Jop Koopman

“Humans are after all social animals and we need the social connection to function.”

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 15 March – 23 April 2020

My name is Jop Koopman, I am a social and cultural anthropologist who specialises in disasters and crises with an aerial focus on Indonesia. Currently I am a fellow researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where I am starting a PhD in the next academic year. The next section is a short summary of my written diary entries. However, my struggle with the covid-19 virus is not included in the summary, and can be found throughout my diary entries in the section after the next.

Summary entries

My home is in Amsterdam, the capital city of the Netherlands. Amsterdam is a city which usually vibrates with life. There are lot of cafés and terraces next to the famous canals where locals and tourists mix and normally enjoy a drink or food with a view in the historical city centre. However, nowadays these cafés and terraces are deserted. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Dutch government decided that -among other things- all catering industry related businesses should close in order to halt the spread of the virus. The Netherlands has decided on what they call ‘an intelligent lockdown’, meaning that they did not install a total lockdown such as a lot of other countries do, but they merely decided that groups up to three persons are forbidden in the public sphere (unless you are a household), everyone should keep a distance of 1.5 meter, and every person with a non-essential job should work from home. Walking, exercise, and cycling are still allowed albeit with the mandatory 1.5 meters.

During the quarantine I try to stay fit, but since every gym is closed I simply try to do

10.000 steps per day to stay in shape and a daily workout routine in the morning. During my daily walks I observe what is happening in the city and how people are dealing with the measures imposed by the government. Every day when I am on the street for my walk the amount of people being outside still surprise me. Of course, I am part of the problem with my daily walk, however I walk alone, not with friends, family or acquaintances. What I see in the park is that people who are walking there are mostly walking in pairs or groups up until four or five people. The government did impose a fine of 390 euros for people who are ignoring the rules, but I think that there is too little blue on the streets to maintain the new rules. Besides the police others can impose fines as well, these so called *handhavers* (enforcers) are people that enforce the rules of the city and can give fines. They usually are moving through the city by bike, but nowadays they also drive in cars which are decorated with signs that show the 1.5-meter rule. On the top of the car a few megaphones are placed, through which the enforcers can call to people on the street who are not following the rules.

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The effects of the lockdown are also shown in the shops in Amsterdam. As I said, all non-essential jobs should work from home. Besides this, all contact jobs such as tattoo artists, nail salons, massage places, physiotherapists, and hair dressers are closed as well. All this contributes to a street image which is very empty. Only places where one could buy food and medicine are crowded. Almost every time when I pick up groceries I have to wait in line outside of the building. The line is made with tape on the ground. Everyone has to stand on a designated spot to keep up with the 1.5 meters (See pictures). When entering the grocery store one employee is sanitizing the mandatory carts. Every cashier employee is sitting behind a piece of plastic in order to protect themselves from coughing or sneezing customers.

The streets are empty, everyone is either inside or going to a place to go inside. Since there is no place or moment to meet our friends and family, a lot of people take to the internet and different applications such as Zoom, Houseparty, Facetime, and Whatsapp video call to see each other. Humans are after all social animals and we need the social connection to function. When I was isolated for three weeks, I often felt depressed due to the loss of contact with others. In that time, I had a small glimpse of the feeling lonely people would have in normal day-to-day life. Therefore, I started a group on Facebook called the coronavirus support network Hoofddorppleinbuurt (Hoofddorpppleinbuurt is my neighbourhood). The group is as of today as large as 100 people, and we work together with health organisations throughout our neighbourhood to support the elderly and vulnerable, the sick and the isolated, and the poor and the homeless.

In Amsterdam more groups such as mine have emerged. There is approximately one group per neighbourhood, all made up of concerned citizens and volunteers. This rise of solidarity is not something new for anthropologists and scientists who study disasters and crises, however, it is new for me to experience it on such a large scale.

Sunday 15th of March – Amsterdam

This morning I read in the newspaper that the coronavirus is exponentially spreading in the Netherlands. I wondered right at that moment what kind of measures the government would take to stop this, since the Dutch government is known for its neoliberal standpoints. Would it concede to a lockdown? Or would the government just let our country run its play during the virus outbreak? I feel a bit anxious about the idea of an uncontrolled outbreak in the Netherlands, although our healthcare system is one of the best in the world, still such an outbreak might have major implications on the economy, social well-being, and the state of mind of many citizens. Most of all, I find myself worrying about others more than about myself,

how will my parents and grandparents cope?

After my morning gymnastics I go to my girlfriend her home to play a Lord of the Rings board game with friends. As the time passes during our game, the time arrives that the press conference of the Dutch government commences. Mark Rutte, prime minister of the Netherlands, tells us that from that day everyone should work from home, that we could not leave our homes unless necessary, we have to implement social distancing in our day-to-day lives, and that until the 6th of April all bars, restaurants, and other places that can hold more than 100 people are closed. Besides being an anthropologist, I also have a nightlife organisation which I run with friends. I immediately understood the implications for the nightlife scene. Many friends are going to be or bankrupted, or financially dependent on the government. However, I also found myself to agree with the measures since the spread of the coronavirus has to be stopped.

Monday 16th of March – Amsterdam

I woke up feeling normal until I remembered the implications of the measures taken by the government. I decided to go to my work and get myself an account which enabled me to work from home for my second job at the housing association Ymere. After I went to my work I decided to get a few groceries for the week ahead, as I normally always do. When I entered the local grocery store almost every single shelf was empty. It seems that the hoarders took their chance quite early this morning, to hoard everything from pasta to toilet paper in an episode of panic. I managed to gather a week supply of food and other products which I normally would never buy, but due to the limited products available I had to make certain choices in food and products that I use and eat. So, I bought oatmeal instead of bread, I bought a bidet shower instead of toilet paper, and for my diner I bought sacks of dried lentils and

beans which I could cook up with frozen vegetables which were still in my freezer at home.

Whilst I cycled on my bicycle to go to my home I started to think about my internships in the Vrije Universiteit Medical Centre (VUmc) and elderly care during my bachelor Social Work, in which I most of the time worked with elderly people that found themselves to be lonely or had health issues. They often had a limited social network and health institutions always found it hard to reach them in the time I was working with them. Since I know that a lot of elderly people are living in my neighbourhood and the adjacent neighbourhoods I started to think about a coronavirus support network. A network in which volunteers could say what they had to offer, and whereby people who needed help could request it. I started this group on Facebook, however it is important to note that similar groups at the same time emerged for different neighbourhoods in Amsterdam. All for the support of the elderly, the vulnerable, or the quarantined. This wave of solidarity gave me hope for humanity and for our capability of overcoming this virus. People often think that when society is in disarray we tend to go back a step on the societal ladder and become barbarians again. However, the emergence of said groups proved to me that this was not the case. Instead of becoming barbarians, people tend to become more loving and supporting to one and another.

“This wave of solidarity gave me hope for humanity and for our capability of overcoming this virus.”

I decided to create a Facebook group called *Corona Virus Support Network*

Hoofddorppleinbuurt. My neighbourhood is called the *Hoofddorppleinbuurt*, which is divided in two by a canal called the Westlandgracht, one side of the canal is very beautiful, the buildings are old, and built in this classical Amsterdamse School style. The other side of the canal, the side that I live on, is filled with ugly flats for people with a lower income. In a few hours I already had 40 new members that wanted to help in this neighbourhood.

Tuesday 17th of March – Amsterdam

When I woke up, I saw to my surprise that my group had grown to 60 people. All eager to help others. That is why I decided to contact Combiwel, one of the larger health organisations in Amsterdam. I had contact with Nathalie, and Nathalie told me that they soon would start with a large flyer movement called 'Voor elkaar in Amsterdam' which translates to 'For each other in Amsterdam'. The flyer consisted of information for the vulnerable, quarantined, or elderly who did not want to go outside due to fear of the virus. If someone called the phonenumber on the flyer with a request for help, they would be linked to a volunteer in their region. I decided that my group and I needed to work together with this flyer movement.

An hour after I spoke with Nathalie from Combiwel I received 7500 flyers for my neighbourhood and the adjacent neighbourhoods After receiving the flyers, I messaged my group that I would need help on Wednesday and Thursday to help me distribute them all in our area. After I posted my message I needed to work again for my second job, so I did as the government told us to do, and stayed home and worked.

When my work was finished I decided to go to the grocery store again, because the last time I went there I did not have success in buying the thing that I needed. To my shock everyone in the store did not follow the new regulation of haven 1.5 meters

distance, even more so, people were hoarding and hoarding as if the apocalypse was upon us. I saw a few people fighting over supplies such as hand sanitizer, soap, and milk. The panic started to settle with the people, and therefore nobody followed the regulations the government tried to enforce.

> "People were hoarding and hoarding as if the apocalypse was upon us."

Wednesday 18th of March – Amsterdam

Every day when I wake up the first thing that I do is check the news. As I see the growing numbers of people being infected by this virus and dying of this virus, I start to worry more and more about my parents and vulnerable friends. Although I know that they are far away from the epicentre of the virus in the Netherlands, I still worry. In a weird way, this worrying gives me the energy to go out there to help other people, since I sincerely believe that with every good deed a ripple effect starts, and others will do good as well. Maybe it will reach my parents and my vulnerable friends?

A group of 10 volunteers help me today with the distribution of the flyers in our neighbourhood. I have bought plastic surgical gloves for everyone, since the virus can stay on materials such as steel, wood, and plastics for 3 days. I recommended them to not touch their faces whilst distributing the flyers, and to bring hand sanitizer. The distribution of the first 4000 flyers is finished in 5 hours, which seemed to be really fast to me. During distributing the flyers, I see slim to no people on the streets, which make me feel good and makes me get my hopes up for the

future of the growth of the virus.

Afterwards I drink a glass of wine to finish of my day with one of my neighbours.

Thursday 19th of March – Amsterdam

Today I woke up feeling a little bit nauseated, I hope it stems from the many hours I have been outside yesterday and that it is not foreboding something worse in terms of the virus. Therefore, I decided that the distribution of the flyers should be done by the volunteers and not myself. During the day I receive a few requests for help from an elderly couple and a health organisation which has seen it staff shrink with 30% due to health issues. I have posted both requests in my group and facilitated volunteers for both requests.

My girlfriend, who has her own support network for her neighbourhood supplies me with the necessary groceries, so that I could stay home and not possibly infect others. When she is at my door and knocks, she takes a few steps back and puts down the bag of groceries. As if we are in a mafia movie, she steps away from the bag, and I pick it up. I wave to her, and we have a short conversation about the developments of the day. This system seems to work, and we decide that we will continue doing this if I get even more sick.

Friday 20th of March – Amsterdam

My fears have come true, I have been notified that I have been in contact with someone on the night between Wednesday and Thursday with the virus. The neighbour I had a drink with has the virus, and logically I have been infected as well. Thus, my self-isolation for the upcoming weeks starts. I decide to download the app

Luscii Vitals through which the hospital can monitor my health from a distance.

When I tell my girlfriend and family about my illness they immediately start to worry, after which I told them I would be fine. Their worries are not ungrounded. I have had a history of lung problems (a collapsed lung and a few times pneumonia). But I feel confident that I will overcome this virus. During the day I try to focus on writing and my work for my job at Ymere, however the walls start to get closer to me earlier than I thought. My apartment is really small, one would not even call it an apartment since it is only 24 square meters. Luckily the weather outside is perfect, which enables me to open my windows, which creates the feeling of a larger apartment since it is more opened up.

Saturday 21st of March – Amsterdam

I feel worse than yesterday, I have woken up with a fever and I feel a pain in my lungs. Is it hypochondria? During the day I try to be easy on myself and to Skype with a few friends about the situation. With horror I watch the news that thousands of people took to the beaches and natural parks in the Netherlands, to celebrate the start of spring. I understand that people want to enjoy the sun after 5 months of almost non-stop sun, but I find it hard to understand how people could be so egocentric and play with other people's lives.

I do have to confess, the urge to go outside has never been this big. Normally, with this kind of weather in this time of year I would meet up with friends at a nice terrace and drink a few beers in the sun, laugh and make a lot of jokes, and enjoy life in spring. However, all that now seems as if it has been ages ago when we were able to do such things. Therefore, I try to connect with friends digitally, and as I lay down on my bed in the sun I still feel some of the warmth of these dear memories.

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Sunday 22nd of March – Amsterdam

This day is even sunnier than yesterday, as I see how the outside world looks like I worry. I worry because I know that a lot of people again will take to the beaches and parks and will bypass the measures of the government, which eventually will result in more cases of the coronavirus. The only thing that we can do is to raise our voices digitally and try to stop people from going to these public places.

My health improved slightly from yesterday, and I actually start to feel good again. Was it all just hypochondria? Just out of precaution I will not go outside yet. People suffering from the virus often feel these ambivalent stages between feeling sick and feeling slightly better. Therefore, I do not want to put people needlessly at risk.

During the day I see more and more people going outside acting as if nothing is happening. It makes me furious to see these people 'enjoying' the sun whilst others are altruistically staying inside in order to stop the spread of this virus. I can guarantee that the government will come with more measures after this weekend. They have to.

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Monday 23rd of March – Amsterdam

As the week starts the requests for help start to come in; a few elderly people are in need of groceries. I have posted them in my group, and immediately 5 people respond to the request for help. The feeling I get from helping these people and seeing that other people are willing to help others out are warming my heart and resolving fears for the future of humanity (climate change, societal disorder due to climate change, and disasters in general). I have seen this when I did my research in Lombok as well, right after the earthquakes in the most desperate times people would find and support each other, regardless of differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, or status. The same thing is happening now around me in Amsterdam, of course there are people who are trying to benefit from this situation, but most of the messages I see and observe are messages of hope and support.

This evening more measures were announced by the government. So-called 'contact' professions had to close their doors (i.e. hairdressers, physiotherapists, nail salons). There is a fine for people who are not enforcing the 1.5-meter social distance agreement on the streets, and for businesses when they do not enforce it in their stores. Besides this, all final exams for high schools are cancelled, and the regulations surrounding events have been moved up until the 1st of June, which means that all events up until that date are suspended. I feel that these measures are a wise step, however I do argue that the Netherlands needs to follow the rest of the European Union and start a total lockdown.

This week is very important for the Dutch health agency. If the trend of infections and the death toll rise exponentially then the measures of last week had no effect and will force the government to stricter measures.

Tuesday 24th of March – Amsterdam

This day I feel very sick, my lungs are on fire. However, I did need to work, so I gathered my strength and worked all day long. The urge of going outside has never been larger than now, I need some fresh air. However, I try to stay inside otherwise I might infect others again. During my break, my girlfriend brought me groceries again. She again knocked on the door, took a few steps back and gave me the opportunity to get two chairs. I have placed the chairs with a distance of 2 meters, so that we could have a safe conversation. Without her this isolation would have been much harder than now.

During the day I had several calls of the municipality and health organisations about requests for help in the neighbourhood. I have posted them in my Facebook group and again, people immediately wanted to help. This attitude of the people gives me so much strength and motivation to keep going. I know that the peak of the virus will not come in the foreseeable future, but I think this combination of work, writing, and volunteering might be the perfect solution to fill my days whilst battling the virus.

“I think this combination of work, writing, and volunteering might be the perfect solution to fill my days whilst battling the virus.”

Wednesday 25th of March

Today I decided to stay inside, since my symptoms of the coronavirus are still

present. I started thinking about the people who had visited me, about the distant conversations I had (2 meters), and the Skype sessions I had been through. That is the sheer beauty of technology nowadays, we stay updated about the news every time we want it, we can call whoever we like, and see each other through our webcams without even leaving the house. I wondered how it would have been like to be in isolation during the Spanish Flu outbreak in the previous century. People who would be lonely in day-to-day life would have felt alone much more without the technologies we use today.

Although the self-isolation can be lonely from time to time, I do feel that I am actively saving lives by not going outside, which motivates me. In what time could we saving humanity by just sitting at home and watch tv-shows? This seems like a dream come true to many. However, I do feel that a lot of people -whilst being in isolation- feel the need to connect. 1 or 2 days of Netflix and playing games is fun, but after that it seems like a boring activity. This crisis confirms again that we are social beings, in need of social contacts throughout the day.

Thursday 26th of March

I start to feel better, I rarely cough and I rarely sneeze. Is it part of the recovery trajectory? Or is it part of the general illness itself? Since a lot of people tend to get better and start feeling worse right afterwards again. Today I have literally nothing to do. It is a beautiful day outside and I still feel the urge to go out. However, since I live in a flat on the 6th floor so I opened up my windows on the sunny side of the flat, and laid down on the ground to do some sun bathing. During the bathing I still wanted to go outside, but this is as close as I can get.

In the beginning of the afternoon my girlfriend comes again to supply me with groceries. We do the same old mafia trick whereby she puts the bag on the ground,

steps back for 2 meters which enables me to pick up the bag. After this exchange I carried two chairs outside, and place them with two meters in between them. We talked for an hour or so about everything in our lives and what has been happening around us. These talks have been a highlight of my day every time she visits, since it is the rare social contact I get.

Friday 27th of March

Today I have to work for Ymere again, the housing association. I work from 08:30 till 17:00, so the whole day I was basically busy with work. Afterwards I decided I deserved a glass of wine, since at 00:00 it officially was my birthday. Although it might not have been the best idea to do, since I still had symptoms, the lifelong mantra 'live a little' went through my head before my decision.

Saturday 28th of March

It is my birthday today, I turned 26 years old. It must have been the weirdest time in my whole life to be celebrating my birthday. Since I could not invite anyone to my birthday due to government restrictions, I was called a lot by people through phone and Skype. This was really fun, more fun than I thought. The rest of the day I decided to read a book that I was planning to read and enjoy a nice cup of tea. Until someone knocked on my door. I opened the door and a few of my closest friends and my girlfriend were standing in front of it, with balloons, a cake, and a confetti cannon. As you can guess, my whole house was immediately filled with confetti after they shot the cannon. We decided to get a few chairs and to drink a beer and have some cake outside of my apartment, whilst doing this we all stayed 2 meters away from each other.

After they left I felt kind of depressed about the whole situation, me not being able to leave my apartment, and the idea that I could not celebrate my birthday the way I wanted to. Therefore, I curled myself up to a ball and tried to fall asleep as fast as possible.

Sunday 29th of March

No notable things happened today.

Monday 30th of March

First day outside again! I expected the outside world to be this dystopian space whereby the city of Amsterdam would be completely deserted. However, to my surprise the city was bustling with live. Fairly few cars were driving around, but a lot of people were cycling to their destinations. It might have been a thing that it was around 17:00 o'clock, the time that everyone transits from their work to their home, although everyone was advised by the government to work at home in their intelligent lockdown strategy.

I had to pick up some groceries since I was all out of supplies at home. So, I went to the Albert Heijn, the local grocery store. We had to wait outside since a certain amount of people were allowed in the store at once. The store had made compartments on the floor with tape, which supposedly were places where you could stand to maintain the 1.5 mandatory meters of social distance. In the store itself there was a security guy who kept the count of people going in, and who disinfected the handles of the mandatory shopping carts. After I got everything I needed I walked towards the counter, where this young lady was working. She was

working behind a glass barrier which was placed there in order to protect her from sneezing or coughing customers. We could no longer pay with cash due to possible further spread of infection, so I had to pay with my card. Afterwards I decided to go to my girlfriend her house. She has a bigger place, and is much more suitable for a longer period of lockdown.

Tuesday 31st of March

I woke up today feeling healthy and rested, in a different room than the one I had been quarantined in for the last two weeks, which felt as a total relieve. Today's activities were filled with work, but now at the home office at my girlfriend's house. Together we worked until 5 o'clock. Afterwards we cooked dinner. After these activities, the day almost felt as being normal and that there were no problems at all. However, that feeling quickly was shattered by the press conference Mark Rutte (PM of the Netherlands) in which he announced that the measures taken by the government to halt the virus were prolonged till the 28th of April.

Wednesday 1st of April

Whilst I have the possibility to go outside more often I choose to stay inside. I do not entirely trust the 'intelligent' lockdown installed by the Dutch government. This is due to the fact that the people have been given the responsibility to choose whether they stay home or go outside. Of course, the recommendation is to stay home as much as possible, but with the good weather coming up this weekend, I am starting to think that a lot of people are going to ignore the recommendations and decide to go outside anyway.

Since I went to the house of my girlfriend my space in which I could move is grown exponentially. My own apartment is 25 square metres, whilst her bedroom alone is also that size. The best thing about her house is that she owns a garden, in which we can sit when the sun comes out. I started to wonder, this way the lockdown is not so bad after all? At the end of the day I went to the supermarket to get the groceries for the next few days. Everyone has to carry a mandatory basket or use one of the mandatory shopping carts to ensure 1.5 meters of distance between different customers. Before entering the supermarket, everyone has to wait in line, 1.5 meters apart, until a security guard at the door waves to the next person in line so that they can enter the building. The carts and baskets are sanitized at the door by another employee of the supermarket.

After I got my groceries I went back to the house of my girlfriend, as I walk down the street I try to evade people like the spaceship does in the game space invaders with flying meteorites. When I point the social distancing protocol out to a few people they laugh at me, and they said that I was taking this thing to seriously. By actions such as these I have started to wonder why the government does not impose full restrictions on our society? People seem not to care about the rules.

Thursday 2nd of April

Today I decided to scan social media for initiatives, groups, messages, and everything else what is related to the coronavirus outbreak. Since I am a member of the nightlife community due to my nightlife business I see a lot of deejays and artists hosting live sets, indoor concerts, and zoom parties (a zoom party is a party with one deejay whereby everyone logs on separately).

Besides these live concerts and sets it seems like people in my friend lists are becoming more spiritual during this lockdown. I see a lot of invites for livestreams of

yoga sessions, mantra readings, and live tarot readings. This is a development I had not seen before the crisis, of course I knew that a lot of people were exploring spirituality, but I had no idea it was on this scale. Furthermore, a lot of Facebook groups have been created for every postal code area in Amsterdam. These groups are created in the sense of support networks in order to help elderly, vulnerable people, and people who are currently isolated. A few weeks ago, I mentioned that I myself created a group such as this, which is still growing in membership. When I see all these sparks of solidarity throughout the city of Amsterdam and all these volunteers who want to help I feel hopeful for the future. Although it is still questionable if this high level of solidarity and volunteers will be maintained after the crisis, it is a good sign that when something happens that affects us all, people will step up and support each other.

Friday 3rd of April

Nothing really interesting happened today, I was at home all the time and did not go outside in order to keep myself away from the busy streets.

Saturday 4th of April

Today my parents wanted to come over to celebrate my birthday, since I turned 26 years old on the 28th of March. I invited them at the home of my girlfriend. It was a weird day, since we could not give each other a hug, had to keep a radius of 1.5 meters in order to keep our distance, and we could not sit with each other. Since they are one household, and I and my girlfriend are, we were placed on two sides of a large table. Luckily the weather was so good that we could sit in the garden, otherwise it would not have been possible to meet up. Meeting up was quite

awkward without the physical contact but it was okay. I did wonder how we all would be living after this whole situation, would we all have more or less physical contact? What major social implications would the virus have in its aftermath? Would we be living in a world in which social distancing is a given?

> "I did wonder how we all would be living after this whole situation, would we all have more or less physical contact?"

Sunday 5th of April

It is a beautiful day outside, with 20 degrees Celsius it looks like it is officially the start of spring in terms of temperatures. Normally, we Dutch people tend to flock to parks, beaches, terraces, and just generally 'the outside' when there is even a little bit of sun. Therefore, the government imposed special restrictions for today, several natural parks and beaches are closed, it is forbidden to go sailing in the city centre of Amsterdam, and more cars are driving around with megaphones to tell people that they should have more distance. With all these measures one would assume that it would not be that busy outside, especially when one could get a fine of 390 euros. I could not have been more wrong.

When I decided to go for my daily walk to get my 10.000 steps goal, I saw a lot of crowded places, people playing music, drinking beverages, and acting as if nothing was actually going on. I sometimes hate the casualness of Dutch people when it comes to illnesses, especially on these days. What is peculiar is that the Dutch vocabulary of swearing is all based around illnesses, which means that in a way

Dutch people feel easily offended when called names of illnesses. This, however, does not project unto the casualness of dealing with measures imposed by the government in order to halt the spread of the virus. The result of this casual way of dealing with the virus will be seen in one week in possibly a rise in cases of infection.

Monday 6th of April

Today I woke up quite around 6 in the morning, which is an hour earlier than my usual time to wake up. I think it might have something to do with stress, not stress about the situation per se, but the stress about not seeing my friends and loved ones in real life. In moments like these I realize more and more why we call ourselves social animals. Of course, this is one of the first things we learn in our biology classes, but still. It is interesting to notice it in real life for once. This feeling of disconnection is not solvable through the many applications (e.g. Houseparty, Zoom, Skype, and other facetime apps) people in my environment have adopted, but rather physical contact. Therefore, I have made a few appointments with friends to meet them in parks for a picnic. Of course, we will have the mandatory 2 – 3 meters distance, but it is going to be nice to talk to each other in real life again.

Tuesday 7th of April

Nothing special happened today, I stayed inside and did not come out of my house. I tried to do some exercise but I noticed that I really miss my regular gym, so I ceased the exercising and decided that I was having an 'off-day'. Which meant that I started a series, and watched it all day long. I did feel really lazy afterwards, but sometimes I have this urge that I need to do such a thing.

Jop Koopman

Wednesday 8th of April till 16th of April

The newspapers and media are full of messages from scientists and other virology experts who are claiming that the measures of social distancing are going to last until the end of 2021. Since I have a company in nightlife besides my anthropological career, and my best friend is the owner of a sushi shop these measures might be the end of our companies. It is understandable that we cannot come together due to the virus, but I did not think about the length of these measures. Some media rapports from our national newspaper De Volkskrant show that we might be dealing with the virus and several lockdowns up until 2024. These messages make me wonder if I should not just go bankrupt with my company and call it a day. It might save me of a lot of future trouble.

Due to the conspiracy theories on the internet the media nowadays also covers people who set 5G transmission towers in fire. I agree with the notion that the radiation has not been tested enough to know its long-term effects, but the idea that 5G has caused Covid-19 is nonsensical. Other theories that are widely accepted in the Netherlands is the idea that Covid-19 is just a flu but a little bit tougher. These people are the ones that are calling upon the government to stop the measures and to continue with business as usual.

Jop Koopman



The situation outside -which I observe during my daily walks- is still quiet. Throughout the city red cars painted with white images of 1.5 metres drive through the empty streets. From the megaphones on the roofs of the cars they are saying: 'Stay home', 'If you go outside keep distance', and 'follow the 1.5-meter rule'. These broadcasts are not only in Dutch, but also in English, Polish, and Arabic in order to reach most of the minorities in Amsterdam. Besides these cars small signs of solidarity are everywhere. People have drawn texts of solidarity on the streets with chalk, there are signs all around the city with written texts such as: 'Keep on fighting children! We miss you here at our school', 'Stay Strong Amsterdam!' or 'people with a vital job can get free meals and flowers here!'. These small signs of solidarity are the signs that pull me (and presumably others) through the day.

The hospitals in the city are using an app called Luscii. With the use of this app they

can keep track of people who have symptoms. If the symptoms get worse the hospitals call the participants in order to check up on them. This way, the reach of the hospitals is larger and they can monitor people who are not able to go get checked due to the lockdown measures.

A 'nice' side-effect of the lockdown is that the sky in Amsterdam is beautiful since there is less pollution. This means that we have the brightest April in years. Environmental activists are taking this as an opportunity to push their agendas for better climate regulations in our city and country. More and more people are waking up in my environment and see that our neoliberalist world needs changing in order to overcome the challenges of the future, some say that a challenge might be that even more pandemics rise due to our growing contact with wild animals.

"A 'nice' side-effect of the lockdown is that the sky in Amsterdam is beautiful since there is less pollution."

Whilst most of the streets are empty, the people that are on the street are being very rude. They do not take the 1.5-meter measure in account and rudely walk close to you. Sometimes when I say something about it, people tend to get angry. Due to these signals I more and more start to doubt the effectiveness of the 'intelligent' lockdown. Most of the Dutch population can think for themselves, however there are always a few individuals who spoil it for the rest and who simply cannot follow

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16th of April – 23rd of April

The Dutch government decided on Tuesday the 21st of April that it was time to loosen up the measurement of the 'intelligent lockdown'. Children under 13 years could go to schools again, they are supposed to go schematic and half days. This means that some children go to school on Monday, whilst others are going to school on Tuesday. The reasons behind this decision is that the government believes the coronavirus is not easily spread between children, and from children to grown-ups. Besides that, the children can go to school, they can start beginning with sports again although whilst playing the sports, they need to be 1.5 meters apart. To me, these changes come way to soon. The virus is still taking 100-200 lives per day in The Netherlands, with 700-1000 extra contaminated people. Therefore, in my opinion, I believe it is too soon to let children go to schools again, let alone start exercising again. The problem is not the children having fun or going back to school, but the increase in possible moments of contacts between adults is.

The problem with loosening the measurements of the beginning of March is that people are getting more careless. They see that the government is loosening up society and decided that they can take risks by going outside more often. The problem here is, especially in a densely populated city such as Amsterdam in which street are small and tight, that more and more people are starting to get in contact with others. Of course, there is law enforcement on the streets, however, in my opinion they do not do enough since the situation is uncontrollable because too many people are back on the streets. It is not as busy as it normally was, but still it often is hard to maintain the 1.5 meters distance between myself and other pedestrians when I go to the supermarket.

The weather has been improving everyday now. Due to the lack of airplanes in the sky, we have had unprecedented clear skies and sunny days, solar energy output is on its all-time high, and the air pollution is on a minimum. I hear friends saying that

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they like the weather as it is, politicians saying that we should be looking for a new post-virus society wherein we are sustainable, and media outlets reporting on the matter. However, just like every positive thing there is a negative side. April has never been this dry in the history of The Netherlands, which caused the ground whereupon the farmers need to sow their crops to dry out; one of the largest forest fires is currently spreading in the provinces of Limburg and Noord-Brabant; and people tend to leave their apartments sooner due to higher temperatures and visit recreational sites such as beaches and parks.

“We do not know how the virus will behave during the summer, therefore it is too dangerous to take risks in this situation.”

In the weekend of the 18th and the 19th of April the weather was again outstanding. People took to the parks and to the canals to enjoy the sun and the company of friends. Although it seems reasonable for one to miss his friends and social activities this was supposed to be not allowed. I was staying at home over the weekend, in my apartment at the 6th floor of my building. I could see the people sitting outside in the sun with friends enjoying a cold beverage. This sight made me furious and hopeless at the same time. I became angry because the sight proved to me that people were to irresponsible to make the right choice and to stay at home. I still believe that people need to stay home and only are allowed outside for necessary errands to get grip on the virus. Otherwise we will be dealing with a second or a third wave after the summer, or even during the summer. We do not know how the virus will behave during the summer, therefore it is too dangerous to take risks in this situation.