

# newSpecial



# VIRTUAL REALITY



804- NOV 2020

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## INTERIM EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

### Virtual reality

Ballet? Classical music? Art? Training and education? Management meetings? All these and everything in between have switched to virtual reality at the speed of light. We are living an experiment. In a matter of weeks, professional workers abandoned their offices en masse in favour of working from home. Meetings were replaced with virtual calls, and commutes with longer hours at the desk. Some of the early indications are that the experiment has turned out to be an improvement for many and many of us say it has gone better or much better than we expected. The United Nations Day Concert 2020 was recorded at La Scala Theatre in Milan, Italy. The concert included world class performers as well as the Orchestra of Teatro alla Scala. A number of classical, modern and reimagined dances, curated specifically for the United Nations Day Concert, were performed. The concert was pre-recorded and screened virtually in the General Assembly Hall in New York.

We have brought you articles that shed light on experiences with virtual reality for Geneva-based agencies. We also have stories from those engaged in education and training and the life of retired persons as well as insights into how virtual art or other visits continue to help us engage with each other. As always, feel free to send us your comments or ideas, especially if you want to express yourself in the magazine with the new paradigms in which we find ourselves. We hope you will enjoy this issue! ■

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## COMITÉ DE RÉDACTION INTÉIMAIRE

### Réalité virtuelle

Ballet, musique classique, art, formation et éducation, réunions de gestion et bien d'autres. La réalité virtuelle nous a rattrapés à la vitesse de la lumière. En seulement quelques semaines, nos travailleurs ont abandonné en masse leurs bureaux au profit du domicile. Les réunions sont virtualisées et les temps de trajets économisés sont transformés en heures de travail plus longues. Les premières indications démontrent que ce monde virtuel améliore la vie quotidienne de la plupart d'entre vous. Dans ce contexte particulier, Le concert de la Journée des Nations Unies 2020 a été enregistré au théâtre La Scala de Milan en Italie. Des artistes de renommée mondiale ont rejoint l'orchestre du Teatro alla Scala pour sublimer les danses classiques, modernes réinventées spécialement pour ce concert. L'événement avait été préenregistré et fut projeté dans la salle de l'Assemblée générale à New York.

Nos quelques articles éclairent les expériences de réalité virtuelle pour les agences genevoises. Vous lirez également des histoires de personnes engagées dans l'éducation et la formation, la vie des retraités, ainsi que des aperçus sur la façon dont l'art virtuel ou des approches alternatives continuent à nous aider pour dialoguer les uns avec les autres. N'hésitez pas à nous faire parvenir vos commentaires et même à nous interpeller, notamment si certains d'entre vous ont envie et besoin de s'exprimer sur tous les nouveaux paradigmes engendrés par la crise sanitaire. Nous espérons que vous apprécierez ce numéro! ■

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# Virtual switch – sketching the future

*Interview with Mr. John Flanagan,  
Director a.i. Operations Support  
Services, WHO.*

**CATHERINE KIROREI-CORSINI AND  
GARRY ASLANYAN, WHO**

**We are all adapting to virtual reality, be that in our professional or personal lives. What have been the main challenges for WHO's logistics and services team in this process?**

Covid-19, and the related teleworking for most staff, has caused huge change for everyone. For OSS specifically, we had to ensure the continuation of essential services on the premises and at the same time make sure that all necessary measures were in place to keep our premises safe and minimize the risks to staff who remained onsite supporting the response to the crisis. In addition to our staff, this wouldn't have been possible without the commitment of our critical service providers for facility management, security, IT/AV support, printing and catering – the whole team made, and are continuing to make,

extraordinary efforts to maintain uninterrupted services.

While it was possible for many units to telework, many of the OSS services require staff to be onsite. We had challenges organizing outgoing shipment of goods to WHO country offices in support of the Covid response, most flights were cancelled and there were no staff at the country office side to receive the goods. At the same time, we continued to receive many pallets of goods, but with no way to dispatch them, so we had to improvise and find additional storage space onsite.

**The travel industry was one of the sectors most affected by the crisis, with many disruptions due to cancelled flights and movement restrictions. This must have been difficult for the travel unit to manage?**

Yes, business travel was one of the most affected activities, both outside and within WHO.

It is the first time in the travel industry history that all stakeholders – airlines, travel agents, system providers and hotels – were so heavily impacted, nobody was prepared to face a crisis of this magnitude. At WHO, the number of air trips globally during Q2/Q3 2020 decreased by 90% versus the same period in 2019.

The HQ travel team had to adapt very quickly to the new circumstances. At the beginning of the crisis, priority was given to assisting stranded travellers and the management of cancellations, but a new challenge emerged very quickly – while the volume of travel drastically decreased, the remaining essential trips were very complex due to limited flight options and strict entry restrictions in most countries. The constantly changing environment made the planning of any travel very difficult. To provide additional flight capacity, OSS collaborated with WFP who established a new aviation service to provide air transportation services in programme-critical areas where commercial flights were interrupted or reduced. Another aspect that became very complicated was the recovery of refunds from airlines for cancelled flights, which was a long and complex process as airlines were suffering a financial crisis.

For business travel operations, like in many other areas, the crisis accelerated trends that were already happening at a slower pace – such as digitalization of processes – and we expect that business travel will be managed differently in the future as a result of the effects of the pandemic.

**Many meetings, including WHO governance meetings, have been switched to being virtual or hybrid. What are the early learnings about this kind of**

**approach and what can staff learn from these experiences? Do you have any statistics on how many meetings or events have been taking place in the new format and what the trends are?**

The nature of the meetings supported onsite suddenly changed from physical to virtual and hybrid arrangements, and within a very short period, the technology in the meeting rooms had to be redesigned and upgraded to fully support both physical and complex virtual meetings with remote interpretation. For the teams concerned, this involved rapid learning of the new technologies and making significant changes to systems while at the same time facilitating sensitive press conferences and mission briefings – a lot of learning on the job and intense cooperation and collaboration between OSS, IMT and DCO departments. All this while also dealing with staff safety and physical distancing in meeting rooms and small spaces such as interpreter and operator booths and managing the risk of the whole team potentially having to self-isolate if a person came into close contact with somebody who was infected – the early days were stressful times.

Since the start of the crisis, more than 600 virtual and hybrid meetings have been facilitated, including governing bodies meetings, and in the vast majority of cases, the meetings were successful, and while at the start it was only meetings and briefings related to the crisis, it soon evolved to include long planned technical meetings that were supposed to be physically onsite, changing to remote virtual meetings with participants from all parts of the world. The technology has worked quite well, and the main problems for participants are related to getting familiar with the new systems, and

connectivity at the participant end of the line.

There has been a huge increase in demand for virtual meetings with remote interpretation through the Zoom platform. It was a different, and strange, experience when I walked into the EB room during a busy meeting with more than 400 participants, and the room was completely empty, but the interpreter and operator booths were a hive of activity.

**How do you see the future of meetings at WHO? Do you think there will be a big shift from physical presence towards virtual/hybrid meetings?**

There are many different types of meetings at WHO, so it will never be a one-size-fits-all.

On one hand, we have clearly demonstrated that virtual meetings can be highly efficient and cost effective – especially when the number of participants is limited, when the attendees are already used to working together and when a strict agenda can be followed, but we have also seen that virtual meetings can be challenging, especially for meetings over several days, and across many time zones, and when an interactive event is required.

However, I believe this experience has proved to many that virtual meetings can be a valid substitute for many of the meetings that involved travelling to attend face-to-face meetings in the past. The technologies are improving rapidly, and we are all learning how to use them, but we also learning the pros and cons of virtual meetings, so we will be better equipped to make more informed decisions on meeting formats in the future, and not so afraid of the virtual option.

We will continue to promote virtual meetings even beyond

the Covid crisis, but for some situations, nothing will replace direct human interactions. For governing bodies meetings, a virtual/hybrid format can accommodate much of the daily workload, but still has challenges when secure voting is required. Nonetheless, we can't ignore that something is lost in terms of the networking of member states and the informal discussions that happen on the fringes outside the formal agenda. The traditional hubbub that precedes the start of a WHA Plenary or an EB session no longer takes place, and we lose some of the human element. ■



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**Entretien avec Odette Foudral,  
Présidente de l'Association des Anciens Fonctionnaires Internationaux (AAFI/AFICS)**

# Retraités: Comment vivre dans un monde virtuel?

*Au fil de ses sept décennies d'existence, l'AAFI/AFICS a su se rendre utile et même incontournable auprès de tous les fonctionnaires internationaux retraités ou en passe de l'être. Son intégration dans une fédération mondiale ([www.fafics.org](http://www.fafics.org)) renforce davantage cette présence.*

## **CHRISTIAN DAVID, UNOG**

Par ces temps difficiles, obtenir un «vrai rendez-vous» avec des vraies personnes devient rare. L'entretien se déroule au Palais des Nations dans un bureau situé au premier niveau du nouveau bâtiment. Je rencontre Odette Foudral, présidente aguerrie de l'Association. L'environnement et les habitudes des fonctionnaires retraités ont été particulièrement impactés par cette crise sanitaire et il convenait d'entendre la voix de leur représentante.

## **Comment fonctionnez-vous au bureau de l'AAFI?**

C'est un travail d'équipe avant tout. Nous nous répartissons les tâches. Je m'occupe du bulletin mensuel et du relationnel avec les collègues, l'administration, la ville de Genève et la Fédération. Le comité compte 18 membres auxquels s'ajoutent les représentants des associations sœurs BIT, OMS,

UIT, OMM, ITC et OMC, soit 24 au total. Notre présidente reste en contact étroit avec la Fédération, particulièrement pour prévenir toute tentative de radier les retraités de l'assurance maladie. Nous avons deux collègues qui connaissent parfaitement les rouages en ce domaine, dont un a d'ailleurs été secrétaire exécutif de l'assurance maladie. Les aspects fiscaux constituent également des questions récurrentes. (liste et contacts sur le site)

Chacun d'entre-nous essaie de régler au mieux les problèmes rencontrés par nos membres et nous nous consultons souvent pour partager nos connaissances et répondre à leurs interrogations. De plus, nos réseaux nous permettent de trouver la bonne réponse à des questions plus difficiles. Enfin, nous organisons des séminaires d'information indispensables au bon suivi et à l'actualité.

En temps normal, nous programmons une assemblée générale au printemps ce qui n'a évidemment pas pu être le cas cette année.

#### Comment avez-vous rejoint l'association?

J'ai commencé ma carrière à l'ONU en 1971. Deux ans avant ma retraite, je travaillais à la GPAFI (assurance complémentaire). Mon prédécesseur: Anders Tholle, que j'admire car il était brillant et dévoué, est entré dans mon bureau et m'a dit amicalement: «tu es membre de l'AAFI/AFICS à partir de maintenant et candidate pour intégrer le comité.» Je lui ai répondu que je n'étais pas encore retraitée mais il m'a rétorqué qu'ils avaient besoin de moi. C'était, certes, une manière un peu directe de procéder mais avec le temps j'y souscris. Je considère en effet qu'il est très important que les membres adhèrent à notre association avant de partir à la retraite et ce, afin de disposer des meilleures informations et envisager ainsi la meilleure façon de procéder.

#### Quelles sont les difficultés que vous rencontrez?

La principale concerne les conditions d'accès au Palais qui sont difficiles et provoquent des conséquences en chaîne. Ces difficultés dissuadent de plus en plus nos membres de venir assister aux réunions ou tout simplement de venir nous rendre visite. A cet égard, il serait pourtant tellement simple d'émettre quelques autorisations par jour pour permettre l'accès au Palais de nos retraités avec véhicule au lieu de les refouler à l'entrée. Pour certains d'entre eux qui ont du mal à marcher et qui ont donné plusieurs décennies de leur vie à l'organisation, ces interdictions sont difficilement supportables. Comme les gens ne peuvent pas entrer au Palais, ils se désintéressent de leur ancien lieu de travail et le lien est de plus en plus souvent coupé.

#### Avez-vous un exemple d'une de vos interventions récentes?

Une dame nous a contactés afin d'essayer de trouver une solution pour obtenir le remboursement des frais de fin de vie de sa mère, ancienne fonctionnaire internationale. Ce remboursement a finalement été obtenu grâce à notre intervention mais le délai a été important. La plupart du temps, il vaut mieux nous contacter le plus vite possible pour que nous puissions accompagner les personnes ou leurs enfants qui ne connaissent pas les subtilités de certaines

démarches administratives. Notre collègue France Henry apporte actuellement son aide à une dizaine de personnes, souvent très âgées qui lui font parvenir leurs dossiers. Nous avons aussi découvert que les personnes paient bien leur factures mais ne demandent pas le remboursement, souvent parce que c'est trop compliqué. Heureusement que la prise en charge directe existe pour les frais hospitaliers élevés mais encore faut-il que la personne habite dans la région où les organisations internationales sont connues. Mais je voudrais profiter de cette tribune pour remercier les fonctionnaires de UNSMIS et de la Caisse des Pensions qui font un travail remarquable.

#### Que pensez-vous de notre système d'assurance maladie?

Les fonctionnaires internationaux ne se rendent pas compte qu'ils sont privilégiés! Ils possèdent une couverture sociale extraordinaire pour une cotisation plus que raisonnable. Je n'ai pas peur d'affirmer que nos retraités ont été des enfants gâtés pendant toute leur carrière. Ils ne se sont pas rendus-compte qu'ils payaient des impôts ni une assurance maladie car les sommes étaient prélevées directement sur leur salaire. Quand leur statut change, ils doivent sortir l'argent de leur compte et cela semble être la fin du monde. Certains même décident de supprimer leur assurance maladie car ils ne sont jamais

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Les collègues partent jeunes et en bonne santé sans réaliser qu'ils ne vont pas toujours le rester.

malades mais oublient que cette décision est irrévocable. D'autres décident de s'installer dans un petit village au soleil, pour des raisons aussi parfois fiscales, sans réaliser que l'hôpital le plus proche est à deux heures de route et que leur médecin traitant est à Genève. Nous constatons ce manque d'anticipation flagrant.

#### Evolution de l'AAFI au fil des années

Nous comptons plus de 3300 membres vivant dans quelque 95 pays. Depuis quelques années, nous constatons une baisse des affiliations. Les gens partent en tournant la page des Nations Unies et parfois avec une grande déception. Ils organisent de moins en moins de pots de départ et c'est vraiment significatif de ce malaise. Les relations de travail se sont durcies alors que nous devrions être un modèle. C'est pour cette raison aussi que nous essayons de proposer un bulletin trimestriel, pour garder un dernier lien avec les retraités. Pendant cette crise, beaucoup de gens sont partis à la retraite et, par la force des choses, sans avoir suivi de séminaire de préparation à la retraite. Habituellement, un séminaire est organisé tous les ans par la section de la formation de l'ONUG et un autre par le BIT. Nous recommandons aussi à nos membres de s'intégrer dans la vie sociale de leur lieu de résidence afin de bénéficier d'un soutien social et éviter l'isolement, tout particulièrement à Genève qui propose énormément d'activités.

#### Crise sanitaire et monde virtuel

Le monde a changé et il va falloir se réinventer, nous avons besoin d'idées nouvelles. Deux tiers de nos membres ont une adresse mail mais le tiers qui manque nous pose

évidemment problème et d'autant plus dans les circonstances actuelles car ils ont été véritablement abandonnés pendant le confinement. Nos retraités les plus âgés ont besoin de davantage d'accompagnement car ils ne maîtrisent pas, pour la plupart, l'outil internet.

D'autres n'ont pas envie car ils ont eu l'habitude de transmettre leurs dossiers papier. Ils n'ont pas compris qu'ils n'ont plus le choix: les impôts, les formalités administratives, tout est désormais connecté. Le téléphone portable est en revanche bien entré dans les habitudes pour des raisons familiales. Il s'agit donc de parvenir à les convaincre de l'utiliser aussi pour toutes leurs démarches. Il y a, en ce domaine, un gros travail à faire peut-être avec l'aide d'UNSMIS. Tout le monde y gagnera car cela raccourcira les délais et accentuera l'efficacité des remboursements! Il est clair aussi que beaucoup de personnes ont développé des pathologies d'isolement et que parmi le tiers de nos membres, il y en a que nous n'avons pas détectés. Nous sommes dans cette période charnière, il faut se donner de nouveaux moyens. Dans l'un de mes bulletins, j'évoquais mon propre Smartphone en expliquant qu'il m'a sauvé car, grâce à lui, je suis restée en contact. Il serait idiot de se priver de cette révolution technologique!

#### Le mot de la fin

Si vous avez l'habitude de vivre comme des cigales, pensez qu'un jour vous aurez peut-être besoin d'un peu d'argent si vous traversez une situation difficile. Et puis, forcez-vous à maîtriser les nouvelles technologies, votre vie sera transformée! ■

#### Communiqué

Les membres du Comité et du Secrétariat de l'Association sont tous des bénévoles au service des membres de l'Association. Ils apportent aux retraités de la fonction publique internationale l'avantage de nombreux services importants, par exemple: Information rapide et précise sur les changements du montant des pensions, les règles de l'assurance de protection de la santé et toutes questions intéressant les retraités par le canal du Bulletin AAFI-AFICS, publié cinq fois par an; Consultations sur les pensions, leur ajustement, la fiscalité, le choix du pays de résidence et tout problème que peuvent rencontrer les retraités; Représentation devant les instances nationales et internationales par des collègues expérimentés dans la défense des droits des retraités en matière de pensions, d'assurance de protection de la santé, etc.; Fonds de solidarité, destiné à venir en aide aux retraités se trouvant dans des situations d'urgence momentanées. Activités sociales organisées par l'Association à Genève pour ses membres.

#### APPEL DE CANDIDATURE

##### Il est temps de préparer l'avenir!

Pour faire face à cette situation inédite, nous devons nous réinventer et nous avons besoin de renforcer le Comité avec des personnes inventives et pleines d'entrain. Nous comptons sur votre candidature avant le 30 novembre.

Vous trouverez le bulletin de candidature sur notre site web ([afics.unog.ch](https://afics.unog.ch)).

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# A (virtual) window into the work of WHO

*The name of the World Health Organization is known globally, but over the last 10 months, interest in our work, specifically that related to COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks, has increased exponentially.*

**VERONICA RIEMER, WHO IN CONVERSATION WITH DORINE VAN DER WAL, WHO**

Young professionals, university students of public health, diplomacy and international affairs want to know more about our mandate, our relationship with member states and today's hot topic – our work in emergency situations.

The WHO Briefing Centre (Department of Health and Multilateral Partnerships) provides this service, engaging thousands of students, members of professional associations and public health practitioners from a variety of disciplines every year. In a way, the Briefing Centre is a window into the multi-faceted work of WHO, giving

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current and future global public health leaders access to WHO experts through dedicated technical briefing sessions and free-flowing discussions.

Over the years, these sessions have proven to be much more than simply informative. “I have literally had students tell me that they want to change their career path after visiting WHO. They were so moved by the passion and dedication of WHO’s technical staff, that they felt inspired to pursue a future in public health,” says Dorine Van der Wal, who manages the WHO Briefing Centre in the Department of Health and Multilateral Partnerships.

“The inspiration goes both ways” says one of the frequent speakers, Oliver Rosenbauer from the Polio Eradication Program: “It is an extremely

rewarding experience to present to young people, and to engage with them about WHO’s work in polio eradication. Their enthusiasm and desire to learn is exciting and makes me proud to be part of this Organization.”

The Briefing Centre has evolved extensively over the past 10 years to become more of an experience, bringing the content “alive” through interactive sessions to tell the story of the Organization, its challenges, successes and to build trust in our brand. Some universities now even make the visit to the WHO Briefing Centre an accredited part of their academic program. Hundreds of WHO staff have shared their time and skills, seeing it not only as way to help young people understand WHO’s unique role and mandate, but also as an opportunity to hear

from today’s students, some of whom will be tomorrow’s international decision makers.

Dorine, like many of us, has had to adapt to how she receives and informs WHO guests over the past eight months. She tells us more about the evolution of the Briefing Centre and her role.

#### **How was the transition from a busy schedule of live tours and presentations, to virtual tours after lockdown?**

It was quite an adjustment, first cancelling all 28 planned visits for March, which is typical during the peak months – March-July, so it was a big disappointment for the students, for whom the visit to WHO is often the highlight of their study year. Yearly, we organize over 200 visits with more than 5,200 participants

and it was therefore even more important to connect with our audience and demonstrate that WHO is an agile organization, by moving quickly to a virtual environment.

Going virtual means we can now reach many more people, who would normally not be able to travel to Geneva. Today, sessions may have up to 200 participants, reaching a much wider audience with a greater geographic diversity.

#### **Has there been an increase in the interest in WHO work since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak?**

With WHO so much in the international media, the interest has been overwhelming. Students have many technical and political questions, resulting in a dynamic, exciting and productive discussion. We are very



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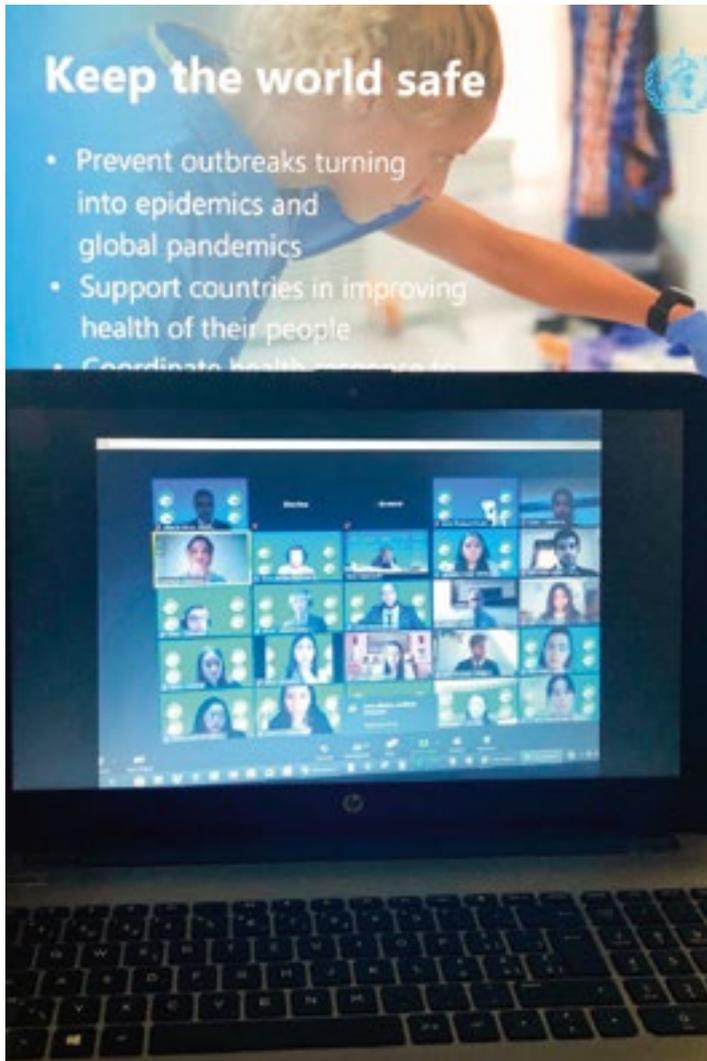
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privileged to have a powerful speaker in Dr. David Nabarro, WHO Special Envoy on COVID-19 and Katherine Deland, his Senior Health Adviser leading inspiring sessions with our students. This complements the many other webinars and outreach done through platforms such as OpenWHO, EPI-WIN.

**Have you received requests from institutions/universities who have not visited previously?**

We have been approached by many universities and institutions to set up virtual sessions. We provide support to new institutions in the African and the South-East Asia Regions that are responsible for health professional education and are facing challenges in adapting to the new virtual reality. Here are

some of the current challenges:

- how to ensure the quality of virtual learning and teaching and define methods of efficient delivery;
- how to adapt communication to rural areas respecting the language and cultural sensitivities; and
- how to benefit from pooling instructional and virtual classroom resources.

**What are the most common questions, and most requested presentations now in comparison to 2019?**

Currently, the most requested topic for the virtual sessions is COVID-19 and often questions are:

- what is WHO's role in the outbreak response?
- when will a vaccine be

- released and will it bring the outbreak to an end?
- can WHO ensure equitable distribution of PPE, therapeutics, vaccines etc?
- how will WHO be affected by the US funding cut and who will fill the gap?
- did WHO react fast enough?
- What does WHO do in the area of mental health?
- how does WHO work with countries?
- what kind of people work at WHO and what kind of expertise is needed?
- how can I prepare my education to work at WHO one day?

**Will you continue to run virtual tours, even when the measures are eased at HQ?**

Yes, for sure, so that we can continue to reach out to those who cannot come to Geneva to visit us and create a better geographic balance. This type of interaction is more inclusive, saves money and contributes to a cleaner environment.

**What are students sharing with you?**

More than ever it is important to connect and listen to the younger generation in these uncertain times. Sometimes I finish a session by asking the students if they could give me just one word that describes the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and almost all students are eager to reply and talk about their experience, their feelings, their story. I hear about increased stress, exhaustion, panic, growth, powerlessness, rebirth, loneliness, opportunity, chaos, evolution, but the one word that struck me most was "forgotten".

Young people will play a crucial role in addressing both current and future global health challenges. They are well placed to understand the realities and challenges faced by our communities and are not afraid to

speak up and act for a better future. We need to continue to encourage and inspire them to be gamechangers for a better world, to help shape new solutions for a post-COVID era. ■

If you would like more information about the WHO Briefing Centre, or would like to participate or propose a briefing session, contact Dorine van der Wal [vanderwald@who.int](mailto:vanderwald@who.int)

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# Comment carboniser un événement virtuel en dix leçons

*C'est à chacun d'entre nous de décider s'il croit en Dieu. Mais s'il y a une chose que 2020 nous a bel et bien prouvée, c'est que l'enfer existe – et qu'il est sur Zoom. Ou Webex. Ou Teams. Ou toute autre technologie qu'on vous aura convaincu d'utiliser.*

## FREDERIC BALLENEGGER<sup>1</sup>

La disparition du monde analogue au printemps dernier est comme un feu de forêt. D'abord, tout est calciné. Puis, d'un coup, des espèces se mettent à proliférer: espèces pionnières ou graines cachées qui attendaient leur heure. Ce n'est que plus tard, beaucoup plus tard, que ces liserons seront supplantés par des essences d'arbres plus durables et plus solides, mais à la croissance plus lente.

De la même manière, dans le foisonnement de conférences numériques qui aguichent le chaland depuis ce printemps, à grands coups de groupes WhatsApp ou de listes de distribution, beaucoup sont absolument oubliables.

Afin de carboniser vous aussi votre conférence virtuelle, suivez scrupuleusement les Dix Commandements de 2020.

### 1. La fin et les moyens toujours tu sépareras.

Érigez une séparation aussi hermétique que possible entre les détenteurs du Savoir et les techniciens de la communication. Dans la mesure du possible, il faudrait que ces deux publics ne se parlent jamais.

Pour que les intervenants conservent leur spontanéité, ne faites pas de tests – ou alors, si vous ne pouvez faire autrement, veillez bien à ce que les intervenants changent d'équipement lorsqu'ils passent au direct.

### 2. De la technologie, sans fin tu débattras.

Pour choisir une solution technique, demandez conseil à votre département juridique, puis impliquez le département informatique dans la conversation. Ils sont faits pour s'entendre: qu'ils en discutent, de préférence par email. Pour assurer la sérénité des débats, confinez-les, empêchez tout contact avec les utilisateurs. Avant de refermer la porte, prononcez les mots «protection des données».

### 3. Du passé tu feras table rase.

Si la «transformation numérique» piétine, faites appel aux moins de 30 ans: ils sont par nature doués en informatique. Et en diplomatie. Réunissez les stagiaires et staff entry-level engagés il y a moins de six mois. Ils ont tout inventé, le ciel bleu, l'eau chaude, la vidéo: ils apporteront à cette transformation numérique la fraîcheur qui lui manque si souvent, et

## Alright, does everyone have sound?



sauront toujours poser les bonnes questions aux bonnes personnes. Privilégiez les équipes nombreuses. Quelques (jeunes) consultants suffiront à organiser le tout, pourvu qu'ils n'aient aucun accès à la mémoire de l'organisation et ignorent soigneusement tout ce qui s'est fait jusqu'ici.

### 4. Sur l'outil, tout ton budget tu dépenseras.

Adaptez l'outil à vos besoins et consacrez à ces modifications 100% de votre budget, en plusieurs itérations si nécessaire. Vous aurez ainsi le plaisir d'improviser des supports de formation tout neufs (bientôt disponibles) et spécifiques à votre «solution». Les utilisateurs aguerris nageant ainsi autant que les débutants, la cohésion des équipes n'en sera que meilleure... Après tout, lors du recrutement, vous avez mis la barre très haut.

### 5. Toujours en direct tu passeras.

Le direct vous permet de tirer le meilleur parti non seulement des pannes techniques mais aussi des hésitations des modérateurs. De toute façon, vous avez grillé votre budget: il est hors de question de faire

appel à des monteurs professionnels qui se mettraient à insérer des plans de coupe, des synthèses, et tous les *goodies* auxquels la télévision nous a habitués, enfants gâtés que nous sommes. On travaille, ici!

### 6. Longuement tu ronronneras.

Lors de votre premier événement, faites long (deux bonnes heures) et surtout sans pauses et sans à-coups. Le cerveau humain a tendance à décrocher après 8 à 10 minutes de concentration, à moins qu'on ne l'active pour résoudre une tâche. Il est donc crucial que personne n'interrompe vos intervenants: ni modération professionnelle, ni interactivité avec le public. Pas de controverses, pas de narratif, pas de conclusion. Ne tenez aucun compte des techniques d'apprentissage: de l'*ex cathedra* abrupt, c'est ce qui fonctionne le mieux, surtout avec les jeunes générations. Évitez de diffuser votre conférence sur votre propre chaîne YouTube et verrouillez vos comptes de médias sociaux.

### 7. Du matériel tu empileras.

Comme vous avez fini par retrouver une queue de budget (celle des voyages que vous ne

ferrez pas), investissez le tout sur du matériel audiovisuel. Fond vert, bannières d'arrière-plan, projecteurs 4000K, insonorisation, perches, stabilisateurs, tout ce qu'il faut pour impressionner vos visiteurs. Qui ne les verront pas, puisqu'ils ne voyagent plus.

#### 8. Comme elle vient la vie tu prendras.

Le rythme et la ponctualité, c'est bon pour la télé. Les événements virtuels sont rebelles, bohèmes même. Commencez toujours avec quelques minutes de retard, faites systématiquement remarquer la nouveauté du format. Venez comme vous êtes, façon McDo: une subtile touche de rouge à lèvres sur les dents ou une cravate dénouée donnera un tour sympathique à votre «petit speech». Après ce moment de spontanéité, lisez. Lisez un texte conçu pour la

communication écrite, il prendra toute sa force à l'écran.

#### 9. Sans contrainte tu créeras.

Une forêt vierge? la Grande Muraille? des drapeaux, des îles, un lit défait? Ne reculez devant rien lorsque vous créez un arrière-plan pour une prise de parole virtuelle. L'exemple vient d'en haut. De tout en haut: à l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, ceux qui ont osé la créativité ont eu les honneurs des gazettes<sup>2</sup> – davantage peut-être que le contenu des discours.

#### 10. Au jour le jour tu vivras.

Cette situation ne durera pas.

A l'instar de Facebook, les événements virtuels ne vont pas tarder à disparaître. Ne planifiez donc pas de former vos équipes à ces modes de communication. Ne professionnalisez pas ces fonctions, ou alors réservez-les exclusivement aux hautes sphères.

Avez-vous suivi à la lettre tous ces préceptes? Si oui, il y a de très bonnes chances que votre événement virtuel disparaisse de la mémoire collective aussi vite qu'il y est entré.

En fait, la seule trace qu'il laissera, ce sera le réchauffement climatique: d'ici à 2030, Internet

absorbera un cinquième de la demande mondiale d'électricité<sup>3</sup>, dont une bonne part pour la vidéo en direct.

Réflexion faite, serait-ce peut-être une bonne raison pour éviter de carboniser votre conférence en ligne et se concentrer sur la qualité.

Alors, chêne ou liseron? L'avenir jugera. ■

1 Global Commission on Drug Policy

2 «The Guardian», 22.09.2020

3 «Nature», 09.12.2018

Pour lire la version anglaise en ligne: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-carbonize-virtual-event-10-lessons-frederic-ballenegger>

#### Pavé de bonnes intentions

Les événements virtuels qui fonctionnent le mieux sont ceux qui font appel à des modérateurs professionnels, comme le décrit Claire Doole dans son blog (<http://www.doolecommunications.com/successful-virtual-events-are-good-television>) ou alors des vidéos post-éditées en «pseudo-live» comme par exemple celle réalisée par la Commission mondiale de politique en matière de drogues en juin dernier ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3RpxIAh3U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3RpxIAh3U)), en collaboration avec Hide&Seek Media.

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# Exploring Virtual Reality (VR) and its applications

*Over the past decade, virtual reality (VR) has been experiencing double-digit growth rates, with spending forecasts for 2023 of more than \$160 billion.*



Example from “3645Km around Sudan” a VR project produced by Impersive in Sudan in 2018.

## GUIDO GEMINIANI, CEO AT IMPERSIVE

From a fun entertainment tool, VR is increasingly becoming a technology capable of generating an ideal platform for supporting various pathways, from the management of major events to training syllabuses facilitated by an experiential learning component. In the coming years, investment in this technology is also expected to affect the financial and infrastructure sectors in particular, with the public sector following closely behind.

In the context of international organizations, some early VR applications have already affected specific pathways, which concern the development of tools to support:

- the **selection of personnel**, with case studies in VR format in which the candidate is assessed on the basis of their

methods of interaction and decisions made in the context of the simulation;

- the **management of conferences**, through the creation of virtual spaces that facilitate interaction between people connected all over the world;
- the **training of internal staff** with respect to standard operating procedures and continuous learning initiatives, thereby maximizing the experiential learning component and reducing logistics costs and barriers to remote training;
- external communication and **brand awareness** initiatives that highlight the results of projects in the field and facilitate engagement with donors.

As suggested by Alexander Hiedemann — an expert in the management of international organizations — these

initiatives make it clear that VR is not a technology aimed at replacing the organizational models of the past, but rather a tool through which it is possible to “augment” the experience of the user and enhance the operational excellence of our institutions.

Moreover, in the current circumstances, VR is the instrument *par excellence* for circumventing the limitations on movement and interaction that the Covid-19 pandemic has imposed upon us. The difficulty, if not the impossibility, of travelling and meeting colleagues cannot be allowed to interrupt training processes and moments of cohesion. Virtual reality is therefore a tool that can help organizations, businesses and communities in overcoming such limitations and create new pathways for innovation in the way we learn, interact and collaborate. It is important to stress that the technological evolution of hardware and platforms today guarantees us effective tools for bolstering organizational performance. This, however, is provided that they are handled wisely and adopted in a manner appropriate to contexts in which such technologies can demonstrate their maximum effectiveness.

From this perspective, among the most innovative experiences

are realities such as *Impersive*; this is the result of a combination of proprietary tools and strategies that has made it possible to increase the effective use of VR headsets, thanks to the production of highly emotive content combined with live VR platforms for interaction among avatars, objects and environments in CGI (Common Gateway Interface). More than 350 VR projects have gained experience globally, and have seen application in a wide range of fields. Among these, in addition to applications in the fashion, automotive and sports fields, the most interesting projects have been developed with a view to contributing to sustainable development regarding:

- the development of training courses in the medical fields of orthopaedics, gynaecology, oncology, cosmetic surgery and veterinary medicine
- representation and reporting to external stakeholders of projects in the field with realities such as *Emergency* and *The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation*.

In the specific case of *Emergency*, in Uganda the NGO elected to use subjective storytelling to tell the story of the construction of Entebbe’s new surgical and diagnostic hospital, which serves all African countries free of charge. In this way, as soon as they donned



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Full 360° stereoscopic view and handshake with architect Renzo Piano.

the headset, donors, political representatives and other stakeholders found themselves in the shoes of an Emergency operator, experiencing a meeting with Gino Strada at Casa Emergency in Milan, then being transported to a coordination meeting with the architect

Renzo Piano, and finally arriving in Entebbe, Uganda, participating in the different phases of construction, meeting with the local team, and exploring the surrounding territory. This clever use of VR enabled the “behind the scenes” to be effectively shared, making it possible for the user to meet with people of great prestige, and showcasing the results achieved for stakeholders worldwide.

From these specific experiences, which you can also explore using the QR code below, it is evident that VR allows you to travel, meet and experiment, but above all represents an empathetic technology that ignites the emotion and therefore the attention of the user, who can move in a virtual space with six degrees of freedom (thanks to 6DOF technology). The virtual experience can now be shared even

on a large scale, thanks to the integration of low-cost tools such as cardboard. The success stories we have seen to date prove that today it is possible to transport the user into the field, to the centre of the action, as the protagonist (360-3D-POV) of emergency simulations and complex situations. This type of experience provides users with opportunities to learn processes and critical issues with live interaction between avatars. By such means, roleplay and staff meetings can be conducted within explorable virtual environments featuring objects generated by photogrammetry, lasers-scanning and 3D modelling.

Finally, in view of the evolution of the latest headsets (Oculus Quest, PICO G24Ks, HTC Vive Focus, etc.), which guarantee a portable and deliverable experience even on a large

scale at a reasonable cost, it is important to always remember the necessity of observing the maximum user exposure time limits. When we are in VR, all the attention and emotion of the user is in our hands, and the effectiveness of the tool is inversely proportional to the duration.



Future developments and the opportunities before us are obvious. It is now up to us to adopt the most effective ways of using VR to serve our organizations and innovate the ways in which international organizations and partners such as civil society, academia and the private sector will exploit such opportunities to contribute to and fulfil the 2030 Agenda. ■

For more information, please contact [vrtraining@impersive.com](mailto:vrtraining@impersive.com) and visit <https://impersive.com>



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## Les enseignantes en première ligne dans le contexte COVID-19

# Une profession en quête de reconnaissance

*Les crises sont souvent salutaires pour réviser nos préconceptions sur des questions liées à l'éducation.*

*Dans cet article, nous allons mettre en évidence comment l'épisode COVID-19 a mis à jour le rôle crucial des enseignantes<sup>2</sup> qui, à l'instar des soignantes dans de nombreux contextes, sont passées du statut de professionnelles peu reconnues par la société au statut de quasi-héroïnes.*

THIBAUT LAUWERIER & ABDELJALIL AKKARI<sup>1</sup>

### Des années de marginalisation

La recherche traitant de l'impact des enseignantes sur les performances des élèves au niveau international souligne que leur rôle est le déterminant principal de la réussite scolaire. Toutefois, la recherche a également démontré que la profession d'enseignante est marginalisée depuis des décennies. Si nous prenons le cas des pays du Sud, la profession a connu une période de précarisation croissante et longue qui correspondait à un double mouvement international parallèle. Premièrement, les programmes d'ajustement structurel des années 1980-1990 ont eu pour effets le départ d'enseignantes fonctionnaires qualifiées et la fermeture de nombreux centres de formation initiale. Deuxièmement, les

initiatives d'Éducation pour tous (EPT) dans le cadre des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement (OMD) avaient principalement mis l'accent sur l'accès à l'école à travers la scolarisation massive d'élèves au détriment de la qualité de l'éducation et, par conséquent, de la qualification des enseignantes<sup>3</sup>. Pour ce qui est des pays du Nord, la recherche alerte sur l'abandon de la profession après quelques années d'exercice et la pénurie d'enseignantes dans certains pays. Plus spécifiquement, les salaires sont considérés comme faibles si nous les mettons en parallèle avec les revenus d'autres actifs occupés diplômés de l'enseignement tertiaire (voir graphique 3), et si nous considérons, et l'expérience COVID-19 l'a démontré, que les enseignantes travaillent bien plus que les seules heures passées devant des élèves.

Après le surcroît de travail en lien avec l'école à distance durant la pandémie, nous constatons que la charge de travail pour les enseignantes s'est alourdie lors de la rentrée scolaire de 2020 avec des exigences accrues: au-delà d'assurer les heures de service habituelles, se sont greffés les plans opérationnels de santé, les questions numériques, les questions d'équité, les questions de motivation, la planification de l'enseignement en classe et de l'enseignement virtuel en même temps<sup>4</sup>.

### Une profession indispensable et en voie de transformation

Malgré ces difficultés affrontées par la profession, l'épisode COVID-19 aura permis de mettre sous les projecteurs au niveau international l'action quotidienne des enseignantes pour former les jeunes. Certes, nous n'avons pas pu observer des scènes d'applaudissements comme pour le personnel soignant, mais des discours se sont multipliés pour reconnaître la valeur ajoutée de la profession enseignante. Cette reconnaissance était très nette chez les parents qui ont eu de la peine à aider leurs enfants à maintenir une partie de leur processus d'apprentissage à la maison et comprennent mieux à quel point le travail de l'enseignante est exigeant et stimulant, et ne s'improvise pas. Par ailleurs, des études ont reprécisé que les enfants apprennent mieux avec des «vraies» personnes que devant des machines. Si une utilisation accrue de la technologie dans l'enseignement est inévitable, la technologie ne remplacera jamais une enseignante qualifiée<sup>5</sup>. D'ailleurs, les enseignantes ont

également dû s'adapter pendant la COVID-19 à de nouveaux concepts pédagogiques et modes de prestation de l'enseignement, pour lesquels elles n'ont peut-être pas été formées. Dans de nombreux contextes, elles se sont démenées pour que des élèves n'ayant pas accès aux ressources d'apprentissage numériques ou qui n'ont l'appui nécessaire pour continuer les apprentissages, prennent le moins de retard possible. En outre, la profession d'enseignante s'était déjà transformée pour prendre en compte la diversité socioculturelle des apprenant-es, les réformes permanentes de l'école et les pressions pour une éducation centrée sur les résultats.

### Vers plus de reconnaissance

Ainsi, comment faire en sorte de considérer l'enseignante dans toute sa valeur et lui donner toutes les clés pour être au cœur de la qualité des systèmes éducatifs? Parmi les priorités, il s'agit en premier lieu de donner les moyens aux enseignantes de répondre aux besoins d'apprentissage de tous les élèves, car une des plus grandes leçons de la pandémie aura été de mettre en lumière les inégalités criantes déjà existantes entre élèves dont les plus défavorisé-es socio-économiquement ont décroché lors de la fermeture forcée des écoles, et cela aussi bien dans les pays du Nord que du Sud. Et puisque le numérique a pris et prendra

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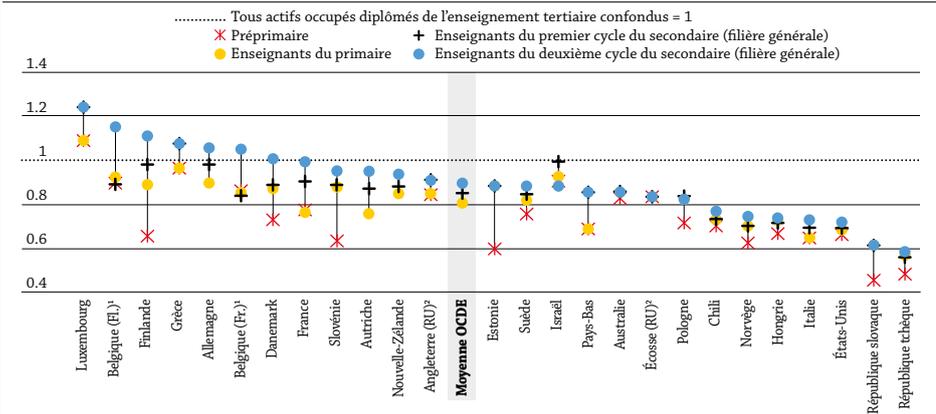

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### Graphique 3. Salaire effectif des enseignants par comparaison avec les revenus du travail d'autres actifs occupés diplômés de l'enseignement tertiaire, selon le niveau d'enseignement (2014)

Rapport entre les salaires, sur la base de la comparaison du salaire annuel moyen (primes et allocations comprises) des enseignants des établissements publics avec les revenus du travail d'autres actifs occupés diplômés de l'enseignement tertiaire travaillant à temps plein toute l'année



Salaire effectif des enseignantes par comparaison avec les revenus du travail d'autres actifs occupés diplômés de l'enseignement tertiaire, selon le niveau d'enseignement (2014)

une place considérable, il faut considérer que la technologie ne change pas seulement les méthodes d'enseignement et d'apprentissage, elle peut également transformer le rôle des enseignantes dans la transmission des connaissances et compétences reçues vers davantage de co-création, de mentorat et d'évaluation, y compris au-delà des outils informatiques classiques (via les réseaux sociaux, la radio, etc.). Cela suppose de renforcer les opportunités de formation pour affronter ces défis, ce qui n'est pas encore généralisé: 60% des enseignantes, ayant participé à l'enquête internationale TALIS, ont bénéficié d'une formation professionnelle en TIC, tandis que 18% ont fait état d'un besoin élevé pour le développement dans ce domaine<sup>6</sup>.

La technologie peut permettre d'accéder à du matériel spécialisé, bien au-delà des manuels scolaires, dans de multiples formats, mais encore faut-il que les enseignantes aient les outils pour apprendre aux élèves à savoir trouver et exploiter dans un esprit critique la quantité d'informations disponibles en ligne. Les enseignantes seront au cœur de la révolution amenée par les ressources éducatives libres. Elles seront les principales productrices et utilisatrices de ces ressources.

Au-delà des qualifications, malgré cette nouvelle reconnaissance mondiale, des enseignantes se sont retrouvées dans une situation davantage précaire surtout en Afrique et en Asie, en particulier dans le secteur privé car les écoles fermées pendant le confinement n'ont pas eu d'entrées

financières et donc n'étaient pas en mesure de payer leur personnel<sup>7</sup>. Les Principes d'Abidjan récemment adoptés fournissent de ce point de vue des directives claires pour aider les États à construire des systèmes éducatifs plus équitables, solides et efficaces, notamment sur la question enseignante. Des recommandations ont été impulsées en ce sens par la Rapporteuse spéciale sur le Droit à l'éducation lors de la 44<sup>e</sup> session du Conseil des droits de l'Homme des Nations Unies qui a eu lieu à Genève durant l'été 2020. La Genève internationale a effectivement un rôle clé à jouer en termes d'appui pour plus de reconnaissance de la profession enseignante, notamment en appliquant la cible 4c des Objectifs pour le Développement Durable (ODD) qui leur est consacrée: des ONG avec des projets de formation continue en Afrique jusqu'au Bureau International du Travail (BIT), qui historiquement s'est engagé dans l'amélioration des conditions de travail des enseignantes. Dans cette perspective, les modules du Master of Advanced Studies Éducation internationale et recherche de l'Université de Genève ont pour ambition de donner des clés pour répondre aux défis de la profession enseignante, depuis les politiques internationales jusque dans les salles des classes. ■

Plus d'informations sur le MAS: <https://www.unige.ch/formcont/cours/edu-recherche>

1 Enseignants-chercheurs à la Faculté de Psychologie et des Sciences de l'Éducation, Université de Genève

Responsables du MAS *Éducation internationale et recherche*

- Nous utiliserons volontairement le féminin dans cet article car les enseignantes représentent dans le monde 67% du corps pour le primaire, 94% pour le préscolaire et 54% pour le secondaire (ISU-UNESCO).
- Voir le numéro spécial de la revue *Formation & Profession* en accès libre sur «La profession enseignante dans des contextes marqués par l'adversité: Regards croisés»
- «Public Education Homework: An Equitable and Inclusive Future», Armand Doucet (2020)
- «Reimagining a more equitable and resilient K-12 education system», McKinsey & Company (2020)
- «The impact of COVID-19 on education – Insights from Education at a Glance 2020», OECD (2020)
- «Re-building resilient education systems: three lessons on the privatisation of education and one solution emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic», GEMR-UNESCO (2020)

# L'art sur internet



© Stanovic

## LAURA STANOVIC<sup>1</sup>

La crise actuelle du COVID-19 a incité certains professionnels de musée à réfléchir sur eux-mêmes. Quel est, se demandent-ils, l'intérêt d'un musée qui reste fermé au public? Comment les musées peuvent-ils rester pertinents si les gens ne peuvent pas les visiter? Les expositions, dont la planification et la réalisation prennent des années, peuvent-elles être transférées dans le domaine numérique, afin de maintenir les musées ouverts virtuellement? Cette crise a soulevé une série de questions pour les musées, dont certaines concernent leur pertinence.

Grâce aux nouvelles technologies, nous pouvons trouver de nos jours des musées d'art, des

galeries et bien plus tout en un «clic.» L'accessibilité est plus simple et plus directe avec les artistes, qu'on soit à l'autre bout de la terre ou pas; grâce à internet, nous pouvons ne rien louper! Il y a bien évidemment pas mal d'inconvénients dans l'art sur internet. En effet, en ligne, nous ne pouvons ni visualiser, ni ressentir une œuvre ou bien la taille réelle des peintures. Le partage d'une même passion avec d'autres personnes peut également difficilement s'accomplir en ligne.

Au moyen des images et d'une structure numérique, le haut potentiel des réseaux sociaux, comme Instagram ou Facebook, touchera un public plus large. Une plateforme efficacement construite informera

plus facilement les visiteurs. L'art sur internet nous permet d'aborder un nouveau modèle de rapport entre l'artiste et son public. Les réseaux sociaux apportent un moyen plus direct aux artistes. Il leur permet d'échanger avec les visiteurs et de potentiellement représenter une possibilité de vernissage permanent. Par exemple, dans mon école (École Internationale de Genève) je fais partie d'un groupe curatorial de jeunes qui a réussi à monter une exposition dans notre magnifique centre des arts<sup>2</sup>. Nous avons créé ce site web afin de restreindre au minimum le nombre de visiteurs. Le grand public peut donc accéder à une plus grande sélection d'œuvres d'art, ce qui permet aux artistes de mieux exposer leurs créations. En effet, ces artistes peuvent désormais attirer une audience plus large et diverse grâce aux réseaux sociaux. Il s'agit en fait d'une sorte de nouvelle démocratie de l'art.

Cette nouvelle forme d'art peut davantage être appréciée en temps de confinement. Avec la récente pandémie qui a subitement surgi et bouleversé le monde, de nombreux centres artistiques et culturels ont dû fermer leurs portes. Cependant,

de nombreux instituts ont décidé d'étendre leur présence en ligne et de donner accès au public à de nombreuses œuvres d'art. De cette manière aussi, le public pouvait continuer à apprécier l'art, y compris depuis l'ordinateur. Avec toutes ces fermetures de musées, les artistes continuent ainsi à partager leur art exclusivement au travers de l'internet. Il semble à cet égard, que cette transition vers l'art en ligne s'effectue de manière naturelle. C'est ainsi que de nombreux artistes ont pu continuer leur travail et organiser leurs vernissages.

Globalement, même si l'internet a beaucoup d'inconvénients, avez-vous déjà été confiné chez vous alors que vous deviez assister à un vernissage? Grâce à la technologie d'aujourd'hui, notre société est plus ouverte et nous unit d'une manière unique en nous offrant la possibilité de s'engager dans le milieu artistique en personne tout autant qu'en ligne même dans les temps les plus difficiles. ■

<sup>1</sup> Étudiante en 12<sup>e</sup> année de l'école internationale de Genève – La Grande Boissière

<sup>2</sup> Aussi disponible sur <https://fadatmanuel.wixsite.com/curatorialteam20>

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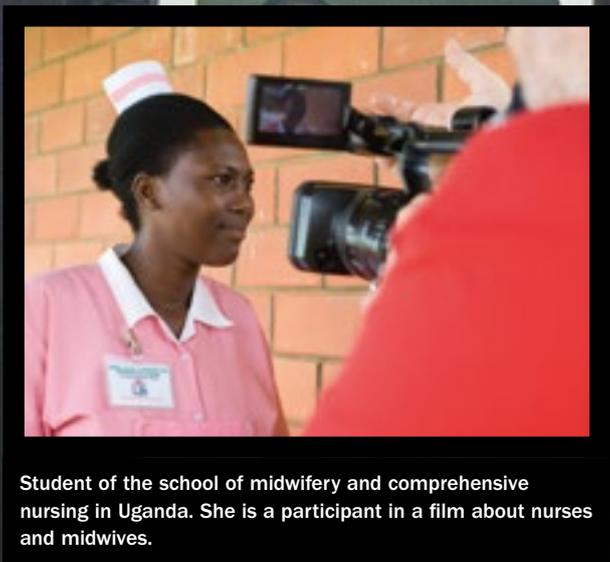
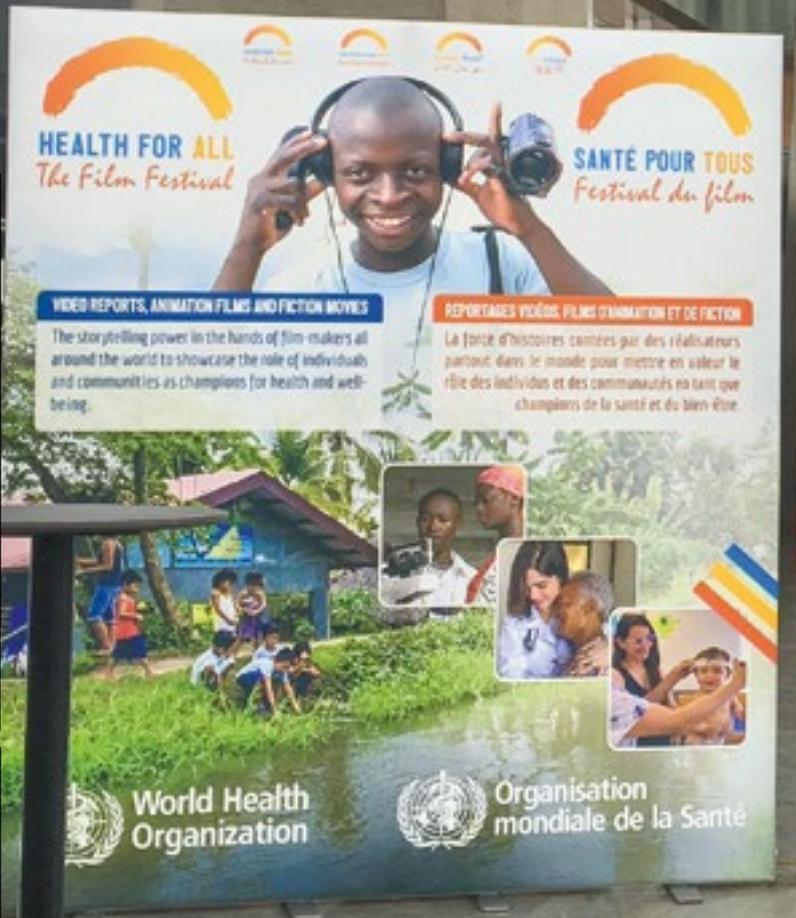
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# Going virtual The new Health for All



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# Platform for the Health for All Film Festival

The World Health Organization invites independent film-makers, production companies, public health institutions, NGOs, communities, students, and film schools from around the world to submit their original short films to the 2nd Health for All Film Festival.

Launched in 2020, the festival aims to recruit a new generation of film and video innovators to champion global health issues.

The inaugural Health for All Film Festival in 2019/2020 accepted 1,300 short film submissions from more than 110 countries.

"Telling stories is as old as human civilization. It helps us understand our problems and heal ourselves. WHO is proud to announce the second Health for All Film Festival, to cultivate visual storytelling about public health," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "We look forward to receiving creative entries inspired by WHO's mission to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable."

The competition categories this year will align with WHO's global goals for public health.

- Universal health coverage (UHC): films about mental health, noncommunicable diseases and other UHC stories linked to communicable diseases not part of emergencies;
- Health emergencies: films about health emergencies, such as COVID-19, Ebola, as well as health responses in the context of humanitarian crises and in conflict-affected settings;
- Better health and well-being: films about environmental and social determinants of health, such as nutrition, sanitation, pollution, gender, and/or films about health promotion or health education.

For each of these three grand prix categories, judges will accept short documentaries or fiction films (3 to 8 minutes in length), short videos for social media or animation films (1 to 5 minutes in length).

Three other prizes will be awarded for a student-produced film, a health educational film aimed at youth, and a short video designed exclusively for social media platforms.

Submissions are open from 24 October 2020 to 30 January 2021.

After the close of submissions, critically-acclaimed artists from the film and music industries will review the shortlisted films with WHO experts and recommend winners to WHO's Director-General, who will make the final decision. The jury composition will be announced in by January 2021.

For further information, visit <http://www.who.int/film-festival>  
Contact Gilles Reboux, Film Festival Lead: [rebouxg@who.int](mailto:rebouxg@who.int)



# Geneva Health Forum

*Its 8th edition will take place from 16th to 18th November in an entirely virtual format.*

JELENA MILENKOVIC<sup>1</sup>

## **The Geneva Health Forum – an important gathering of key players in global health**

The Geneva Health Forum (GHF) was created in 2006 by the Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva. Since then, every two years, it gathers professionals from the health sector with the overall goal of contributing to improve health and care access in the world.

The Geneva Health Forum is one of the most important international conferences on global health. As the complexity of global health challenges is growing, answering those challenges requires a multidisciplinary approach, as well as being able to bring innovative solutions.

Bringing together more than 1500 participants from all sectors – field practitioners, academics, professionals from public and private sectors, policy-makers, international and non-governmental organizations – the Geneva Health Forum offers a unique opportunity for a dynamic exchange between the key stakeholders in global health. It also aims to present innovative, accessible and sustainable practices in order to facilitate access to care and health equity.

The Geneva Health Forum brings together key partners in international Geneva and beyond, active in global health and humanitarian action. It gives a voice to professionals from the field, bridging them with policy-makers. It also spreads knowledge and good practice of new guidelines towards field workers worldwide.

This year, the guest of honour is India, with two ministers participating in the Forum and an entire session dedicated to the interaction between modern and traditional medicine. The GHF traditionally has two special guests, this year it will be the



A Malian radiologist training doctors and midwives to mobile and tele-echography in a maternity in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

© Antoine Geissbühler

International Council of Nurses, which will be part of marking the international year of the nurses and midwives, and IAPO, the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations, which will help us reflect on the active role that patients can play and give a patients' perspective to various issues.

## **This year, for the first time, the Geneva Health Forum will be entirely virtual**

The GHF usually gathers an important crowd in the CICG in Geneva. This year the pandemic imposed its rules. For the safety of all our participants and in order to avoid any kind of risk, we decided to go entirely virtual for this 8th edition of the Forum.

This global pandemic has shown us the crucial importance of global health and of having a Forum where we can discuss global health challenges to try and find global solutions. It is because we believe **that now more than ever, we need a Forum gathering all the key players in global health and humanitarian action**, that we have done our best to be agile and to organize the Geneva Health Forum in an entirely virtual format in about two months.

Changing an entire Forum to an entirely virtual event is no easy task, as you can imagine. But we met the challenge.

We will have 21 online sessions that will be broadcast live during our three-day event and that will remain available for our participants for three months after the event. These sessions will be held in a studio created for the GHF and handled by a professional production company, giving the best experience that a virtual session can offer.

We tried to develop a really interesting programme for all our GHF community. We will of course be tackling the global health crisis that impacts us all; three sessions will be dedicated to exploring global stakes and challenges of epidemics such as Covid-19 and lessons that can be learnt from it. But, as a Forum on global health, we cannot forget crucial issues that impact millions of people worldwide.

We will be tackling, with our network of key players in Geneva and beyond, issues such as the potential of digital health in times when it is spreading exponentially. We will

also explore how patients can be co-creators and disseminators of health. We will explore the crucial role that nurses and midwives play and the challenges that they face. We will get to know better Indian traditional medicine and its integration with modern medicine. Universal health coverage, neglected tropical diseases, SDGs, cancer or the impact of climate change will also be topics of discussions that our participants will have the opportunity to take part in. We will hear about the challenges that humanitarian workers face when they try to take care of the health of populations in times of war or crises. Finally, we will hear about many success stories in the field of health, which is much needed in these challenging times.

Among eminent speakers, we will have this year Swiss Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health & Family Welfare and H.E. Mr. Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, Minister of State for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) of the Indian government. We will also have UNOG Director-General Ms Tatiana Valovaya, ICRC Director-General Mr. Robert Mardini and Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Being a Forum that aims at giving a voice to professionals from the field, we will of course have many speakers coming from or working in low or middle-income countries to share their views and experiences.

**The GHF is the Forum that fosters cooperation and spreads meaningful innovations**

The Geneva Health Forum is also the Forum that gathers people and connects them to start meaningful collaborations. It also showcases innovative approaches and tools that can allow for better access to healthcare. So, for this entirely virtual edition of the GHF, we will have virtual exhibition booths from our institutional partners as well as from the private sector which will allow for interaction. One of the highlights of the GHF is its Innovation Fair showcasing solutions that are being found worldwide by our dynamic global health network; it will be virtual this year as well. The GHF is also a scientific Forum and this year e-posters will present meaningful research and offer a possibility to exchange

with the presenters. Finally, we will offer a dynamic networking tool, allowing the participants to find each other depending on their centres of interest, areas of activities or countries they work in, among others.

**Come and join a one-of-a-kind experience**

With this entirely new edition of the Forum, we are trying to keep the spirit of the Forum, which is to gather a wide range of key players in the field of global health and humanitarian action in a dynamic and collaborative mood. This whole new version of the GHF offers an opportunity to reach a much broader audience worldwide, which is aligned with our goal. To share this new experience with us, register at

[www.ghf2020.org](http://www.ghf2020.org) and enjoy learning about new approaches, discussing perspectives and sharing your views with a worldwide community! ■

1 Geneva Health Forum, University of Geneva Institute of Global Health



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# Paradigm shifts in higher education

*Interview with Professor Martin Hilpert,  
University of Neuchâtel.*

**GUILHERME SANCHES LIRA,  
UNIVERSITY OF NEUCHÂTEL**

As most educational systems in the world have been faced with no choice but to innovate to deal with the pandemic, new teaching practices have emerged. newSpecial magazine had the opportunity to interview Professor Martin Hilpert, Vice-Rector of Teaching to gain additional insights into the paradigm shifts that are taking place.

Professor of English Linguistics, Martin Hilpert arrived at UniNE in 2012. He obtained his doctorate from Rice University (Texas), then pursued a research career which led him to the International Computer Science Institute in Berkeley (California) and to the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies in Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany).

His research focuses on cognition and language change. Passionate about pedagogical innovation, he has constantly invested in new forms of teaching using digital technologies.

**First of all, thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. Could you tell us a bit more about yourself and your work?**

Thank you for having me, it's a great pleasure! What can I say about myself? I've been trained as a linguist. That means that I analyze data from different languages in order to study

the universal human capacity to talk and communicate. I am particularly interested in the cognitive and social processes that underlie language change. Ordinary languages always evolve and develop new structures. Why is that so? What are the factors that determine how language moves forward? What are the regular patterns and generalizations? In order to understand better what is going on, my research team members and I carry out experiments and analyses of so-called corpus data, which are large linguistic databases that make it possible to use big-data approaches and statistical modeling.

**This might sound too much of a cliché, but how strong was the impact of the global pandemic on your university, as well as on your own ways of teaching? What has changed the most and what has resisted this impact?**

The impact has been significant, not only in teaching, but virtually in every aspect of university life. Think for example of research projects in the field, or academic conferences. Think about the measures that were taken to safeguard the health and safety of our staff. Preparations to meet these challenges started long before the lockdown. A task force was put in place and reacted flexibly to the changing circumstances. The technical equipment in lecture halls was upgraded to facilitate video recordings and distance



© Ning Hilpert

teaching. The switch to digital teaching in March 2020, in the middle of an on-going semester, was of course a major effort for everyone involved, students, teachers, and technical and administrative staff alike. I'm still amazed that this actually worked out, and I'm grateful for the enormous efforts that have been made behind the scenes.

In my own classes, I was facing the same problems as everybody else: Teaching via a computer screen is just not the same as teaching in person. Maintaining a personal connection is more demanding, and the methods that make in-person teaching successful do not always lead to satisfying results in the digital domain. A simple transfer of the classroom program to the digital sphere is not enough. So I've had to adapt to the new format and find new ways of keeping everyone engaged.

**I know from my own experience that you were already**

**innovating the way you organized your courses prior to pandemic by introducing activities that complement in-person lectures. How did that prepare you and put you ahead of the game?**

I'm not sure that I was ahead of the game. During the lockdown, it felt more like I was improvising from one day to the next. However, that may be, for some time already now, I have been working with the flipped-classroom technique, which includes digital teaching elements that the students work through before in-person sessions. For example, I teach a general introduction to English linguistics in which the students prepare for our weekly meeting by watching a video lecture and filling out an online questionnaire, which also gives them the possibility to think of questions that they'd like to discuss in person. When we meet, we can talk about the issues that the students found the most interesting, or the most challenging, and we

can discuss these questions in depth. Now, that may look superficially like a great preparation for all-digital teaching, but in fact it's not, because the crucial element is the in-person discussion. I've always been thinking of digital elements as a preparation for live teaching. I use digital strategies not to replace in-person teaching, but to create better conditions for in-person teaching. With the lockdown, that was no longer a viable strategy, so I actually wouldn't agree that I was particularly well-prepared. On the other hand, my students were already familiar with the idea that my courses have digital elements, so for them there was some continuity, and the switch was not quite as dramatic as it could have been otherwise.

**Your online lectures and courses are open for anyone wishing to boost their linguistic knowledge. How do you think technology and the digital element can impact the access to education for people who may not have other opportunities to learn?**

If we use technology in the right way, it can be a fantastic support for pedagogical purposes. On my YouTube channel, I often receive feedback from viewers that come from all over the world, and I'm extremely grateful for that. At the same time, we know from systematic empirical research that open digital resources are mainly used by students who already have institutional learning opportunities. My typical viewers on YouTube are university students who are enrolled in a linguistics program and who turn to my videos because they have a difficult reading assignment or a particularly tricky homework problem. They find my videos as a solution to an existing problem that they are trying to solve. This is very important: Digital resources on their own are not enough. Students need

real-life mentors and real-life peers. When such a context is in place, digital resources can definitely improve and enhance your learning experience.

**As you mentioned, teaching takes place under different social-economic conditions around the globe and that teachers as well as professors face different challenges. How do you think professors and teachers across the board had to adapt their ways of teaching?**

It is true that technological innovations and events such as the COVID-19 crisis have had a significant impact on changing pedagogical practices. I could also name the Bologna reform as a factor that has substantially transformed university teaching. Developments towards goals such as gender equality and sustainability are other factors. Every academic subject evolves, so that there are constant changes to what a student can be expected to learn during a basic three-year program. Yet, there are central elements that remain constant, namely that I have to recognize the needs and interests of my students, and that I have to identify areas of knowledge that I can make accessible to them, so that they can grow intellectually and develop on a personal level. You could argue that this approach has not fundamentally changed since medieval times. To put the changes of the last months into perspective, I have had to make far more substantial adjustments to my teaching when I first came to Neuchâtel and had to figure out how to work with my students here. In my opinion, making a human connection is the most important element, no matter what tools you are using and what circumstances you find yourself in.

**Looking into the future, with a paradigm shift taking place**

**in higher education, what do you see emerging in the next couple of years? How different will this be at your university, in Switzerland, in Europe and globally?**

There are actually several paradigm shifts happening at the same time. One of them is digitalization, which will continue to have a strong impact, not only in teaching, but also in the domain of research, for example in the way researchers meet and collaborate. To give just one example from my own discipline, in March 2020 the Linguistic Association of Brazil has started a digital lecture series via YouTube. The lectures represent a veritable who-is-who of linguists worldwide, including the likes of Noam Chomsky, Steven Pinker, or Adele Goldberg. Initiatives such as this one can only happen in the digital domain, and my colleagues from Brazil have

clearly understood this. This is a skill that you could call digital literacy. We need to be able to understand how digital tools work in a globalized world. Another important trend is the development towards open science. Sharing data and making research results freely accessible is thankfully becoming more and more common. The benefits are clear: If I make my data available to others, they can see for themselves if my conclusions are warranted, and errors can be corrected. For all of this to work, however, we will need to adopt a more collaborative mindset. Today, universities and individual researchers are seen as successful if they are competitive. My hope for the future is that we will realize the virtues of collaboration and participation, and that we will reward those colleagues and institutions that build bridges and networks. ■

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# Managing your wellbeing during the Pandemic

## GWYNETH LETHERBARROW<sup>1</sup>

By now you will probably have already experienced first-hand what it's like to work from home. But there's a big difference between working from home because you want to and being forced to stay within your walls for the sake of protecting your life and the lives of others. And contrary to what you might have believed a few months ago, you are not a machine able to work under constant pressure, and you do not possess superhuman powers.

The pandemic has caused uncertainty and forced us to re-think our priorities. I've had conversations with people who tell me that they're exhausted because they're working even longer hours, checking their emails late into the night just to make sure that there aren't

yet more new rules and procedures on the horizon.

Others are at breaking point because they cannot provide the level of care and attention to their family that they would like to. Some haven't been able to travel to be with their partner or spouse since March and feel as though their lives are falling apart.

They're all desperate and can't see a way forward.

Does that sound dramatic?

Don't underestimate how your physical, emotional and mental health has been affected in 2020. Fear of the unknown can quickly push people into overwhelm and we are all in a very steep learning curve because no-one ever taught you what

it would be like to exist in a virtual reality.

Emotionally we associate our home space with relaxation, not work, and this change in itself can cause great discomfort. If you have a young family, you're suddenly on call 24/7. If you have children of a school age you've had to add home-schooling into the mix. If you live on your own, maintaining social contact with your colleagues and friends requires great discipline.

So what can you do to look after yourself and stay motivated and on track?

### Take personal responsibility

First and foremost you must take ownership of your own well-being and if you need help ask for it because neither your

family, nor your friends or colleagues will be able to help you if you stay silent. Blaming supervisors and other colleagues for not providing the support you believe they should be giving is not a solution – they're in the same learning curve and are likely to be experiencing a similar emotional reaction to change. Help them to help you by telling them what you need.

### Bring routine into your day

Looking after your body clock plays a big part in your wellbeing and as you already know, routine is a critical element of keeping yourself going. Getting up at a similar time every day regardless of whether you're going to the office or not will go a long way to improving how you feel. If you have children who have to stay at home they'll also benefit from

getting up and having breakfast as though it were a normal school day.

Something as simple as getting dressed can also affect your mental health and resist the urge to live in pyjamas, sweatpants or other very casual clothes.

If you have a family sit down with them on a regular basis to agree on who is going to do what. It is impossible for any one person to bear the entire responsibility for keeping the household going *and* do home-schooling *and* attempt to do a full day's work. Be realistic and honest with yourself about what you can achieve.

Regardless of whether you're in your home or official workspace, to the extent possible split your day up into shorter chunks and spend a maximum of 30 to 45-minutes on each task. Use a time tracker with an alarm on your laptop or phone and stick to your plans.

#### Keep your workspace clear

Not everyone has the space at home for a separate work area and do what you can to keep distractions to a minimum for example by blocking off an area with plants or other items. Piles of washing, children's toys or other non-work items in view will distract you.

Keep your work office tidy too. Even if you tell yourself that you know where everything is in the huge piles of paper and files on your desk, you're making it more difficult for yourself to focus so have a good clear out.

Consider investing in a chair for your home office or find out whether you can borrow something from your employer. These days it's quite usual for organizations to supply their staff with laptops, but even if you have the most up to date equipment, it won't help you if you're having to sit on your sofa for hours at a time.

#### Limit Feelings of Isolation

Human beings are not meant to live in isolation, and even if there are other people in the household, not being at the office with your colleagues can leave you feeling very alone. Find an online community and join groups on Facebook, LinkedIn or other social media, or create your own online social group with those close to you.

If you live alone and you're not keen to socialise online with your colleagues you are going to have to make some extra effort to connect with friends and family.

Plan some FUN activities for the evenings or weekends. Get creative using video on your phone

or laptop. Join an online yoga class, arrange a virtual dinner party with friends or take it in turns to play your favourite music, hold a baking class and show others how to make your favourite cake, form an online choir, set up online play dates for your children – let your creativity flow because once you get over seeing yourself on video the possibilities are endless.

When it comes to watching television or being on your laptop, even though it's tempting to stay glued to the news channel every evening so that you're up to date with pandemic developments, watching and reading the news will have a negative effect on how you feel. To the extent possible decide to watch a news summary once a day and stick to it.

#### Managing your working relationships

You're living in a fast-changing and uncertain environment and the person who can best look after you is you. No-one else can make you feel better and as mentioned above, your supervisor and others won't know what you need unless you tell them.

Even if you are concerned that your supervisor won't be sympathetic to your worries, asking for help is not a sign of

weakness and if it means the difference between you being ok and not, you owe it to yourself to speak up.

#### And finally

To function properly, and in addition to water, protein and sleep, your brain needs oxygen. If you don't already do it, this would be a great time to start meditating, even if it's for just 10 or 15 minutes a day. Find an app such as Headspace or find some meditation music on YouTube, get comfortable, breathe and relax.

Stay safe, stay healthy, keep washing your hands, and stay fabulous. ■

1 Gwyneth Letherbarrow worked in international organizations for more than 20 years and now provides online workshops and coaching focused on helping others to strengthen their self-awareness and self-management (emotional and mental health) as well as working relationships and organizational culture. If you'd like to find out more please email her at [gwyneth@feelgoodcoachingandconsulting.com](mailto:gwyneth@feelgoodcoachingandconsulting.com)

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# Wolokoto, un village debout!

*Depuis 2001, une petite équipe de gens motivés, entre la France, la Suisse et le Burkina Faso, s'est mis en tête qu'une communauté, un village, aussi précaire que son territoire, puissent devenir autonome, sans subvention, sans assistanat, avec uniquement des idées partagées et un petit fond de départ (un prêt de 2000 euros). Le premier village rembourse le prêt, et devient référent. Le prêt sera alors octroyé à un deuxième village et ainsi de suite.*

## YANNICK HUMEAU, BIT

C'est au beau milieu de la brousse, à deux dizaines de kilomètres de Bobo Doullassio, la deuxième ville du pays, que l'on peut découvrir des habitants – au nombre de 7'000 – unis, follement motivés, extraordinaires.

Dès le départ, il y a deux ans, notre association d'activistes autonomistes «VillageDebout.org» s'est passionnée pour ces femmes et ces hommes assoiffés de dignité.

En quelques semaines à peine, ils avaient déjà remboursé leur prêt, destiné à la construction d'une boutique communale, dont les bénéficiaires financent d'ores et déjà des services publics.

Un an après notre rencontre, fin 2019, grâce à la mise à disposition d'un terrain par l'un des villageois les plus motivés (sic), nous (Village Debout) avons aussi fait notre pas et construit un maquis (une boutique), à proximité, lieu de sensibilisation à l'autonomie collective.

Dans le même élan, dans ce même lieu, assis à côté de notre tracteur collectif, une conversation s'est tenue avec un des responsables du projet «Village Debout - Wolokoto». Le sujet abordé fut la nécessité de construire un collège pour la centaine d'élèves qui sont scolarisés à Bobo, situé à 20km.

Les étudiants ne peuvent revenir au village le soir, du fait de

la distance, et leurs conditions de vie à la ville sont désastreuses. En bref: échec scolaire garanti.

Trois jours plus tard, un habitant de Wolokoto nous informe qu'il donne un terrain de 2 hectares pour construire le bâtiment.

Deux semaines s'écoulent. La mobilisation est générale. Les habitants se réunissent et symbolisent les murs du collège avec leurs corps. Le projet s'enflamme, les décisions sont prises, les bailleurs de fonds contactés, les dossiers déposés.

Deux mois après, la première pierre est posée en présence du maire du 7ième arrondissement de Bobo, du président de



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Village Debout et des caméras de la télévision nationale!

Du coup plus moyen de reculer... le projet n'est pas encore financé, mais les travaux démarrent! Les habitants se sont mis à la production de briques, en grande quantité. Le chantier, et son financement sont divisés en plusieurs phases, afin de nous donner du temps pour trouver les fonds.

Les travaux avancent, les murs sortent de terre. La mairie observe et s'active tout autant: elle construit un pont et effectue des travaux routiers afin de faciliter l'accès au site.

Au mois de juillet, le «Fond 1% pour le Développement» accepte de nous accompagner et cofinance généreusement le projet. Les travaux s'accroissent.

Le rêve devient réalité, Wolo-koto va obtenir son tout premier collège, trois classes, capacité: 120 élèves. Les autorités embrassent le projet et décident de tenter l'impossible: ouvrir le collège dès la rentrée prochaine, dans quelques semaines seulement!

Le ministère et diverses autorités sont contactés en urgence. La même énergie se propage jusque dans les rouages de l'administration et le résultat est au rendez-vous. Le collège pourra ouvrir! Une classe de 60 élèves de 6ième tout d'abord, puis deux autres l'année prochaine, trois l'année suivante... Si nous trouvons les fonds pour continuer à construire des classes.

Le budget de roulement du collège, pour cette première année, est assuré par le ministère de l'éducation nationale pour les postes administratifs, et par les parents d'élèves pour les professeurs.

Leur décision, prise la veille de l'ouverture (!) est unanime: ils vont tous se cotiser et payer le salaire des 6 professeurs de 6ème pour cette année scolaire.

De son côté, Village Debout s'engage à financer les prêts nécessaires afin de développer des activités génératrices de revenus pour l'association des parents d'élèves, dès qu'elle sera créée. Cela sera fait rapidement, soyons-en assurés!

Ainsi, elle deviendra autonome, et le collège sera majoritairement autofinancé, le temps qu'il faudra.

C'est le cœur de métier de Village Debout: L'autonomie, la dignité, la solidarité. ■

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## Inspiration from a front line warrior

# Mission: destination reset

*I was honoured to speak at The International Film and Peace Festival (2020) on mental wellbeing in September. In addition to sharing my personal story and blueprint for optimal wellbeing, I shared insights and top tips from interviews with global experts.*

### CHRISTINA YAP<sup>1</sup>

My interview with Dr. Doreen Ang (COVID medical lead in Singapore) was particularly rich and poignant. Doreen shared with me, in a very raw way, how she was handling life's extreme challenges. Her story and wisdom can do much to inspire and guide us, as we brace ourselves to face further challenges that lie ahead.

I first met Doreen in January 2020. Doreen is a family doctor in Singapore. She also serves as a mission doctor, often embarking on challenging expeditions

abroad, providing medical care to patients in countries with poor healthcare systems and working in tough conditions. At the time we met, Doreen's husband had undergone Stage 4 cancer treatment.

On 12 March, Doreen's husband, Ying Chang, passed. He was 50. Doreen and her two boys compiled a beautiful, moving short video to honour his life. The video bears testimony to a life of happiness and love, of precious moments spent with family and friends, joyful experiences cycling through

beautiful landscapes, delighting in the carefree, simple moments in life.

Doreen had turned down assignments to spend time with Ying Chang. She sat down to reflect with her sons on what she would do with the time she now had on her hands. When she went to the front line, she turned out to be the only one with experience as a mission doctor and, with precious time available to help, this meant that she was the sole and obvious choice to lead the COVID medical team.

However, her new role would bring some risks and require substantial adjustments to an already disrupted family life. Her two boys considered the situation and wholeheartedly approved of their mother taking on this critical role. They offered to take on household duties, shopping, cooking and supporting each other whilst she embarked on this new and critical mission.

When I interviewed Doreen in August, she was working a 7-day week in the migrant workers' dormitories, where the pandemic was rife. She recounted the daily challenges that she and her medical team face.

**What has it been like to lead this mission?**

I've been going to the dormitories where the migrant construction workers are working. We have a very bad COVID situation over there. The dormitory that I go to is more than 80% COVID positive. We have 25,000 workers there. And I think at least 20,000 were infected.

I run the medical post and do whatever a family doctor like me can do for them, provide them with medical help.

**What are the particular challenges you and your team face?**

We wear the full PPE, we work outdoors, it's very hot. We perspire, we get really drenched and sweat. The patients come by the hundreds and, at the end of the day, I am really drenched in perspiration and really exhausted. It feels as if I've run a marathon every day. During the time we're working, we have to make sure our N95 is very tight. We don't pause. We don't stop to drink. We get very dehydrated. We don't stop to go to the toilet. Even if our noses were itching, we can't even scratch our nose...

There are just so many of them, we just have to just keep going.

**How do you keep going in such challenging conditions?**

**Faith**

I think that the dharma practice is the main thing that's helping me.

("Dharma" refers to "the nature of reality" as taught in Buddhist and Indian philosophy).

Our life is a continuum: all these are like waves at the surface of the ocean. Sometimes, you get turbulent waves, sometimes you get peaceful times. This is a time when the surface of the ocean is experiencing a thunderstorm.

And this too will pass.

**Focus on the present**

When I'm faced with workers, hundreds of workers, thousands of them, I just see each and every one of them one at a time. And I help one worker at a time. That's how I do it.

I don't think too hard. I don't worry too much. I just help one person at a time with whatever I can, in the situation that I'm in.

I don't worry and fret about the entire pandemic as a big world issue. I just do my part as a single doctor attending to a single patient at that very present moment.

That's it.

**What advice would you give to the rest of the world right now?**

**Focus on the present**

Whatever happens to me or anyone, we cannot change the past. But we just focus on the present and do whatever we can.

There's no point worrying, thinking and imagining the worst case scenario.

Just deal with your current



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problem right in front of your face and that's it. Do whatever you can and don't worry about things that are not within your control.

**Change our perspective**

If you look at history as a whole, there were past pandemics, diseases, wars, famines, earthquakes... lots of disaster. All of this chaos and suffering will keep coming, in one form or another, just in a different façade.

Even if it's massive death and suffering, we can't change the external. We have to just find peace within ourselves. And let it be.

Understand that nothing is permanent, everything is impermanent. Just ease into the moment, relax into the situation with a certain amount of acceptance, not clinging on to too much.

If you cannot change the external, you change the internal.

You change the perspective, you change how you see the thing.

**Set our destination further**

We have to focus and set our destination further.

As long as you ride the waves and help everyone with the situation, everything will become something that has happened in the past.

**How did you set your destination further?**

I felt that this period was something that I was meant to do, to help the world. With my husband so-called well taken care of in the heavens, I can focus and do what I'm meant to do as a front line warrior. ■

1 Christina Yap is an executive advisor and coach, author and speaker. She is Vice Chair of the Yoga Therapy Initiative of the Global Wellness Institute. Her works have been published by Forbes, PwC and Thrive Global. info@christina-yap.com

The speech screened at The International Film and Peace Festival (September 2020) is now on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWwvgtQ7dKE&t=1s>

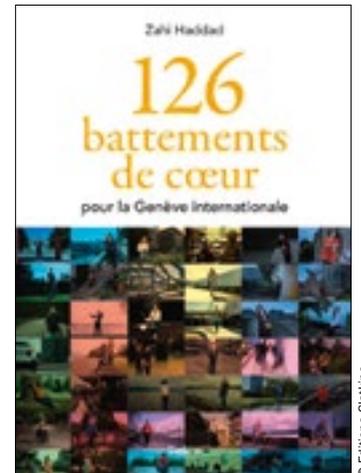
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# Publishing in a pandemic

## 126 heartbeats for International Geneva

*In this year of UN75, let us not forget the Organization's forerunner, the very first nongovernmental organization, the League of Nations. Geneva author Zahi Haddad celebrates the centenary of the League's first meeting with a book that highlights the continuing importance of diversity and dialogue in the city in which it was founded.*



### SARAH JORDAN, UNOG

We hear more and more about International Geneva these days; it is a term that has become mainstream. At newSpecial, formerly *UN Special*, it has been the focus of our attention for decades. Our section "International Geneva", under the successive editors-in-chief of our inter-agency staff magazine, has covered its many facets and acknowledged multiculturalism as being the beating heart of this city.

At the end of September, *Le Temps* published an article on 15 under-40s from international organizations, NGOs or academia who "make International Geneva". It was an interesting and informative article, presenting the profiles of six men and nine women who are doing great work here in Geneva and will certainly continue to do so. But International Geneva is not just about the young and thriving. It's a bigger

melting pot than that and there are parallel paths that serve the greater good.

When I heard about a book called "126 Heartbeats for International Geneva", I had to find out more. Published on 24 November by Zahi Haddad to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first meeting in Geneva of the League of Nations on 15 November 1920, it couldn't be a more fitting celebration of what makes Geneva such a meaningful place in which to live and work, irrespective of one's age, education or origin. Multiculturalism in Geneva was Zahi's departure point – not at the United Nations, where you would expect it – but in civil society. He tracked down 126 of the 185 or so nationalities registered by the Office Cantonal de la Statistique (OCSTAT) as living in Geneva. Those missing either declined the invitation or only have very few nationals in

Geneva. But for those who were willing, Zahi interviewed them and told their stories.

The profiles range in age from 15 to 83. Women and men from 126 different countries, identified by their names and the nationality they represent. In common, their passion for a project – be it economic, humanitarian, cultural, artistic, scientific or environmental. These people embody the values of human rights and peace that we all adhere to and showcase Geneva as a city that welcomes difference and offers opportunities. Some came specifically to Geneva because it was the only place from which they could launch their project and all 126 of them are ambassadors for Geneva the world over, flying the flag for a city in which everything is possible, and, in particular, change through dialogue. This resonates with what those of us working inside the United Nations are

doing, but these 126 stories are about the self-employed, about entrepreneurs and about migrants from war zones. These are people who have had to invent or re-invent themselves. They are not diplomats or civil servants although, for many, their journeys inevitably led to fruitful exchanges with the international public sector. With Covid-19, some of us are worried about growing precarity. For many of the profiles in this book, precarity is a way of life.

When Zahi started working on this project 18 months ago, he knew precisely what he wanted to do. An expatriate himself (he arrived in Geneva from Lebanon at the age of three), he had already published a book based on his family's experience of emigration in 2014 (*Au bonheur de Yaya*, Editions Tamyras). Active in the world of journalism, publications and international relations, including for the City of Geneva for



almost 10 years, Zahi secured sponsors for his project including the Canton and City of Geneva, the Loterie romande, Genève tourisme and the Göhner Foundation as well as institutional patrons. He found the perfect publisher, Slatkine, a reference in Geneva for illustrated books, founded, symbolically, just two years before the League of Nations, in 1918. The next step was to find the stories he wanted to tell. Alongside his other professional activities and in the context of the world pandemic and all the complications it has represented since March, Zahi found his heartbeats, interviewed them and then told their stories. For each profile, presented across two pages, a date and place of birth, a sector of activity, the name of their project and a short phrase saying what International Geneva means to them. Then 600 words to develop each story and a portrait signed by Zahi's

photographer Aurélien Bergot in graphic synergy in some way with the story told.

Paradoxically, what transpires from these stories, are both diversity and universality as well as a determination to change the world we all live in for the better. Presented in the alphabetical order of first names, the book has a preface by Geneva State Councillor, Pierre Maudet, and a postface by Maria Isabelle Weiser, Swiss-French Director of the foraus think tank – and one of the 15 under-40s featured in the le Temps article mentioned above.

Zahi had hoped to organize a party on the publication of his book this November. He had imagined it as a celebration of multiculturalism, to which some of the individuals featured in the book would contribute their art, music or gastronomy. The pandemic, unfortunately, has put paid to this idea... for

the moment at least. Zahi, like many of the people described in his book, is clearly not one to give up. His book, conceived as a commemoration of the League of Nations is a league of nations in itself, like the city of Geneva. To read it is already a celebration of what all of us in International Geneva hold dear. “126 Heartbeats for International Geneva” is published in French and in English by Editions Slatkine. ■

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Antoine Marguier, Parc de la Perle du Lac

*newSpecial is delighted to include profiles presented by Zahi Haddad. We thank the author and his publisher, Slatkine, for this exclusivity.*

“Like musicians who agree on “la”, l’Orchestre des Nations intends to bring people together by transmitting a universal message of brotherhood.” And that is an understatement when you know that this unique ensemble, founded and directed by Antoine Marguier, plays in places around the world. With its sixty amateurs, hand-picked! “I take them in the sense of those who love, who have an unlimited passion, since that is what unites them above all!” And to add, quoting his mentor Armin Jordan: “They love music and it is reciprocal!”

Meaning amateurs. “Even if they have an excellent level, I make them work like professionals!” The orchestra comprises souls that communicate. Jurists, researchers at CERN, housewives, who alone represent around fifteen nationalities! Magnificent bridges are woven among themselves and with the international city of Geneva, sometimes so elusive.

To get there, to bring together this plurality in Geneva, Antoine was inspired by his own journey, from two founding elements. In

1989, Antoine has an intense encounter with Mother Teresa. He is twenty years old and the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize laureate explains to him that the donations made by some musicians of the French Youth Orchestra, in which Antoine plays his clarinet, are among the few that arrive at their destination. It is a shock for Antoine. Two years later, in a Europe turned upside down by the fall of the Berlin Wall, Antoine notices the strength of the Youth Orchestra of “United Europe”, of which he is a member and which performs in Moscow before Mikhaïl Gorbachev and under the conductor’s wand of Claudio Abbado: “It was a real instrument to convey positive messages and to fraternize!”

“Cultural diplomacy” then begins to take shape in Antoine’s mind, who then joins the “royal road”, The *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* (OSR), and Armin Jordan, as conductor, a “humanist who made his art modest in addressing a public at large.” Antoine observes, learns, perfects his art. Assimilates great classical works. He, the kid who preferred the village brass band and popular balls to soccer training. He, who discovers classical music at the age of seventeen, takes on a “real musical bulimia” to catch up. Antoine then becomes conductor and a professor at the *Haute École de Musique*. He rubs shoulders with Ban Ki-moon. Over eight years, Antoine raises some 250,000 francs in donations with his orchestra. He is even imagined

## Antoine Marguier... and the Orchestre des Nations, Humanity gatherers... in A major

- *Pompaples-Switzerland, 1969*
- *Classical music – L’Orchestre des Nations*
- *“The Orchestre des Nations, my baby.”*

by a South Korean violinist to conduct an ensemble consisting of a northern choir and a southern orchestra, on the dividing line that divides the two Koreas. Even if this dream did not come true, Antoine still had his wand waltzed throughout South Korea and in particular in villages near the border.

“As I watch the Orchestre des Nations grow I feel like I am a dad. The synergies between the musicians are extraordinary. Their unity vibrates and transmits unimaginable energy. It is a festive ceremony and it makes me cry to see their joy at the end of a concert!” Antoine’s fervor is communicative. His eyes catch fire. His pride is to succeed in bringing emotions to his orchestra and to his audience. It is about democratizing music. To remove the dust from the standards that sometimes still want to reserve classical music for an elite. After all, the “greatest composers were acrobats”. From time to time, Antoine takes his clarinet for a “spin amongst friends”, just to keep his feet and his music well anchored in reality. ■



@Edelembos

## La Suisse inconnue, à la découverte des 26 cantons

# Canton de Tessin: Val Bedretto

*Une série de 26 impressions des lieux  
plutôt inconnus – loin du tourisme.*

### CARLA EDELENBOS, UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

Le Tessin – le nom invoque déjà le soleil, les palmes, le bleu azur des lacs, le merlot, la *polenta ai funghi porcini* – bref, la *dolce vita*. Mais il y a aussi une grande partie du Tessin qui est montagnarde, et où l'on voit plutôt des vaches, des moutons, et si on a un peu de chance, des marmottes et bouquetins.

C'est haut dans le Val Bedretto, à côté de sa frontière avec le canton du Valais sur le col de la *Novena*, où il fiume Ticino,

la rivière qui a donné son nom au canton de Tessin, prend ses sources.

Non loin du sommet, le jeune Ticino n'est pas plus qu'un ruisseau avant de gagner en volume par les eaux de tous les petits torrents qui affluent. Quelques kilomètres plus loin, à Villa, à l'autre bout du Val Bedretto, il est déjà beaucoup plus puissant et a réussi à creuser une vallée aussi belle qu'accueillante.

Comme il fait beau le jour de notre visite, nous avons décidé de faire une balade à pied par les 4 villages qui constituent le Val Bedretto. Nous commençons à Ronco, le plus haut des villages, situé à 1500 mètres d'altitude. C'est un endroit

de rêve, avec une jolie église, quelques maisons, un hôtel et deux restaurants, entourés des fleurs, un îlot de charme dans le paysage rude des montagnes environnantes. Plusieurs sentiers pédestres partent depuis Ronco, un vers le col de Nufenen qui relie le Tessin au Valais et un autre vers le col de Gothard, qui le relie au canton d'Uri.

Nous prenons un chemin dans l'autre direction, suivant la rive gauche du Tessin, vers le village de Bedretto qui est un peu plus grand que Ronco et moins attrayant. Mais il y a un oratoire charmant, et le tableau derrière l'autel est d'une étonnante simplicité moderne. A la sortie du village, il y a un petit hôtel-restaurant,



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malheureusement fermé ce jour-là. Depuis le village la vue se dégage et nous admirons le panorama sur la vallée – sur les côtes des montagnes à gauche on peut apercevoir des viaducs de la route du *Gottardo* qui se dirige vers Airolo.

Nous continuons notre chemin et arrivons bientôt à Villa, qui est le plus important des lieux dans le Val Bedretto, où se trouve la mairie de la commune. Le centre a quelques jolis bâtiments historiques, mais – ici aussi! – le restaurant est fermé.

L'église se trouve sur un plateau surplombant la rivière, exposée aux avalanches, qui l'ont en effet détruite trois fois au 16<sup>e</sup> et 17<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'ancien tour polygonale fonctionnait aussi comme protection anti-avalanche.

Pourtant – vu que la campagne seule ne suffisait pas pour protéger le village – des grands murs anti-avalanche modernes ont été construits un peu plus loin.

Après encore une courte balade nous arrivons à Ossasco, le dernier village du Val Bedretto: une vieille chapelle récemment restaurée, quelques maisons en pierre, et la petite centrale électrique de la vallée. Nous décidons de retourner par la *strada bassa*, un joli sentier bien aménagé à travers les champs et la forêt, suivant de distance la rive droite du Tessin.

Rentrés à Rondo, nous déjeunons – enfin – à la trattoria Esterina, un petit local avec terrasse, qui sert à manger tout

l'après-midi. Le canton oblige, nous y dégustons une excellente polenta au fromage si copieuse que nous sommes contents de ne plus de marcher après cet épisode gustatif!

Selon le recensement officiel de l'année 2000, le Val Bedretto est la commune la plus âgée de Suisse avec la plus grande proportion de seniors de plus de 65 ans. Il n'est donc guère surprenant que le Val Bedretto nous ait paru plutôt calme et à moitié endormi. Mais, quand nous nous arrêtons un moment à Cioss Prato, sur la route de retour vers le col de Nufenen, c'est la surprise! Nous découvrons un restaurant, une grotte de cristaux, et un parc pour enfants avec plusieurs terrains de jeux, balançoires, toboggans, la maison de Harry Potter, ainsi

qu'arbres et d'autres constructions à grimper. Beaucoup de familles profitent ici du beau temps, et d'après les plaques des voitures garées, ce sont surtout des Tessinois qui savent trouver cet endroit. En hiver, le lieu se transforme en petite station de ski. L'arrêt du car postal est utilisé toute l'année, même en hiver, depuis Airolo.

Un peu plus loin encore, nous faisons une halte pour acheter du fromage à l'alpe Manegorio. Les vaches viennent d'arriver pour être traitées, il y a de la boue partout, mais le fermier prend son temps pour me vendre ses délicieux fromages – il réalise quatre variétés différentes.

Nous continuons la route sinueuse vers le col et disons



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au revoir au Val Bedretto. Juste avant de passer la frontière avec le Valais, un jeune bouquetin nous salue dans un virage de la route. C'est clair, le Tessin n'a pas seulement un flair méditerranéen, c'est aussi alpin, on est bien en Suisse. ■

Depuis Genève, prenez le train pour Airolo, et ensuite le car postal pour Val Bedretto. Durée de trajet environ six heures. En été on peut aussi passer par le col de Nufenen, prenez le train pour Oberwald en Valais et ensuite le car postal direction Airolo.

# Hermann Hesse

TRANSLATIONS BY ALFRED DE ZAYAS, UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

## Im Nebel

*Seltsam, im Nebel zu wandern!  
Einsam ist jeder Busch und Stein,  
Kein Baum sieht den anderen,  
Jeder ist allein.*

*Voll von Freunden war mir die Welt,  
Als noch mein Leben licht war;  
Nun, da der Nebel fällt,  
ist keiner mehr sichtbar.*

*Wahrlich, keiner ist weise,  
der nicht das Dunkel kennt,  
das unentrinnbar und leise,  
von allen ihn trennt.*

*Seltsam, im Nebel zu wandern!  
Leben ist Einsamsein.  
Kein Mensch kennt den anderen,  
Jeder ist allein.*

## In the Fog

*How magic: strolling in the mist!  
Secluded every shrub and stone,  
no tree sees others that exist,  
for each tree stands alone.*

*The world seemed full of friends to me,  
so long my life was bathed in light;  
but now that fog descends on me,  
no person is in sight.*

*In truth is no one wise who never  
knew the darkness that so gently  
separates him from all things, that ever  
severs each so inescapably.*

*How magic: strolling in the mist!  
Our life is solitude – we are alone.  
No person recognizes others who exist,  
for each is on his own.*

# Thank the Heavens

ALFRED DE ZAYAS, UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

Thank the Heavens for all Beauty  
that surrounds us, heritage along with duty,  
heraldry of sun and moon, of galaxies in flight,  
our daily blessings from the Architect of Light.

Thank the Heavens for the fractured rays  
of shimmering auroras, sunsets all ablaze,  
horizon glows, sheet lightning, thunderbolts,  
refreshing rains, twin rainbows, nature's somersaults.

Thank the Heavens for exuberant celestial blue,  
fast shooting stars and constellations that renew,  
our wonderment at limitless experiments  
of interplaying four primordial elements.

Thank the Heavens for recurring seasons, sowing of the fields,  
amber autumns, orchards offering rich yields,  
fresh April greens, May colza fields, maturing wheat,  
rich fragrances from lime trees, jasmine, lilacs sweet.

Thank the Heavens for migrating silhouettes,  
fast flocks of geese, traversing orange sunsets,  
dashing terns and wafting seagulls in the sky,  
sandpipers, swallows, falcons, kites on high.

Thank the Heavens for melodious nightingales  
canaries, cardinals and magpies with long tails,  
for toucans, peacocks, cockatoos at play,  
intrepid eagles, condors, cormorants above the bay.

Thank the Heavens for the Amazon with bright macaws,  
Australian galahs, Gouldian finches, African flamingos,  
chirping crickets, quick grasshoppers – green and red and brown,  
the timid red-eyed tree frog, Costa Rica's old iconic clown.

Thank the Heavens for the whistling wind song,  
frothing, roaring waterfalls, brooks that babble all along,  
the sundry sounds of forests, Nature's vibrant words,  
stags bellowing in autumn, mating calls of myriad chanting birds.

Thank the Heavens for primeval beaches,  
sands where turtles lay their eggs in lonesome reaches  
seals at play in Iceland, life-forms of the great Australian Barrier  
Reef,  
where corals reproduce in synchronized eruptions quite beyond  
belief!

Thank the Heavens for inspiring sights that conjure intimate  
emotions,  
dazzling icebergs of the Arctic and Antarctic oceans,  
iridescent glaciers: Lambert, Inostrantsev, Yolung, Aletsch,  
Allalin, Baltoro, Vatnajökull... each a daunting stretch!



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Thank the Heavens for vast oceans full of fish,  
Alaska salmon, dolphins, whales for every wish,  
wide shores for water-skiing, sailing, surfboard gliding,  
snorkeling in turquoise waters, scuba diving.

Thank the Heavens for majestic mountain peaks,  
blue swimming trout in highland creeks,  
cliffs dotted with chamois, bold ibex near abysmal drops,  
red deer, shy sheep, and whistling coy marmots.

Thank the Heavens when white blossoms blow  
as snow in April afternoons, when glow-worms glow  
in sultry summer nights, and squirrels chase  
each other, chipmunks winking at the race.

Thank the Heavens for our friendly garden hedgehogs,  
and our faithful friends: the almost human cats and dogs.  
Each creature is our sister and our brother  
as our hallowed Earth is *Pacha Mama*, mother.

Thank the Heavens for each blade of grass,  
for eucalyptus, baobab, beech, birch and ash.  
We stand in awe before high flowering magnolias and acacias,  
blooming Bouganvilliers, Jacarandas – all exulting *Deo gratias!*

Thank the Heavens for enduring dewdrops on a rose,  
for crocuses that break through thawing snows,  
for multicoloured tulips, dancing daffodils,  
the scents of hyacinths along Dutch windmills.

Thank the Heavens for the Leitmotifs of Life,  
harmonious music that resolves all stress and strife,  
the Song of Songs, *Tannhäuser's* Pilgrims choir,  
Beethoven's *Pastoral*, inspiring us ever higher.

Thank the Heavens for the trumpet call,  
for violins and oboes in the concert hall,  
for operas as grand as *Rosenkavalier*,  
for Bach Cantatas, Händel Oratorios old and dear.



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Thank the Heavens for sweet tears that swell  
when friends depart in fleeting farewell,  
when listening to Schubert's melancholic moods,  
impromptus, Lieder, quartets, interludes...

Thank the Heavens for insightful metaphors revealing  
naked truth, symbolic language charged with feeling,  
thoughts cross-fertilizing into codes of word gestation,  
algorithms to release the fullness of Creation.

Thank the Heavens for our existential curiosity,  
instinctive yearning, living poetry,  
an inborn Faustian striving, diligent desire,  
the fountainhead of action, source of fire.

Thank the Heavens for that healthy appetite  
for knowledge, thirst for justice, for what's right,  
for vital dialectics that display the thrill  
of all Creation, open options, freedom of the will.

Thank the Heavens for our urge to travel,  
meet old cultures, watch world history unravel:  
Trade routes, silk road, rivers, channels, market places,  
hoary ruins, viaducts, hushed vestiges of gods and races.

Thank the Heavens for the faculty of reason,  
seeking truth and inner peace in every season,  
practicing proportion with imagination -  
testing our Promethean power of invention.

Thank the Heavens for perpetual contrast:  
fair or ugly, quiet or loud, contented or downcast,  
slow or fast, myopic or far-seeing...  
Contrast is the sinusoidal law of Being.

Thank the Heavens for the gift of hope,  
an optimistic world kaleidoscope,  
good humour and the grace of laughter:  
Chaplin, Disney, Larson now and hereafter.

Thank the Heavens for the gift of giving  
of ourselves, of sharing with the living  
graciously in friendship and largesse,  
not bent on market *do ut des*.

Thank the Heavens for a welcome opportunity  
to help, do good, advance a cause, experience empathy,  
as good Samaritans need nothing in return,  
for goodness is its own reward, as all can learn.

Thank the Heavens for a sense of brotherhood,  
true human solidarity, converging planethood,  
committed to conserving common heritage for generations,  
conscious of the boundless Treasures of all Nations.

Thank the Heavens for millennia of fine youth  
whose quick perfection illustrates their transient truth,  
hilarious children, adolescents that evolve like flowers,  
butterflies that flutter, vibrant bells on lofty towers.

Thank the Heavens for the furtive glance  
that animates our hope and gives us chance  
to earn a soft caress and reap a tender smile,  
for gentle words that reconcile.

Thank the Heavens for St. Francis' Hymn  
to all Creation, so diverse and trim,  
for Providence that constantly astounds us,  
wonderment at all the Goodness that surrounds us.

Thank the Heavens for each day, each moment that we live,  
for loving others, being loved, enthused to give and to forgive.  
We pray for intuition how to safely row to gracious banks.  
We thank the Heavens for the very word of thanks. ■



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## PARTIE 1/2

# Plutôt cassoulet ou choucroute ?

*Crise du Covid-19 oblige, tout voyage lointain est prohibé ; adieu Afrique, Asie, Amériques, Océanie... Alors, si nous voulons voir du pays, cela a au moins le mérite de nous faire découvrir notre belle France qui regorge de trésors méconnus et pourtant tellement exceptionnels.*



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## CLAUDE MAILLARD

Parmi tous ces trésors, la gastronomie. La France est un véritable « buffet gastronomique ». Elle renferme une histoire riche en traditions et chacune de ses régions propose sa spécialité culinaire. Chez « nous », proche de la frontière avec la Suisse, le fromage est roi et la fondue que l'on déguste au coin du feu nous fait saliver rien que d'y penser. Autres mets savoureux très appréciés, le cassoulet et la choucroute, deux plats emblématiques de la cuisine locale occitane et alsacienne.

### Castelnaudary, capitale mondiale du cassoulet

Idéalement situé entre Toulouse et Carcassonne, l'Hôtel de France<sup>1</sup> est une institution à

Castelnaudary depuis plus d'un siècle. Son restaurant est une halte gastronomique incontournable dans le département de l'Aude en région Occitanie, au cœur du pays lauragais, sur les berges du canal du Midi. Charles Trenet, Johnny Halliday, Claude Nougaro font partie des nombreuses célébrités qui s'y sont attablées pour y déguster la spécialité locale mondialement connue: le cassoulet. Celui concocté à l'Hôtel de France a marqué l'histoire du cassoulet de Castelnaudary, et son Chef Philippe Dunod, maître des lieux, en garde jalousement la recette. Il continue à perpétuer la tradition en sélectionnant rigoureusement ses produits, tous d'origine française. Les haricots sont des lingots de

Castelnaudary choisis pour leur fermeté et leur tenue en cuisson. Les oies viennent directement du Périgord pour un confit de qualité. La saucisse, exclusivement pur porc, est faite maison. Et pour finir, un morceau d'échine de porc confit choisi pour son mœlleux confirme l'excellence de son cassoulet. Le secret de celui-ci réside dans la perfection du jus de cuisson des lingots accompagnée par le savoir-faire du Chef. Épaulé en cuisine par la pétillante Cathy et au service par Bruno, toujours aux petits soins pour ses clients, il saura incontestablement régaler vos papilles.

L'origine du cassoulet remonte à la période médiévale. La légende place sa naissance



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lors de la Guerre de Cent Ans (1337-1453). Durant le siège de Castelnaudary par les Anglais, les habitants, menacés de famine, mirent en commun tout ce qu'ils avaient pour nourrir les soldats qui défendaient la ville. Lard, porcs, fèves, saucisses, viandes furent mis à mijoter dans une grande jatte. Revigorés par ce repas, les soldats chauriens (c'est-à-dire de Castelnaudary) boutèrent les Anglais hors du Lauragais et jusqu'au bord de la Manche. La recette du cassoulet était née.

**Confectionné uniquement avec les produits du Lauragais**

Ce «plat du pauvre» était un repas complet qui permettait d'accommoder les restes. A la

fin du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce ragoût fut mis à cuire dans un plat à la forme particulière, la cassole, qui fut créée par un Italien vers 1377 à Issel, village proche de Castelnaudary. Les haricots lingots, ramenés d'Amérique, ont remplacé les fèves à partir du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. En effet, Alexandre de Médicis offrit un sac de ces haricots à sa sœur Catherine en guise de cadeau lors de son mariage avec le dauphin de France, futur Henri II. Devenue comtesse du Lauragais en 1553, Catherine de Médicis joua vraisemblablement un rôle pour imposer la culture de cette nouvelle plante dans le Lauragais. La graine blanche, peu à peu semée et cultivée, gagna l'ensemble du sud-ouest de la France.

Le lingot devint durant le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et jusqu'au XIX<sup>e</sup> une base importante de la production et de la consommation locales. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, cette culture a été abandonnée au profit de cultures plus rentables. Le cassoulet fut alors fabriqué avec des haricots venus de l'étranger. Mais la qualité du produit en a souffert; les haricots importés provenant de mélanges, il était difficile d'obtenir une qualité constante et un niveau de cuisson homogène.

Vers le milieu des années 1990 se créa un syndicat des producteurs de haricots à cassoulet dont la vocation est de promouvoir la production du haricot lauragais. En 10 ans,

la production a ainsi été multipliée par presque 20 (de 35 tonnes à 600 tonnes).

**Autant de recettes que de régions**

Les ingrédients indispensables pour la confection d'un cassoulet sont les haricots lingots, du jarret et de l'épaule de porc, des saucisses, du confit (d'oie ou de canard), de la couenne, du lard, de l'ail, du sel et du poivre.

Quelles sont les différences entre les cassoulets de Castelnaudary, de Toulouse, de Carcassonne et même d'Albi? Il n'y a pas en effet un cassoulet mais bien des cassoulets selon les origines et traditions de chaque région. En 1929, Prosper Montagné, célèbre chef



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cuisinier d'origine carcassonnaise, reconnu la suprématie du cassoulet de Castelnaudary dans son ouvrage intitulé «*Le Festin occitan*»: «*Le cassoulet est le Dieu de la cuisine occitane. Dieu le Père est le cassoulet de Castelnaudary, Dieu le fils celui de Carcassonne et le Saint-Esprit, celui de Toulouse*».

A Castelnaudary, l'originel, on le cuisine avec des confits et du porc. A Toulouse, on le mitonne avec des saucisses de Toulouse et du confit. Dans celui de Carcassonne, le confit

est remplacé par de la perdrix rouge, les saucisses supprimées et des morceaux d'agneau ajoutés. A Albi, dans le Tarn, c'est un peu un mélange de tous!

Il existe même un cassoulet venu du département de l'Ariège, moins connu: il s'agit de la Mongetada dont le nom vient de l'occitan mongeta (haricot). Autrefois un plat de haricots préparé avec des restes de viandes, c'est aujourd'hui un plat festif avec du porc et du canard gras. La différence avec les autres est simplement l'utilisation des

haricots de Pamiers, sous-préfecture de l'Ariège.

### Grande Confrérie du Cassoulet de Castelnaudary

Au fil des siècles Castelnaudary a su s'approprier la cassole, le haricot lingot et perfectionner au mieux la recette du cassoulet qui fut rendue officielle en 1909. Il se prépare en plusieurs étapes, ce n'est clairement pas un plat de dernière minute. L'idéal serait de le laisser mijoter toute une journée sur les braises d'un feu de cheminée.

Habituellement servi avec un vin rouge de la région (Fitou, Malepère, Corbières ou Minervois), le cassoulet n'est pas du tout compliqué à faire. Le plus important sera de choisir des ingrédients de bonne qualité. La Grande Confrérie du Cassoulet de Castelnaudary<sup>2</sup> dont on fête cette année le cinquantième a pour objet de servir le prestige, de diffuser et de défendre la renommée du cassoulet de Castelnaudary. Revêtus de leur robe couleur marron, coiffés d'une toque en forme de cassole et ornés d'une médaille représentant les armes

de la ville de Castelnaudary, les membres veillent au respect des traditions et au maintien d'une élaboration de qualité répondant à la tradition culinaire. La recette du cassoulet de Castelnaudary dévoilée sur leur site est celle proposée par Prosper Montagné dans «*Le Festin occitan*». Vous n'avez plus qu'à passer aux fourneaux... avant de vous régaler!

Rendez-vous est pris du côté de Colmar pour en savoir plus sur une autre spécialité locale venant d'Alsace: la choucroute, à déguster dans le prochain numéro du *newSpecial*. ■

1 Hôtel de France de Castelnaudary  
www.hdefrance.com

2 Grande Confrérie du Cassoulet de Castelnaudary

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[www.newspecial.org](http://www.newspecial.org)

**Éditeur / Publisher**

**Publicité / Advertising**

C • E • P S.A.  
Quai Gustave-Ador 42, 1207 Genève  
T. +41 22 700 98 00 – F. +41 22 700 90 55  
cepinfo@bluewin.ch

**Imprimé sur du papier certifié FSC.**

**Tirage combiné total (impression et numérique): >10 500 exemplaires**



**Au service du personnel des organisations internationales de Genève depuis 1949.**

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Les opinions exprimées dans newSpecial sont celles des auteurs, et non forcément celles de l'ONU, de l'OMS ou de ses agences spécialisées. La parution de ce magazine dépend uniquement du support financier de la publicité prise en charge par une régie.

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**Impression / Printer**

Courvoisier-Attinger Art graphiques SA  
135, chemin du Long-Champ – 2504 Bienne  
T. +41 32 344 83 84  
[www.courvoisier.ch](http://www.courvoisier.ch)

**Graphisme / Design**

Atelier Schnegg+ – Michel Schnegg  
Rue du Simplon 5, CH-1207 Genève  
T. +41 22 344 72 90 – F. +41 22 340 24 11  
[www.atelier-schnegg.ch](http://www.atelier-schnegg.ch)

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