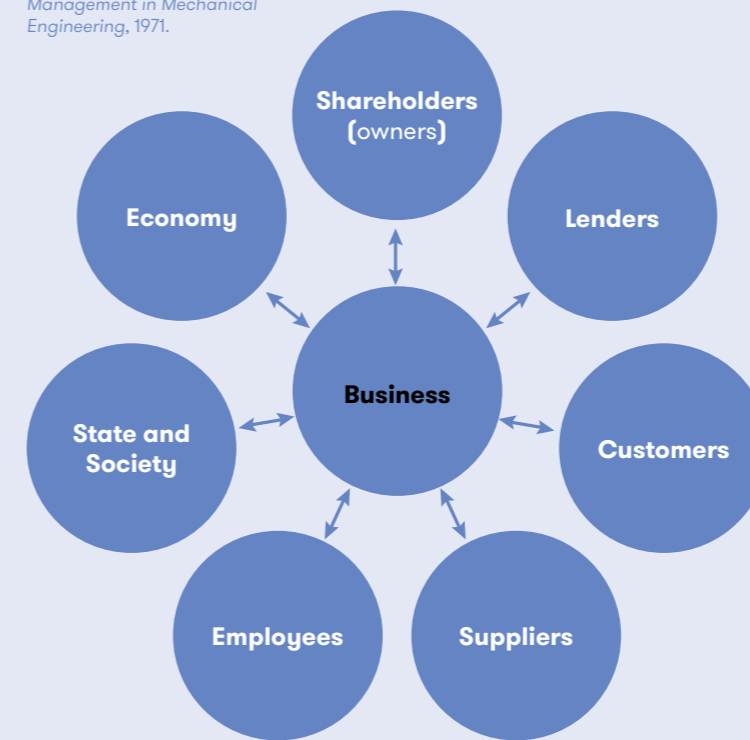
inter-connectedness, and the fact that no one is safe and well, until everyone is. When the SARS-CoV-2 virus spread around the planet, it devastated the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people and led to death or severe illness for many millions. With the exception of a few island nations, no border closure was stringent enough to prevent the spread of the disease.

The extensive spread of Internet technology also makes people around the world more aware than ever of the fortunes of people elsewhere. This draws attention to global equity, making it an important objective, perhaps for the first time in history. Indeed, people are social animals, and their absolute well-being is less important than their relative well-being.

Wherever you are in the world, there is thus an increased consensus that the well-being of people—wherever they live—and the planet as a whole matter to all of us. These two elements are



The company at the center point
of its stakeholders.
Image: Schwab, *Modern Company
Management in Mechanical
Engineering*, 1971.



natural stakeholders, with people being simply all human individuals and planet being the natural environment we all share. It leads to a new stakeholder model where those two are at the center.

The Key Stakeholders and Their Objectives: Profits, Purpose, Prosperity and Peace

To ensure that both people and the planet prosper, four key stakeholders play a crucial role. They are: governments (of countries, states, and local communities); civil society (from unions to NGOs, from schools and universities to action groups); companies (constituting the private sector, whether freelancers or large multinational companies); and the international community (consisting of international organizations such as the UN as well as regional organizations such as the European Union or ASEAN).

All these stakeholders crucially consist of people and make use of the planet. It is no surprise then, that they should want to optimize the well-being of all of us as well as that of the environment. But equally, it should be clear they have specific objectives that make them distinct organisms in the first place.

- Governments focus on creating the greatest possibly prosperity for the greatest number of people
- Civil society exists to advance the interest of its constituents and to give a meaning or purpose to its members.

•Companies aim to generate an economic surplus, measurable in profits in the short run, and long-term value creation in the long run

•And the overarching goal for the international community is to preserve peace

It leads to the stakeholder model as we know it today, valid anywhere in the world. When the well-being of people and planet are at the center of business, the four remaining key groups of stakeholders contribute to their betterment. As all of these groups and their goals are interconnected. One cannot succeed if the others fail.

The model is simple, but it immediately reveals why shareholder primacy and state capitalism lead to suboptimal outcomes: They focus on the more granular and exclusive objectives of profits or prosperity in a particular company or country rather than the well-being of all people and the planet as a whole.

By contrast, in the stakeholder model, neither of the more granular objectives is set aside, but the interconnectivity and the overarching well-being

of people and the planet are central, ensuring a more harmonious outcome over time.

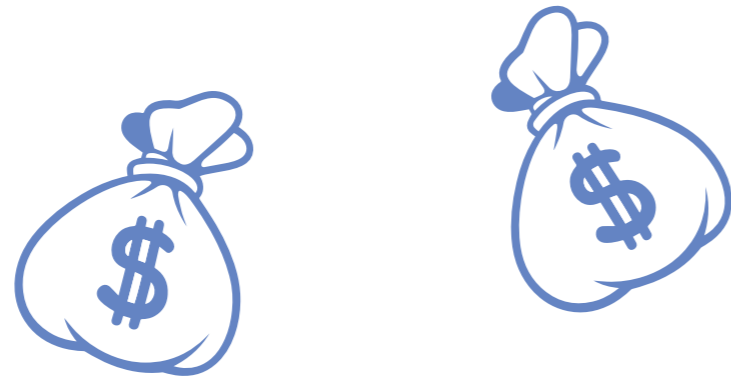
If you would like to learn more about the stakeholder model, we invite you to read our book, "Stakeholder Capitalism" (Wiley, January 2021).

This text is adapted from the book "Stakeholder Capitalism: A Global Economy that Works for Progress, People and Planet, by Klaus Schwab with Peter Vanham, and was originally published on January 22nd 2021 by the World Economic Forum on its website www.weforum.org on the occasion of the Davos Agenda 2021, and is republished in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public License, and in accordance with the World Economic Forum's Terms of Use. The views expressed in this article are those of the author alone and not the World Economic Forum.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/01/klaus-schwab-on-what-is-stakeholder-capitalism-history-relevance/>

Can Cheap Countries Catch Up?

By **Ricardo Hausmann**



Being cheap may narrow poorer countries' path to prosperity by making technology relatively more expensive. But if these economies could develop the capabilities to export knowledge-intensive business services, their firms could be globally competitive while providing their employees with a higher standard of living.

CAMBRIDGE – Poor countries are cheap. In 2019, a dollar could buy more than twice as much in Argentina, Morocco, South Africa, and Thailand as it could in the United States. It could buy more than three times as much in Vietnam, India, and Ukraine, and more than four times as much in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Egypt. If a country is cheap, it should be more competitive and thus able to catch up with richer economies. In fact, many

cheap countries are falling further behind.

At first glance, the fact that poor countries are cheap is counterintuitive. If poor countries are much less productive, shouldn't things there cost more, because it takes more time and effort to make them? This would be the case if salaries were the same in all countries. But they are much lower in poor countries than in rich ones. According to the OECD, average annual wages in 2019 (in

constant prices) were over \$60,000 in Switzerland and the US; over \$50,000 in Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Germany; over \$40,000 in France, South Korea, and Sweden; over \$30,000 in Spain, South Korea, Italy, and Poland; over \$20,000 in Greece and Hungary; and over \$10,000 in Mexico.

Such differentials suggest there is a possible alternative universe in which highly productive countries pay higher wages and unproductive countries pay lower wages, so that all goods and services cost the same everywhere. It makes sense, but that is not the world we live in: a dollar buys more in a poor country than in a rich one. The standard economic explanation for this is that, although poor countries may be unproductive across the board, they are particularly unproductive at making things that trade

THE STANDARD ECONOMIC EXPLANATION FOR THIS IS THAT, ALTHOUGH POOR COUNTRIES MAY BE UNPRODUCTIVE ACROSS THE BOARD, THEY ARE PARTICULARLY UNPRODUCTIVE AT MAKING THINGS THAT TRADE INTERNATIONALLY, RELATIVE TO THOSE THAT DO NOT.

internationally, relative to those that do not. But how can this explain why poor countries are cheap? The prices of internationally tradable goods, like coffee and cellphones, tend to be similar across countries. If the local price is too high, you might as well import the good. And if the

local price is low, people can make more money exporting the product than selling it domestically.

By contrast, so-called non-tradable goods that can be sold only to locals, like cappuccinos,

mobile-phone services, and haircuts, can have very different prices in different countries. Such goods and services tend to be cheaper in poorer countries, because these economies are relatively less unproductive at providing them compared to tradable goods. This raises the question of why poor countries are especially unproductive at producing things that trade internationally. The most persuasive answer is that productivity hinges on technology adoption and adaptation, which requires figuring things out. And the cost of doing this can be recouped only through a period of excess profits. In a non-tradable sector, a pioneer at adopting a new technology will have a monopoly until successful imitators emerge, giving the pioneer the pricing power to recover the cost of the innovation. By contrast, a pioneer in a product that trades internationally will have to compete from the start with foreign firms that



Ricardo Hausmann
A former minister of planning of Venezuela and former chief economist at the Inter-American Development Bank, is a professor at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and Director of the Harvard Growth Lab

already make similar products. Without monopoly power, recouping the innovation costs will be difficult. Technology is knowledge that can be used to do things such as produce food, provide entertainment, or administer justice. It takes three forms: embodied knowledge in tools; codified knowledge in formulas, algorithms, recipes, and how-to manuals; and tacit knowledge, or know-how, in the brains of teams of humans with complementary skills, like surgeons and anesthesiologists. In principle, codified knowledge is costless to reproduce and, absent property rights, can move around the world as quickly as an email. So, this should not be the reason why poor countries do not catch up. But tools are typically produced in rich countries, which embed the knowledge in them, and they account for over 40% of world trade in goods. Because poor countries are cheap, machines look very expensive to them: the same machine appears four times more costly to an Egyptian firm than it

does to a Swiss firm.

Moreover, know-how is key to implementing any technology, and a lack of it means that the costs of machines, materials, and labor can easily go to waste. Unfortunately, know-how moves with enormous difficulty from brain to brain. It is much easier just to move the brains. Moving brains is a powerful mechanism of technological diffusion, as evidence from migration, diasporas, and even business travel illustrates. Just look at the growing importance of so-called knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS), provided by firms like McKinsey & Company, Accenture, Halliburton, or Schlumberger. But, here again, the cheaper the country, the more expensive these services will look.

So, the fact that poor countries are cheap makes it harder for them to acquire the technology they need to catch up. As a result, they remain poor. But maybe there is a way to turn being cheap into an advantage. If poor countries could develop the capabilities to export

KIBS, their firms could be globally competitive while providing their employees with a higher standard of living, as Indian companies such as Wipro and Tata Consultancy Services have done. Being cheap is no panacea for poorer countries. Quite the contrary: it may block the door to prosperity by making technology, whether tools or know-how, relatively more expensive. But cheapness may leave open a couple of windows on the third floor through which poorer countries could find a way to climb.

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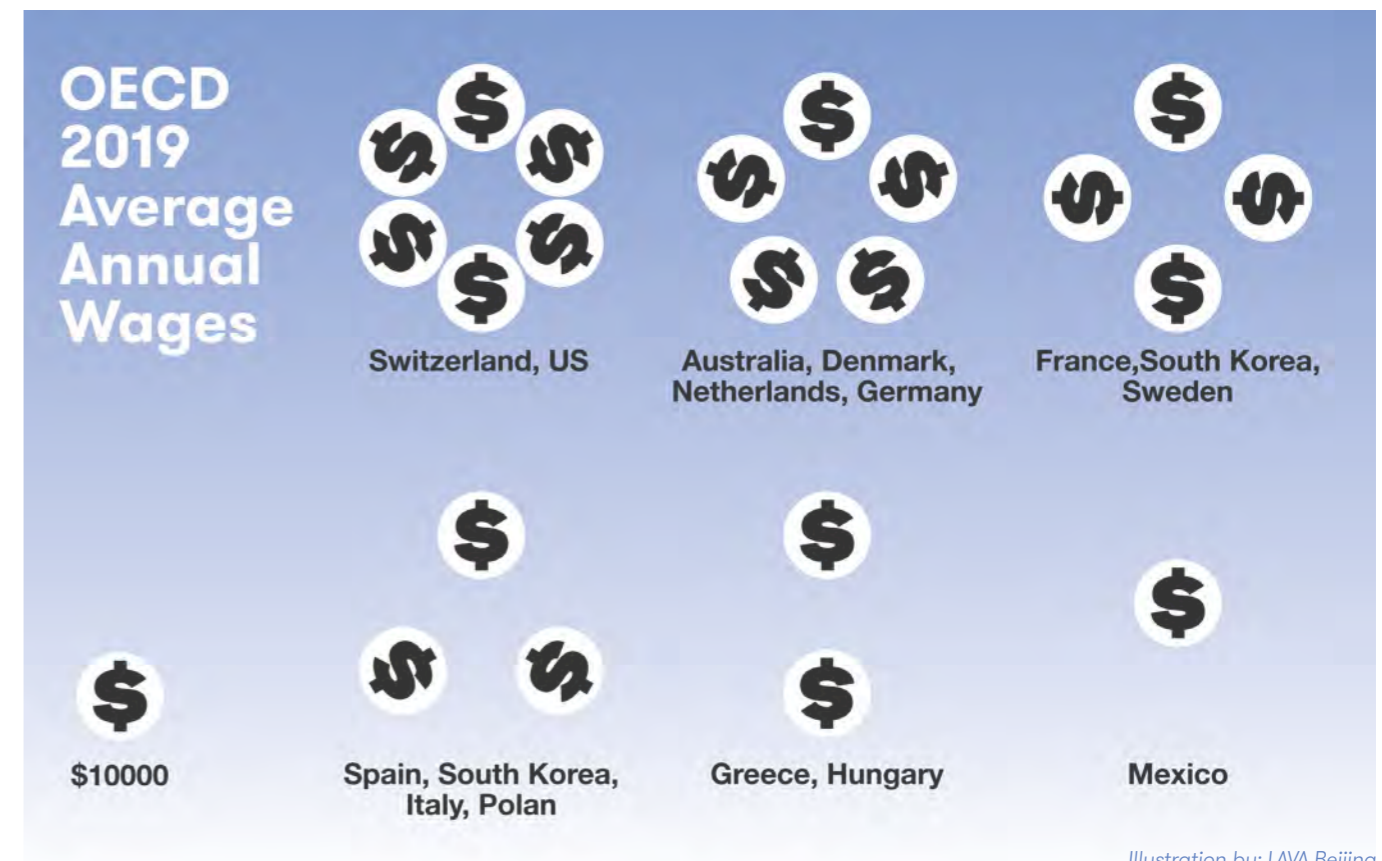


Illustration by: LAVA Beijing

Keeping Poverty Reduction Front and Center

By Juan Manuel Santos, Sabina Alkire

OXFORD – Today’s pandemic-induced humanitarian and economic crisis represents an unprecedented opportunity to go beyond emergency responses and address our economies’ structural flaws. Many governments’ stimulus and recovery packages are already shaping the future. But leaders across all sectors of society should recognize this moment as a rare chance to build a more inclusive and sustainable world, which will be possible only if we end poverty in all its forms.

Ending poverty might seem like an impossible dream, but so did abolishing slavery and ending apartheid. The launch of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020 can serve as a catalyst. Recently released by the United Nations Development Programme and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, the MPI shows that 65 of the 75 countries studied reduced their

poverty levels significantly within the last decade. Moreover, the country that reduced poverty the fastest, Sierra Leone, did so despite the Ebola epidemic that began in 2014.

The risk now is that these gains could be reversed. The COVID-19 crisis requires the commitment of global and national leaders not only to preserve hard-won progress, but also to turn a corner in the global effort to end poverty. This will not be easy, given that the pandemic is exacerbating pre-existing inequalities.

It is a “myth that we are all in the same boat,” observed United Nations Secretary General António Guterres this month. “While we are all floating on the same sea, it’s clear that some are in superyachts while others are clinging to the drifting debris.” It is thus all the more essential that we extend a hand to the poor, who are suffering

Juan Manuel Santos, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is a former president of Colombia (2010-18) and a visiting professor at the Department of International Development, University of Oxford. **Sabina Alkire** is director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, University of Oxford.

multiple deprivations, with COVID-19 adding to what was already a crushing burden.

Using data dating back to 2010, the MPI provides a comprehensive picture of how people experience disadvantages in their daily lives, because it simultaneously measures deprivations in health care, education, and living standards across ten indicators. These data can help us mitigate the pandemic’s burden on the 1.3 billion people living in multidimensional poverty, while preventing many others from becoming impoverished. At the national level, governments should consider creating their own country-specific MPIs to guide effective strategies for tackling poverty.

Dozens of countries around the world already have. Of the 47 countries to submit Voluntary National Reviews at the UN’s High-Level Political Forum this month, 21 mention multidimensional poverty. We hope they can wield this powerful tool during the pandemic itself. By emphasizing support for the most vulnerable today, all countries will be in a stronger position to “build back better” after the pandemic. Tackling multidimensional poverty is good for society, and good for peace.

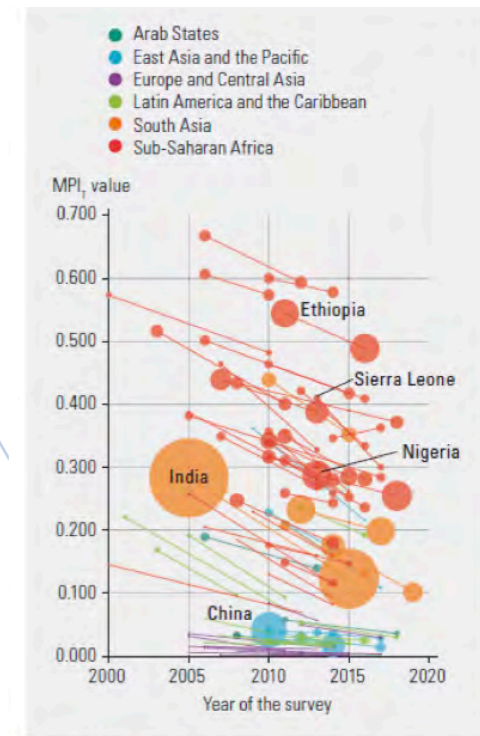
But to turn a corner on poverty, commitments at the highest levels are essential. During my (Santos’s) tenure as president of Colombia, we complemented the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) with a national MPI that focused not just on income but also on the additional social deprivations that were affecting Colombians’ lives. Our MPI, supported by robust data, served as the basis for developing concrete programs and policies that succeeded in reducing multidimensional poverty from 30.4% to 19.6% within eight years.

Countries that do not yet have an official permanent multidimensional poverty indicator could explore the global MPI to see if it could strengthen their own efforts. Either way, all governments must place human dignity and capabilities at the center of their recovery strategies.

National governments can’t do this alone, of course. The magnitude of the challenge demands collective action on the part of businesses, nongovernmental and civil-society organizations, and philanthropists. Now is the time to back words with action. Leaders must demonstrate grit, determination, and endurance, and combine boldness with pragmatism. Mobilizing all sectors of society around the common cause of ending poverty will benefit not just the poor but also the broader economy.

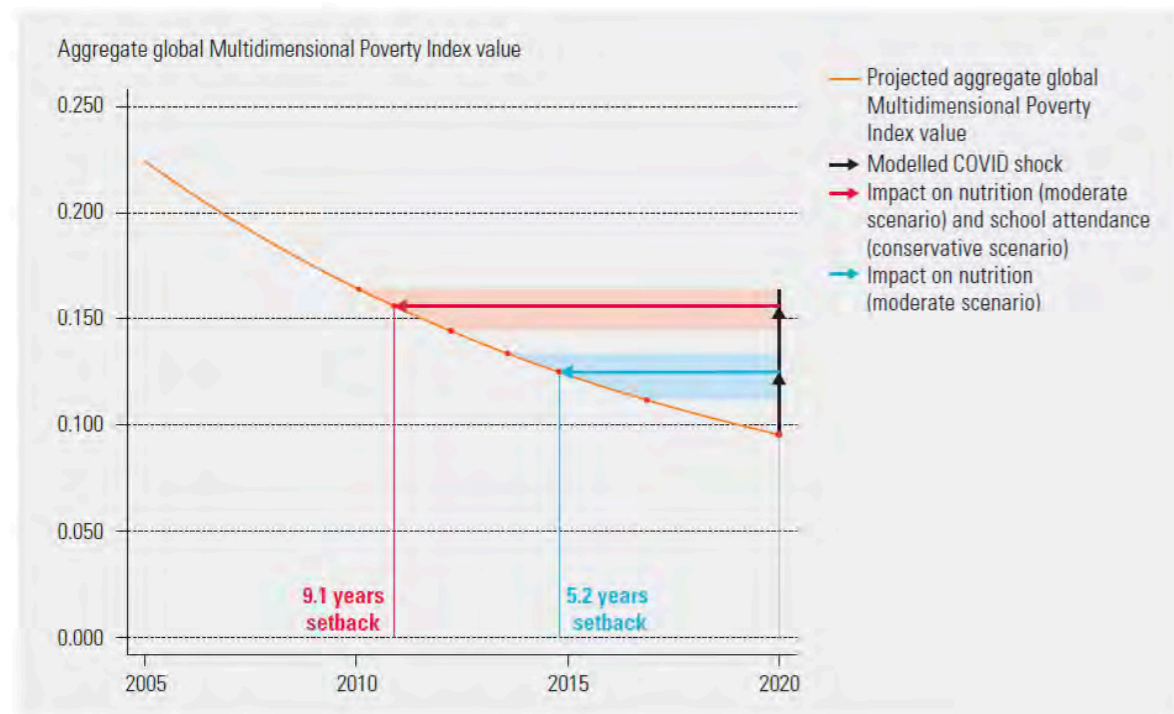
In the wake of World War II, Eleanor Roosevelt noted that, “We cannot tell from day to day what may come. This is no ordinary time. No time for weighing anything, except what we can best do for the country as a whole.” In these challenging

Poorer countries with the highest initial Multidimensional Poverty Index values and countries with low values tend to have slower absolute reduction rates



MPI is the Multidimensional Poverty Index estimate that is based on harmonized indicator definitions for strict comparability over time. Note: The figure shows the level of multidimensional poverty in the starting and ending periods of the study. The size of each bubble represents the number of multidimensionally poor people in each year, the colour indicates the region of the country and the trend line connecting to bubbles depicts the speed of reduction. The horizontal placement refers to the years of the surveys. Source: Alkire, Kovesdi, Mitchell and others 2020.

Under a conservative scenario of the impact of COVID-19 on school attendance and a moderate scenario of the impact on nutrition, simulations indicate that the increase in deprivations because of COVID-19 may set poverty levels back by 9.1 years, with an additional 490 million people falling into multidimensional poverty



Source: Alkire, Nogales and others 2020.

times, humanity has an opportunity to come together in solidarity on behalf of those left behind, and to act with vision and determination to end poverty in all its dimensions everywhere.

At the start of this pandemic, our friend Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate economist, reminded us of good and bad examples of leadership during times of crisis. He pointed out that during WWII, a rationing system in Britain led to more equal food distribution, which in turn underpinned a sharp increase in life expectancy – of 6.5 years for men and seven years for women (up from an increase of only 1.2 and 1.5 years, respectively, in the previous decade).

The lesson from that experience, and from Sierra Leone’s over the past decade, is that forward-looking, practical, equitable policies enacted during times of duress do work. Let us hope that today’s leaders recognize the opportunity in front of them, and adopt the multidimensional metrics needed to seize it. ■

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The Small Picture

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Redesigning the Welfare State

An Interview with Hilary Cottam
By Alice Rawsthorn



Hilary Cottam

The pioneering social designer Hilary Cottam started out as a social scientist and worked for the World Bank before conducting more than 20 years of practical experiments in applying design to address some of the most complex social and political problems of our time, from long-term unemployment to provision of care for the elderly. Having written about those experiments in her book, *Radical Help*, Cottam has embarked on an ambitious new project to redesign the welfare state. Her aim, as she explained to Alice Rawsthorn, is to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century, in what she calls the 'fifth social revolution.'

AR: How did you discover design and identify it as a useful tool in your work?

HC: Over 20 years ago, I was working in Africa and Latin America. I became obsessed with the failure of social programmes and with the way that well-meaning people and well-meaning organisations (often trying to solve social problems) always failed. Or a project might work, and then after a while it would stop working.

In *Radical Help*, I give an example of when I worked in the Dominican Republic, and I was asked by its ministry of education to look at why primary school attendance was so low. We were told that the challenge was that people were hungry and couldn't afford the mandatory school uniforms. So, we ran focus groups and we heard that yes, of course, uniforms are too expensive, and we haven't got school meals. And duly, new policies were designed. Much later, I went to live in a barrio in the Dominican Republic, where there was a brilliant school on the edge, but none of the people who lived in the barrio went there. I asked why and they said that they didn't have any identity cards. It's very complex, why they wouldn't have had identity cards. But the point is, I needed to find ways that could connect real lives as they are lived to structures of power, to get out new information and to tell different stories, and that's what first led me into design.

AR: How did you integrate design into the practical experiments you conducted at the social enterprise Participle, which you ran for a decade as a prototyping lab?

HC: As the Black feminist Audre Lorde said: 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.' We needed a different way to work, and design brought three things. Firstly, if we think about the complexity of the social challenges we face today, we need interdisciplinary teams to work together and that, in and of itself, is a challenge. We need policymakers to work with practitioners, we need economists, we need social scientists, and so on. But we also need to find a

way to have lived experience as part of those conversations, and not to flatten out other voices, or to allow certain power to dominate. Design provided the vehicle, the Esperanto within which everyone could come together, and we could design something new. So that was one thing.

The second thing is that I'm dedicated to visual methods of working. I think that if we use visual tools and techniques, whether it's simple drawings or video, we can talk about things that are otherwise difficult to talk about. And most issues to do with welfare and needing help are at some level shameful or difficult. So, we can merge different stories, which can lead to different solutions.

The third thing is that, of course, design is very closely aligned to technology. And everything I do is possible because of technology, really. At Participle, we used really simple technology – cheap mobile phones and platforms – to upend business models. One of the tenets of Participle was, let's design things that become stronger, the more people who use them, rather than things that exclude them. Technology made that possible.

AR: Tell us about your new project, about the fifth social revolution.

HC: It's a manifesto for social change, and a call to think about connec-

tions between our social troubles, our economic and political systems and the climate emergency. It's a way to think about those three things together, and how they're linked. I started work on it before the pandemic but, obviously, it has become even more critical now, when we can see very clear structural inequalities, that the spread of COVID-19 is linked to the climate emergency and that some political systems can react well to support their populations in a crisis like this, and others can't.

AR: What will the methodology of this project be? It's incredibly ambitious, though that hasn't frightened you before.

HC: There are two main parts, which are interconnected. One is the thinking part, so I've been thinking and collaborating with lots of people. The most important thing is that it's called the fifth

social revolution, because it's tied to the idea that we're in a fifth technology revolution. I draw very strongly on the work of the brilliant economist, Carlota Perez, who's been studying technology revolutions, and the way they manifest themselves, politically and economically. Drawing on her framing, we're in the fifth technology revolution, and I think about what would be a sibling social system.

Then there's a practical piece, which is that it is really important to redesign certain areas: work, care and learning are critical. My first project is about reimagining the future of work. I've been exploring these ideas with communities of people from different backgrounds: carers, grave diggers, nuclear weapon makers, digital entrepreneurs.

AR: Having done so much research, do you now have a clear vision of the future direction? Or will you continue the research while formulating it?

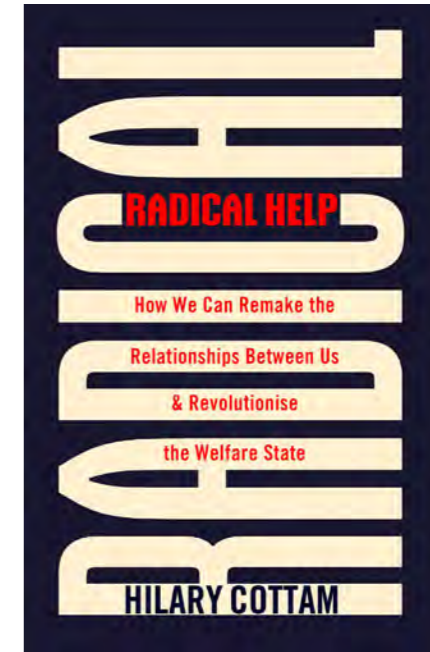
HC: I'm always learning and it's always iterative. So, definitely, there's a set of ideas which have gone into the practice and will come out differently. But in the paper on the fifth social revolution, which was recently published by the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose at University College London, I've got an idea of a social code. It's a design pattern, if you like: what are the five principles that could be taken, used and reimagined everywhere to underpin this revolution? It can't be a blueprint as the last one was, when mass industrial welfare systems were introduced in the mid-20th century and passed down to us.

AR: How will the role of technology in this project be different from your Participle experiments, which tended to be community-based?

HC: Radical Help and the experiments at Participle were very UK-focused. I was looking very much at the British welfare state.

I'm still very embedded in communities here in Britain, but one of the things I realised through the reactions to Radical Help was how certain mindsets dominate across Western democracies. I mean, also, of course, that through colonial patterns, we've exported them to the Global South. How can we rethink that?

What's important about technology is that it changes everything. It changes what we see as common sense, the patterns of how we live, how we parent, how we sleep, how we work. There's really nothing that isn't in that transformation process. One of the things that has been very clear in this pandemic is that people have seen the need



Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships Between Us & Revolutionise the Welfare State, by Hilary Cottam (2018, Virago); hilarycottam.com

to rethink capitalism. We've seen very strong calls to rethink capitalism, but much less attention on the need to rethink a social settlement. Part of the idea behind the social revolution is to tie them back together, but also to think about what technology makes possible in terms of new ways of working, and new systems.

I'm not thinking about how we might have a good app for healthcare, for example, I'm thinking about how health is created in the 21st century, and how we support that. When you think like that, you realise that putting more money into a 1950s mass industrial health system is not the way to go.

AR: A parallel phenomenon that I know you care about passionately is the climate emergency. How will it interact with this project?

HC: The climate emergency is a very good example of the different sorts of problems we face that can't be changed by mass industrial social systems. Solving or addressing the climate emergency definitely means macro policy and very different participation of citizens in different ways of living, so it's not something that can be commanded from on high. It's very much about our relationships with each other, to nature, and to the economy. That's why we have to change not only what's on offer, but the way that we create it. For me, this pandemic, as difficult and tragic as it has been, is just a warm-up for what's coming down the tracks in ten years or less.

Unless we reintegrate and rethink how we address that in terms of social policy, we'll be stuck. This means thinking about how we transition out of dirty work into good green employment and thinking about health systems. I think the National Health Service is second only to the aviation industry in terms of its carbon footprint. It's thinking about how all those things are connected and also, of course, harnessing the energy in something like Extinction Rebellion, or Black Lives Matter, the kind of movements that are really absolutely critical to thinking about how we can have what I think of as a soft and peaceful revolution.

AR: Combating inequality and injustice has always been absolutely fundamental to your work, and this is a time when George Floyd's tragic murder has ignited such powerful responses all over the world. What will be the role of the fifth social revolution in combating inequality in general, and systemic racism in particular?

HC: That's such an important question. One thing is that our current systems can't see some of those structural inequalities. In this pandemic, the extent of structural inequality has been made very evident: who can work at home; who can't; who are dying more than others, and so on. I think that's really brought home to many of us who couldn't see it before that not everyone is taken care of, and that we need to think, again, because a lot of those inequalities weren't addressed in the kind of post-war welfare systems we've got in western Europe. One of the things about those systems is that they're very proud of treating everybody equally or of aspiring to. I think we understand now that treating everybody equally is entrenching inequality because we're not all equal, and that it's very complex, the way that ethnicity, gender, poverty, all these issues are interconnected. If we don't understand that, we can't see that 'one size fits all' is not going to address those problems. That's very important.

The other thing we have to address is that, as Carlota Perez shows very clearly, when you have a technology revolution, a certain class always

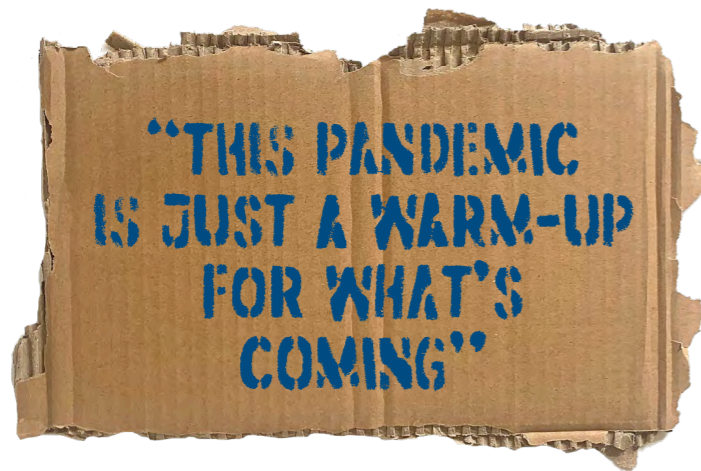
gains: first of all, agrarian workers, then so-called blue-collar workers. Previously many of those gains have been made by passing problems elsewhere and exploiting other bodies we can't see. For instance, British welfare systems have always imported a workforce: well-trained nurses from Zambia, Jamaica and so on. We haven't asked ever, or rarely, what we were doing by importing people trained elsewhere, very highly skilled people from countries that need them. In this revolution, we have to think about how we are all connected, and about raising everybody's potential to flourish, rather than doing good things in one space by exporting the problem somewhere else.

AR: For all the anguish, challenges and contradictions of lockdown, this has been a time for reflection

for many people. How optimistic are you that those reflections will lead to a positive outcome, by catalysing change on the massive scale you're advocating?

HC: We're still in the pandemic, so we don't know what is going to happen. One thing I think that's been really, really important is that we've had a sort of explosion of new relationships. We have really come together to help one another, whether that's by making masks or leaning over the fence to have a chat. This has happened in small, local ways, which work much better. We got to know one another again and forge new relationships. We're not going to forget our experience of participation or that we have got to know our neighbours. It's not that I expect all the small mutual aid groups that have flourished in Britain and other places to last, but I think the experience will last just as it did in the case of the Second World War. It was fundamental to the experience of war, whether on the front or at home, for people from different classes to get together.

Upper middle class people, in particular, had to realise that poverty wasn't due to laziness, but because structurally it was impossible to get on. That led to a deep rethinking about our society, and what was needed. We've had that experience now.



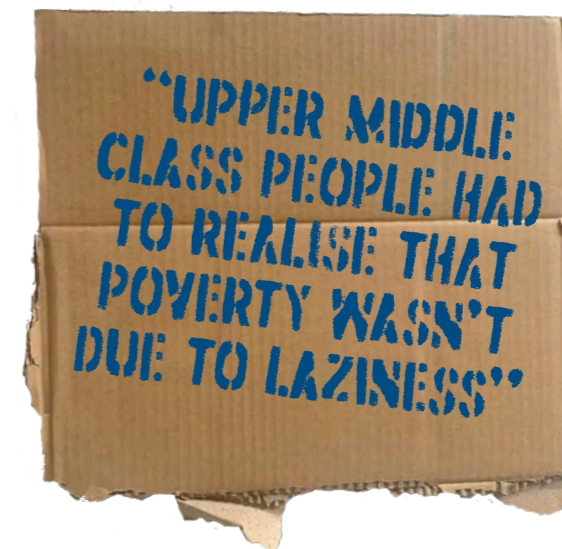
Something else we could talk about which relates to the social code in the manifesto is that we've also had an explosion of making, repairs and remaking: whether it is making scrubs as personal protective equipment for frontline health workers, or whether it's bread baking, or, in my case, growing a lot of lettuces. This is really important because the fifth social revolution will be made and remade in every place, things will be shared, learning will be shared. But this isn't something that's going to be made in a mass way and then moved down some vertical production line. We've seen so much of that in this pandemic.

AR: There are grounds for optimism. The community support networks you alluded to have strong historic precedents all over the world. In India, where the escalation of COVID-19 infections is a huge concern, the situation would be far worse without the local community work of women's self-help groups. They began in the 1918 Bombay Influenza pandemic, that we call Spanish Flu, when community support groups fed and cared for people throughout the crisis. They have done so again with COVID-19.

HC: I love that. One of the things that's really important in technology revolutions is reinventing old ideas in new ways. One thing we're seeing very strongly is a renewed interest in cooperatives and commons. The work of the late economist Elinor Ostrom on the commons, for example, is being linked to the new economic thinking, which is exciting. I think something optimistic is going to happen by taking those ideas and reinterpreting them. But, of course, we need other structural change, and it's going to happen by design and by effort. That's the challenge.

AR: So how will it happen by design, Hilary?

HC: The first thing is that when you look historically, you can see that to enable deep social transition (I call it a revolution because it's a paradigm change, an absolute moment of break and rebirth), four sets of actors were needed every time. The first group is of what I call organic intellectuals. I call them that in a Gramscian sense, because I don't just mean people in universities, I mean people with big ideas that can connect to practice and connect to hearts



and minds, so we begin to tell a different story about what might be.

The second group is organised civil society, which is very important whether it is in the form of the labour movement, trade unions, or the social movements you've already referred to: Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion being really critical examples.

The third group, I think, is sometimes somewhat overlooked by social campaigners. It's a group of what I call the new industrialists. When you look historically, you see that what's always absolutely critical is that a group of business leaders, usually with big businesses at the forefront of new technologies, understand (not for philanthropic reasons, but for reasons of economics) that if they don't shift the model, they won't be able to grow themselves.

Henry Ford is a classic example of the last revolution. He realized that if he didn't pay his workers more, there would be no market for his cars. So, he argued (in fact he took his board to court over it) to pay his workers more. Now, Ford wasn't a very nice man, I'm sure you know, he also shot his workers. But the point is that he understood why the model had to change. Part of my work at the moment is a series of conversations with leaders in technology businesses, thinking about what their role is, not just (although this is very important) in terms of good working conditions and relationships throughout the supply chain, but thinking also much more broadly about what the new social contract is.

And then the fourth group is the state, because it's clear that the state is the head gardener that sets out the framework, which is needed to adopt the social code. Lots of the work I've written about is obviously collaborative, it's not just something I dreamt up myself. But if the state doesn't say that this is the direction of travel, this is where investment will go, as happened after the Second World War, then it becomes very, very difficult to actually shift systems. The challenge, of course, is that we've got a

mass production state: very, very hierarchical, very vertically stratified, which in itself needs to undergo a form of revolution in order to help this process along. Some countries, such as New Zealand, are

thinking very radically about this. Whereas, unfortunately, in Britain, we're seeing a lot of state money move without any idea of what the transition needs to be to achieve a more just society but also critically to address the climate emergency.

AR: Indeed. If we go back to your third group of new industrialists. Do you have any evidence that the attitudes and motivation of this group has changed? You describe Henry Ford as a super dynamic rascal, who decided to pay his workers more out of naked financial self-interest, rather than, say, the Keynesian belief that by creating a more prosperous society, you can also create a fairer, juster, better educated and more productive one. Do you believe that today's new industrialists are still motivated by financial self-interest, or does the work of, say, Bill Gates point to a more profound commitment to philanthropy and to the greater good?

HC: I don't want to speak out against the great Bill Gates, but what I'm interested in is not his model. I'm not interested in people who make a lot of money, and then become philanthropists. Not that their money isn't needed, but a just society doesn't work that way.

It doesn't work to have some form of economy that creates all sorts of problems, and later, you have the great Band-Aid approach that tries to fix

it. It works (and this is what the fifth social revolution is about) by reconnecting the economy with society and rethinking the purpose of that economy.

If we think that the purpose of the economy is to use people to create GDP and ever-growing wealth, then we're going to always need some sort of desperate sticking plaster solution and most people are not going to be able to thrive. If we think that the purpose of the economy is to create the conditions for human and natural flourishing, then we begin to think very differently.

The question is, where are the new industrialists who are thinking radically differently about their roles as capitalists, not about 'get rich and give back'? But really, how do we rethink the economy? I'm having a series of conversations about this. I had a conversation at the World Economic Forum's meeting in Davos this year with Satya Nadella, chief executive officer of Microsoft and with Ajay Singh Banga, president and chief executive officer of MasterCard. It's interesting to see how far they can go and where the gaps still are. Rebecca Solnit has written about the privatized heart, and it's quite difficult for many of us now to think about this as a collective endeavour rather than just the endeavour of the firm or the endeavour of the great leader. It's much bigger than that.



generative economy; where there's no good work, for example. We can't have that, and that's why the first project I've been working on is around work, a fundamental hinge between economy and society.

AR: What is success going to look like?

HC: There are various levels of success. Success will be that we can flourish, that we see flourishing all around us, which we don't see now. We managed, for instance, to take many homeless people off the streets during the COVID-19 lockdown, but all around us, we see evidence of human waste rather than human flourishing and our inability to support people to grow. That's one thing.

Connecting to nature, in the widest possible sense, so there is natural flourishing and our planet is flourishing. Then we'll have re-gear our economies to support people and the planet to flourish. I think, ultimately, we will tell this new story, we will have transition and we'll be addressing structural inequalities, but unlike the last revolution, these things won't be done to us, but by us. We'll be making and designing this revolution ourselves and will be part of it. That's the shift in power, and the shift in making in the story of design, that is at the heart of this fifth social revolution. ■

This is part of the full interview appeared in the October 2020 issue of Wallpaper*, guest edited by Design Emergency, a project by Alice Rawsthorn and Paola Antonelli.

AR: You have described your vision eloquently and precisely. What are the main obstacles to achieving it?

HC: There are so many obstacles. It's a game of two halves. There's so much extraordinary practice already happening. I take inspiration from that, whether it's in Barrow-in-Furness, or Wigan, or East Ayrshire in this country. But then we have the enormous challenge of an over-centralised state that is unable and unwilling to either use its centralised power to really think about macro-level investment and the green transition, or to cede power socially so that people can find their own ways to flourish. That's the big challenge, really.

I think of it visually. We have got extremely strong, vertical, top-to bottom systems. And the fifth social revolution is all about turning that on its side and building really, really strong mycelium-like networks like horizontal systems. The challenge is how we go about doing that. We can see it happening in local government here in

Britain, and in different places around the world (you've referred to India), often through necessity. But it is still a very big challenge to consider how we begin to shift that mindset to think about those horizontal systems, rather than patching in this vertical way.

AR: Could you describe one of the programmes that gives you cause for hope?

HC: What gives me cause for hope is that, if I think about what's happened in this pandemic, there are lots of places, not everywhere, but lots of places where not only has civil society mobilised all the support groups we've talked about, but that government and statutory services – social work, education, police, and so on – have thought about how they can join in. They've literally taken off their lanyards and their labels, and they've ditched all the regulations about 'Do you have the right needs?', and they've thought: 'Well, here we are, together in our community, what's in front of us? What are we going to do?' We've seen this really strongly in Barrow-in-Furness, for example. We've seen it in East Ayrshire as well. What's really exciting is that it should be possible to continue that work, and we're thinking about how to do that. Very often, top-down regulations are the biggest limitation.

And how do we link that thinking to the thinking of a new economy? How do we think about a generative economy in all of those local places to support the changes? What we can't have is what we've had for too long: really good social innovations in places where there's no good, thriving



What It Takes to Make a Home,
Film still © CCA

What It Takes to Make a Home

By **Julia Albani**, CCA

Architecture is a way of reading and redefining the present, the society in which we are living and working. At the CCA, all our exhibitions, books, research and public programs extend from this premise. So, if we want to read the world through architecture, we have to decide what we are looking for.

With the short documentary film *What It Takes to Make a Home* (2019, 29 min), we looked at the opening questions carefully, and tried to cast new light on the ways architecture enters the wider social, economic, and political contexts reshaping urban life today. This film is the first in a three-part series we started to explore intersecting social conditions—loneliness, migration, segregation, and aging. In each episode we look through the lens of selected architectural projects at the global scope as well as the local specificities of particular changes to lifestyles and demographics and the challenges they pose to urban societies and their spatial configurations.

The first episode: What It Takes to Make a Home

Rather than survey attempts at architectural solutions to homelessness and housing insecurity, the documentary introduces the attitudes of two architects whose work directly engages these issues: Michael Maltzan, based in Los Angeles, and Alexander Hagner, based in Vienna. The film interweaves a conversation between the two with

the perspectives of those who have experienced—and who are experiencing—homelessness firsthand, giving them space to convey their everyday challenges and larger experiences.

"Home is really complicated. I really feel that I have been able to find solace in community, the people that make me feel safe. I've never felt safe in a place that's enclosed by four walls. If anything, I feel like a rectangle that defines a space as home has more defined a space where violence occurs, where displacement occurs. So I've had to learn how to cope with this idea that the navigation of going from one space to the next has been home." Kevin Recinos, life skills coordinator at Safe Parking Los Angeles

In pairing Vienna and Los Angeles, the documentary begins to unpack the complexities of the problem: homelessness takes both familiar and unexpected forms, demanding responses that take into account not only human spatial requirements but also emotional needs. While pointing to the lack of affordable housing globally, the film asks what role architecture can have in destigmatizing the experience of housing insecurity and establishing what a home might be.

For Hagner, creating architecture for only a particular segment of society emphasizes difference and reinforces stigmatization. His VinziRast-mittendrin housing project in Vienna intentionally blends into the urban fabric; it is



Michael Maltzan



VinziRast, Vienna



Alexander Hagner



Star Apartments, Los Angeles
What It Takes to Make a Home, Film stills © CCA

exceptional because it provides a prototype for a new form of community, where students and individuals formerly without homes live together.

Maltzan, on the other hand, believes that distinctive architecture has the capacity to bring value to spaces designed for vulnerable individuals. Star Apartments, a mixed-use complex featured in the film that provides 102 apartments for inhabitants who previously did not have dependable shelter, is one of several projects he has realized with Los Angeles's Skid Row Housing Trust. For Maltzan, developing multiple models of signature housing over time can draw needed attention, pushing cities to face housing insecurity more productively.

Both Maltzan and Hagner search for long-term strategies for housing rather than propose ad hoc solutions. In this sense, the film contrasts the specific, material work that architects can do against conditions that architecture alone cannot possibly fix.

—When people think of architecture and homelessness, they think of shelters.

—Yep.

—And the idea of shelter is good, trying to get someone off the streets for a day, or maybe a week. But the downside is that people almost always return to the street.

I think that's an important thing to put on the table—are these for a special community, or are you really trying to make something that

integrates, in some way, these communities with the rest of the city as a whole?

—Yes. There is this stigmatization, and I don't want to have it visible in the design. I hate to do a special kind of architecture for special parts of society. I hate that. But I try to use our design to make it not special, so that the stigmatization will not grow any longer if we start to do our work.

We were criticized that we were doing a human experiment here. Students and homeless living together? But this is not about creating something special. The project is about designing a togetherness.

*—Well, one of the criticisms I heard—often—was, why are you building something that's so nice for the homeless community? And what I think is really at stake there is that architecture having a strong aesthetic is a tool to say that homelessness cannot be an anonymous problem. The aesthetics of architecture set up the dialogue. It's the way that architecture communicates. The people who are living in this building, they are part of the larger citizenry of the city. And there's a real quality and value to that community.
Michael Maltzan and Alexander Hagner*

Following screenings at film festivals and institutions worldwide, including at the United Nations headquarters in New York City as part of the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development, we now have published the film on cca.qc.ca/tomakeahome.



Next episodes in the series

When We Live Alone (2020, 27 min)—to premier this summer—, explores the ways in which we live alone, together in contemporary cities. The unprecedented rise of urban dwellers living on their own challenges normative ideas about home, and raises questions about how this might affect cities as a whole. While the causes of living alone seem apparent—shifting social values, the flexibilization of labour, new demographics, increased wealth, and changes to normative gender roles, to name a few—their effects on society and its spatial configurations remain uncertain.

The film interrogates this new urban condition, offering glimpses into the lives of individuals inhabiting singleton homes and the extended domestic sphere. Urban dwellers living on their own, architect Takahashi Ippei, and sociologist Yoshikazu Nango navigate the audience through a series of sole spaces in Tokyo. If living alone is our new reality, the film asks what does it look like?

The third and last film in the series —to be released in 2022— will address another challenge: our growing aging society.

The three films follow the same lines of investigation as our one-year research project titled *Catching Up With Life* (2021-2022), through which we explore new behaviors, rituals, and values and their spatial implications, to catalyze urban and architectural interventions that accommodate, influence, and, in some cases, pre-empt our new lived realities.

The series is conceived by Giovanna Borasi, an architect, editor, and curator, who has been the Director of the CCA since 2020, and directed by Daniel Schwartz, a filmmaker and artist whose work focuses on urban transformation from spatial, social, and political perspectives. Documentary film has begun to play a key role as a curatorial tool for us at the CCA, that allow us to reach our globally dispersed audiences and to catalyze conversations around fundamental social issues today. ■

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) is an international research institution and museum premised on the belief that architecture is a public concern. The CCA produces exhibitions and publications, develops and shares its collection as a resource, advance research, offer public programs, and host a range of other activities driven by a curiosity about how architecture shapes—and might reshape—contemporary life. Founded as a new type of cultural institution by Phyllis Lambert in 1979, the CCA is currently directed by Giovanna Borasi.

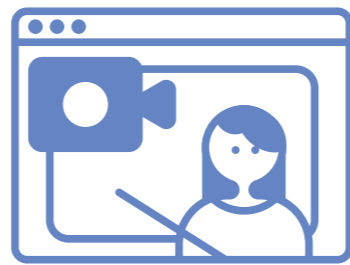
cca.qc.ca

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN THE CITY WITHOUT A PLACE YOU CAN CALL YOUR OWN? WHAT ROLE CAN ARCHITECTS HAVE IN ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS? AND HOW CAN CITIES BECOME A BETTER HOME FOR ALL?



When We Live Alone, 2020. Film still © CCA

Digital Transformation of Technical and Vocational Education in Indonesia



The COVID-19 pandemic has strongly accelerated digital transformation in the world of education and training, including for instructors of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Centers, or Balai Latihan Kerja (BLK), in Indonesia.

Thanks to a training organized in 2020 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower and Skilvul, a technology education platform, Irma Adyatni and Wiwiek Hayyin, both 38 years old, are among the 180 BLK instructors pioneering the transformation of digital training in their regions.

Irma Adyatni works as an instructor at BLK Tanjung, Tabalong, South Kalimantan, and teaches 32 students in two classes on local food processing: making bread using yellow squash and processing “tempeh” from rubber seeds. For her training, she provided the training materials through Google Classroom application, and for quizzes she chose gamification methods using Quizzizz application to make the tests more challenging and interesting, stating that the participants to her classes preferred to take tests online rather than on paper.

Meanwhile, Wiwiek Hayyin is an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) instructor from BLK Pekalongan. Even though the training in her BLK is still carried out offline,

she started to provide online teaching materials in the form of a tutorial video that she produced after participating in the ILO training, and started to use Google Form application for her tests.

The obstacles to digitization are still very high though, due to inadequate internet infrastructure in their regions: no internet networks available often require for instructors to use their phones’ wifi hotspots.

Nonetheless, both Irma and Wiwiek -despite being 1,450 kilometres apart- are determined to start a digital transformation at their respective BLKs, planning to create a Learning Management System (LMS) which will further strengthen the digital transformation.

For the short term, for example, Irma intends to upload training materials on agricultural product processing to cloud computing services. The goal is to make them

easily accessible to students or other instructors. Meanwhile, for the longer term, she wants to use AR (Augmented Reality) technology to explain food safety in her class.

“The use of AR technology can ease and optimize student’s understanding of training materials. By using AR to deliver room sanitation topic, for instance, will enable students to physically see bad microbes, which then help them to understand and conduct proper sanitation techniques” said Irma, who

completed her Master’s degree in the United States, to ILO Jakarta.

“Online training is not only relevant as an emergency response during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is the future of training in BLK,” said Irma. “Online training will increase access to and the capacity of training [in BLK],” Wiwiek added in the same interview with ILO.

Another incumbent obstacle to digitization is the lack of technical instructions from the Ministry of Manpower regarding online and hybrid learning. On this point Fauziah, Director of Instructors and Training Personnel at the Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development at the Ministry of Manpower, reported to ILO that technical guidelines are currently being developed, and will become a benchmark for future instructors and provide guidance on the implementation of effective digital training.

This would hopefully further accelerate the transformation of digital training in Indonesia, especially in BLKs, to reach even wider participation from all over the country.

This programme was carried out by the ILO through the Women’s Workforce Readiness and Development Programme in STEM funded by J.P. The Morgan Chase Foundation, seeking to provide women in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines with training in non-technical and technical skills related to STEM, employability and leadership. ■

ONLINE TRAINING IS NOT ONLY RELEVANT AS AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BUT IT IS THE FUTURE OF TRAINING

How Two Doctors Designed a Vital Telemedicine Service for Pakistan

By Alice Rawsthorn

An Interview with Sara Saeed Khurram and Iffat Zafar Aga

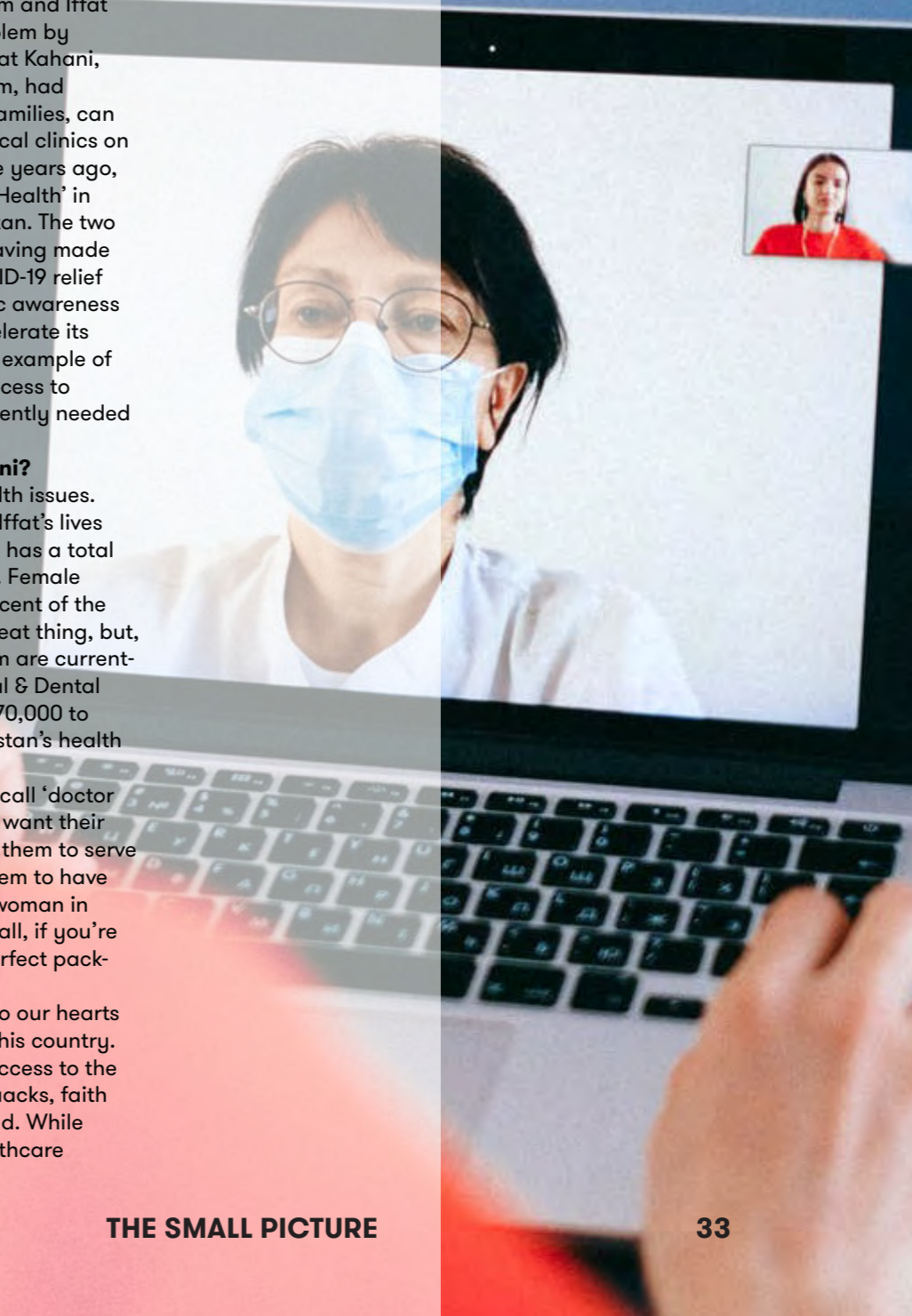
Pakistan is a country of 200 million people, less than half of whom have access to a doctor. Two Pakistani doctors, Sara Saeed Khurram and Iffat Zafar Aga, decided to tackle this problem by designing a telemedicine service, Sehat Kahani, whereby female doctors who, like them, had stopped practicing to focus on their families, can work from home to treat patients in local clinics on live video links or apps. Founded three years ago, Sehat Kahani, which means ‘Story of Health’ in Urdu, now operates throughout Pakistan. The two founders told Alice Rawsthorn how, having made an important contribution to the COVID-19 relief effort, their project now has the public awareness and political support required to accelerate its future growth, serving as an inspiring example of telemedicine’s potential to improve access to healthcare in countries where it is urgently needed

AR: Why did you found Sehat Kahani?

SSK: It evolved around two major health issues. The first is very connected to my and Iffat’s lives – the issue of doctors’ rights. Pakistan has a total medical workforce of 170,000 doctors. Female doctors make up around 60 to 70 per cent of the total medical workforce, which is a great thing, but, unfortunately, only 23 percent of them are currently registered with the Pakistan Medical & Dental Council and work, which means that 70,000 to 80,000 doctors are missing from Pakistan’s health ecosystem.

This happens because of what we call ‘doctor brides’, in that parents in our country want their daughters to become doctors, not for them to serve communities as physicians, but for them to have better hands in marriage. If you’re a woman in Pakistan, if you’re a doctor, if you’re tall, if you’re thin, if you’re pretty, you make the perfect package for an arranged marriage.

The second problem is very close to our hearts – the inaccessibility of healthcare in this country. Over half the population don’t have access to the help of qualified doctors and go to quacks, faith healers or midwives and nurses instead. While there are a lot of problems in the healthcare



infrastructure, we believe that the inability of our medical workforce to work to its full potential contributes a lot to preventing the majority of the people in Pakistan from having access to health-care.

Iffat and I both went through the doctor bride issue. When I had a small daughter, I couldn't work and fell into postpartum depression, and Iffat lost her baby in a premature birth so left her job. The next time she conceived, she thought that she might lose the baby again. We felt that so many female doctors in Pakistan go through these traumas, that we could help by making provision for them to practise from their homes and to use telemedicine technology to connect to patients in communities where doctors are not accessible. That's how Sehat Kahani came into being.

AR: What difficulties have you had to overcome since founding Sehat Kahani three years ago?

IZA: There were a lot of challenges. When we presented the concept, some people said it wouldn't work.

Telemedicine had come into Pakistan in the late 1990s, but most of those programmes were funded by donors. There were questions as to whether people would pay for telemedicine, how the system would work and whether patients would trust a doctor they could only meet online.

When we started reaching out to the right kind of communities for us to work with, it required a lot of education from our end to convince people that they would benefit from the initiative.

In the early days we'd sit on the floor with women from those communities and explain what the service would be like for them, that the doctors lived in the city and had all graduated from prestigious hospitals. These were the challenges, but over time, we've overcome them and learned a lot along the way.

AR: Was it also challenging for you to operate as an all-female team of doctors?

SSK: Yes, because Pakistan is still a patriarchal country, and many people still think that women are not able to do a lot of things. But one thing that has gone in our favour is that medicine is considered to be a noble profession in Pakistan, and while many female patients feel uncomfortable going to male doctors, we don't see male patients being as uncomfortable about female doctors, because they respect the profession. We started Sehat Kahani with the idea of creating telemedicine clinics in low-income communities, which are majorly patriarchal in nature, with the men taking all the decisions.

When we started opening clinics with nurses working as intermediaries and helping the patients to connect to female doctors, one of the things that worked in our favour is that when women and children came in, they saw families getting consultations from a female nurse and a female doctor. So, there was limited male involvement in those clinics.

But as Sehat Kahani evolved, we added a mobile app to our service, to make it better suited to the mass market. Interestingly, 70 per cent of the market for our app are male patients, who are consulting female doctors and seem pretty happy about it. Yes, there are some issues, such as sex issues, urological issues, and psychological issues for which we also need male doctors. And we employ male doctors specifically for them. But,

generally, we've seen that men are more comfortable for themselves and their families to consult female doctors, than to see male doctors.

AR: What was the role of design in Sehat Kahani's development?

SSK: Design has been an essential part of how we have developed each and every service, and each and every product. We were very

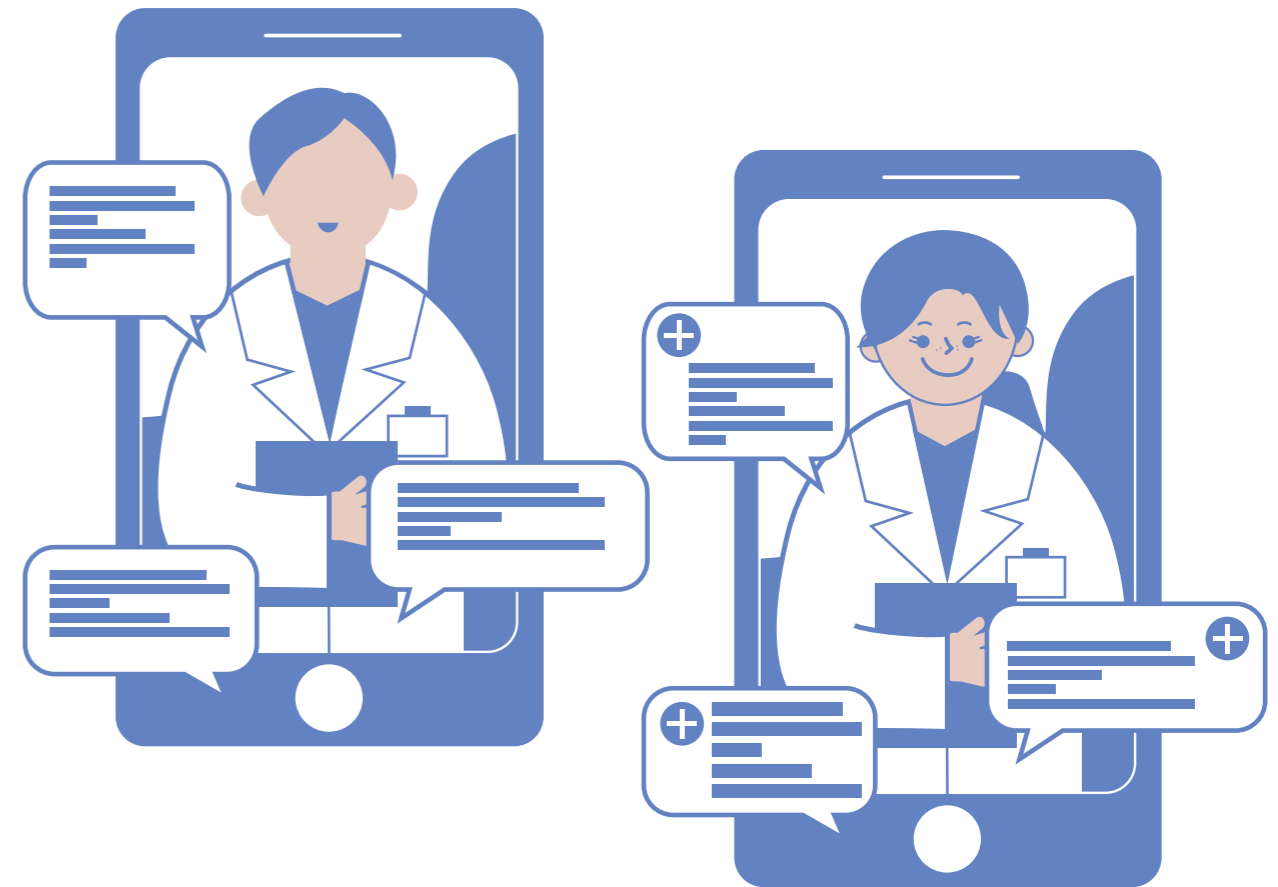
lucky in being associated with a lot of programmes that taught us about design. For example, we were part of the Spring Accelerator programme, which supports businesses whose products and services promise to improve the lives of adolescent girls. Spring Accelerator conducted external research in our communities to find out what healthcare services our patients would look for from a one-stop shop. Through this, we learned that women were not only looking to access general physicians, but as many healthcare services as is possible under one roof. So, for example, our community clinics now also offer access to ultrasound specialists on designated days.

We also learned that mental health is a very important problem faced by people in Pakistan, whether we're talking about low-income communities or high-income communities. While the problems are the same in those communities, the way they are manifested can be very different and through these various design techniques we have been able to constantly evolve our services to better suit the users.

AR: How has Sehat Kahani responded to the COVID-19 crisis in Pakistan?

SSK: When COVID-19 happened, we were scared that as we don't have a very robust healthcare system, it is very difficult for a country like ours to cope with this additional stress. When hospitals

DESIGN HAS BEEN AN ESSENTIAL PART OF HOW WE HAVE DEVELOPED EACH AND EVERY SERVICE, AND EACH AND EVERY PRODUCT



were brimming with COVID-19 patients, what would happen to patients who wouldn't be able to get out of their homes? What about the women and children, and the chronic cases who would need help and wouldn't be able to go to hospital?

Within our company, there was a very interesting scenario where our original base, the telemedicine clinics, had to close down because of the lockdown. We had a young app that had only been on the market for six months and was used by around 15 to 20 patients a day, and we had a corporate-care solution that was being used by six to seven corporates. We thought that either we can be agile and use this opportunity to provide healthcare to a lot of people, or we can sit around and wait for the telemedicine clinics to open again. We chose the first option. We put all our energy into our telemedicine app and went full force in making sure that it would be there whenever a patient needed a consultation with an online doctor. And we started working towards that by creating highly subsidised packages for our corporates and making our retail Sehat Kahani app free for all patients. We partnered with the federal government of Pakistan and provincial governments, and we partnered with corporates and NGOs to provide healthcare services to everyone who needed them.

We created as much outreach as possible for our services, so that anyone who picked up a phone could contact a doctor using the Sehat Kahani app. And because of this, we went from seeing 12 to 15 patients a day on our app, to 700 or 800 patients a day: one in ten of them were suffering from COVID-19. There was also a first-time mother who went into labour at 4am, whose husband was in Dubai working. She was all alone at home and didn't know what to do. A Sehat Kahani doctor helped her get to a tertiary care facility for delivery. We had a 70-year-old man who suffered from cardiac failure in Balochistan, a very remote area of Pakistan with poor healthcare access. We were able to diagnose from his symptoms that he was going through cardiac failure. We had several mental health issues coming up on our app because of the lockdown and the economic crisis, and we were able to help those patients. I think this changed the course for Pakistan in terms of digital healthcare and for Sehat Kahani as a company.

AR: How did you restructure Sehat Kahani, and hire more doctors, to manage such a significant expansion in so short a period of time?

IZA: We already had a network of 1,500 physicians. The idea is that they become part of our

bigger network where they engage in training and health education, so it has been a matter of mobilising the doctors from that pool whenever we needed them.

As Sara explained, when we started doing so many more consultations, we had to mobilise up to 200 additional doctors to work on the app. At one point, we had somewhere around 300 to 350 doctors working on it. They were ready to serve and trained for the core protocols. That's how we were able to adapt so quickly. Whenever a doctor becomes a part of the Sehat Kahani network, they go through extensive training, which not only involves telemedicine, but how they can meet patients' needs using software. They were all trained for COVID protocols, which evolve as government protocols change. We were constantly upgrading those protocols, and all the primary healthcare issues we could foresee through the mobile app. For example, we have had instances where suicidal patients have ended up calling general physicians and not mental health experts, so the general physicians also need to be trained to recognise that those cases need to be referred to specialists.

AR: What impact will your experience of COVID-19 have on Sehat Kahani going forward?

SSK: COVID has taught us a lot of things. Technology adoption in the country was extremely poor, or not at the standard we would have expected. We thought it would take another three to four years for people to really believe in the power of technology, and in the power of telemedicine. But COVID has made people in Pakistan understand its value. Our conversations with corporate partners, governments and stakeholders about telemedicine being the future of healthcare have become really easy. Corporates are subscribing every day. The fact that the federal and provincial governments partnered with a start-up to provide telemedicine services shows that even the government realises the value of digital healthcare.

When we talk about the future of healthcare in a country where the resources are so limited and the healthcare infrastructure is broken, telemedicine can play a very important role. Public healthcare is structured in Pakistan, much like in the UK. The patient goes to a basic healthcare unit, from there to a secondary health unit and then to a tertiary unit. What if we change all the basic health units into telemedicine units, so that each patient is seen by a virtual telemedicine physician rather than a nurse or a midwife? How many patients could you help in their communities with primary healthcare problems by doing that? This is a conversation that's very easy to have with the government now, compared to before.

AR: How do you plan to develop the services you offer?

IZA: We're always looking for new avenues. The idea is that for this year, we want to focus on expanding the mobile app services. Right now, we're focusing on Pakistan, but we're looking at scaling them in other countries too. We also see a huge opportunity in creating versions of the same app to be used by various healthcare facilities, by tertiary care hospitals, for example. And there are other areas of healthcare we can delve into.

AR: And how do you plan to take advantage of the new political support for your work and the growing awareness of it?

SSK: We'll be talking to governments about a proper digital health policy, or for regulation or guidelines for digital health in the country. In order for any service to be legitimate, there has to be a policy or guidelines, which unfortunately are missing in Pakistan at the moment. We're raising our voices on as many government, federal and provincial platforms as possible about this.

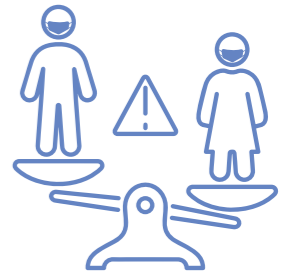
The second thing is that working with the government has given us credibility, so a lot of physicians want to come and work with us to set up virtual clinics using our mobile app. We are also having conversations with the government about upgrading basic health units into telemedicine units. There are currently 6,000 to 7,000 units in Pakistan that are dormant and without doctors but could be upgraded. Of course, these will have to start as small pilot projects that can be upscaled if they show promise. Right now, one out of three people in Pakistan has access to a doctor. We can change that to two out of three.

We also see ourselves as a telemedicine platform that can use Pakistani doctors to help other countries with limited access to healthcare. Bangladesh, for example, but also countries in Africa and Latin America. Our network of doctors and our telemedicine platform can be solutions for them, rather than just for Pakistan. ■

sehatkahani.com

This interview appeared in the October 2020 issue of Wallpaper*, guest edited by Design Emergency, a project by Alice Rawsthorn and Paola Antonelli

COVID-19 Widens Existing Gender Inequalities



A new research brief published in March 2021 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Viet Nam shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has not only exacerbated existing inequalities, but also created new gender gaps.

Despite a remarkably high labour market participation rate (more than 70 per cent of Vietnam's working-age women are in the labour force, compared to the global level of 47.2 per cent and the average of 43.9 per cent in Asia and the Pacific), women in Vietnam face multiple and persistent labour market inequalities, and carry a disproportionate double burden of work and family responsibilities.

The research indicated that the high labour force participation of women in Viet Nam should not be interpreted as an indicator of equal opportunity. In fact, high labour force participation and low unemployment mask relatively poorer employment quality for women.

"Before the COVID-19 pandemic, both women and men had a relatively easy access to jobs, but the quality of such jobs was on average lower among women than among men," said Valentina

Barcucci, ILO Vietnam Labour Economist, lead author of the research.

Female workers were overrepresented in vulnerable employment, particularly in contributing family work. They earned less than men (by 13.7 per cent on monthly wages in 2019), despite comparable working hours and the progressive elimination of gender gaps in educational attainment.

Women were also underrepresented in decision-making jobs. They accounted for nearly half of the labour force, but less than one fourth of overall management roles.

"Again the gap women face in job quality and career development stems from the double burden they carry," said Barcucci. "They spend twice as many hours on household work than men."

COVID-19 has not only exacerbated existing labour market inequalities, but it has created new ones. Women faced an especially severe reduction in working hours during the second quarter of 2020. They left the labour market in larger shares than men. Younger and older women, typically holding the most

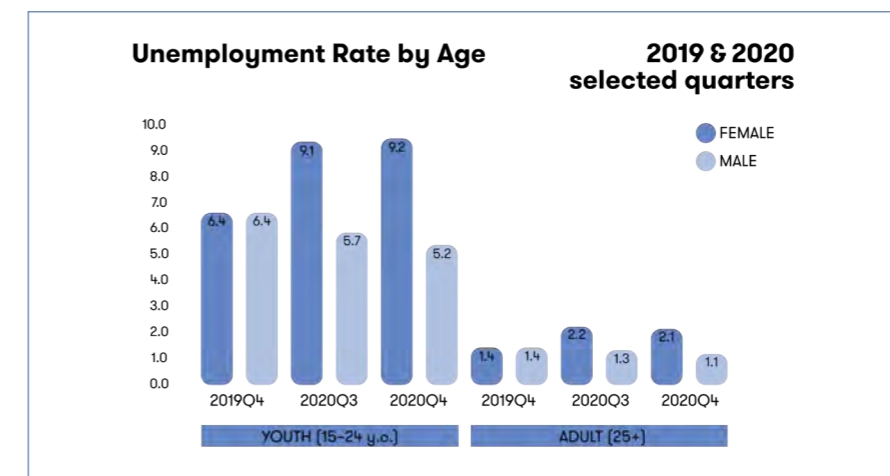
unstable employment arrangements, are particularly likely to have left the labour force.

Women's working hours recovered faster than men, however this was possibly due to the need to work longer hours in order to make-up for the income losses in the second quarter. These elements suggest that the pandemic might have made women's double burden heavier than before the crisis hit.

The impact of COVID-19 on Viet Nam's labour market has not only widened existing inequalities, but also created new ones. Before the pandemic, there was no difference between male and female unemployment rate, but a gap appeared from the third quarter of 2020.

"While at the policy level, the 2019 Labour Code [that came into effect on the 1st January of 2021] has opened opportunities to close such gender gaps, for example in retirement age or removing the ban on female employment in certain occupations, a much more difficult task still awaits Viet Nam. That is changing the mind sets of the Vietnamese men and women themselves which will in turn influence their behaviours in the labour market." said ILO Viet Nam Director, Chang-Hee Lee.

Viet Nam's Socio Economic Development Strategy for 2021-30 is expected to call for gender gaps to be reduced across several areas of the political, economic, and social lives of citizens. If this goal is to be achieved, a genuine process of challenging and eradicating traditional gender inequalities needs to begin. ■



Lua Pad Project: Facing Period Poverty through Waste Reduction and Gender Equity

By Anna Orlando

Around the globe, more than 800 million women menstruate every day and at least five hundred million of those lack adequate resources, including supplies, education and facilities for managing their periods.

Practical consequences of the societal and cultural stigma can be astonishing: worldwide, girls often skip and abandon school since they cannot attend school during menstruation days; in the poorest countries, less than half of all schools and public places have working toilets and half of them have running water, that means no proper places and disposal bins to change the menstrual pads. The lack of toilets intensifies a related hygiene problem, the worldwide misconception that bathing while menstruating can lead to various diseases and infertility. Most women are lacking in education about menstruation, believing it's a disease when the first menarche arrives. Other issues not to be forgotten may be the transactional sex to buy goods such as sanitary products and rituals that exile girls from society during menstruation (i.e. chaupadi, Nepal).

Such rooted stigma marginalizes menstruation and, through the fragility of women's health and safety, enhances the conditions of poverty while diminishing their life opportunities.

The aim of Lua Pad Project is to tackle period poverty and menstrual health management while raising awareness of those issues with

women that have accessibility to products and facilities and diminishing waste production by single use pads in all segments of society.

The first country addressed is Philippines, in particular the indigenous women of the Mangyan minority of the island of Mindoro and one tribe in Palawan. Mangyan communities live in remote areas, especially on the mountains, and are mostly sustaining themselves as hunter gatherers. Interviews and research have been conducted in



the villages, pointing out that menstruations were always followed by stigma and lack of hygiene. Superstitions about the period are such that a menstruating woman is believed to make vegetable rot by her simple touch, that the man that will put his lap on her legs would become bold, and that she is not allowed to wash herself for the whole week. Women spend all their time at home, mostly in their beds, in the discomfort of not being able to protect themselves, with two or more trousers. They avoid doing the

chores for the whole week, letting the men take care of the family.

Due to lack of money and physical remoteness, women mostly use makeshift materials like leaves, rice bags and fabric scraps to absorb the menstrual blood, and when they can afford the plastic pads they use each pad for 24 hours, both methods causing infections and discomfort. In the latter case the used pads, instead of being burnt – as it is habit for these communities for the majority of plastic waste - are buried under the ground of the forest due to menstrual taboos, polluting ground and groundwater.

Besides, family men manage the money for the menstrual products and oblige women and girls to avoid touching water or grow and sell vegetables for the duration of their period. Many women and girls confess hiding their menstruations in order to be able to conduct a normal life.

The Lua rewashable sanitary pads are a pragmatic solution for all the women in need and have been prototyped with various materials, from anti leak material coming from used umbrellas to used cotton t-shirts. Prototypes have been enhanced during time through a trial-error process made possible by the feedback and inputs of the women and girls of the villages.

The reduction of menstruation waste brings to environmental sustainability, moving up in the waste management hierarchy: on average a woman uses 16.000 pads

in her entire life, approximately the amount of 150 kg of plastic.

A core aspect of the project is furthermore its social sustainability: reducing period poverty and the accessibility to menstruation products and enhancing the menstruation health management by raising awareness and promoting education during gatherings and conversations with women and girls of the villages.

The project has been approved by the National Commission of Indigenous People (NCIP), the agency of the national government of the Philippines that is responsible for protecting the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Philippines, that didn't see any harm in the objective and the implications of the project's donation.

Lua is now present in Philippines and Colombia and the long-term target is for its rawashable sanitary pads to be sold worldwide to all women who can afford their cost, and with such proceeds produce and donate the same quantity of the pads sold to women in need. ■

LuaPad Project was initiated by Anna Orlando, Italian architect and building engineer, and Cindy Suaza, Colombian Doctor in political science specialized in gender equity, and with the precious support of Melody Ledesma, a brilliant local of Puerto Galera. The project has been developed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mindoro island where they were living since before the lockdown and working on WASH projects for remote elementary schools of the native communities, as well as coordinating COVID-19 masks donation and food donations.

@luapadproject

China Logs



China's Experience of Poverty Alleviation

On April 6, 2021, the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China released a white paper entitled, "Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution."

The white paper reviews China's fight against poverty under the leadership and united direction of the Chinese Communist Party, especially the eradication phase that began with the 18th National Party Congress. It introduces China's experience and practice of poverty reduction, and shares the country's experiences in poverty reduction and eradication. The white paper is an important historical document that provides a panoramic reflection on the development of China's poverty reduction program.

The white paper shows how the Communist Party led the people to victory from revolution, established a new China, and took a new course which led to prosperity for the people. The opening up and reform period has enhanced China's developmental path, and accelerated the poverty reduction process. China's development has entered a new era, and China's poverty reduction has entered a new historical stage - elimination. By the end of 2020, following an eight year period since the 18th National Party Congress, China brought its poverty alleviation endeavors to an end on time and as planned. Current standards have been met for a rural poor population of 98.99 million to be lifted out of poverty, which includes 832 poor counties, and 128,000 poor villages. Winning the battle against poverty in China speaks to the world as a miraculous success.

The fight against poverty has changed China's rural areas in a historic and comprehensive way, according to the white paper, and can be called another revolution in the countryside. Poverty reduction has stimulated overall development of China's rural areas. China laid a solid foundation for building a modern socialist China and realizing the Second Century Goal. China has secured a complete victory in the battle against extreme poverty, eliminating overall and extreme poverty for the first time in its history of thousands of years, and realizing a century-long aspiration of the Chinese people.

Having a targeted strategy was China's magic

weapon in the battle against poverty, and a major innovation in poverty reduction theory and practice. China proposed and implemented six targeted goals of efforts to identify the poor accurately, arrange targeted programs, utilize capital efficiently, take household-based measures, dispatch first Party secretaries based on village conditions, and achieve the set goals. Economic booster goals were set, namely more job opportunities, relocating poor people from inhospitable areas, compensating for economic losses associated with reducing ecological damage, improving education in impoverished areas, and providing subsistence allowances for those unable to shake off poverty through their own efforts alone will solve the "five issues" of who should help, who should be helped, how to help, how to evaluate whether someone has emerged from poverty, and how to ensure those people stay free from poverty, to increase the overall effectiveness of the poverty alleviation strategy.

The white paper emphasizes that the targeted poverty alleviation strategy not only ensures the overall victory of the fight against poverty, but also effectively improved the modernization of China's governance system and capabilities, and an enriched and developed conceptual basis for a national strategy fit for the new era.

The path to poverty reduction with Chinese characteristics and anti-poverty theory with Chinese characteristics has been explored and expanded into a fully worked out anti-poverty mentality which has enabled further paths to be found for poverty reduction. The white paper focuses on a people-centered, poverty-first approach to governance,

eradicating poverty by means of development, advancing the process of poverty reduction based on conditions on the ground, giving play to the capacity of the poor, and gathering all forces to form a strong synergy, in order to establish genuinely Chinese poverty reduction proposals and plans.

China cannot develop without the world, and the world cannot develop without China. China actively participates in international poverty reduction cooperation and is an advocate, promot-

THE WHITE PAPER SHOWS HOW THE COMMUNIST PARTY LED THE PEOPLE TO VICTORY FROM REVOLUTION, ESTABLISHED A NEW CHINA, AND TOOK A NEW COURSE WHICH LED TO PROSPERITY FOR THE PEOPLE

er and contributor to international poverty reduction. The white paper points out that China, which accounts for nearly one-fifth of the world's population, has completely eradicated absolute poverty and achieved the poverty reduction goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule, making significant contributions to global poverty reduction and human development. China is willing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in poverty reduction with other countries, join hands in advancing the international poverty reduction process, and make greater contributions to building a human community with a shared poverty-free future.

Eliminating absolute poverty is not the end point, but the starting point of a new era and struggle. China is still the largest developing country in the world. There is still a long way to go to solve the problem of unbalanced and inadequate development, narrow the gap in development between urban and rural areas, and realize all-round human development and prosperity of all. China will continue to consolidate and expand its poverty alleviation efforts, engage in rural revitalization, and promote this with strong measures and forces. The white paper describes the bright prospects of China's rural revitalization and development between 2035 and 2050, and points out that in the future, China will continue to move towards achieving all-round development and a higher level of prosperity for all. ■

The full text of the white paper is 30,000 words long. It includes a foreword and concluding remarks, and five parts I. The Solemn Commitment of the CPC; II. Final Victory in the Fight Against Extreme Poverty; III. The Strategy of Targeted Poverty Alleviation; IV. Exploring a New Path of Poverty Alleviation; V. A Global Community of Shared Future Free from Poverty. For the full text, please see: http://language.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202104/06/WS606bf7a31024ad0bab3c43_1.html (bilingual version)

How Design Can Help in Poverty Alleviation

By **Tang Jian**

Dean of the Design Institute for Poverty Alleviation and Director of the Urban-Rural Cooperative Development Center of the China Industrial Design Association

Poverty alleviation is one of China's most important national policies, and presents as a multifaceted dilemma that goes beyond current levels of poverty, to address issues of industrial and sustainable development. Aside from helping people earn more, poverty alleviation is all about addressing regional economic imbalance and lifting the quality of life in the poorest parts of the country. A long term approach is the only way to implement industrial development in this form, improving the variety, quality, branding, character, and type of products, and increasing awareness of ecological value, creating an environment of fair opportunity, and paying attention to natural ecological capacity. We need to find value as we set out on the path of realization between temporal and long-term development in which we bridge gaps between ownership and use, advantages and shortcomings, parts and the whole, plans and updates, and then under the principle of efficiency and low-consumption, achieve our most ambitious goals. For this we need design thinking, system thinking and digital thinking.

In this context, the China Industrial Design Association established a Design Institute for Poverty Alleviation in November 2018, charged with pivoting design from the industrial to the social. The Institute is a response to the Design Poverty Alleviation Initiative set up with the UN Industrial Development Organization and the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology in April 2018. The Initiative urges countries to strengthen their poverty alleviation work in design and harness the power of originality, morality, emotion, and aesthetics to take on the common goal of poverty elimination, and form economic, social and environmental circulation for the good of all, effectively enhancing industrial vitality and human value, promoting prosperity, protecting the earth,

and contributing to the realization of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Design Institute for Poverty Alleviation summed up the achievements of the Association's members over many years, and came up with "ten models and ten measures" for design poverty alleviation that would inform national guidance on the topic. The Industrial Design Association helps connect, coordinate, support, empower and promote relations between local authorities with their development needs and members who directly implement design poverty alleviation work. Its main work comprises:

1. Refining production knowledge, methods and tools from practice, disseminating knowledge by organizing trainings and field research, and

recommending professional service providers or teams to match the design needs of product and industrial development locally;

2. Defining and establishing procedures and working standards for product design and industrial design services for poverty alleviation design work, formulating fee collection rules and standard contract formats for public welfare projects. Providing a normalized operation work platform which includes but is not limited to knowledge management, expert databases and policy inquiry, establishing a winning evaluation mechanism for service work, and enabling public welfare activities and social enterprises to embark on a regular and systematic path;

3. In accordance with the specific needs of government bodies at all levels in poverty-stricken areas, establishing a local public welfare industrial innovation and development thinktank to investigate and study the core issues of regional industrial innovation and development; bringing in experts and entrepreneurs to study underlying local

THE INITIATIVE URGES COUNTRIES TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORK IN DESIGN AND HARNESS THE POWER OF ORIGINALITY, MORALITY, EMOTION, AND AESTHETICS TO TAKE ON THE COMMON GOAL OF POVERTY ELIMINATION, AND FORM ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CIRCULATION FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

We believe that all the way from the product to industrial application to social needs, poverty alleviation needs design

causes of poverty, and develop solutions to common issues in regional economic development; doing demonstration projects for regional economic innovation and development, and establishing working models and learning benchmarks.

The success of designing poverty alleviation projects depends firstly on business success and the capacity to create wealth in poor areas and among poor populations. Design innovation can lead to business success. I personally think that when we are not strong enough, we should first follow, survive and improve through micro-innovation. When we become leaders in our market segment, we can then innovate and lead by half steps. These half-steps refer to putting in the hard work in the existing market, and bravely leaping into unknown territories to create new technologies, new business models and products to meet novel scenarios and needs. To maintain the momentum of sustainable development, we must dare to leave our comfort zone, confront imbalances head-on, and spiral upwards between imbalances and rebalances, enhancing innovation and regional economic development as we go.

Since its establishment, the Design Institute for Poverty Alleviation has organized and carried out a series of surveys on the needs of industrial development in poverty alleviation areas and the

gathering and matching of service resources. In practice, we have gradually realized that relying on the creative power of China Industrial Design Association designers, supply chain integration, and the integration of new retail channels has indeed the capacity to help farmers and artisans increase their income levels. There is still a gap in the ultimate goal of designing poverty alleviation. This ultimate goal is to create new pillar industries for the local government at the level of industrial design and regional economic development, truly realize the integrated development of agriculture, industry and service industries, and create as much value as possible. To do this, remaining local and realizing value is key to establishing an industrial highland in regional and even national market segments, and setting a threshold for industrial development as well as new momentum for sustainable development.

Design poverty alleviation work has a dual focus: rural industrial development and rural talent cultivation. We will not only be a thinktank for government industrial development and rural revitalization in poor areas, but also work with industrial service platforms and demonstration zones. With industry and information technology departments and China's industrial design forces as the core, local governments, government

platforms, state enterprises and social forces should be brought together as much as possible to work hard for the development of industries in poverty-stricken areas. In addition, with a paucity of talent for industrial development at prefecture-level, notably in counties, districts and sub-districts, it is necessary to establish lifelong education and careers with local human resources and social security departments, vocational education and professional education, science and technology, and industry departments. The key is to develop models and strive for professional and general talent capable of meeting the challenges of regional economic development.

Design focus should change according to the stage of poverty alleviation at stake. In the initial stage, the focus of poverty alleviation should be to help poor people meet their basic living needs. Design must find sub-optimal solutions with minimal resource consumption, meet basic functional needs and aesthetic appeals, and seek comparative product advantages through design and marketing. In the second stage, poverty alleviation needs to solve the problems of innovation and development and industrial system competitiveness. It is here that industrial design is needed, and advantageous systems of industrial development are needed for maximum efficiency, low cost, and best practice.

In the third stage, poverty alleviation turns to regional sustainable development, ecologicalization, scientification, and digital development. In

this stage, it is necessary to design an industrial system for all-round improvements, realize interactive capacity to connect reality and the virtual world, and work to blur the borders between the natural and the artificial. This blend of reality and the virtual, through the establishment of a socialized design service system, will help us achieve economic, intellectual and spiritual poverty alleviation. We believe that all the way from the product to industrial application to social needs, poverty alleviation needs design. ■

This article is based on an interview with the author in the September 2020 issue of *Design* magazine entitled, "Design Evolution -- From Product Design, to Industrial Design to Social Design".



Design Education Empowers Poverty Alleviation

By **Ma Muqun**
Dean and Professor, School of Art and Design,
Lanzhou Institute of Technology

Lanzhou Institute of Technology is an applied engineering college, upgraded in 2012 to be able to issue graduate degrees. As an institution in the west of China, participating in poverty alleviation has been an inevitable responsibility. The Institute has been intervening in poverty alleviation projects by way of design since 2015. This was when one of our professors visited Dingxi in Weiyuan county as deputy head of science and technology. Dingxi is China's largest producer of Chinese medicinal material, situated in a county considered impoverished at state level. The local government is urging farmers to plant more herbs for medicinal purposes as a way of escaping poverty. The professor asked me help the local herb growers develop e-commerce sites. It happened that we had a web design course, so we assigned this task to the teachers and classmates. We guided students in applying design to poverty alleviation, in brand planning, local product and farm product packaging, rural tourism photobook design, rural e-commerce web design, and other visual communication projects.

From the school's perspective, applied bachelor's studies emphasize serving the local economy, contribution, and indispensability. For a highly applied art design major, practical links are essential course material, so design for poverty alleviation is a gold mine for us. The society has a design demand, and we get a large number of real projects to work on.

In addition to professional purposes, our participation in designing poverty alleviation schemes has historical, geographic and talent-related reasons. Gansu has a rich history and culture, diverse ethnic cultures, and fascinating natural landscapes. However, there are many impoverished counties in the province, many of which are poverty-stricken. The Southern Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, over a 100 kilometers away from Lanzhou, are hard to reach areas in terms of poverty alleviation work. As we are relatively close



by, we are well aware of the needs of people in these areas, which increases our ability to communicate and work together with the locals. In fact, 70% of our students come from rural areas, and their families may not yet be rich, so they have a strong endogenous motivation to change their own hometowns.

Design for poverty alleviation needs a systematic approach. To improve efficiency, we should reduce links in the chain and head directly for the grassroots organizations and businesses that need our services. Our approach is "proactively approach, serve door-to-door." With Lanzhou as the center, the area has Hekou town to the west, which is in need of souvenirs and creative products to represent the ancient cultural streets of the Xigu district town. To the east, Qingcheng in Yuzhong county needs design to support public welfare services, using the form of architectural animation to explore the charm of the ancient

buildings of the Luo Family Courtyard and Qingcheng Academy. We used 3D printing technology to develop cultural and creative educational toys using the traditional architectural tenon structure. To the north, we have the "Roses Town", and to the south, lilies grown in Xiguoyuan town, the "Hometown of Chinese Lilies" in Qilihe district, require packaging design.

The school established the Silk Road Lacquer Art Center and the Western China Ethnic Culture Research Center, focusing on connecting parts of intangible heritage with poverty alleviation projects, focused on ethnic minorities. The eastern and southern parts of Gansu are rich in lacquer trees, with an annual output of more than 50,000 kilos of lacquer. Through the study and training of lacquer painting and lacquer art, we can help develop the industrial chain for lacquer, add cultural value, and increase farmers' income. Design can give new life to "intangible heritage", so that these excellent traditional techniques can be passed on, to benefit modern society. Such design interventions also give the inheritors of "intangible heritage" and folk arts and crafts the opportunity to get in touch with new information and try out better materials.

We took part in the "Intangible Heritage + Poverty Alleviation" project initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Together with the project team of Lanzhou Jiaotong University, we carried out research and design services for two forms of intangible cultural heritage -- Linxia Brick Carving and Baoan Yaodao.

In 2019, Maiji district of Tianshui city held an empowerment training class for poor disabled people. We selected teachers to train them in creative handicrafts and lacquer painting. We hope to help the disabled gain skills that will help them overcome their closed environment, enhance their self-confidence and integrate better.

The 2019 graduation design topic we gave students was to design for rural tourism in their hometown. More than 30 villages were selected from 14 prefectures and

National Intangible Cultural Heritage-Linxia Brick Sculpture / Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism "Intangible Heritage + Poverty Alleviation" Waist Knife Project

Empowerment training for the disabled in Maiji district, Tianshui city





National Intangible Cultural Heritage-Linxia Brick Sculpture / Gansu Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism "Intangible Heritage + Poverty Alleviation" Waist Knife Project

cities in the province, and 47 sets of graduation designs were produced. Premium-level tourism, scenic area planning, rural beautification and reconstruction, packaging design for local products, and cultural and creative product development were all explored and developed.

Participating in poverty alleviation has been of great significance to teachers and students majoring in design. Students had real cases to work on, and could apply their study of real needs and markets in a down-to-earth manner, putting user thinking and product thinking into their design, and communicating face-to-face with their clients. Their work was more grounded and less blindly ambitious as a result. The design for poverty alleviation project made us think again about teaching methods for the design major. For example, our graduation project was completed by asking real questions, one question per person, with hypothetical or virtual questions not permitted. The implantation of a large number of real cases stopped us working behind closed doors and gave us the opportunity to work hard to improve each professional course. In the process of intervention, we look to the requirements of the Ministry of Education's first-class undergraduate majors and first-class courses, to further develop our teaching content, and make it more innovative and challenging.

Design for poverty alleviation requires designers to use insight, design systems, and multidisciplinary knowledge to reorganize existing resources and reactivate traditional materials. New production and consumption systems can be developed through the application of new concepts and technologies to generate lifestyle changes and cultural shaping, and to activate the endogenous power of local culture. We believe we can cultivate a new generation of designers with insight, stay close to the public welfare mission of poverty alleviation design, and ensure the aesthetics, practicality and integrity of design work. We look forward to more collaborations with politics, industry, academia, research, and business, so that design can continue to assist poverty alleviation efforts turn into sustainable development projects. ■

This article is based on an interview in the September 2020 issue of *Design* magazine, originally entitled, "Design is the "Coordinator" of Poverty Alleviation System Engineering".

Village Mothers Take the E-Commerce Route

By Yang Biqiong

E-commerce has proven to be a powerful weapon in China's poverty alleviation and rural revitalization plan. In 2016, it was officially included in China's catalogue of tools to defeat extreme poverty and in the last few years it has been promoted in rural economic development. This has been done by improving internet infrastructure and building online platforms, integrating resources, and strengthening personnel training. According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, online retail sales in poverty-stricken counties nationwide reached 239.2 billion yuan in 2019, a year-on-year increase of 33%, driving up employment and income for 5 million farmers in poverty-stricken areas. Rural e-commerce is now a driving force in the transformation of rural economic development, optimization of industrial structure, promotion of commerce and trade, innovative employment, and higher incomes.

To look at the impact on incomes and poverty alleviation of employment and entrepreneurship via e-commerce, we should turn first to a powerful group of actors: female middle-aged rural residents. In central and western areas of the country in particular, male laborers leave their home areas to work, leaving middle-aged women with the brunt of the responsibility of caring for old and young at home. With limited local economic development, these left-behind women can only work in agriculture, thereby falling into an economic trap.

The "Orange Mothers University" project initiated by Youcheng Social Entrepreneur Foundation works with older rural women who left their hometowns to work and returned due to family responsibilities. The project evolved from a poverty alleviation project called, "Let Moms Go Home and Start a Business" launched by Youcheng in 2017. The name "Orange Mothers" reflects a warm image of rural mothers.

From the start, the project used training in e-commerce as its main mode. The development of e-commerce in rural areas can cut through the middleman, linking rural and urban markets directly, and achieve a two-way cycle. However,



despite the rapid implementation of China's "internet plus" model, rural e-commerce in poorer areas is still in its infancy. This is because, in addition to lagging infrastructure construction and low levels of marketization, human resources and limited trading skills are a major constraint. Youcheng's e-commerce training program adopts a combination of online and offline methods, first with face-to-face lectures ranging from three to five days to ten days, followed by a year-long period of tutoring. The purpose is to train middle-aged rural women to become the local "e-commerce intermediaries" that can bring produce and market together.

Enabling rural mothers to start their own businesses or find jobs through e-commerce has been hard to put into practice. In addition to physical fatigue and poor financial skills, rural women face deep-rooted prejudices on the basis of their gender. This means that e-commerce skills training

The platform has generated interest in the “Orange Mothers University” project, bringing a group of rural mothers into the spotlight



Photographs provided by Youcheng Social Entrepreneur Foundation



is just one part. The “Orange Mothers University” also focuses on empowering rural mothers in terms of psychology and leadership, helping rural mothers find employment and entrepreneurship, increase income, enhance self-confidence, and achieve self-empowerment.

Youcheng Foundation is also trying to use the power of the internet and creativity to make public welfare power go further. In 2019, Youcheng participated in Tencent’s “I’m an entrepreneur” public awareness campaign, and worked with professional creative and technical teams to launch a public welfare “Time Machine”. On the QQ reading platform, users are encouraged to use their own reading time to exchange education funds with rural mothers. In 2020, Youcheng promoted “Women’s Volleyball National Wave Show - Rural Mother’s Embroidery” on the “I’m an entrepreneur” platform, combining women’s volleyball symbolizing the spirit of the times with the Miao craftsmanship of rural mothers. Users can select patterns related to the women’s volleyball team and custom an exclusive embroidered costume.

“I am an entrepreneur” is a public service advertising contest founded by Tencent Charity Foundation, Tencent Advertising and Tencent User

Research and Experience Design (CDC). It has been held four times so far. The contest strives to become a socialized profit-making platform. It integrates Tencent’s global resources and leverages its advertising traffic and technical advantages, while also connecting traditional public welfare organizations with creative institutions in advertising, design, and branding. The aim is for multiple philanthropic forces to cooperate to form a public welfare ecology. The platform has generated interest in the “Orange Mothers University” project, bringing a group of rural mothers into the spotlight.

As of May 2020, Youcheng’s “Orange Mothers University” project has been deployed in 76 counties (including 37 impoverished ones) in eight provinces across the country. A total of 15,661 people have been trained, and of them, 65% have grown their incomes through employment and entrepreneurship in e-commerce, with a per capita income increase of between 500 and 3,000 yuan. The increase in income has increased the self-confidence of rural mothers and transformed their families. They used their creativity to bring their hometown to more people, and at the same time they also allowed themselves to live out a new face that they could not have imagined in the past. ■

Poverty Alleviation in Trial and Practice in the Rainforest Village of Hebian

Interview with **Li Xiaoyun**, Chair and Professor of Liberal Arts, China Agricultural University
By **Yang Biqiong**

Li Xiaoyun, a professor at China Agricultural University and national expert in poverty alleviation, visited an area in the far south of China in early 2015 and discovered Hebian village in Mengban township, a place populated by the Yao people in the Mengla county tropical rainforest area. He went to conduct a survey on poverty, and on arrival felt that Hebian suited the kind of long-term project he had in mind. "Although I have been working in poverty alleviation for a long time, I have never done a long-term trial like this, having always worked on smaller tasks," he said. He established himself in the village and developed an open-ended yet comprehensive strategy that aimed to impact the whole village. In March, Li Xiaoyun registered a Mengla county non-profit organization called Action Against Poverty, and took his team to Hebian to begin the poverty alleviation trial.

Mengla county where Hebian village is located, was registered nationally as among the poorest until 2019. Hebian village was registered as a poor village in 2011. Of the 206 residents living in 57 households most belong to the Blue Yao ethnic group, named for the indigo dye of the women's headcloths. The trial team conducted analysis of the village's situation and determined that Hebian was a deeply impoverished place in which residents were trapped in a cycle of poverty. Their proposed plan included making full use of Hebian's climatic, rainforest and cultural resources to commercialize small scale conferences, leisure, healthcare and nature education. With the support of the government, Li Xiaoyun's team would work with villagers to develop a new business: "Yao

Mothers' Guesthouses". While this was underway, village beautification, toilet and kitchen revolutions, and the construction of conferences and catering facilities were incorporated into the comprehensive poverty management work of Hebian village.

In an effort to stop profits from these poverty alleviation actions seeping out of the new sector, Hebian authorities invited all villagers to invest in guest rooms and form a Hebian Village Farmer's Cooperative - The Yao People's Rainforest Cooperative. The Cooperative was made responsible for operating all the guesthouses in the Village. The experimental team provided technical support, while a young management team was being trained up to take charge of daily operations. From 2017 onwards, guesthouses had developed to the point at which Hebian could work on nature education, family travel, health care, small conferences and catering services, which led to a transformation in livelihood strategies for the villagers.

After five years of poverty alleviation, the village of Hebian has undergone many changes. It was clear that living conditions were improved and the village looked beautiful. Villagers were now earning much more than before. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 changed all of that, as heavy losses resulted from restrictions to business development, and farmers fell back into the poverty trap. At the end of the year, on the eve of the Spring Festival in 2021, Professor Li Xiaoyun accepted an exclusive interview with this journal to talk about the situation and the future of Hebian village.

Have you been in Hebian village recently? What was the village like before?

Yes, I came on January 26. When I first arrived, I noticed that everyone was talking about the price of gluten-free beans - 11 yuan per kilo. This time last year, the same beans were rotting in the villagers' fields. They were saying that this year, a kilo of peppers are being sold for 40 yuan. I once discussed the re-agriculturalization of Hebian village in an article, and recognize the strengthening of this trend. "Smallholder resilience" has a lot to do with it. Of course, this resilience has a direct relationship with the global market. Villagers say that the high price of gluten-free beans and peppers is because vegetables from Laos cannot cross the border. As Spring Festival approached, farmers killed pigs as they would in any other good year, and it seemed as though the impact of the coronavirus had not been felt too much. Looking at the clean and beautiful houses, the riverside village in the rainforest looked more and more beautiful each time, under its blue skies and white clouds. The fight against poverty has provided a basic livelihood guarantee for the farmers in the village. I do wonder, if we went back to 2015, would we see such beaming faces on the villagers as we do now?

The business driven by the Yao Mothers' Guesthouses has raised incomes in the past few years. However, this type of industry relies heavily on tourists. Surely the village has gone through enormous challenges this year?

From the beginning of 2020, the tourist industry in Hebian village has suffered greatly. Apart from one conference held in December, we have had only a handful of visitors all year. We couldn't put on any winter camps, summer camps or conferences due to restrictions. Winter and summer vacations are our main income generating seasons. The winter camps are normally held during Spring Festival 2021, but they were also cancelled. New business fell off a cliff because of COVID-19, and average losses per farmer reached 5,000 to 10,000 yuan. The village as a whole lost an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 yuan.

You mentioned re-agriculturalization and the resilience of small-scale farmers. With the epidemic, new business has stagnated. Where did resilience show up in Hebian village? What part did it play?

Due to the impact of the coronavirus, the actual income levels of many farmers fell back to 2015 and 2016 levels. Family incomes in 2020 were little more than 10,000 yuan, mainly from work outside the village. In fact, in 2019, the riverside experiment team has already noticed how important diversifi-

cation of household incomes was for coping with risk. It had begun to deploy different types of agricultural demonstrations including winter vegetables, Chinese medicinal materials, fish farming, beekeeping, and winemaking. But as income from the new business grew so rapidly in 2018 and 2019, most farmers failed to realize the significance and role of re-agriculturalization. After major setbacks in 2020, those farmers who actively participated in the agricultural demonstration showed a significantly stronger ability to withstand risk, earning between 10,000 and 60,000 yuan as a household, which greatly compensated for the loss of income from the new business. At the beginning of 2021, market demand for winter vegetables was strong, and more farmers began planting them. There are about ten households in the village planting winter vegetables. In January 2021 alone, each household received between 3,000 and 10,000 yuan from their crops.

Will 2021 see a bounce back to pre-pandemic times for new business?

Money from the new business in Hebian village actually created an income chain, in which visitors not only increased the income of Yao Mothers' guesthouses directly, but drove sales of food and commodities, as well as farm produce. Aquaculture, especially fish farming, as well as poultry and vegetable farming, also grew. More importantly, new house building took off. So when it comes to new business formats, what we are actually talking about is a new industrial chain driven by the guesthouses. In this sense, the development of new business formats in Hebian village was of great significance. But the more interwoven the incomes, the more everyone is connected to external risk. So whether the new village business format can be fully restored in 2021 or not depends on the COVID-19 situation. Once the pandemic has passed worldwide, [I anticipate that] tourism will be the first industry to rebound.

In any case, in 2021, Hebian village will see an income rebound from the new business format. Whether it is agricultural or non-agricultural industries, it is necessary to examine its sustainability from a long-term perspective. Both forms depend on the macro environment: the economic development of the country and the economic development of the world. Hebian is no economic or social island. Remarkably, a small mountain village that few people know is closely connected with the global economy.

In the face of such a massive crisis, were villagers put off the modernization project? Are there any villagers who now want to withdraw from the new industry?



Hebian Village (Before)



Hebian Village (After)

The purpose of the experiment was to bring Hebian village into modern life. Huang Zhicheng of the Yao Rainforest Cooperative was involved in building a kindergarten in Maocaoshan village. He told me: “Mr. Li, I stayed there for a month before returning to Hebian village. Hebian village is great.” Hebian is the biggest trial in the area. For every villager, whether in material or in spiritual terms, we have closed the gap between village life and modernity. The villagers are pretty satisfied with their living conditions and environment, but they are also realistic. This is not a society that depends on cash. In a sense, even if there were no new type of industry, they would still have their land, their labor, and their skills to support them. Village leader Deng Linguo said the villagers were not afraid of the epidemic. If they had no cash, we would still grow rice and fruit, and raise pigs. Many experts say that “the pandemic stops in the countryside.” I understand that what they are talking about is not that the epidemic will not happen in the countryside, but that the village will have the ability to resist external risks. I am a developmentalist, and I will not ignore the necessity of modernization in the countryside just because of such abilities.

No one wants to withdraw from the new business. Even during the pandemic, a sporadic of individual tourists still came, and catering services

were kept in motion. In January 2021, several guests stayed for five days, and the farmers who received them earned 1,500 yuan. Farmers say that this income is still easy to come by. The villagers know that the rainforest they live in is a priceless treasure and may bring them benefits, so they have mobilized the whole village to repair retaining walls in the village during the slack time, because they think the current environment in the village is not good enough to satisfy paying customers. The risk has exercised these poor small farmers’ awareness of risk resistance, and elevated their confidence in their own prospects. It is impossible for us to construct a self-sufficient rural utopia in a completely open society with a market economy at its core. Urban groups are also suffering from market fluctuations, and farmers are unlikely to stay out of the matter.

Before the epidemic hit hard, how was the village viewed in the eyes of outsiders with rising incomes? How much recognition and pride do villagers have for the results brought about by the intervention from outside?

The Hebian trial is not simply an experiment in income generation. Liu Yongfu, director of the State Council’s Poverty Alleviation Office, visited Hebian village and talked with the villagers who greeted him as soon as he got off the bus. His first question was, “Where did you learn Mandarin?” Zhou Zhixue, the CEO of the Yao Rainforest Cooperative, told him a story: They drove the cooperative’s pickup truck to Maocao mountain. When they came back, the epidemic had begun. The comrades at the checkpoint stopped the car to ask questions. They all answered in Mandarin, and then the checkpoint staff asked them to get off the car for inspection. Then they all started talking in Yao. The people at the checkpoint were surprised and said: “Hey, it turns out you are local? Everyone in Hebian village can speak Mandarin.” Hebian Experiment opened a kindergarten in the village, hoping to gradually solve the problem of poverty over the longer term. The villagers themselves said that their children would be different in the future. The elementary school teachers in the town also reported that the pupils from Hebian village in recent years were very different from before.

The teachers and students of the experimental team in Hebian are more cautious about various activities in the village. In this process, farmers gradually built up confidence and pride. Yin Wengang of the Yao Rainforest Cooperative told me: “Teacher Li, before you came, I was an introvert, didn’t like to talk, and didn’t know what lay in the future, but now everyone sees me, I’m very cheerful and confident”. A Deputy Magistrate of Mengla County is from the Yao ethnic group. He

hasn’t been to Hebian village for a long time. At the end of 2020, he came to Hebian village to participate in a meeting. He was very excited and told me that he often came here when he was a child. He is from the Yao ethnic group and has many relatives here. He said he did not expect the place to have become so big. The villagers laughed when they saw him. He went to his relatives and saw the house, which was very clean. The appearance of the villagers has changed a lot, and they had a strong sense of ownership in this process. This change is not entirely brought about by the trial team. Every brick and every tile was organized by themselves. Many people came to visit, and the Dai villages who looked down on them in the past also came to learn. Village chief Deng Linguo attested to the fact that Hebian village was now a proud place. Of course, there are also people who have lost interest in the process. Some farmers feel that these things have little to do with them.

The income of the villagers in Hebian village has increased in recent years, but of the 57 families in the village, 4 families divorced within a year. Why do you think this happened?

Cui Yunqing, Party Secretary of Mengla county, came to the village a few days ago and asked me: Professor Xiaoyun, have you studied the divorce in the village? This is really confusing. In the past few years in Hebian village, four or five families experienced divorced, and in all the cases it was the women who left. The villagers blamed this on WeChat, saying that they were chatting on WeChat and ran away when they couldn’t resist temptation. The living standard of Hebian village has improved, and the environment has also

improved. It can be said that it is the best village in the area, but this person is about to run away. Moreover, the divorced women do not go to any big cities. Their current living and living conditions are not necessarily better than those in Hebian village, so even my colleagues are puzzled. Although divorce is still a case here, the sociological meaning it presents is complicated. Early marriage and early childbirth are common in Hebian village. Almost all the divorced women had teenaged children. Their divorce is not to seek a good material life outside, but to pursue their own value as a woman, and a new choice for love and marriage. The stability of the family is not an indicator of women’s rights and status. I am not encouraging family divorce, but I want to say that this issue does not follow a linear logic directly related to economic conditions.

Has the intervention of the new form of industry in the shape of the “Yao Mothers Guesthouses” affected the traditional division of labor between men and women in the village?

The new format of Yao Mothers Guesthouses was originally assumed to be taken care of by women, but in fact, male labor has invested more in this aspect than we expected. Many guesthouse management tasks have also become the responsibilities of men in the family. The Yao Mothers’ Guesthouses combine working and living space in one, which not only creates conditions for women to achieve family employment, but also absorbs men’s surplus labor. In this sense, the new format of guesthouses for Yao mothers has changed the gender division of labor to a great extent, and has played a positive role in empowering women.



In one article, you reflected on the sustainability of the rapid “de-agriculturalization” approach to poverty alleviation.

Where will Hebian village go to next?

The phenomenon of “de-agriculturalization” and “re-agriculturalization” did appear in the course of the Hebian experiment. This phenomenon is a process of industrial development for Hebian. In fact, the ultimate direction should be the integration of tertiary industry. The integration of the three industries in one village is a particularly complicated process of social, economic, and cultural transformation. Therefore, I said that the development of Hebian village needs to enter a cautious and slow modernization process because of the existence of primary, secondary, and tertiary industries within it. The tertiary industry not only requires different skills, but most importantly, a different concept. Now the ideology and skills of the villagers in Hebian cannot adapt to the integration of the tertiary industry, so it is necessary to continuously cultivate a group of teams that can face the changes in the market economy and manage the village in a measured way. In this, Hebian is not yet prepared. So the next task is to start with the cultivation of the team.

Does Hebian village have a sufficiently educated labor force to support follow-up development?

Hebian is a relatively closed-off and marginal minority village. The outflow of people was not very dramatic for a long time, but since 2015 when I first visited, four young people were admitted to university. I am very concerned that none are willing to return to the village, and in fact none do return. I can also assume that as the education level of the village continues to improve, the educated youth are probably not willing to come back. This is indeed a paradox. On the one hand, we hope that young people will stay. On the other hand, young people continue to speed their way into modern life and out of the countryside.

The paradox between tradition and modernity is not a problem that can be solved by the Hebian trial alone. We established the Yao Rainforest Cooperative in Hebian and cultivated an employment model with modern employment characteristics. The cooperative has beautiful offices, equipped with computers and vehicles for outings, but this is still not comparable to life in modern cities. Reports show that in Japan, hundreds of small towns and villages will disappear as young people continue to flow into the big cities. I have been to Japan, and I have personally experienced the prosperity of Tokyo and the desolation of the Japanese countryside. To be honest, the infrastruc-

ture and natural conditions of the Japanese countryside are very good, but the biggest temptation of modernization is not only this, but the kind of culture that can capture the diverse needs of people, for industrialization, urbanization, and culture. This is both the charm and magic of modernization. I cannot say that all the young people in Hebian will stay after they have received a good education. Indeed, we often cannot keep them there. However, some will stay, and the goal of rural revitalization is to enable those who stay to have a better living and working environment. Therefore, one of the main aspects of the Hebian trial is developing modern business in the village as much as possible. This is what the trial can do on the micro level, so as to alleviate the decline of the countryside as far as possible.

The Yao Rainforest Cooperative’s own market connectivity and resources are relatively scarce, making the development of new business formats heavily dependent on the poverty alleviation trial team. Under such circumstances, have you reconsidered inviting modern enterprises to step in and adopt a “company + farmer” approach?

The biggest challenge Hebian faces is the lack of management resources that can respond to the market. My team cannot lead villagers to market. If we manage this village, it may not make money. The Hebian experiment has been gradually transferred to the management of the young people in the Yao Rainforest Cooperative since 2018, and it has been more than two years now. The CFO of the Yao Rainforest Cooperative, Li Jin, mastered the taxation and accounting skills needed to connect enterprises and companies, and is currently taking an accountant qualification certificate. These young people have shown the basic ability to manage such a cooperative, but their ability is far from enough to connect to a large market and push the industry to market. Therefore, we are again facing the question of whether we need to introduce external companies, that is, whether we can use the “company + farmer” approach to the startup.

The current strategy adopted by the Hebian Trial Team is to introduce tourism and cultural enterprises and treat Hebian village as a public welfare project. These enterprises will help the Yao Rainforest Cooperative build a market and cultivate their capabilities. For example Ctrip reached an agreement with the Hebian Trial Team to build management capabilities and market connections.

In fact, I have always been cautious about introducing companies and external capital in particularly poor areas. I prefer to build the capacity of villages through social enterprises or

public welfare, because once such poor villages are not in their own hands, the asymmetry of information, capacity and capital will quickly drain the villages. Therefore, we need the intervention of social forces to balance the differences in capabilities, capital, and information.

If poverty alleviation in Hebian is just a trial, how long do you plan to carry out the trial?

Although poverty alleviation in Hebian village is a trial, it is also a practice of my team and me. Liu Yongfu, director of the State Council’s Poverty Alleviation Office, told me, Comrade Xiaoyun, you can’t leave Hebian village now. You have to carry out this experiment to the end. I think I will continue this experiment.

After summarizing the experience of Hebian village, do you plan to conduct another trial elsewhere?

To some extent, the Hebian trial relies too much on myself and my team. This situation is very clear in Hebian village. Villagers have a degree of dependence on Teacher Li, the other teachers, and even on other students. They often say “Teacher Li, what you tell us to do, we will do it.” The villagers are real people. In the past few years, they have seen benefits, but this has also increased their underlying dependence on us. This is my biggest regret. I am currently starting new trials in Kunming,



All photos courtesy of Li Xiaoyun team

Lincang and Nujiang. In these, I adopt a method based on the locals. Our team does not stay in the village for long periods of time, but instead engages in exchange and discussion with them. ■

This journal thanks Youcheng Foundation for their help during the interview.



Tencent WeCounty: Connected for the Countryside

Xunwu in southern Jiangxi province, is a mountainous county that most Chinese people have never heard of. Like many poor places, the young leave the county to work, while their parents and children remain in their hometown. Until 2019, local infrastructure was lacking, with over 150 of the county's 173 administrative villages had no streetlights, so getting around at night was hard. This became an urgent task for Xunwu in tackling poverty.

The company that came to Xunwu's assistance was China's internet giant Tencent. It might have been a simple task -- Tencent donates and the lamps get built -- for Tencent is a pro, having given 80% of its 4.5 billion yuan in charity donations to poverty alleviation projects, and its philanthropy platform, China's largest online fundraising site, has raised more than 11.5 billion yuan for over 90,000 projects, 90% of which are poverty alleviation projects.

However, in this case Tencent took a different path. The county planned for 7,800 streetlights at a cost of 15.6 million yuan, and Tencent Foundation promised to donate the full amount. But how many streetlights this would pay for was left up to the residents.

The project was called "Illuminated Xunwu", and from project development to financial disclosure, everything was online. Villagers logged in to apply to "Tencent WeCounty" and determine the number of streetlights their village would receive based on program activity. When active villagers accounted for 10%, 20%, and 30% of the registered population, the village would receive 60%, 80%, and 100% of the predetermined number of streetlights. When the number of online villagers reached 40% and 50% of the village's population, the number of streetlights installed would exceed the planned number, up to 110% or 120% of the target -- and this would be seen as a reward.

After the announcement of the plan, villagers responded actively, signing up to the online scheme. Soon, all villages in the county had their streetlights. Before Spring Festival in 2020, Xunwu county has achieved the poverty alleviation goal of "Village access lights, night roads illuminated".

The story illustrates how Tencent aims to "connect everything" in the countryside with its "WeCounty" platform. A big problem in the



countryside is "disconnection": the population is in exodus, and workers are drifting away; left-behind families have poor access to information and cannot understand what is going on outside; closed information loops mean villages have stagnated or decayed. Tencent's "WeCounty" program comprises a digital open platform catering to village users. It connects feelings, information, and money to the village via the internet. In "Illuminating Xunwu", not only are the streets of the village lit, but so are the concerns of the villagers who have left for work and are far from hometowns. As soon as they heard that streetlights were to be built at home, they actively logged on to the platform and offered advice and suggestions.

In addition to connecting feelings and information, Tencent's "WeCounty" program is helping villagers prosper financially. Longchuan county in Guangdong province is a relatively poor county in a wealthy province. Before absolute poverty was lifted in 2016, there were more than 70 poor villages and 10,000 poor households in the area. Local industries including aquaculture, poultry raising, and grapefruit tea processing operated far from the large markets of the Pearl River Delta, curtailing sales and any hopes of scaling up operations. In 2017, Zhutang village of Longchuan

county became a Tencent "For the Village" participant, and Liu Youwei, a poverty alleviation official, began an online poverty alleviation trial.

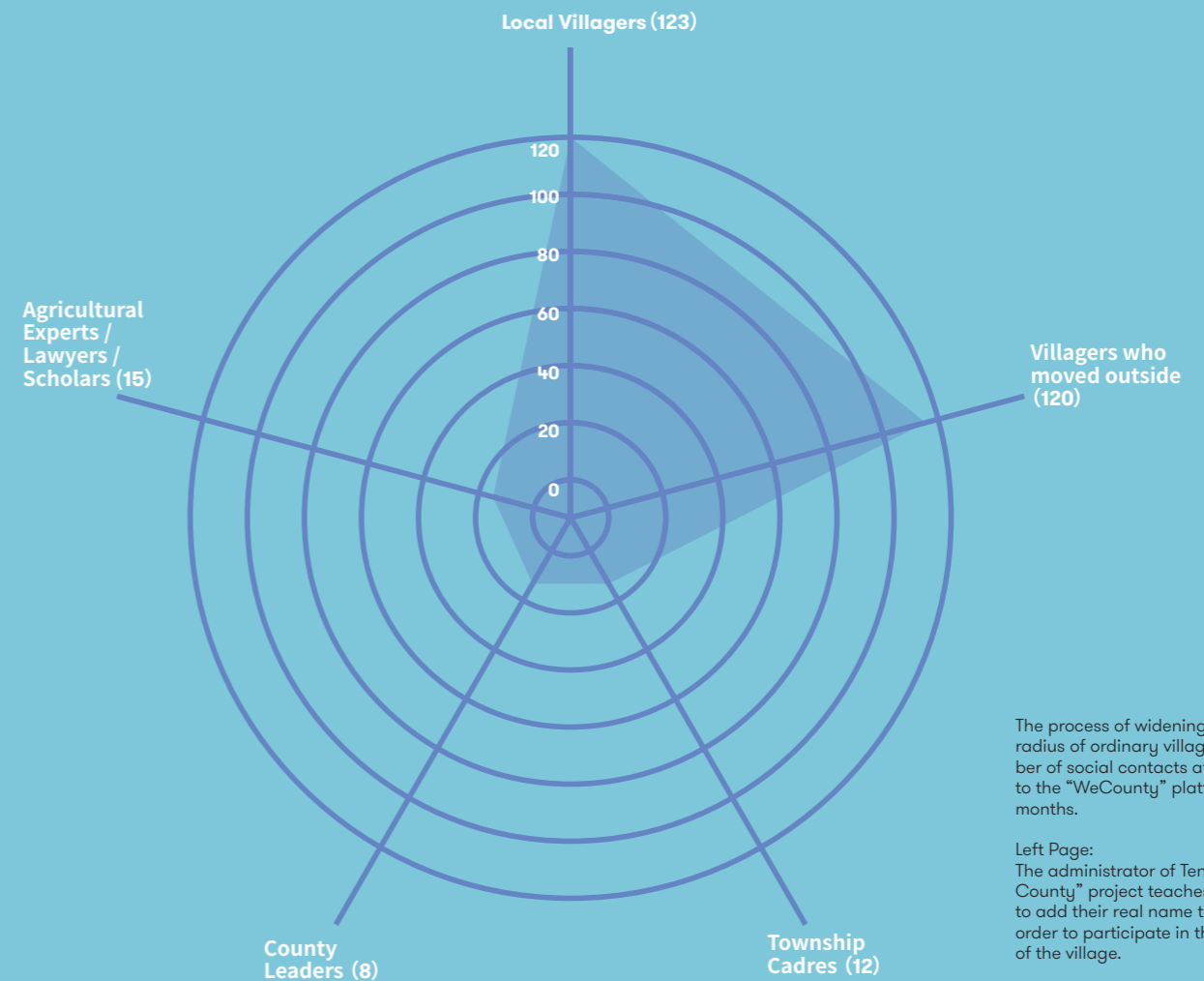
His idea was to put free-range chickens on the "Village Products" section of the village homepage. Customers needed only fill in their address and pay, and a 128-yuan free-range chicken would be delivered to their front door. At first these were bought by local villagers, and soon villagers in nearby towns and villages gathered around. During the Mid-Autumn Festival holiday in 2018, many village returnees bought chicken. The largest poultry farm sold more than 2,000 chickens in three days. The scheme has brought many Shenzhen residents into the radius for Longchuan's chickens.

Zhutang village produces grapefruit, chestnuts, camellia, grass carp, bullfrogs, and ducklings in its rice fields. Its farmers used to be self-sufficient, but now they are connected to the market. The economic development of their hometown has made migrant workers see opportunities. Some people went back to their hometowns to build eco-farms, and incorporated a sightseeing component into orchards cultivation, ornamental flower planting, and ecological

breeding. Zhutang village now has its first hotel.

In the past ten years, smart phones and mobile communications have rocketed in China, and the digital gap between rural and urban areas has been narrowing. Modern Chinese villages are ushering in an unprecedented period of strategic opportunities for rural revitalization, and the role of digitalization is taking hold. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the "WeCounty" platform gave out timely information and provided proper medical and scientific advice. The program's administrators actively cooperated with grassroots pandemic prevention teams to stop outbreaks hitting the area.

The development of various social undertakings in rural China still has a long way to go. "Tencent WeCounty" operates at grassroots level and provides services to villagers, uniting people and harnessing their energy in line with China's rural revitalization strategy. Tencent's explorations will surely inspire other internet companies to contribute their invaluable experience to poverty reduction schemes around the world. ■



The process of widening the social radius of ordinary villagers / The number of social contacts after connecting to the "WeCounty" platform for five months.

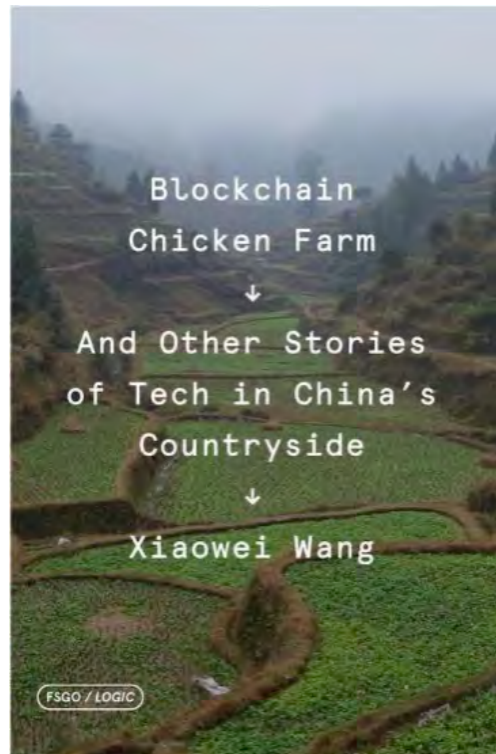
Left Page: The administrator of Tencent's "WeCounty" project teaches a villager how to add their real name to the site in order to participate in the public affairs of the village.

Blockchain Chicken Farm: The Technological Revolution Sweeping through Rural China

Raising free-range chickens isn't easy, a Chinese farmer tells Xiaowei Wang in her new book, "Blockchain Chicken Farm." Why? "Chickens aren't very smart," he notes; if you leave lights on, they'll cluster around "and they overcrowd each other, killing each other. A kind of chicken stampede." Even if you get the chickens safely grown in their sunny, free-range yards, you have a new problem: You have to convince your finicky customers, in far-off cities, that you're telling the truth about how the chickens were raised.

So the farmer turned to high-tech chicken surveillance. He outfitted his chickens with wearable leg bands that record their movements — "a chicken Fitbit of sorts" — and worked with a tech start-up to record the data on a blockchain. A blockchain is a type of software, most famously used to create Bitcoin, that can make nearly tamper-proof digital records. When customers buy the chicken, they don't need to take the seller's word that his birds strolled around in the sunshine. They can trust the implacable math.

In "Blockchain Chicken Farm," Wang introduces dozens of such stories of how technology is transforming the lives of China's rural population. The technologist and writer leads us to Dinglou, a "Taobao village" — a digital-age company town where residents make stuff to sell on Taobao, the e-commerce platform of Alibaba. In Dinglou, the specialty is making costumes that they ship worldwide, relying on Alipay (another Alibaba creation) for their banking needs.



Blockchain Chicken Farm: And Other Stories of Tech in China's Countryside, by Xiaowei Wang. FSG Originals x Logic, October 2020. www.fsgoriginals.com

"Nothing beats coming back to your hometown to run a Taobao business!" banners hung in the city declare, and families transform their houses into factories. Wang watches as a woman "in her kitten-heel shoes and red skirt" clambers onto a

table to jigsaw expertly through layers of fabric for a set of costumes, while a chicken squawks nearby. Wang travels to Zhejiang Province, where pearl farmers patiently feed mussels pig and chicken feces, selling their prize pearls for top dollar and shipping the lousy ones halfway around the globe to American live-streamers, who sell them for \$20 apiece via influencer-style "Pearl Parties" online.

Consider the boom in the production of pork, a hot commodity among China's increasingly prosperous diners. To increase the yield of pork farms, Alibaba trained a new artificial intelligence, "ET Agricultural Brain," on vast amounts of data from pork operations, the better to predict how to increase yield.

From pork farmers using AI to produce the perfect pig, to disruptive luxury counterfeits and the political intersections

of e-commerce villages, Wang unravels the ties between globalization, technology, agriculture, and commerce in unprecedented fashion. She explores the political and social entanglements of technology in rural China. Her discoveries challenge the standard idea that rural culture and people are backward, conservative, and intolerant. Instead, she finds that rural China has not only adapted to rapid globalization but has actually innovated the technology we all use today. ■

Closer to Heaven: A Global Nomad's Journey Through China's Poverty Alleviation

On May 12, 2008, our planet ripped itself apart, and a portal to hell opened on earth in Sichuan province. I don't just mean hell as a metaphor. The quake zone literally assumed a vast geography inhabited by tens of millions of people, wailing and gnashing their teeth, and nearly 90,000 dead or missing.

Erik Nilsson starts his new book, *Closer to Heaven: A Global Nomad's Journey Through China's Poverty Alleviation*, in Sichuan because he, as a China Daily journalist, was supposed to be there. But because of a scheduling change, he wasn't.

Later he made 15 trips through the quake zone, and over the years he saw the rescue and recovery lifted the survivors in Sichuan further and further from hell, and closer and closer to heaven.

This led him to another quake zone, in the nomadic Tibetan



communities of Yushu on the remote Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. There he started a volunteer initiative to bring light to schools by providing solar panels, and provided metric tons of clothes, computer labs, libraries, food, medicine, coal and even yaks, when a blizzard killed most of a school's herd. After seeing China's poverty-alleviation miracle on this so-called "planet's third pole", he shifted toward providing surgeries prosthetics and wheelchairs for children with disabilities and university scholarships for nomads.

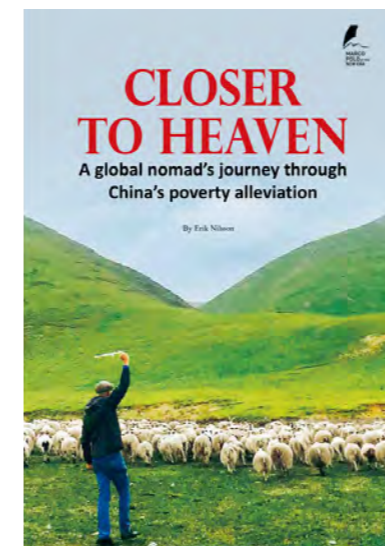
Nilsson's book, published in English and Chinese by China Intercontinental Press, is the capstone of his life's mission to contribute to and tell the story of China's poverty alleviation miracle from the front lines.

It's not a typical China book. The American discovers unexpected dimensions while riding ostriches, visiting leprosy villages, exploring virtual reality parks run

by farmers and spending birthdays at a mass grave. He talks about sexual rehab with people left paralyzed by quakes, meets Hero Pig and eats horse intestines with an elderly nomad who hunts with eagles on horseback.

These journeys have been adventures for Nilsson. And they've been a firsthand exploration of how China has lifted so many people from the hell that is poverty and closer to heaven, as it exists on this Earth.

Erik Nilsson has traveled through mainland China covering poverty alleviation, disaster relief and government policy since 2006. He won the China Friendship Award in 2016, the top honor Chinese government offers to experts from overseas for their "contributions to China's social and economic development". He has co-authored and edited 16 books on China in English and Chinese. ■



What Did China Do to Fight Period Poverty in 2020?

By Yang Biqiong

In August 2020, the Tencent Charity Foundation platform launched a fundraising project they called the “Period Plan”, with the goal of raising 90,000 yuan to buy sanitary pads for the girls in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in one of China’s poorest regions. The project was initiated by the Stand Together club, a group of female high school students from Chengdu No. 7 Middle School’s international department. The club members were nervous when the project was first posted on the platform, worried that no one would take a group of sixteen and seventeen-year-old girls seriously.

They needn’t have worried. The project exceeded their hopes, raising nearly 125,000 yuan in little over a day. With this money they could provide sanitary pads for all 700 girls in Liangshan’s Zhaojue county, and the popularity of the campaign had focused more people’s attention to the issue of period poverty in China’s poorest areas.

Period poverty refers to a lack of regular access to sanitary products during a woman’s menstrual period, and is a global issue. Surveys show that in 2019, a total of 40 million women were affected by period poverty. In low to middle-income countries, more than 50% of women have used homemade sanitary pads. This problem also exists in some developed countries. According to a survey conducted by the NGO Plan International, one in ten girls in the U.K. reported not being able to afford regular sanitary products when they have their period, and 42% of the girls said they have turned to makeshift solutions such as socks and toilet paper.

In China, according to the statistics in the “Chinese Philanthropist” magazine, 40 million children live in poverty, of which about 10% are girls between 12 and 16 years old, facing their first periods. In other words, about 4 million girls in the country are experiencing period poverty. Zhaojue county in Liangshan prefecture, the focus of Tencent’s Period Plan, is 500 km from the capital of Sichuan province, Chengdu, but a world away in terms of income differential. Officially registered as an extremely impoverished county in the depths of Daliang Mountain (until as late as 2020), statistics from 2019 show that it comprises of 55 impoverished villages and 33,000 poverty-stricken



people. Before the fundraising plan began, the members of the Stand Together club went to school in Sikai township, Zhaojue county for fieldwork, and were shocked by what they found. Sanitary pads in the local stores cost 1 yuan each, about the same as in Chengdu. Few girls could afford this, so they would resort to buying rolls of toilet paper for a sixth of the price instead.

A teacher from the local Sikai Middle School said: “There are many left-behind children in the countryside. Their parents have no choice but to leave them in the village with their grandparents when they go to make money in the cities. This has led to the lack of family health education. Some girls don’t know what to do when they get their period for the first time, and are panicked and confused. Fear and anxiety are the norm for many girls here. Because of poverty, children have no money to buy better hygiene products during menstruation, and have to use cloth strips, toilet paper and other materials. Girls are ashamed to talk about their discomfort during their period, so they regularly skip classes and ask for leave.”

Period poverty has never been just about the steep cost of sanitary products. In addition to the excessively high prices, many lack an understanding of women’s physical health, and hold societal taboos regarding menstruation, which is known as period shame. Already, a fifth of the 21st century is behind us, yet menstruation, a phenomenon affecting half the world’s population, is still seen as a taboo in many places. Women having their periods are often regarded as unclean. In some places, they have to leave their homes and stay in huts during menstruation. Absenteeism is one of the physical, physiological and mental health issues that stems from this, in turn exacerbating gender

“#Sisters Fight the Epidemic Relief Action” The topic has been viewed 120 million times on Weibo and discussed more than 150,000 times. While more and more people affirm the value of female workers in the front line of the epidemic, they are also beginning to pay attention to their labor security issues and menstrual supplies needs.

inequality.

The Period Plan is not the first time that the topic of period poverty has entered public discourse in China. A film on the topic based on Indian grassroots entrepreneur Arunachalam Muruganatham came out in 2018, and Chinese netizens translated it as “Pad Man” in Chinese. When it was officially released in China, the title was changed to “Indian Partner”.

In February 2020, just as the novel coronavirus raged in Wuhan and virus-related news occupied every online and offline media platform, the topic of periods again hit the internet. A Weibo blogger noticed that sanitary pads and safety underwear had been missed off the list of personal protective equipment for those tasked with epidemic prevention and control. The demand for menstrual supplies by female medical staff has been ignored. So the blogger and his team launched the “Sisters Fight the Epidemic Relief Action” online to raise donations and coordinate donation activities. Together with Lingshan Charity Foundation, they launched public fundraising on two platforms, Sina Weibo Public Welfare and “Joint Fundraising for Love”. From February 7 to March 13, they raised a total of more than 2.51 million yuan, all of which were used to fight the epidemic. Frontline female medical staff purchase sanitary napkins, relief

pants, disposable underwear and other materials.

#Sisters Fight the Epidemic Relief Action” The topic has been viewed 120 million times on Weibo and discussed more than 150,000 times. While more and more people affirm the value of female workers in the front line of the epidemic, they are also beginning to pay attention to their labor security issues and menstrual supplies needs.

The “Sister’s Fight the Epidemic Relief Action” team called for the inclusion of pads in essential aid packages. The volunteers in this team found that many units thought menstrual supplies were not “essential.” When Hebei became the center of China’s epidemic in January 2021, the city was sealed off, and frontline medical staff and local female residents once again faced a lack of period supplies.

Discussion on the topic of menstruation picked up again on Aug. 28, when the hashtag #Bulk Sanitary Napkins# entered the hot search bar on Weibo. The reason was that a blogger stumbled upon bulk sanitary napkin sellers on Taobao, advertising 100 pads for 21.99 yuan, with no brand and no packaging. The blogger asked: how can you use such a cheap product? To which someone left a message: a pack of sanitary napkins is the price of a cup of milk tea. Other social media users responded with comments such as “Life is tough”

and “I have trouble”, securing the sympathies of countless social media users. The topic quickly heated up, with more than 1 billion views and 200,000 plus comments, once again putting the issue of menstrual poverty under the spotlight.

The bulk sanitary napkins that caused great controversy were reversed several times during the verification process and were eventually removed from the shelves. However, if you search for “bulk sanitary napkins” on e-commerce platforms, there are many to choose from, and some stores have monthly sales of several thousand pieces. In the evaluation of buyers, words such as “large quantity and cost-effective” are common.

Among various period hygiene products, sanitary pads are the most popular on the mainland market. Are they actually expensive?

Based on the most popular brands on the market, in terms of price per pad, they can be divided into low-end (less than 1 yuan), mid-range (1 yuan to 1.5 yuan) and high-end (more than 1.5 yuan). Assuming that a woman has a menstrual period of 5 days, sleeps for 8 hours, and changes a sanitary napkin every 4 hours during the day, then this woman needs to use 4 day sanitary pad and 1 night sanitary pad per 24 hour period. If a single daytime pad costs 1 yuan and a single nighttime pad costs 2 yuan, the average daily spend per woman is 6 yuan, or 30 yuan each period, and 360 yuan per year. If more pads are used the cost increases, and if the period lasts longer, the cost increases.

360 yuan per year does not seem all that much, but China has 600 million people who earn less than 1,000 yuan a year. For low-income families, any amount of money spent on period supplies will be subtracted from food spending.

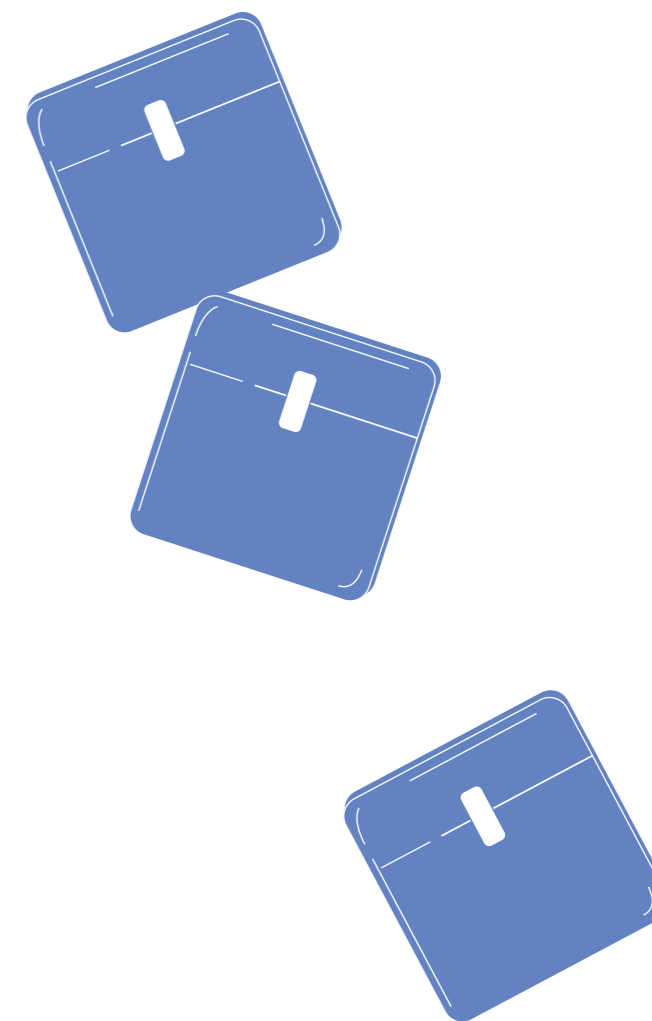
What is gratifying is that the period poverty faced by women and girls is receiving more attention from society. More and more social organizations, public welfare organizations, government forces and individuals are donating, putting on regular health education sessions, and mental health training outreach. Counseling and

other methods have being used to reduce period poverty and eliminate period shame. For example, the “Spring Willow Program” initiated by Shanghai Rende Foundation in 2017, provides left-behind girls in Sichuan, Shaanxi and other places with health kits, physical education and period support.

China Social Welfare Foundation Ai Xiaoya Fund “The Girls Cheer Program” focuses on girls in poor mountainous areas. More young women face up to the issue of menstruation with courage and resist menstrual shame with help of other women, in projects such as the “Sanitary Pad Mutual Aid Box”.

Internationally, more and more countries are paying attention to the issue of period poverty and making changes such as implementing low-tax, zero-tax or free provision policies for period supplies. China still levies a 13% value-added tax on period products, which is the same as for most regular goods. ■

40 MILLION CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY, OF WHICH ABOUT 10% ARE GIRLS BETWEEN 12 AND 16 YEARS OLD, FACING THEIR FIRST PERIODS. IN OTHER WORDS, ABOUT 4 MILLION GIRLS IN THE COUNTRY ARE EXPERIENCING PERIOD POVERTY.



Visualize Me

文化视觉

Environmental Migrants: the Last Illusion

By **Alessandro Grassani**

Environmental migration is destined to become the new humanitarian emergency of the planet: in a not too distant future, the entire planet will have to face the economic and social burden of its consequences. World Bank projections indicate an estimated 143 million internal climate migrants by 2050 while IOM forecasts estimate that there could be between 25 million and 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050 with the most widely sustained prediction being 200 million.

Climate migration is mainly internal from rural to urban areas and this migration does not affect the rich countries, responsible for the alteration of ecosystems, but urban areas of developing countries, already overcrowded and degraded, of the nations of origin of these migrants. For this reason, we are witnessing the uncontrolled expansion of slums that grow without any urban planning, running water, and electricity, ending up becoming traps for environmental migrants who cannot find work living in poverty and inhumane conditions.

This long-term project I started in 2011, crossed several countries to witness the lives of shepherds, farmers, fishermen, women, and men forced to

migrate because of climate change. I focused on Mongolia, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Haiti also to represent different types of climate change that, globally, influence the phenomenon of environmental migration: from the extreme cold of Mongolia to the desertification in Kenya, passing through floods, cyclones, and sea-level rise in Bangladesh and Haiti. In my story, I use one narrative pattern: in every country, I compare the stories of people who struggle against environmental adversity in the countryside with the poor living conditions of the environmental migrants packed into the booming slums of capital cities.

There is no going back, the situation will become more and more critical in the years to come.

The title “the last illusion” refers to the hopes of the environmental migrants who escape from environmental stresses and look for chances of a better life in the city. However, once they get there, because of their lack of resources and opportunities, their dream of a favourable future turns into the last of their illusions.

MONGOLIA

In 2010, during one of the harshest winters, more than 8 million livestock died in Mongolia and around 20,000 herdsman had no other choice but to migrate towards the Capital, Ulaanbaatar, which has doubled its population in the last 10 years. The ger district, in Ulaanbaatar, collects about 60% of the population of the capital city developed with poor urban planning, this slum, is devoid of running water or electricity and is the place where the shepherds, forced to abandon rural areas due to climate change, set up their tent in the few spaces still available. This is how, after a life spent in the pastures, many shepherds find themselves facing any kind of difficulty in an urban context to which they have never been used.





KENYA

Kenya's pastoral population has been among the hardest hit by climate change in Africa. Droughts and clashes between different pastoral groups seeking pasture and water for their animals are pushing many Kenyans dreaming of a better future towards Nairobi. According to a 2008 UN-Habitat report 74% of the environmental migrants living in the slums of Nairobi arrived in the last 20 years (in conjunction with the increase in drought and the impact of climate change in recent years). Kibera is the most populous slum in Nairobi and the largest slum in Africa, about 1 million people live in there in very difficult conditions. Nowadays, Africa has more than 570 million slum dwellers, according to UN-Habitat, with over half of the urban population, 61.7% living in slums like Kibera. Climate change play a key role in this relentless urban growth.



BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is one of the countries more seriously affected by climate change. Dhaka, its capital, has over 300,000 newcomers entering the city each year (source World Bank) driven by a mix of economic and environmental pressures.

The city is considered to be one of the fastest-growing cities in the world. Today the city has about 20 million inhabitants but based on population growth models, the University of Toronto projects that Dhaka will be the third most populous city in the world by 2050 with about 35.2 million residents, while the International Organization for Migration estimates that 70% of Dhaka's slum-dwellers moved there fleeing the consequences of climate changes.





HAITI

Haiti is one of the world's most endangered places vis-a-vis climate change. According to the UN as drought, hurricanes, floods become more frequent, their impact will be amplified specifically in Haiti by the country's existing environmental degradation.

Indeed, Haiti is almost completely denuded of trees, making Haiti's environment one of the most fragile in the world. This arboreal destruction has significantly reduced the land's ability to absorb the effects of extreme weather events and manifestations of climate change.

The vulnerability of the country to natural disasters has triggered waves of internal migration from rural to urban areas. In Port-au-Prince, the country's capital and largest city, half of the residents were not born there and the overcrowded city continues to serve as the main destination for thousands of environmental migrants every year. According to the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics and Quixote Center, today more than 25% of the Haitian population lives in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince.



Serial Innovators

对话创新者

World Food Programme: Innovation and Digital Transformation to Address Humanitarian Crises

by Sarah Orlando

The World Food Programme (WFP) was established in 1961 by the United Nations General Assembly and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and is funded by voluntary contributions from governments, organisations and private individuals.

WFP works in particular to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating poverty and hunger. In 2019, it provided assistance to close to 100 million people in 88 countries through food or cash distributions in emergencies, nutrition support programmes and participation in activities to build resilience to climate change and other global shocks.

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically swelled the number of poor and hungry. In countries such as Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Burkina Faso, the combination of violent conflict and the pandemic has led to a dramatic rise in the number of people living on the brink of starvation. In the face of the pandemic, the World Food Programme has demonstrated an impressive ability to intensify its efforts. As the organisation itself has stated, "Until the day we have a medical vaccine, food is the best vaccine against chaos."

The United Nations World Food Programme was also the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 to WFP "for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict."

"The Nobel Peace Prize is not WFP's alone," said WFP Executive Director David Beasley in a

statement upon the awarding of the Prize. "We work closely with government, organizations and private sector partners whose passion for helping the hungry and vulnerable equals ours. We could not possibly help anyone without them. We are an operational agency and the daily work of our staff each day is driven by our core values of integrity, humanity and inclusion.

Where there is conflict, there is hunger. And where there is hunger, there is often conflict. Today is a reminder that food security, peace and stability go together. Without peace, we cannot achieve our global goal of zero hunger; and while there is hunger, we will never have a peaceful world."

According to a WFP executive board document issued in November 2019, named "Private-sector partnerships and fundraising strategy (2020-2025)" the vision is to transform how WFP works with businesses and other actors – particularly at the local

level – to save and change more lives. The newly stated five-year strategy sets forth a new approach, looking to businesses primarily for technical partnerships that utilize their expertise, capability and advocacy support and to individuals for funds to help close WFP's funding gap. The strategy is built upon three interrelated pillars that will contribute to the achievement of zero hunger and to the broader goals of the 2030 Agenda: Impact, Income and Innovation. Impact: by co-creating technical partnerships with the private sector to form best-in-class technical partnerships aimed at increasing local level impact. Income: by developing a sustainable stream of flexible income through a new individual giving approach, investing in a digital-led fundraising strategy to engage people worldwide. And finally Innovation: allowing WFP to explore new modes of engagement to find innovative and collaborative solutions for the

**UNTIL THE DAY WE
HAVE A MEDICAL
VACCINE, FOOD IS
THE BEST VACCINE
AGAINST CHAOS**

people it serves, through new technology and new ways of working.

Within this new strategic framework, on April 2, 2021 UNESCO and the WFP signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly advocate for the education, health, nutrition and wellbeing needs of school-aged children and young people, towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting school closures, has emphasized the interrelationship between education and health. We have seen that schools are not only essential to deliver education but provide a vital social space and deliver key services like school feeding, vaccinations, and health education, which are central to learners’ health, sense of belonging and wellbeing,” said Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, underlining the importance of good nutrition and health to ensure all children and young people have access to and can take full advantage of learning opportunities.

WFP Innovation Incubator

“We believe that innovation can help us to create impact at scale for some of the most vulnerable people on this planet,” said Bernhard Kowatsch, head of the WFP Innovation Accelerator to Fast-Company in an interview in late 2020. WFP has been ranked amongst Fast Company’s most innovative not-for-profit organizations of 2021 (ranking #2).

“It all started with six people, listening to analog pitches, squeezing into a couple of black leather couches in a rented office in Munich. If it wasn’t for the WFP banner taped to the wall it may as well have been a college dorm room, or a



The humble beginnings of WFP’s Innovation Accelerator @WFP

bootstrapped startup in Silicon Valley, Lagos or anywhere else in the world...and in a way, it was.” writes Jonathan Simms earlier this year on WFP official medium channel.

It was the end of 2015, and no other UN agency had attempted what WFP was trying to do: bring a private sector accelerator methodology to support startups and non-profit innovations in humanitari-

an and development work.

Based in Munich, the Accelerator runs week-long bootcamps (which have moved virtual in the wake of COVID-19), a six-month Sprint Program to help projects develop prototypes and reach proof of concept in developing countries, and then, for projects that merit continued support, a Scale-up Enablement phase including tailored support.

To date, the Accelerator portfolio includes more than 80 projects in 45 countries. In 2019 alone, the innovations that were developed within the programme positively impacted the lives of 1.4 million people globally. According to Bernhard Kowatsch, Head of the Innovation Accelerator, its success was facilitated thanks to the diverse and unique background of the team, that amounts to over 50 people from more than 30 countries, and whose skills include humanitarian, startup industry, tech, and design expertise.

The combination of multidisciplinary skills and experience of each team member enables the team to identify and support disruptive proposals. From providing on-the-ground expertise for an African startup that is working on an app for refugee camps, to helping a WFP innovator build a sustainable business model, or deploying sophisticated technology solutions.

The Accelerator has been testing diverse solutions and leveraging new technologies, even more so since the COVID-19 outbreak: from blockchain technology that delivers cash, to virtual wallets that enable refugees can buy food in remote locations, to an e-shop that allows vulnerable people in Tanzania to order food online. Throughout 2020, WFP scaled up 11 projects that directly reached more than 1.4 million people the year prior.



Women in Chad show off their hydroponic fodder harvest @WFP

WITHOUT PEACE, WE CANNOT ACHIEVE OUR GLOBAL GOAL OF ZERO HUNGER; AND WHILE THERE IS HUNGER, WE WILL NEVER HAVE A PEACEFUL WORLD

ShareTheMeal

Sebastian Stricker and Bernhard Kowatsch founded ShareTheMeal in April 2014 in Berlin during a sabbatical, and since its launch in 2015 it became an innovation project within WFP aiming at feeding child refugees from Syria.

ShareTheMeal is an APP that was born as an innovative funding approach aimed mainly at involving a new generation of young donors and is now an award-winning app that enables users to feed a hungry child with just a tap on their smartphone and USD 0.80.

The vast majority of the world’s hungry live in developing countries. Since launching the app, ShareTheMeal has helped provide aid to mitigate some of the largest food crises in the world including Yemen, Syria and Nigeria.

The app allows users to choose where they want to help by selecting from different goals in the app. Furthermore, the app allows people to see where their funds are being utilized, providing full transparency. Meals can also be shared as part of a team, and the user can engage his own entourage by creating a unique challenge and sharing its actions on the user’s social media profiles.

To date, ShareTheMeal declares that 62% of the funding directly feeds families in need, 28% will be invested into fundraising and marketing,

6% will be used to help run ShareTheMeal’s organisation and 4% will continue to help cover payment fees.

As of December 2020 ShareTheMeal has provided 89 million meals to 3.9 million users in 31 countries.

www.sharethemeal.org

INTEGRITY, HUMANITY AND INCLUSION

Building Blocks: Using Blockchain to Disrupt Patterns of Global Hunger

Building Blocks is probably the best-known application of blockchain in a humanitarian context. It is a project supported by the WFP Innovation Accelerator, started in 2016 by Houman Haddad (then Finance Officer at WFP) and refined with Alexandra Alden (then Innovation Consultant at WFP) during a Singularity University bootcamp. It was developed by Datarella.

Following its inception within the WFP Innovation Accelerator, a proof of concept was developed in Pakistan and Jordan in 2017, and a scale-up phase was launched in refugee camps in Jordan since 2018 reaching approximately 100,000 people in the first year. Within an amazingly short time Building Blocks has demonstrated blockchain's value in providing cash assistance to hungry people (more than 300,000 people served by mid-2020).

For the end-user, the process is incredibly simple: in refugee camps in Jordan, Syrian refugees can shop normally at one of the designated stores, depending on their assigned entitlements. As they check out, they “pay” without physical cash, but rather from a secure digital wallet. At check out each scan identifies the

customer, whose balance is checked to see if it is sufficient, and if so the payment goes through with blockchain technology. Stores then receive their payments from WFP. As a result, more donor money goes directly to food assistance.

Another most recent application is the one implemented in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the world's largest refugee camp. The system has been serving over 500,000 Rohingya people, empowering women and helping families maintaining social distancing, and even if it was originally designed to be touch-operated, because of the COVID-19 pandemic a digital QR code is issued allowing people to collect assistance without having to handle potentially contagious devices.

If it is true that research shows how direct cash transfers to those in need can be the most effective and efficient way to distribute humanitarian assistance, while also supporting local economies, it is also arguable that distributing cash depends on local financial institutions that in some contexts may prove insufficient or unreliable, or not accessible for refugees, who are not allowed to open bank accounts.

The blockchain technology behind Building Blocks allows direct, secure, and fast transactions between participants and WFP—without requiring



Jordan, Zaatari Refugee Camp, 2013 @WFP/Salah Malkawi

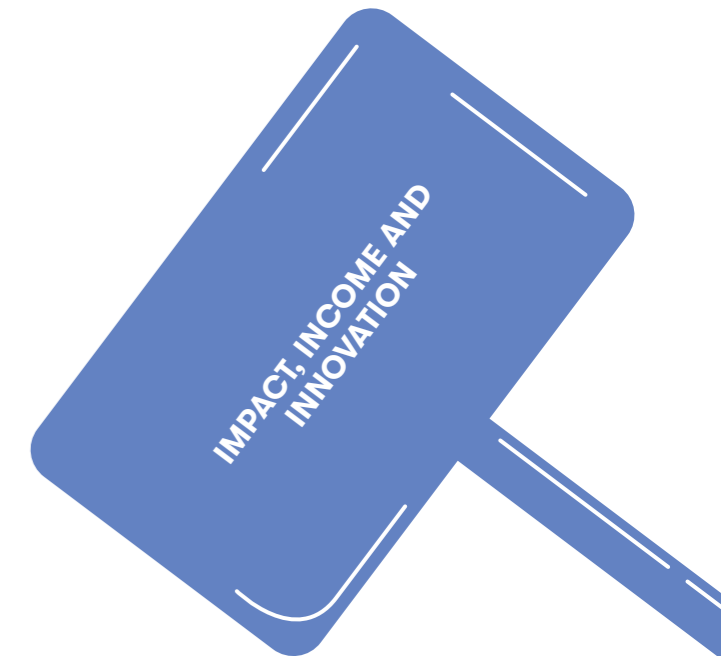
WITH BLOCKCHAIN,
YOU CAN SEE WHO
IS ASSISTING
WHOM IN A
NON-PERSONALLY-
IDENTIFIABLE
MANNER

a financial intermediary like a bank to connect the two parties.

Building Blocks has not only allowed refugees to expand their choices in how they access and spend their cash assistance. It has also helped WFP explore if blockchain can make cash transfers more efficient, secure and transparent. Furthermore, and most importantly, it facilitates cash transfers while protecting beneficiary data, controlling financial risks, and allowing for greater collaboration. Anonymity is in fact key for refugees who are fleeing from conflict zones, where ensuring their privacy in the event that their personal information is used against them is paramount.

“With blockchain, you can see who is assisting whom in a non-personally-identifiable manner,” says Houman Haddad, Head of Emerging Technologies at WFP. In other words, individuals are issued an encrypted ID or code number to distinguish them from others, without revealing their true identities, for security and privacy reasons.

Building Blocks has so far proven among the best current expressions of blockchain-based systems in a humanitarian context, having proven effective in diminishing the cost of cash donations, safeguarding anonymity of refugees, and strengthening social distancing and health safety in highly populated contexts (crucial during COVID-19 pandemic). ■



<https://innovation.wfp.org/project/building-blocks>

Harnessing Technology and Data for Targeted Emergency Aid

by Sarah Orlando

COVID-19 reached Togo, a country in West Africa, in March 2020. In response to the crisis, the country's government launched "Novissi" meaning "solidarity" in the local Ewe language, an innovative social assistance program designed to provide emergency cash assistance to Togo's neediest families through mobile cash payments—a technology well established in Africa.

Half of Togo's 8 million people live on less than \$1.90 a day, and since most Togolese work in the informal sector, when COVID-19 cut off their income opportunities, their biggest risk was dying of starvation, if not of the virus itself.

When COVID-19 struck, Togolese government officials reached out to Joshua Blumenstock, co-director of University of UC Berkeley's Center for Effective Global Action, who'd been researching how big data can fill information gaps facing countries like Togo. His lab had shown that phone records could predict individual wealth in Rwanda about as well as in-person surveys, and that satellite images could track areas of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

Blumenstock (UC Berkeley / CEGA / IPA) offered to adapt his technology to help, and put together a team of researchers including Emily Aiken (UC Berkeley), Suzanne Bellue (U. Mannheim), Dean Karlan (Northwestern / IPA), and Chris Udry (Northwestern / IPA). He also connected the country's government officials with GiveDirectly, which distributes cash payments in poor countries and had already been in touch with Blumenstock on

how to put his research into action. Since March 2020, the research team has been helping the government of Togo get cash to the poorest people in the country, using a mix of machine learning, satellite imagery, and mobile phone data.

The key question at the heart of Novissi was: how to target and prioritize the people with the greatest need of help?

The last census in Togo was conducted in 2011, and the Togolese government did not have a comprehensive social registry that would allow the researchers to directly identify and prioritize its poorest people. Moreover, in the middle of a pandemic it was nearly impossible to collect the data required to create a new registry.

When Novissi first launched in April 2020, the government chose to prioritize informal workers living in the regions most impacted by lockdown restrictions: Lomé (Togo's capital) and Sokodé (the country's second largest city). To determine eligibility, they relied on a voter database that had been recently updated, and in which people had self-declared their home location and their occupation.

Novissi is currently expanding in partnership with GiveDirectly to rural areas of the country, where extreme poverty is most severe. The researchers' approach focuses on prioritizing the poorest villages and neighborhoods first. In order to do so, given the lack of a poverty map, the researchers produced micro-es-



timates of the wealth of each 2.4km of the country by applying deep learning algorithms to high-resolution satellite imagery, and by combining them with estimates on the population density in each area they were able to identify the 100 poorest cantons in Togo. The team then developed methods using mobile phone metadata to help identify the individuals with the greatest need, moving on to prioritize the poorest individuals in these 100 poorest cantons.

Through a collaboration between the government of Togo and GiveDirectly, roughly 57,000 new beneficiaries in rural areas have been enrolled in Novissi using the satellite+phone method.

As described by Joshua Blumenstock on his own channel last January, one important concern is the fact that people who do not have a mobile phone are excluded from the target. Nonetheless, target-

ing mobile owners was the quickest way in which the Togolese government could distribute cash en masse during the pandemic. Based on the research team's analysis of recent nationally-representative household survey data, "we estimate that roughly 90% of households in Togo have at least one mobile phone, which might limit the scope of such exclusions." Says Blumenstock. "In addition, the

GiveDirectly

GiveDirectly, the leading global NGO specialized in delivering digital cash transfers, thanks to its on-site experimentations, especially in Kenya, found that cash donations had not kept people from working, had not contributed to inflation, and had actually boosted the economy on a scale far beyond the initial investment.

GiveDirectly was selected as #3 most innovative non-profit-organization by FastCompany in 2021, "for testing the impact of cash on poor communities, and for transforming disaster aid".

The organization's larger point was to answer the following question: what happens if you give

current expansion was designed to allow anyone with a SIM card to register for Novissi. In other words, someone without a phone could acquire a SIM card (which is much cheaper than a phone) and use that SIM card in someone else's phone to register for the program and receive benefits." For future expansions of the project, the possibility of making low-cost mobile phones available through

people in poverty cash instead of the food and other aid that development organizations typically employ? And their answer is: cash is often the most helpful intervention.

In 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, GiveDirectly delivered more than \$132 million of aid in cash, reaching more than 256,000 people. In the absence of physical contact, some of that giving was made possible with new technologies.

In the last 10 years, GiveDirectly has managed to donate over \$300 million, reaching over 750 thousand people. It also collaborates with a wide range of leading independent researchers to measure the impacts

subsidies is also being explored.

Togo's project is an example of the pandemic forcing urgent experimentation that may lead to lasting change. The turn to satellite and cellphone data was driven, in part, by a shortage of reliable data on citizens and their needs, and it turned out to be so successful that the data-centric approach will likely be used more widely.

of cash transfers and providing rigorous experimental research (randomized controlled trials - RCT) to answer public policy questions. On their website, a very rich repository of papers and reports, both issued by GiveDirectly and by other organizations, can be found, supporting with extensive data the company's point of cash-giving. ■

<https://www.givedirectly.org/>

**CASH IS OFTEN
THE MOST HELPFUL
INTERVENTION**



Creative Senses

创意资讯

The 3rd UNESCO Creative Cities Beijing Summit Held in Beijing



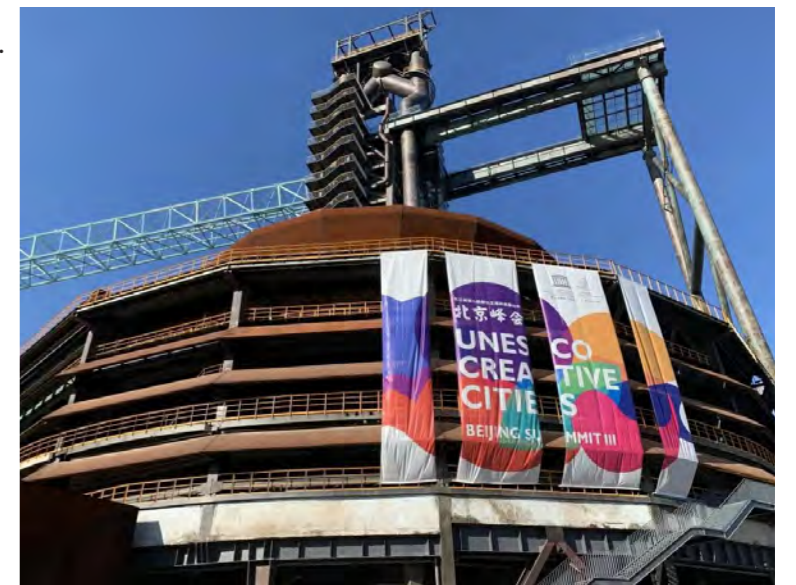
Director-General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay, delivers a speech via video

Xu Qiang, director of the Beijing Science and Technology Commission and director of ICCSD said, Beijing is taking the “three Cities and one Area” (Zhongguancun Science City, Huairou Science City and Future Science City, the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area) as the main platform to accelerate the construction of a science and technology innovation center with global influence and phased progress has been made. Meanwhile, the concept of “Design Makes the City Better” is deeply rooted in the people’s minds. The “City of Design” is gradually becoming an important engine for the sustainable development of Beijing. During the prevention and control of the COVID-19, Beijing takes advantage of cutting-edge technologies such as big data, cloud computing and AI, making great progress in terms of medical care, community prevention and control, work resumption and improving the cultural life of the public. ■

From September 17 to 18, 2020, the third UNESCO Creative Cities Beijing Summit was held in Shougang Industrial Park. More than 30 representatives of international organizations, city leaders, innovation subjects and research institutions were invited to give speeches at the conference. Xu Qiang, director of the Beijing Science and Technology Commission and director of ICCSD, presided over the opening ceremony and made a keynote report.

This Summit represents the first international activity co-hosted by UNESCO and local government under the theme of “Creative Cities” since the outbreak of COVID-19 and it takes the development of cities under the post-epidemic era as a starting point to discuss how to use new technologies to empower culture and creativity, and design more resilient and optimized urban management measures, models and ideas against a big picture of balancing the pandemic-resistance and work resumption.

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General, said in the opening speech, “As a UNESCO Creative City of Design, Beijing provides an exemplary combination of profound history and state-of-the-art technology. Cities are unique spaces for solidarity, cooperation, and innovation. They are where the future of our societies will be defined. The support for Wuhan, a City of Design, from member cities of Creative Cities Network inspired the momentum of solidarity against the COVID-19.”



No.3 BF in Shougang Industrial Park is a «BF of Merit» which has an important contribution to the development of steel industry of Beijing and even China. After renovated, it looks more fashionable with a sense of technology



Mr. Yann Debelle de Montby presents the Fashion Creative Design Award

The 7th Chengdu Creativity & Design Week Held in Chengdu

At the invitation of the organizer of Chengdu Creativity & Design Week, Wu Wenbin and Langlang attended the 7th Chengdu Creativity & Design Week held in Chengdu Nov. 5-7, 2020 on behalf of ICCSD. They were invited to present the Golden Panda Tianfu Creative Design Awards 2020 and were interviewed by local media. Yann Debelle de Montby, a member of the Advisory Committee of ICCSD, was commissioned to serve as the head of the judging panel for the Fashion Creative Design Award. He was impressed by Chengdu and said he would consider establishing a branch office there. In this way, ICCSD has made a contribution to the introduction of international resources to cities in China's interior.

Langlang, researcher-in-charge at ICCSD, said in an interview, "It is the open and free society that attracts creativity. Such a favorable social climate begins with two things. The first is the gathering of creative talent. The other one is the quest for a



The Communicator-in-Charge for ICCSD in an interview with local media.

better life. On top of that, profound culture is another seedbed for the development of the creative design industry in Chengdu. Historically, a city with a well-developed creative design industry, like Rome and Paris, usually has a long-standing culture. Because a steady stream of creativity arises from a cultural sediment accumulated over the years." ■



Italian World Heritage at the Third China International Import Expo (CIIE)

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Italy, the year of 2020 witnessed the birth of the Chinese-English bilingual version of Italian World Heritage, which was jointly launched by the ICCSD, Cesanamedia and Touring Club Italiano for the first time at the Third China International Import Expo and published by Liaoning Science and Technology Press in China.

The Italian world heritage exhibition is the first overseas cultural exchange exhibition by the Italian Trade Agency. Under the landmark dome of Roman Architecture, 55 world heritage sites recognized by UNESCO are displayed in the form of a multimedia photography exhibition. All the pictures in the exhibition are from the book Italian World Heritage. The exhibition attracted a large number of visitors who enjoyed a good viewing experience through impressive visual presentation and multimedia interaction. The book Italian World Heritage presents 55 Italian scenic spots listed in the



UNESCO World Heritage List in an illustrated form. The Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Italian Embassy to China specially wrote an article for this book, hoping that it could share Italy's rich world heritage resources with Chinese readers, and promote exchange and cooperation between the two countries in cultural tourism, heritage protection and future renewal. Italian embassies and consulates, the Italian Trade Agency and other Italian organizations in China plan to present the book to Chinese partners as an official gift. ■

ICCSD Convenes the Second Session of its First Advisory Committee



Committee members from 10 countries attended the session online

The Second Session of the First Advisory Committee of ICCSD was convened in Beijing on Sept. 25, 2020. Ideas were exchanged online and offline using cloud communication because of pandemic-related restrictions.

The session included a brief summary on ICCSD's work over the year, as well as the inauguration and certification of new members of the Advisory Committee. In addition, members focused on figuring out innovative and creative ways to continuously promote global sustainable development in times of changes under the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 15 experts from 10 countries attended and spoke at the meeting, including Xiao Lan, executive director of ICCSD, Hans d'Orville, president of the ICCSD Advisory Committee, and former UNESCO Assistant Director-General, Charles Landry, the proposer and supporter of the Creative City concept, Carolina Quintana, a coordinator of UNCTAD Creative Economy Network, Riccardo Balbo, academic director of Istituto Europeo di Design, Mehri Madarshahi, president of Global Culture Network and former Senior Economist for United Nations, Mugendi K.M'Rithaa, President Emeritus of WDO, Wu Zhiqiang, Vice President of Tongji University and academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and Zhu Xufeng, Executive Director of TUSDG.

Xiao Lan said that COVID-19 has not only endangered the world, but also provided various industries with more opportunities for development. Services driven by digital technology have had a positive effect on work and life during the pandemic, including telemedicine, online education, shared platform, office automation and cross-border e-commerce. In his opinion, it is certain that the digital economy will be a crucial growth area in the next stage. In the future, for the effect of economic development, we will face a new and rapidly changing era. Thus, innovative thinking modes and creative solutions are urgently needed to seize the opportunities and handle the challenges

of the era. ICCSD, as an international platform which advocates advancing sustainable development in a creative way, will play a bigger role in the nearer future, since the previous system is under shock and a new turning point is emerging. The Center would be committed to collecting and studying creative plans across the world, reforming systems, innovating science and technology, and developing culture in a sustainable way.

During the session, Hans d'Orville, president of the ICCSD Advisory Committee, and former UNESCO Assistant Director-General, announced that Professor Xiang Yong, Vice Director of Institute for Cultural Industries, Peking University, was appointed as committee member of ICCSD. Xiao Lan, Executive Director of ICCSD, awarded Professor Xiang Yong a certificate of committee membership.

Hans d'Orville introduced the history of ICCSD, main programs of 2019 and work plans for 2020. He presented the practical and plentiful work in investigation and research, advertising and communication, and international cooperation conducted by ICCSD in the previous year. The Center has expanded creative projects and cases after a successful pilot program, encouraged professionals across the world to discuss the construction of creative cities, and provided a platform for countries to exchange cultures, share experience and achieve win-win cooperation. It has cooperated with more than 20 news agencies and gathered plenty of experience in the field. It has participated in over 10 international events and reached cooperation intentions with more than 30 institutions.

Hans d'Orville said that the center hopes to deepen cooperation with UNESCO, establish more platforms for communication and collaboration, widen the channels for committee members to exchange ideas and share experience, focus on social media operations and reports, and provide more examples of creative cases and achievements for committee members. It will also nurture talents

and blend the concept of sustainable development into works of young designers in the world. "We hope experts would continue to pay close attention to ICCSD and learn about the highlights of our work in the future," he said.

In the meeting, participants recognized and supported ICCSD's achievements. They indicated that they would coordinate more resources and projects from various fields and discuss further cooperation with ICCSD. Concentrating on three topics, experts conducted further discussion on the pandemic's impact on globalization, the creative economy and urban development, as well as the corresponding innovative measures during consulting and discussion. The three topics were "New Thinking under the New Normal: COVID-19's Impact on Globalization and the Creative Economy", "Innovative and Creative Measures Are Adopted in Cities to Curb the Pandemic" and "Research, Advertisement and Digital Tools Advancing Sustainable Development". Professionals believed that the outbreak put forward new requirements for creativity, design and sustainable development. They realized the significance of creating, building, sharing and discussing jointly. Facing the pandem-

ic, countries should cooperate with each other, promote multilateralism and globalization, express themselves, and respond to issues confronting them in more dignified, creative and fairer ways, as well as contribute to the world's recovery and development. In addition, experts mentioned that countries are supposed to try their best to overcome difficulties and achieve their sustainable goals before 2030 although the pandemic's influence is tremendous.

The first Advisory Committee of the Center was established in April 2019. The committee includes 30 members from 14 countries who come from international organizations, research institutes, social organizations and private companies and their majors span from creativity economy, urban development, industrial planning, to artificial intelligence, network technology, sustainable development or communication. The session gathered opinions of experts from various countries, offering intellectual support in order to achieve the sustainable goals on time. ■

Xiao Lan, Executive Director of ICCSD, awards Professor Xiang Yong, Vice President of the Institute for Cultural Industries of Peking University, with the certificate of committee membership of ICCSD's Advisory Committee (left: Chen Ping, middle: Xiao Lan, right: Xiang Yong)



Charitable Art Exhibition Held by ICCSD

At the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, calling for action by all countries to protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, were adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To inspire children's love and curiosity for life and encourage them to discover, appreciate and create beauty, ICCSD and Green & Shine Foundation (G&S Foundation) jointly held the 2020 Charitable Art Exhibition, in the hopes that it could give a boost to Goals 1 (End Poverty) & 4 (Quality Education). We expect that by exhibiting the children's paintings -which show their perception of beauty- we can draw societal attention to art education for rural children.

The collected paintings were from children in Grades 3 to 5 of Zhangcheng Primary School in Longde County, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Da'an Primary School in Longshan County, Hunan Province. The exhibition was divided into two sections. The first part showed these children's imitations of the world-class works by Van Gogh, David Hockney, Giorgio Morandi and other masters. By imitation, they could learn how to appreciate art, the composition of paintings and the combination of exciting colors. The second part exhibited the children's original paintings to show their creative imagination regarding their hometowns and nature. Its aim was to spark their imaginations and creativity by showing their ideas with their colorful painting brushes. ■



My Hometown by Xian Xuelian



Exhibition Site

童

What is beauty? In children's eyes, it can be the bright red blossoms and green willows in the spring, the fields filled with fully ripened grains in the fall, the tranquility after snow in winter. It can also be very simple - a leaf or a grass, a person or a scene.



Imitation by Li Yalong

[Follow ICCSD's official account to see more paintings]

Green & Shine Foundation started a charitable program for aesthetic education in rural primary schools in central and western China in 2017. Aimed at aesthetic enlightenment, the program has designed a series of activities to impart basic knowledge and skills to children in order to inspire their desire for beauty. In 2019, in addition to painting, drama and music were added to the list and activities were expanded to summer camps, training courses and public shows besides one-week voluntary education. Up to now, more than 2000 rural teachers have participated in and benefited from the program.

中国 CHINA ECO可持续 DESIGN 设计AWARD 大奖2021



主办机构
北京当代艺术基金会 (BCAF)

联合主办
中国环境新闻工作者协会 (CFEJ)

指导机构
北京国际设计周 大自然保护协会
联合国教科文组织国际创意与可持续发展中心

联合发起
阿里巴巴公益 阿里巴巴设计
北京工业设计促进会 三联生活实验室
腾讯基金会 腾讯科技公益 腾讯用户研究与体验设计部 雅昌艺术网
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自然之友 左靖工作室 同更生

媒体
财新网 财新文化 东方卫视《梦想改造家》
凤凰网 《卷宗Wallpaper》
《The New York Times for Kids 栩栩多多》
TOPYS 造么 ZaomeDesign
《Design360° 观念与设计》杂志
看什么策展

学术支持
北京师范大学未来设计创新研究中心
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“Dear darkening ground”

Dear darkening ground,
you’ve endured so patiently the walls we’ve built,

please give the cities one more hour
and grant the churches and cloisters two,

And those that labor —maybe you’ll let their work
grip them for another five hours, or seven

before you become forest again, and water,
and widening wilderness,
in that hour of inconceivable terror
when you take back your name from all things.

Just give me a little more time.

I just need a little more time,
because I am going to Love the things
as no one has thought to love them,

until they’re real and worthy of you.

— Rainer Maria Rilke

A poem by Rainer Maria
Rilke, read by Vandana Shi-
va, collectively animated by
@the.impossible.future and
presented by Daniel Wahl
[https://theimpossiblefuture.
org/dear-darkening-ground/](https://theimpossiblefuture.org/dear-darkening-ground/)