

The book cover features a dark blue night sky with a large, bright full moon in the upper left corner and numerous small white stars scattered throughout. In the lower right foreground, three smooth, light-colored stones are stacked vertically on a sandy surface. The background behind the stones shows a dark green landscape with rolling hills and a small body of water under a greenish night sky.

IN THE TIME
OF THE **PANDEMIC:**
MANAGING THROUGH
THE **CRISIS**

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In the time of the pandemic

In the time of the pandemic: Managing through the crisis

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In the time of the pandemic: Managing through the crisis

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Executive Summary

In November, 2019 a first case of COVID-19 virus was reported in China. From that moment, first regions, then nations, and then the whole globe became increasingly aware of the outbreak of a pandemic that threatened lives, endangered people in densely-populated cities, struck rural communities too, old and young, healthy and those sensitive to additional health risks. In some regions, especially in Asia, many began to wear masks, some took the outbreak quite seriously and became part of disciplined and measured responses.

As the pandemic traveled quickly to far reaches in the world, people, physicians, and governments, among other critical stakeholders, were stunned to see the immediacy of change in their daily lives and the ongoing implications of a virus that would continue to multiply. A group of us, practitioners, researchers, and academics, joined together to create a simple, intelligent collection of articles that can materially improve our work to lessen and eliminate the pandemic; share expert advice on managing this crisis; prepare for the next one; understand the many and significant impacts of this crisis on physical and emotional health, family and individual wellbeing; and offer essential recommendations for a safer return to work and other activities of our lives.

This work contains five sections devoted to relevant and immediately usable guidance. These are: 1) disaster response, 2) leadership, management and support, 3) research, 4) economic and business-sector effects, and 5) health and wellbeing. Each section opens with an overview of the articles, and each article begins with a brief summary of its primary thoughts and conclusions. The book may be read in the order in which it is presented, or it may be consulted for specific information as a kind of reference for this moment in our knowledge and experience with a contagion whose scale and impact have been heretofore unknown. There is also ample bibliography for those who seek to deepen their understanding and access other valued, important work.

Quickly the world has taken note of differing disaster responses and the effects of each. Responses have included recognition of the virus itself, ways to protect people from it, and understanding the virus(es) by scientists and physicians. Governmental responses have varied widely and, as indicated in several articles here, many have been decisive for slowing or stopping the reach of disease. These responses importantly

include communication and sharing up-to-date information so that populations may align both within themselves and with others near and far.

Leadership has been essential at all levels of response. The ability to provide information and a thoughtful and detailed strategy for surviving and managing coronavirus have been hallmarks of leadership in this time. Good management can enable and facilitate effective actions, and leadership in many regions and countries, in all areas of human endeavor, has provided early pathways to risk assessment, mitigation, medical research, care for physical and mental health, and strategies for redesigning our world for work, school, and community. The virus has severely affected the world economy, all types of industries, ways to conduct business, and the priorities for the world's limited or sufficient resources. A simple search for goods in retail shops or food stores has shown that deep impacts on our economic lives even now are becoming clear. The economic effects of this pandemic are intricately woven with the health and wellbeing of people and our planet. The economy affects people's access to goods and services, to work, to productive and happy work environments, and relationships among all.

We offer you these articles by contemporary thought leaders to share vision, solutions, knowledge and thinking. It is our goal to contribute, with much of the world, to resolving this pandemic. As these months have evidenced, we can prevent, or mitigate, a global challenge through collaboration among people, wide and deep knowledge, and the arts and sciences. Here, in these pages, we find the science of seeking truth and the art of implementing action based upon it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to ‘In the time of the pandemic’

Alan Hallsworth, Sandra Comas and Carl Adams

Do you remember where you were when you first realized that a virus arrived and life just changed? Was it like the opening of a Harry Potter story, where all at first seemed normal and then it became clear that things were different? Each of us in some way has experienced change since the arrival of the pandemic, and we attempt to understand what is happening. People seek to adapt and to manage through the crisis. We organize this book so people in different circumstances of life, work, and place can connect with each other’s thinking, suggestions, knowledge, advice and experience. This opens us to each other, to our history, and to the future we are creating together, in global and local effort.

Introduction

At the end of 2019 and early 2020 the world saw a newly discovered coronavirus, COVID-19, a very infectious disease that was spreading around different countries and was classed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March 2020 officially as a pandemic. At the time there was little known about COVID-19. There was uncertainty over how lethal COVID-19 was, who were the most affected people in the short term and long term, how infectious the disease was and what were the factors influencing transmission. It was a newly discovered virus with no tried and tested vaccines or treatments. With so much uncertainty about the potentially deadly COVID-19 pandemic the response from most countries was to try and prevent or slow down transmission – effectively putting people under lockdown and disrupting most normal activities across society including social interactions with family, friends and colleagues, business activity, transport, schooling and education, leisure and just about every aspect of society. So the emerging and unfolding COVID-19 crisis is many faceted. There were and continue to be serious health related risks impacting the ability of nations’ healthcare systems to cope with a huge influx of patients affected by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. There were and are many further serious impacts emerging across societies as they effectively close down for prolonged periods of time while citizens social distance or self isolate. The crisis is not just

about a serious pandemic disease, it is also a pandemic crisis of people losing jobs, whole industries almost disappearing, and the social fabric of societies being shaken to the core.

At the time of publishing this book, June 2020, much of the uncertainty remains. If anything extra uncertainties have emerged relating to how societies can come out of lockdown, how to deal with long-term health risks of having COVID-19 in global populations with still no tried and tested vaccines and limited treatments, and how to stimulate economies and bring back to life the many industries and sectors that have been brought to their knees as a result of a prolonged societal lockdown. There is much talk of dealing with the 2nd and 3rd waves of COVID-19 and what will be the *new norm* post COVID-19. There also seems much conflicting advice, concerns and worries.

At the time of publishing it has been over half a year since COVID-19 came to the attention of scientists and the general population, and over three months since the WHO called it a pandemic. Even since then there is much we still do not know about COVID-19, such as the actual number of people who have contracted the virus, the number of people dying once infected and any influencing factors impacting this. There are a few sets of measures which are used to represent how bad a virus is (see <https://ourworldindata.org/mortality-risk-covid> for a good explanation of these measures). Sometimes these figures are used intermittently by media reporting on the spread of the virus, often using the most dramatic set of figures to make the news stories interesting. We have the Infection Fatality Rate (IFR) which is how likely it is that someone would die if they are infected with COVID-19. We also have the Crude Mortality Rate (CMR) or Crude Death Rate (CDR), which is calculated as the probability that any individual in a population will die from the disease, so not just those who are infected it is the average for the whole population: So a crude or blunt measure. Then we have the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) which is the number of people who have died divided by the total number of people actually *diagnosed* with the disease. This is not the same as the risk of death for an infected person because we don't actually know how many people are infected – it is just the ones that have been tested, and presumably this would be a biased group initially, perhaps those showing symptoms or in high risk areas. The press and decision makers seem to focus on such stats including the 'R', the reproduction number or growth rate of COVID-19 through a population. But the COVID-19 crisis is not just about figures and infection rates, as will clearly be demonstrated in the chapters in this

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book. There are many issues, sometimes conflicting issues, which decision makers need to consider.

There is a need for some joined-up thinking of what to do next, of how to “manage through the crisis”. This book aims to address those needs by providing insights and guidance of how to deal with the next phases of the COVID-19 crisis, and hopefully get safely to the new normal, whatever that will be. The book draws input from multiple areas of knowledge to give useful insights on what to do as organizations and society move through the current pandemic crisis. Indeed the group of experts that has provided their insights is quite impressive, with top people from academia and industry. We connect expertise from different disciplines including health and wellbeing, leadership and management, the disaster and risk management communities, and technology experts.

As with much of the activity to address the COVID-19 impacts it was a manic and challenging set of tasks to put together such a book with insights from key people. Considered and well founded insights were needed quickly. We adopted an Agile Science approach to putting the book together, including sourcing experts from three continents, from industry, from academia and from different disciplines to provide a strong base for connected thinking on the issues and solutions. As the reader will notice, the chapters have different styles which represent the diversity of disciplines that contribute as well as the mix of practical insights from business and theoretical and research informed insights from academia. This diversity of style is intentional as the focus of the book has been on generating timely expert insights, not necessarily on the necessities of a homogenized chapter format.

Each of the short chapters follows the general structure of a separate page at the start capturing the title, author name and institution, and then a set of bullet points with the main issues from the chapter. This will hopefully make it easy for people to read and capture the main elements in the book. Then the main arguments, discussion points in the chapter are presented. These will be the main insights from the experts along with any points of particular interest and guidance notes.

The end of the book contains a short Bio of all the contributors. As can be seen we have an interesting mix of experts from three different continents, from several top universities and from industry. We have different topic and discipline expertise providing a wide set of insights on the very

complex set of issues around the impacts of COVID-19 and how to address those impacts.

There are five main sections in the book, followed by a summary chapter which collates together some of the main insights from the book. The rest of this introduction briefly captures some of the background of COVID-19 and the challenges society, organizations and people have been facing through the pandemic. Then we have a ‘Disaster response’ section bringing together insights from contributions from experts in the crisis, disaster and risk management communities. This includes academics and practitioners at the forefront of dealing with disasters like pandemics. Following this we have a ‘Leadership, managing and support section’ which brings together insights from experts in leadership and management and from technology support. This includes insights on analytics. Again this section draws upon experts from practitioners and academics. We then have a section on ‘The economy and business sectors’ which provides insights at a higher level examining how to understand impacts and responses at the overall economy level and within industries, such as retail. Following this we have a ‘Health and wellbeing’ section examining the mental and wider health and wellbeing implications of people living through the COVID-19 crisis. The final section collates the insights from the diverse groups of experts to bring out the key messages.

This book is aimed at a wide audience but particularly those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, or decision managers with remits to address the impacts of COVID-19, and want insights and guidance in how to manage through the crisis and be better prepared for further waves of the pandemic or indeed for future pandemics.

To further set the scene for the book, here is a brief abstract from one of the interviews covered in Chapter 10; it is from an MD from a multinational energy company based in Italy:

“Of course we knew about the COVID-19 pandemic as it was rolling out in China, and how China was fighting it.... But it was not really on the front page of the news paper.... Then towards the 3rd week of February when everyone was on a skiing vacation, we started to see there were a few cases identified in Italy. But we had good hospital systems - so not problem. But the number of cases were growing. So towards the end of February / beginning of March we realised that this was exponentially

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growing and this was likely a sort of catch up effect. Suddenly the numbers look horrific”

Then reaching a decision tipping point:

“And at that moment I realised this is really, really serious. We decided as a company a little bit before the ministry came out with a country lockdown we decided to close our offices ... moving people to smart working and partial lockdown of the company where possible ...”

So clearly a serious situation was emerging, but also there were extra and new management concerns emerging:

“But the fear has been there. And that has been another interesting challenge. At least for someone used to managing engineers and finance people and very rational thinking [context] it has been a completely new challenge ...to how to communicate , how to have meetings and so on [in a climate of fear]”

The impact of COVID-19 is also impacting companies’ ability for effective crisis management:

“We as managers have been trained on how to manage a crisis. This is not my first crisis... But typically these are events that unfold within an hour or two hours or three within a day, and then you have the crisis at its peak ... and you have a crisis cell and a management groups that manages over five days maximum ... We are on crisis management on week 8!”

We see a picture of the COVID-19 crisis emerging with many new and serious challenges impacting organizations, managers and employees – and their families.

Section 1: Insights from the disaster risk community

In this section we present four outstanding articles that illustrate the necessity of prevention, provide recommendations for mitigating risk in the current pandemic, and suggest current actions that can accelerate elimination of the virus. As both Phil Crook and Simon Forster indicate, practice for a possible disaster transforms quickly to real-life consequences when a viral outbreak occurs on a large scale. Simon Forster, a commander at a fire station in the UK brings an immediate, personal narrative of his experience leading three teams, 89 people, to reconsider all aspects of collaborative work in the fire department, with planning required for all forms of sanitation, opening and closing doors, and communicating quickly and well. These teams also face the challenge of strategic planning for potentially 4000 deceased people for whom a mortuary must be built and other logistical preparations made.

Carina Fearnley powerfully describes the alert system in the UK, and identifies seven areas of weakness in it. Two areas of focus include a comparison between the UK and New Zealand, and the importance of continuous and transparent communication for positive outcome in the latter. Additionally Carina Fearnley offers 10 specific recommendations for improving the current alert system, and highlights the importance of social media and a social media strategy for aligned, informed actions.

In the first article in this section, Carmen Solana, Jessica Roberts, Richard Teeuw, Carina Fearnley, Phil Crook, and Naomi Morris outline risks associated with pandemic disaster, and emphasize the importance of comprehensive prevention methods to be planned in advance along with an effective warning system. Recommendations to management for mitigating risk and keeping people safe are particularly noteworthy.

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