



TNOC Covid Roundtable

Covid has upended all the normal routines in our lives and work. How do you imagine you might be changed by it, both professionally, but also personally as you negotiate a new post-virus “normal”?

Below are the short, summary texts from each contributor’s longer response. To read each person’s full text, click the link below.

<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2020/05/03/covid-has-upended-all-the-normal-routines-in-our-lives-and-work-how-do-you-imagine-you-might-be-changed-by-it-both-professionally-but-also-personally-as-you-negotiate-a-new-post-virus-norm/>

[Pippin Anderson, Cape Town](#) The differences in the lives of our students is stark. With everybody heading home for lock down, the somewhat levelling experience of a shared campus has gone like Cinderella’s carriage at midnight. Some get to leave the ball as they arrived, and others are left with pumpkins and rats.

[Isabelle Anguelovski, Barcelona](#) The balance between keeping but delaying essential community engagement meetings, moving them online, or cancelling them all together, will be some of the many difficult decisions we will have to make in the near future.

[Janice Astbury, Buenos Aires](#) I hope that many people around the world are enjoying the sounds of voices and birdsong, and the experience of cleaner air flowing into their homes, and will want this to continue.

[Carmen Bouyer, Paris](#) I will keep dancing half an hour a day on Zoom with people from all over the world, and join the direct local actions that bring wonder, trust and care among people and among species, learning from the ways of trees and the songs of bees, together.

[Lindsay Campbell, New York](#) For those of us privileged to be sheltering at home, the crisis has created a new sense of simplicity and attention to place. May we carry that forward wherever the future takes us

[Sarah Charlop-Powers, New York](#) While we're all navigating through this extremely stressful—and sometimes downright scary—moment, I can't imagine what my life, and the lives of all New Yorkers, would be like without our local parks.

[Katrine Claassens, Montreal](#) The pandemic teaches us this: rapid, coherent change is possible. It has also laid bare that there is much to be actively dismantled, and much to be actively built.

[M'Lisa Colbert, Montreal](#) I am confronted with how much I need trees, grass, and fresh air to remain a sane human being. Being stuck between the four walls of my apartment all day feels foreign and unnatural.

[Marcus Collier, Dublin](#) I have a new resolve to overcome my despondency and try harder to find a means to engage urban communities with wild nature. In this case, the first step is literally on the doorstep!

[Paul Currie, Cape Town](#) Covid has surfaced a key reality for me: choice. I will be paying more attention to how cities increase the promise and attainment of choice for their citizens, who are so often restricted by cost, geography or demography, to one option.

[Samarth Das, Mumbai](#) Being locked up in the comfort of our homes is certainly a privilege. Social distancing in a time like this is a luxury afforded by a few—over 55% of Mumbai city's 13 million inhabitants live in slums where 6-7 people share a single room.

[Gillian Dick, Glasgow](#) We definitely need to take the opportunity to build back better, but we also need to pause and not rush when we hit the reset button. We need the right rebuilding, in the right place, at the right time, for the right communities.

[Paul Downton, Melbourne](#) COVID-19 has forced changes that have given nature a breathing space, but I'm betting when the capitalist engine of destruction returns to "normal" it will raid the stores of nature like a selfish bully in a candy shop. It won't be pretty.

[Emilio Fantin, Bologna](#) Talking about coronavirus, egoism needs to be switched into solidarity and sharing, but this cannot be done as a reaction to contagion fear or daily body count. It has to be the result of a long path towards the achievement of a new existential consciousness.

[Todd Forrest, New York](#) A garden feels empty and pointless without people to enjoy it. So does nature. While I have always felt strongly about the importance of nature to a person's well-being, I have never been so keenly aware of the essential partnership people have with the natural world.

[Andrew Grant, Bath](#) I have learned to take time to notice, and perhaps I have learned that however devastating Covid-19 is being, it has taught me to reflect on my Life, my Art, and my Nature.

[Eduardo Guerrero, Bogotá](#) The dilemma for a healthy planet is not: nature or people? The right approach must be people in nature, planning, and building resilient cities following ecological principles. Quoting Garcia Márquez: "I believe it's not too late to build a utopia that allows us to share an Earth on which solidarity could become a reality".

[Bram Gunther, New York](#) Instead of opening the streets up to cars again, muscling each other and spewing their nasty exhaust, we should keep the cars where they are now, inert. The city would transform itself, streets into nature trails lined with aster, sweet pepperbush, and oak trees. Our world-class electric-powered mass transportation system would connect all our neighborhoods as one equal family.

[Dagmar Haase, Leipzig](#) COVID-19 is not just a natural, virus, or health crisis, it is a societal crisis. The response has to be given by the whole humankind. Urban nature, its maintenance, care and fair use, forms an important part of this global response.

[Annegret Haase, Berlin](#) The crisis also sheds light on existing inequalities and injustices of our urban societies—in terms of how people can adapt to and cope with restrictions: It is much easier to stand restrictions in a large flat with balcony, garden or rooftop access and close to green spaces than in a small flat packed with people.

[Fadi Hamdan, Beirut](#) What we need is a value change in order to effect a paradigm shift in the way we produce, consume and live as societies.

[Cecilia Herzog, Rio de Janeiro](#) I am investing my time in isolation to improve my capacity to contribute to a wide discussion about urban nature, how it is important to sustain healthy lives and adapt to the ever-growing threat of extreme weather events.

[Alex Herzog, Rio de Janeiro](#) I believe there will be a strong enhancement of circular economy, increasing the value of local, its people and its businesses. Consequently, waste will decrease, and much of what before was seen as such, will begin to be reused. In other words, a syntropy in restoration.

[Mike Houck, Portland](#) [excerpt]I will spend more time, personally and professionally, focusing on the green interstices of our city, the small, often scrappy, bits of nature nearby for my own psychological and physical health, and that of my city.

[Matthew Jensen, New York](#) But who hasn't dreamt about snapping their fingers and making air pollution go away? And all of a sudden we realize it is optional. Those scroll bar images are fun. Before. After. Before. After. What else is optional?

[Panagiota Kotsila, Barcelona](#) The balance between keeping but delaying essential community engagement meetings, moving them online, or cancelling them all together, will be some of the many difficult decisions we will have to make in the near future.

[Gilles Lecuir, Paris](#) The confinement makes me feel intimately what I have known and said for many years now: the presence of nature in the city is not a decoration, it is a vital need for the city dweller. // Le confinement me donne à ressentir intimement ce que je sais et dis depuis de nombreuses années maintenant : la présence de la nature en ville n'est pas un décor, c'est un besoin vital pour le citoyen.

[Nina-Marie Lister, Toronto](#) For now, I take solace in the routine of daily bread. The measured pace of the knead, the proof, and the rise offers structure to my blurry days. Ultimately, it is the realization that this simple, measured act and its alchemy are both literally and figuratively what sustains us in its slow and patient way.

[Kevin Lunzalu, Nairobi](#) The COVID-19 curfew has given me the space to reflect on viable alternatives to my common practices: I am rethinking my food, modes of travel, entertainment, and forms of meeting people. Working from home for certain days may prove to be one of the best environmental practices. These ideas will greatly shape my post-crisis personality.

[Patrick Lydon, Osaka](#) What will be the new normal? Perhaps now is our chance to slow down, take care of ourselves and our fellow living beings a bit better, look to nature, and figure it out.

[Yvonne Lynch, Riyadh](#) I remain positive regarding a post-virus era because, notwithstanding the gravity of this situation, crisis always presents opportunity for positive transformation. Professionals in my field have always struggled to convince decision makers of the benefits of urban greening and climate adaptation. Not so much now.

[Antonia Machado, Portland](#) The coronavirus has exposed deep structural weaknesses, reinforcing the notion that working across silos and centering equity is imperative to building resilience and moving towards transformative change.

[François Mancebo, Paris](#) Hidden behind any disaster, there always is a cost-benefits analysis that went wrong. Yet, more than often those who decide on the acceptability of a risk are not those who will be most exposed once the disaster happens. For the future, it is crucial to decide now who and what actions should be priority in the aftermath of Covid-19, and by whom these choices should be made.

[Rob McDonald, Washington](#) I have often been someone who threw himself at work, who saw work as not just a job but as a calling, who perhaps spent too much time working and not enough time at home. So, it is humbling to realize that, at this moment in time, perhaps the most important thing I can do in the universe is be with my family.

[Brian McGrath, New York](#) I with others have recently postulated a metacity framework—a more flexible and adaptable form of architectural space—for the future adaptation of cities as we face a global climate crisis—such as the current pandemic. My hope for a positive outcome of this tragic virus is the development of new infrastructures in solidarity towards a just transition based on the feminist/ecologist metacity matrix.

[Siobhán McQuaid, Dublin](#) We are facing now into a pivotal moment in time where it is possible to contemplate an alternative recovery plan. Governments and decision-makers need to take time out to reflect on the importance of small business, local business and nature-based business for community resilience.

[Ragene Palma, London](#) I call for urban practitioners and legislators to immerse in the daily lives of those who have been sidetracked for the longest time, and work from there to begin championing spatial equality—visit slums, converse with the homeless, and know what it's like to live on the verge of the city. Our previous "normal" should not be recreated. // Hinihikayat ko ang mga nasa larangan ng pagpapalano at mambabatas na pananaliksik ng pamumuhay ng nakararami—bisitahin natin ang mga iskwater, kausapin natin ang mga walang tirahan, at alamin natin kung ano ang kalagayan ng mga namumuhay sa loob at labas ng mga lungsod.

[Diane Pataki, New York](#) What about poverty, inequality, food insecurity, lack of access to clean water, climate change, and pollution? Now that I know we can act in response to COVID-19, there's no turning back. Our society can change – completely and rapidly. The next time we have a daring solution, let's not take “no” for an answer.

[Mitch Pavao-Zuckerman, College Park](#) Not all of our students have the desire to learn online, and not all have the resources to do so. There is talk about impacts to university budgets and student enrollments. This experience is teaching many about the real lives and experiences of our students, and we need to be sure that any transformations in the new normal reflect on inequities in access to time, technology, and privacy.

[Steward Pickett, Poughkeepsie](#) This changes everything ... again. Will those of us who survive learn this time? All of us are on some verge.

[Mary Rowe, Toronto](#) I think the most profound challenge for any of us working in urbanism through and after COVID, is now that we have seen how our cities truly function at their most vulnerable, what possible excuse do we now have to not emerge solely committed to fixing it?

[Andrew Rudd, New York](#) I am frequently in mourning that after this crisis the world will never be the same. I am also hopeful that after this crisis the world will never be the same.

[Eric Sanderson, New York](#) What is life, if not hope? What are our cities, if not an investment in our future? Great things will come again. Take care, my friends; hold on; and invest what you can into the long now.

[Olivier Scheffer, Bordeaux](#) We are standing at the edge of the cliff, and the coronavirus is right behind us...So how do we urgently change the urban metabolism to something highly resilient?

[Huda Shaka, Dubai](#) I have been reminded of the privileges I have which others do not: having the option to work remotely, having access to quality public space and amenities at my door step, having a choice about how I travel and where I spend my leisure time—and having leisure time. I will work harder personally and professionally to bring those privileges to others, I hope.

[Laura Shillington, Montreal](#) While we may be sharing a *global* experience of living in a pandemic, how we experience it is very specific to place, age, class, race, and gender. Can we use this experience to create a new normal with each of us as more ethical subjects to imagine new worlds?

[Elisa Silva, Caracas](#) It is clear that the way we have been living and the patterns of governance we have chosen could be very different, they could change the second we decide to make them a priority and work collectively toward their fulfilment.

[David Simon, London](#) The adaptational effort will be immense. While certain other activities are amenable to onlin-isation, others are not—some activities will simply be impossible. All bets are off.

[Mary Hall Surface, Washington](#) At its best, theatre is a unique forum where communities can imagine together. We gather and literally align our beating hearts as a story unfolds told by actors who breathe our same air. My nightmare new normal is a Romeo and Juliet who never touch, watched by a masked audience too afraid to believe the story.

[Erika Svendsen, New York](#) I am grateful for all those who are working outside during this crisis and the sacrifices they have made all these days. Nature's stage crew, so to speak. In the future, I'd like to explore ways to help strengthen our green workforce and support those within it that are most vulnerable during times of crisis.

[Abdallah Tawfic, Cairo](#) Planting is a representation of peace and hope and we should continue to encourage, support and spread it in such critical time, for the sake of our health and wellbeing. Let's be hopeful and revive victory gardens again all over the world, let's get back to our roots, and grow food and hope inside our cities.

[Christine Thuring, Vancouver](#) I'm contemplating alternative and new ways by which to engage my energy, expertise, and love for the world. It is a bit of an existential place, which enlists the whole range of my creative and scientific faculties. If this is the new normal, where "business as usual" no longer applies, then how do I wish to contribute?

[Naomi Tsur, Jerusalem](#) Since we are supposed to go no more than 500 meters from our homes, this is clearly a good time to see if we have all we need within that perimeter. A grocer's? A small park? A school? A community garden?... Perhaps it is time to think just what is needed for a happy neighborhood and ask whether we have it.

[Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro, Paris](#) Can we, as artists, organize ourselves to inspire our institutions and societies to keep the engine on slow and never start again the machinery of neoliberal destruction? We talked long enough about politics in art. Time for action and art-as-politics.

[Andreas Weber, Berlin](#) I wonder what we will make of the insight that we are suddenly so vulnerable. I watch the glittering insects in the sun, much less numerous than some years ago behind this same window, and listen to the nightingale that plucks those insects from the twigs to feed their young. I sit in silence, until the first bat is out and shatters the pale sky with its ragged path.

[Diana Wiesner, Bogotá](#) We are the birds that make up their nest with everything they find: branches, bark, feathers, leaves, hair, and even strands of wool, any material to protect the essential: creatively reinventing what will emerge from this process of caring for the global nest. // Somos las aves que componen su nido con todo lo que encuentran: ramas, cortezas, plumas, hojas, pelos, y hasta hebras de lana, cualquier material para proteger lo esencial: reinventando creativamente lo que va a emerger de este proceso de cuidar el nido global.

[Darlene Wolnik, New Orleans](#) My work supporting farmers' markets across the U.S. remains very much the same. The markets are innovating contactless procedures at a furious pace: new "drive-thru" markets, ticketed entry walk-thru markets, curbside pickup, "click and collect" pre-ordering procedures. My days start early and go late, and at the end of each I wonder if I could have done more. Yet it is such hopeful work

[Xin Yu, Schenzhen](#) Will the pandemic flame urban residents' passion to get in touch with Nature? I really hope so. Will people further respect and take care of Nature after the post-pandemic world becomes the new normal? We need to find out and do more.

[Carly Ziter, Montreal](#) I desperately miss interacting with family, friends, and colleagues in person—but I do plan to be more intentional about the choices I make, and to appreciate every family visit, conference, and chat in the hallway a little bit more as we make our way to a new normal.