

# **“There can come good changes out of everything having been turned upside down for a while.”**

**Oslo, Norway, 22 March – 15 June 2020**

*I'm a Norwegian living and studying my bachelor degree in Anthropology in Denmark. I have strong connections to my two cousins from Ecuador; one of them is now studying in Canada. Currently I'm staying at my parents' home in Oslo, together with my brother who was sent back home from his folk high school (folkehøgskole).*

*Night to the 12th of March all schools and universities closed in Denmark, and the country began to lockdown. The day after I hastily packed a small backpack and left my student dorm and flat mates, really unsure if it was the best to stay or to leave. On my way back to Oslo, Denmark closed its borders and as I took my first steps in Norway, the government changed the quarantine rules including travelers from Denmark as one of the groups required to stay 14 days at home. That was the beginning of my corona adventure, and here I will try to describe the rest.*

*In the text there are no personal names and sufficient anonymization has been taken care of.*

## **22nd of March**

The day started with the sun rays slipping through my curtains, which led us to the conclusion of it being a perfect day for a walk in the forest. Normally we would have gone all together, but me being in quarantine required some creative solutions. My mom wanted to go with one of her friends, who didn't think it was a good idea to

walk with me since I am in quarantine, mostly because of the huge fee you get if you break quarantine rules. Even if we all were going to the same place we went separately. The trip had a bit of a dramatic turn when my dad fell and hit both his head and knee on a stone. Limping back to the car we mostly discussed going to the emergency room, if it even was a possibility to go to go there with something else than corona, and if it was a good idea concerning contagion risks.

In the end my parents did go to emergency. Turned out to be a small concussion.

### 23rd of March

A new restriction to minimize contagion, all football fields are being closed.

Looking out of the windows in my room I see the neighborhood's football field, where there usually always are people playing. Now a man is fighting against the wind to set up a thin red and white barrier tape around the whole field. It looks ridiculous. Anyhow, now every time I look outside the window, I'm reminded of how everything is turned upside down.

Another happening today. The Danish government decided to continue the lockdown of the country till the 13th of April, which means continuing with virtual university. I don't know when I'll be able to go back to Denmark again. I don't know what I should do. I feel like I'm trapped inside a box that just becomes smaller and smaller.

<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/mette-frederiksen-danmark-vil-fortsat-vaere-lukket-ned-frem-til-13-april>, date of access: 29.03.20

### 24th of March

"There can come good changes out of everything having been turned upside down for a while."  
<https://boasblogs.org/curarecoronadiaries/there-can-come-good-changes-out-of-everything-having-been-turned-upside-down-for-a-while/>

After several days with frustration and anger against restrictions on how many friends you should meet, my brother unwillingly accepted to not take the risk, and went camping with just one friend instead of the group that he had planned to go with.

A teenager in Oslo has had to pay a fee of 20.000 NOK for breaking quarantine rules yesterday. Probably a way of showing the consequences of breaking the rules, even for teenagers.

<https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/coronasmittet-far-20-000-i-bot-etter-fest/72283732>, date of access: 29.03.20

## 27th of March

I'm done with my 14 days of quarantine today! After doing some reading and attending a virtual meeting with the NGO I volunteer for in Denmark, I finally met with two of my friends, that also have gone back to their families, after two weeks of not meeting anyone else than my family.

We had a really nice, long walk in the forest. Being with others physically just makes all the difference. It's also nice to see the loved ones that normally live so far away.

D, one of my walking friends today, told me about her mother, who is a teacher in primary school. Normally she just works 80% because she has been overworked and stressed for various years. Now, because of the lockdown and the sudden need for the schools to adapt to the virtual format she ends up doing a lot more than she should. In addition to making a class program that fits at home, she also calls around to everyone of her students every week to check-up on them, how they are and what they have done. D remarked that her mother is starting to look quite tired, also because she is not used to using digital platforms, so now her job requires her to

learn these platforms in addition to preparing and holding classes and checking up on students.

## 28th of March

I talked with my two cousins from Ecuador tonight. C, that is my age, is studying in Canada and can't go back to Ecuador because the country has closed its' borders completely, planes are forbidden to land, people can't neither get in or out. My older cousin, P, is studying to pass her specialization exam in medicine that she is supposed to do in Spain next fall. Now she is studying online in Ecuador.

A conversation like that from three people in three countries makes you realize how big the contrasts are from country to country. Well actually, Norway and Canada are a bit similar, and T and I are living the same type of virtual student life. For P, however, it's very different. I think she also understands much better than the two of us what all of this means, at least what it means in Ecuador. She knows the health care system, she knows all the limitations there are, several of her friends work as doctors at different hospitals. She is supposed to study online, but she says she can't really concentrate on her exam. I think she feels a weight of responsibility, as well as fear and a bit of hopelessness. When I said that she should try to focus on that she is a student and that is what she is doing now, she only answered saying: "But *I am* a doctor, and people *are* dying."

Ecuador is a country with so few resources compared to Norway. In Norway there is not enough masks and protection gear for the personal at the hospitals. Imagine Ecuador, or all the other countries in the world that have even fewer resources. M says there is only around 120 beds for emergency cases in Quito, not enough masks and not nearly enough respirators.

I think it feels like waiting for a disaster. M told us she has been offered to do 2 hours

of television medicine, giving people medical advice over national television. Maybe it's better for her to take small breaks from the online study and do something practical, so she can concentrate. It's a long time since I've seen her so upset, frustrated and distracted as now. I think she is really worried about what this virus can do to her country when it hits hard, and I think she is really scared. Which is weird for her, normally she is calm and very rational.

What do you say to make it better? There is not much you can say really. With a growing lump in throat I just listen.

“I think it feels like waiting for a disaster.”

### 31st of March

I haven't been writing for some days, because I've been a bit weighed down by the whole situation. Even if I know that I am in a very privileged situation and that I am very lucky to be here in Oslo with my family, I can't help but feel a bit stressed about all the uncertainty. All the constant changing of restrictions and the not knowing when this is going to end or how drain me a bit of energy.

I read on the news today about a 12-year-old girl dying from the virus in Belgium today. She is one of the youngest to die of corona in Europe. I did some more research about younger people dying of the virus in Europe out of curiosity, and at the moment there is a 13-year-old boy in the UK, a 14-year-old boy in Portugal and a 16-year-old girl in Paris that has died. There wasn't really so much information to be found about *why* these youngsters were so hardly affected. I guess there are not any

answers to that yet, nobody knows. There has been this idea, at least here in Norway, that young people are not really affected by the virus and that the older people are the ones really at risk. The tendency has been to think that if you as a youngster don't have other health issues you can't really die of the virus, then you're kind of invincible. But we can't really know, and I think it's dangerous to adopt a behavior where you allow yourself to take risks just because you think you're safer when you're young.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/12-year-old-girl-dies-of-coronavirus-in-belgium/1786601>, 31.03.20

In a press conference yesterday Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said that the numbers of contagion in the country are more stable, showing that maybe the restrictions have helped. They are aiming at gradually "opening up" Denmark again after the 13th of April. It seems like Norway is following the same footsteps, and are aiming at the same goal. The football fields in Oslo have at least opened up again. Which means the football field that I can see from my window had suddenly people playing on it again, maybe even a bit too crowded for what is reasonable. It's weird how the situation changes all the time, putting up restrictions one day, taking them down again the next. It makes thing even more surrealistic, and gives me the sense that the government doesn't really have a clear idea of what they are doing with all these restrictions.

## 1st of April

The Danish government has decided that all citizens with a Danish passport are allowed to enter Denmark. Those without Danish nationality can pass the borders if you have a "worthy reason" of entering the country. I called the Denmark's police hotline to ask if my situation is considered a "worthy reason" of entering. The answer

was that you're allowed to enter as long as you're able to prove that you're living in Denmark, if you for example have a Danish identity card, which means they probably would accept me. I've been thinking about going back after Easter, because I have an exam that I'm writing with someone else, and it would be easier if we're in the same country to do that. I'm just not so sure if it is a good idea to travel, and move, especially thinking about what I wrote about yesterday with young people also being very much at risk. I also feel it's a bit irresponsible and egoistic to not follow governmental recommendations of staying put where you are.

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Folkehelseinstituttet, FHI) have recommended for Norway to follow Finland's example of handling the pandemic. In Finland they have only had one week of strict restrictions, and have opened up the primary schools and kindergartens again. There wasn't so much information on what exactly Finland's strategy is in the article I read, or why they thought this was the best way of doing it. It followed up saying that the Norwegian Health Directorate are not following the advice of the FHI, and thus the government has decided to continue with the strict restrictions till, at least, the 13th of April, following more China's example.

We had a conversation around the dinner table today about the virus, as happens often these days. My dad mentioned Sweden where they haven't really put up any severe restrictions and talked about a news reportage from Stockholm that showed people going to cafés as normal, and the city center filled with people. It's very different from Oslo, where most public places are mostly empty. As we talked, my mom pointed out that Sweden have just recommended people to stay home, it's not a requirement. Sweden has more than 130 deaths, and a high number of them are migrants. My mom pointed out that the reason for that could be linked with how the whole situation has been handled. By recommending people to stay at home and not requiring, it's up to each work place and each private person to follow this recommendation. The work places with the worst working conditions, and that are

more dependent economically on staying open are also the ones where most migrants work. Thus, they continue to go out. Many migrants also often live with their old family members, which results in them being more vulnerable. In a way the government's recommendation ignore parts of its population, maybe one could go as far to say that in a way it's an implicit discrimination of the minorities. The people in vulnerable economical positions become the ones that are most vulnerable to the virus as well. It's a lot more complex than it seems at a first glance.

## 2nd of April

It's soon Easter vacation, and I was supposed to go back to Norway tomorrow. I just received an email telling me that part of my bus travel home has been cancelled due to Denmark's closed borders, which means I probably wouldn't be able to get back to Oslo by bus if I didn't travel three weeks ago. I was also supposed to spend the holidays with some friends hiking in the mountains, but the municipality they live in has closed of its' "borders", as many municipalities in Norway have. There still haven't been proven cases in that area, and therefore people from Oslo have to be in quarantine for 14 days if they decide to go there. It's not really a big thing to miss out on, but it still weird to think about how everything is so much changed now.

One of the things that I also was looking forward to, going back home, was visiting my grandma, who lives in another city close to Oslo. Now, I've been here for three weeks and I haven't been able to see her, and I don't know if I'll be able to either. For the moment my uncle and aunt shops groceries for her, and puts it on her doorsteps. The idea is to minimize contact and thus risk of contagion. She just sees one or two friends, but she doesn't really see family. We've been discussing how we could visit her, just go on a walk together, if we should, shouldn't. My brother has a clear and strong opinion on the matter. He thinks it's a bad idea, I think he is afraid of taking that risk. Older people seem very vulnerable in regard to this. I still think it's weird to



not be able to see family, and I think that for my grandma and older people that live alone and aren't used to using digital media, these times with strict health restrictions can feel quite lonely. It also makes me think about all the older people that don't really have a family that lives closely to shop for them or maybe don't have strong family connections.

In a way the restrictions take for granted one type of society. Where people have families that take care of each other, where you have two toilets in your house so the potential sick person can use that one and the rest the other, where it's safe to stay at home, where everyone has a home.

### **3rd of April**

My appointment to consult my chiropractor about a hand injury that I have had the last month got cancelled because they are required to stay closed until the 14th of April. One of my aunts in Ecuador has twisted her foot and can't get it checked, because the hospitals don't allow external consultations and physiotherapeutic clinics are closed as well. My other aunt in Ecuador has a bad tooth and half of her face has swollen up, but there aren't many dentists open either.

I talked to our neighbor that works at a hospital here in Norway, and she said that there are a lot of empty beds in the hospitals now. The strategy has been to liberate space and not attend cases that are not urgent. She was saying that the problem with this is that there will be very long queues when more and more restrictions are let off, which means that there will continue to be a lot of pressure on the health system. She was not so convinced that it was the best strategy to not attend to much else than virus cases. Also, because there are other cases that are important, even if they don't seem urgent, for example patients with mental health problems. Health is more than this virus, and people can be sick by many other things and need help.

## “Health is more than this virus”

### 4th of April

We woke up today with news from Ecuador. One of the biggest cities in the country, Guayaquil, with the most cases of sick people in Ecuador, is not doing so good. The health system is collapsing, it doesn't have enough capacity to face the enormous numbers of people that need help, and there is an increasing problem of what to do with the dead bodies. I don't think my mom could quite get the pictures she had seen on the news, of dead bodies lying on the streets, out of her head. These things gives you perspective, then suddenly you don't have much to complain about when you're sitting in a house attending virtual classes in a state where quarantine means being able to walk outside of your house whenever you want as long as you don't meet with so many people.

There is a tendency in Norwegian media and newspapers to focus more and more on the economic consequences of the restrictions and the crisis. The papers and radio news are even applying a discourse where the economic consequences of the crisis are described as a “wound that won't heal”. I get that this is an important part for the country, and also on each individual household, I just think that all the attention that the economy gets under a pandemic crisis shows where the focus normally always ends up laying. It can also be kind of frustrating to listen to talk about the Norwegian society's “wound”, when there are so many people that are dying and so many other countries with less resources that are facing much harder task. Norway will survive, economy and all, but there are many people that aren't surviving.

Later today I walked our dog with my friend D in the forest. I told her about the news from Ecuador and about it giving some perspective to things. We talked about that you have to be able to feel what you feel about all these restrictions, but it's good to remember that here in Norway and Denmark we are very privileged. And also, how even within Norway we are the lucky ones, with a home that feels safe to stay in.

<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-52116100>

## **6th of April**

The Norwegian Health Directorate sent out a SMS to everyone in Norway wishing us a happy Easter, and reminding us to keep 2 meters distance and to not be in bigger groups than 5 people.

## **7th of April**

Today was one of the sunny ones, one of those that give you the glimpses of summer that is slowly approaching. We started the morning with a long breakfast, followed by a walk in the forest and enjoying the sun in the garden afterwards. These are the breathing holes, where you forget for some moments that everything is in a state of exception. It's good and I think it's important, leaving the stress out and remembering that there are other things that fill the world than COVID-19.

In the evening, whilst practice driving with my dad in a neighborhood with big wooden houses, there was suddenly a lady on a stretcher, with a breathing mask on, being rolled into an ambulance right in front of us. Suddenly we were thrown back to the hard part of reality, and corona was again very present.

The Norwegian government announced that there will now happen a gradually

opening of the society again, first starting with kindergartens and schools in mid-April. Denmark is doing something similar, just after Easter. My university, however, is closed until further notice till the 10th of May, which means no more physical classes for us this semester. My brother also got to know from his folk high school (folkehøgskole) that they will not open again until after summer. I think he and his friend had some hope that they would be able to meet again their school before summer. Now it's officially announced that they won't, and he seems both sad and a bit frustrated.

### 9th of April

One of my best friends called me today. Whilst crying she told me how she was so weighed down by not being able to meet people or do the things she normally does. She said she was tired of activities being limited and not knowing how long it would be this way. Even though quarantine it's done for the best of our physical health, it's important to remember that it can be very challenging for many people's mental health.

### 10th of April

I talked to L tonight, a friend that lives in France. For the moment she is trapped in a little mountain village with some friends, which isn't really so bad, but they still have to live by strict restrictions. She told me that they're only allowed to be 1 hour outside and walk just within a 1 km radius. Each time they go out they are obliged to bring a written paper with them that states at what time they went out and from where. People are also told to not meet anyone they don't live with. She talked about how the roads are completely empty of cars, how there are no people outside, and even though there aren't many police officers in her little town she knows from other

friends, that are in the bigger cities, that there are many controls. There are even police helicopters that control if people walk outside in the mountains. In general, L said, there is a discontent with how the president is handling the situation, and people are saying that lot of resources and money is used on controlling that people follow the rules, instead of giving economical support to hospitals and the health system.

The phone call got me thinking about how the Scandinavian countries always seem to draw the longest straw. Even if we are in a pandemic situation that has hit hard and is damaging indeed, most people in Norway are still very much in a livable situation. Yes, there is a lockdown of the country, and yes, we have restrictions as well. But we're not forbidden to go outside like in Spain or Italy, we're not controlled by the police when we go outside and there isn't only one day in the week when we're allowed to go grocery shopping, like in Ecuador. On the contrary, all the time we've been allowed to meet with other people that aren't part of our household, you can move pretty freely around if you have a car and we can go shopping whenever we want, even our schools are opening in two weeks, just after one month of lockdown whilst other countries have stayed closed much longer. It's almost like social and economic inequality is evident in the levels of strictness of the different pandemic measures. The consequences of the virus make it very clear how everything is very interlinked, social dimensions with scientific ones, health with politics, economics with science, you can't really look at them separately.

### 13th of April

The last days I've been trying to do other things, to think about other stuff than pandemic situations. With the news flow mainly focusing on corona, I haven't really wanted to read or listen to it. It's like a constant reminder of the situation that you're a bit frustrated with. That's why the last days I've been trying to take some distance

from papers, radio and news in general. There are often so many negative thoughts and poor prospects for the future in these medias, which can be good, but when I, myself, am in a pessimistic mood, I don't really want to add it up with more gloominess.

### **17th of April**

These are some intense days for me as I'm writing as an exam, and it's funny because in a way it's really not so different from what a normal exam period would have been. You spend your days inside in front of a computer mainly, and don't really leave the house so often. It fits well with the quarantine life.

Next Monday the kindergartens are opening again, and the week after the pupils from 1st to 4th grade will be allowed back to school. You can sense that people are loosening up in social settings and also getting more creative in how to meet. For example, having a birthday party by sitting two meters from each other in the park, but with everyone wearing a party hat. It's also hotter outside, and spring is here, which also means more and more people spending time out in the sun. I think the good weather makes people less weighed down, maybe even more optimistic.

But the underlying tension is still very present. Because what does it mean when everyone loosens up and maybe aren't that strict with precautions? Will there be an enormous fallback when the schools open?

There have now been published studies that show that the virus may have similar characteristics to the HIV virus, implying that it damages your immune system. What does this mean? Is it even more dangerous than what we think it is?

## 25th of April

Dear corona-diary,

I haven't written for a while since I've been occupied with university lately. The week has mainly been filled up with exam writing.

Well, T my cousin, who studies in Canada, returned back to Ecuador today or tonight, depending on which time zone you follow, on a humanitarian flight. She travelled back all the way with a mask on. She passed through the US, Mexico and then arrived at last in Quito. She couldn't however go directly back to her parents' house, because at the moment all people that arrive in Ecuador have to go directly from the airport to a hotel, and be in isolation there for two weeks. Then the hotel staff will out food outside your door and you're not allowed to be out of your room in this period. So, that's what is next for T. Luckily, she is not going to be alone in the hotel room, a friend of hers from Ecuador that studies in Canada travelled back with her and they are doing the quarantine together. T also usually makes the best out of each situation, so I think she is going to be okay, and now she is where she wanted to be, and can soon meet her family.

Here in Oslo the primary schools are opening next week, the kindergartens have been open for one week and people are starting to be more and more relaxed. At the same time, it's like people have accepted that corona will be a big part of our lives for a long time, and therefore also don't take as strict precautions. It's difficult to all the time feel that you cannot stand close to others, not visit friends or family, wash your hands every time you touch something outside when you think it's going to be this way for one year or more. It's also a rich country's problem, we don't feel the consequences so hard, so we don't see the necessity of such severe restrictions. At the same time, I think a big part of being human is to be social, share things with others, not be aware of oneself all the time. I think no matter where you are it's hard to accept that all these things are going to be forbidden for you for a long time. And

it's maybe even weirder to accept that these have become negative things, as well as suddenly changing social habits.

Another aspect that is interesting is how quarantine implies so many different things depending on where you are. In Norway how to do your quarantine is left up to each individual. Some are strict and don't meet anyone, others behave more freely. Anyhow, being in quarantine basically means that you can't meet with anyone besides the one in your household, but you're still allowed to walk outside and be places where there aren't a lot of people. However, in for example Spain, France, Italy and Ecuador, being in quarantine means not being able to leave your house, just to do groceries and then it's for a short time and during a given time of the week and day. This, of course, is connected to that the virus spreads and affects societies differently, and is also linked to the different health systems and resources each country has. For instance, in Norway you have the idea that the health system will take care of you, it will thrive and be strong enough to support the affected. In other countries as, for example those I mentioned above, on the other hand, this is not necessarily a shared idea. The health system working smoothly is not a given thing, and as one of my mom's friend who lives in Italy said: "Most people that get the virus now are those that visit the hospital for other causes than the virus. So, going to the hospital is in itself a risk." The hospital is not necessarily a safe spot. Then maybe your house becomes a very important refuge. I wonder what homeless people do. Where do they hide?

## 28th of April

It is soon the 1st of May, normally the official beginning of the *russ* tradition in Norway. During these weeks, graduating high school students normally put on red, blue or black suits and party till the 17th of May, Norway's national day. It is like a several week long graduation party. Many teens use a lot of money on this, making



groups with their own logos, design own sweaters, pay “russ”-artists to make songs for their group, and buy a lot of alcohol. Some even buy buses to remake them into party-buses, that they drive around in the city during the night. It is also a tradition that is heavily criticized every year because; of it being in the middle of the last exams for the students, high numbers of rapes, sexually discriminating songs, huge amounts of alcohol and drugs, and a high risk of contagion of meningitis. The schools normally offer and recommend everyone that is going to be russ that year a vaccine against meningitis, because during previous years this has been a problem. In other words, these are weeks known for being contagion bombs, and this is where the corona comes in. The prime minister has even named it as such, a contagion bomb, and it has been decided that both the 17th of May and the graduating party weeks are cancelled due to Covid-19 precautions.

However, a part of wearing these pants is also that you’re kind of “allowed” to break social rules. There are all kind of funny challenges that require you to break small rules, like drinking in a roundabout, staying in the schools overnight, entering into places you shouldn’t be. It’s like a type of *rite de passage*, where norms and rules don’t apply to you. However, this kind of idea now clashes with the restrictions against Covid-19. Not obeying to rules is part of the tradition, the problem is just that now these rules aren’t social norms to maintain “order” in society, but requirements to try to handle a pandemic. There have already been various cases with police stopping big “russefester” (russ-parties) that occur even if you aren’t supposed to be in bigger groups than 5 people. The police have tried to put in simple terms for the young graduating students by writing on twitter: “Red, blue or black suits won’t protect you from Covid-19, and neither do they allow you to not follow governmental decisions and advice.”

Another part of the tradition is to hand out self-made business cards with jokes on them to the kids, that make big collections of them. Now, it is actually forbidden to hand out these cards, but I have seen russ handing out cards and kids collecting

them anyway. Young people and kids maybe have the most difficulties in remembering the restrictions and understanding what consequences it can have that “just” you choose to not follow advice. It will be interesting to see how this will evolve during the next weeks. Will there be more cases of the virus? Will it spread more? Will there suddenly be more asymptomatic bearers? Or will it not really have any effect at all?

<https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/mR9l5v/politiet-stoppet-flere-russefester-natt-til-loerdag>, accessed 28.04.2020

## 29th of April

There has been a noticeable change in the media picture the last two weeks. Since Norway decided to “lock-down” the news have mostly centered around the pandemic and the different measures taken to try to handle the situation, as well as the consequences of these measures. Now, however, the papers are starting to have other news on the front pages, writing about other cases and concerns as crime cases, a corruption case, the fish industry. This also mirrors how there suddenly has started to be a more relaxed atmosphere, where people don’t follow restrictions and advice as strictly as before. For example, one of my friends visited two other friends this week-end, and they ate the same food together, even if it before has been a general idea that you shouldn’t enter other people’s houses. She is also planning to eat lunch with her grandma on her balcony, even if she is technically a part of the “vulnerable” population. Another friend met with a lot of other family members to help a part of the family move out of their house. A third friend is thinking of arranging a party at her home. And my teachers at the university wants us to make projects where participant observation which means being physically present and around different people is a requirement. Students that went home when the lockdown started are also returning to their student cities.

There is a growing idea that the virus is under control, and that we can relax more. Last Tuesday the director of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI) Camilla Stoltenberg announced in a press conference, after having presented FHI's sixth risk assessment of the corona-situation in Norway, that we have control over the pandemic in the country due to our control measures the last weeks. The health minister Bent Høie has also announced that Norway now has control over the virus. They both, however, point out the importance of not completely relaxing and stop putting effort in following governmental advice. However, this last message is a bit lost behind the big promise of control. People relax, people begin to do as before. But can we relax? Do we really have control? Or are we tricking ourselves with the idea that we are untouchable, and end up in a fall back? I have a feeling that there is something that doesn't quite add up. How can it be that other countries around in the world are so far away from control and that Norway suddenly has it? How can it be that China and South-Korea, with their strict measures, struggle a lot longer than Denmark and Norway that have had a much freer way of handling the virus? How can we start to travel around in our own countries or passing borders, when so many people haven't been outside of their houses in 7 weeks, but to buy groceries? Is it just a general injustice as always, where the richest suffer little and the less resourceful countries are affected much more severely? What happens when people start living "normal" lives? Is that even possible when big parts of the world are crashing down? Will we forget all about the virus when we're not directly affected by it anymore? Will it become some distant news of terrible situations in parts of the world that always end up suffering the most, whilst we continue to live carelessly? Will it continue to be seen as a global problem when we "aren't part of it anymore"? Will it turn out to be that unfair?

“There is a growing idea that the virus is under

control, and that we can relax more.”

<https://www.aftenbladet.no/innenriks/i/Wb5rvd/ny-fhi-rapport-koronaepidemie-n-under-kontroll-i-norge-er-na-pa-retu>, accessed 29.04.2020

[https://www.nrk.no/norge/helseministeren\\_-\\_vi-har-fatt-koronaeidemien-under-kontroll-1.14967289](https://www.nrk.no/norge/helseministeren_-_vi-har-fatt-koronaeidemien-under-kontroll-1.14967289), accessed the 29.04.2020

## 10th of May

Yesterday we had a zoom family meeting. Our family is one that lives in different parts of the world, and we're therefore used to not see each other so regularly. I talk frequently to my cousins and my mom calls with her sister and brother, but we've never really had family reunions over virtual mediums. The pandemic restrictions have made some virtual media, especially Zoom, popular as platforms that can work as temporary solutions when we're not supposed to be assembled in big groups. It's funny how in our family, that is used to not be able to see each other physically so often, hasn't normally taken use of these platforms, but that now that they become popular, we've also began to use them to meet in family. It's not something that was "taken away" from us with the restrictions, it's rather something that we "gain". Maybe it also has to do that each of us has more time, because our movement is limited. I hope it's a thing we continue with.

Anyhow, talking to my family yesterday I was thrown back to a much harder reality than my own. For the moment I'm on the countryside in a little village in Norway where there have been no shown cases of corona, and people are behaving almost completely normal, hugging each other, sharing food, visiting each other, even sharing the same cup and having small parties. Here you kind of forget that there are

such severe restrictions other parts in the world. Even the reality in Oslo seems far away, even if it's just two hours away by train. Therefore, hearing about my family not having walked outside from their homes in seven weeks, besides grocery shopping, is kind of surreal. Their quarantine has been prolonged till the 31st of May, and they will probably not be allowed to leave their homes during summer either. In contrast, here people talk about a million plans they have this summer, biking, travelling within the country, seeing family, working. It seems like two completely different worlds. Talking to them yesterday I got this feeling, that I know is unfair and privileged, that I wanted to stay in this bubble here and not think about the virus, restrictions or disasters around the world, just forget it a little bit longer, just continue to have a break from it all for a little bit more. There is this balance between being aware of what's happening and of it becoming all what you think of and talk about. It's heavy mentally to always be aware.

As for status on the situation for now things are returning more and more back to normal. Bars that serve food have been allowed to open, shops are opening, some cafés as well. Looking at train departures they have suddenly increased, meaning there are more and more trains travelling around in the country in Norway and Denmark. Several of the ferries over to Denmark that had stopped, have now began to have departures again. My university is reopening for some students the 18th of May, and they're preparing for a complete reopening for the start of the next semester. In Denmark the efterskoler, boarding schools where school students live for one year, are opening for the last month of their year. Some folk high schools are opening as well, and some museums. I still can make it fit in my brain that restrictions suddenly can be loosened up so fast.

## 15th of June

Now there has been a long break since my last entry. It is mostly because things are

returning a bit towards to what they were before, and then suddenly life picks up its' pace. I guess this is an indicator of how, since May, a lot is going more and more back to the society that was there before lockdown. Another side of it is that people are getting more used to things being the way they are, the restrictions are not as strict as before, but has also become more of a habit.

There has been a lot of debate regarding summer vacations about travelling plans to other countries, and green and red zones. More borders are open, and some close again and some reopen after months being closed. There is a relaxed atmosphere, people are talking about travelling around in Norway, and some even go to other countries. In Ecuador most people still don't leave their houses, and travelling to other countries is quite difficult. They have however seen themselves obliged to reopen a lot of things, mostly because of economical reasons. A lot of people have suffered, and still do, a lot of uncertainty around work situations and personal economy, due to the country having been locked down for such a long time. Another example of how the pandemic situation is very much about health, but reaches far beyond that. It is interlinked with the economy and affect peoples' social lives and opportunities.

On the side of the world I find myself there is still not much information about how classes at the universities are going to happen. Most classes will probably be online, but many universities around in Norway and also in Denmark has said they will try to have some physical classes for everyone. There are some unusual months, or even longer, who knows, ahead of us. There is a lot of talk about fall backs. In Norway there is a rumor that the government is foreseeing a new peak in October. What will happen remains to be seen, but hopefully there is not such a long time till the virus spread diminishes enough so that it stops limiting the many things that have become important for many people. And hopefully the changes and ups and downs, and learnings during these months and the next ones will be remembered. There can come good changes out of everything having been turned upside down for a while.

