Pandemic Praxis

Anarchist Responses to This Crisis and the Next

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Contents

About three years ago, the coronavirus pandemic began and swept across the globe. Our lives have changed not just once but many times as the pandemic has progressed. The crisis is not over, and this text attempts to reflect on how anarchists have handled the pandemic thus far. It starts with a (woefully incomplete) recounting of events to ensure that we have some shared understanding of the progression of events to serve as a foundation on which to base our analyses. What follows is not nitpicking individual orgs or actions and the merits thereof but instead reflections on the broad trends that emerged from the anarchist and adjacent movements. This is by no means a formal academic paper, but where appropriate or useful, we have linked to resources for further reading.[1]

We're writing this out of Berlin, and obviously this text is colored by our experiences here. We know it applies rather well to the rest of the BRD[2] and, to a fair degree, the rest of Europe and so-called West. Maybe what we describe applies to you, but maybe not. We hope you can focus on the similarities rather than the differences between our experiences and yours and that you can use this information to inform future actions and tactics.

Outbreak

Starting in January of '20, reports from China alerted us to a SARS-like disease that had appeared in Wuhan in the Hubei province. The cause was identified as a novel coronavirus and given the identifier SARS-CoV-2. The disease caused by the infection was called COVID-19. These quickly became household names as the disease ran rampant in Wuhan leading to lockdowns and forced quarantines. It's little surprise that in a globalized world, it quickly spread to other provinces and hitched rides on commercial flights to cross international borders. A first major hotspot in the so-called West was in the Lombardi region of Italy where we again saw lockdowns. Hospitals were completely overwhelmed, and the military was called in to Bergamo to ship bodies to other cities because local crematoriums couldn't keep up.[3] We saw prisoners from Riker's Island in New York City dressed in white coveralls digging mass graves on Hart Island[4] while being paid a paltry $6 per hour.[5] In hospitals, people died alone because it was too dangerous to let family visit them. Some healthcare workers slept at hospitals to avoid infecting those they lived with,[6] and many died while on the front lines.[7] Dealing with the stress and mass death traumatized many healthcare workers, and even in regions less severely impacted,

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[1]And just because something doesn't have a referernce or only one of several cases was mentioned doesn't mean it's not important, just that time and space are limited.

[2]Bundesrepublik Deutchland ("Federal Republic of Germany"). A way of referring to so-called Germany that doesn't add to the mythos of a German State.

workers developed anxieties over the horrors that might come.

As infections spread, other cities and States began to implement lockdowns, but often this was done with a hesitancy that politicians took in the name of not causing panic that showed their true intentions of protecting the economy or their ratings by avoiding any action that might poll as "unfavorable." Despite this, some States used force to prevent the spread, unrest, or both. Even though ski resorts were major culprits in the early spread of the coronavirus throughout Europe,[8]severe measures were only used against the marginalized such as the targeted quarantining of whole buildings.

When the lockdowns came, corona deniers, conspiracy theorists, and rugged individualists started movements that either began with or quickly were overrun by fascists. In Berlin, these currents merged into the loosely associated Querdenker movement.[9] Politicians and xenophobes used the location of the first major outbreak to spread anti-Asian racism and call for stronger borders. This, of course, led to increased racist violence. While drawing attention to the "China virus," they minimized the virus itself and called it "just a cold" to justify inaction. Other misinformation flourished like claiming it was a Chinese or American bioweapon, or that some shadowy cabal of elites (usually meaning "the Jews") were creating a "plandemic" as a means of population control.

Where there is fascism, there are anti-fascists, and where there are those in need, there are anarchists practicing mutual aid, and at the onset of the pandemic, it was no different. Spontaneous groups chats in neighborhoods offered help to the most vulnerable.[10] Recognizing that the most marginalized were the worst off led for calls to free people from prisons and migrant concentration camps. At the onset, some tried to agitate for a general strike (to little success) to protect service workers. People petitioned to get unused property allocated to get the unhoused off the streets or to pause rent and debt. When fascists took to the streets, people opposed them.[11]

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[3]The Independent.*Coronavirus: Army drafted in to help move corpses from 'Italy's Wuhan'.*2020-03-19.

[4]Time. *Lost in the Pandemic: Inside New York City's Mass Graveyard on Hart Island.*2020-11-20.

[5]For comparison, minimum wage in NYC at the time was $15 per hour.

[6]Wired. *How Health Care Workers Avoid Bringing Covid-19 Home.* 2020-04-14.

[7]A WHO report estimated that worldwide up to 180,000 healthcare workers died from January '20 to May '21. (World Health Organization. *The impact of COVID-19 on health and care workers: a closer look at deaths.* 2021-09-20.)

[8]Politico. *The Austrian ski town that spread coronavirus across the Continent.* 2020-03-19.

[9]Literally "lateral thinkers," but better translated to English as "alternative thinkers" in reference to the infamous "alternative facts" quote by Kellyanne Conway, the counselor to US president Donald Trump.

[10]Though we do not know a single person in Berlin who actually was called upon to pick up groceries or meds, and we're somewhat convinced that the ratio of "back patting" to "useful tasks accomplished" was extremely high.

[11]Though turnouts were often weaker than they should have been because some underestimated the threat of crossover between fascists with esoterics and conspiracists, and others were more concerned

Globally, anarchists engaged in additional forms of organizing. One of earliest anarchist contributions against misinformation and toward managing the disease itself came from the Four Thieves Vinegar Collective[12] on February 19th. Some collectives put out agitprop for organizing against the State while staying safe, like CrimethInc's *Surviving the Virus*. Others started making hand sanitizer.[13] Some sewed cloth masks (though this was often done by apolitical sewing circles), and some organized to distribute healthcare supplies to the unhoused.

Anarchism is not a singular movement, and while many tendencies and individuals turned to science and collective action, there were also many who embraced conspiracy and the sort of vulgar individualism that perpetuates the very same antagonistic relationships that drive the current world. Graffiti and social media posts appeared saying "Wer hamstert ist zu faul zum plündern"[14] as if the risk posed by committing theft was evenly distributed across the population. Nor did it consider that the people who were panic buying weren't impoverished or radical and therefore wouldn't even consider heeding the message.[15] The slogan "capitalism is the virus" became prominent to draw attention to society's current organizational strategies that were driving factors behind the pandemic, but this original meaning was bastardized to mean that capital and the State exaggerated the nature of the virus to justify oppressive and controlling measures. Some anarchists called masks "face rags" and likened wearing them to being "muzzled." It was said of those being cautious to avoid catching and spreading a deadly disease that they were "living in fear" and being "domesticated" by their trust and reliance on modern medicine.

Summer & Winter

After the frantic first months, health measures took effect and warm weather allowed us to better ventilate our indoor spaces. The number of infections dropped, and the hard lockdowns lifted. Life was alleged to have returned to some sort of normal. Restaurants only offered take-away, shops only fulfilled online orders, and

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with catching the coronavirus in a crowd than they were of the threat of fascism. This is not to minimize those fears, just to remind us that we are facing many threats, but if fascism wins, we all lose.

[12] *An Anarchist's Guide to Surviving Coronavirus COVID-19 a.k.a. 2019-nCoV*. Some of the information contained in it didn't withstand the test of time, but at least they tried to use medicine as a starting point to inform their actions.

[13] It's Going Down. *Antifascists & Mutual Aid Groups Form Coalition to Mass Produce and Distribute Free Hand Sanitizer in Portland.* 2020-04-06.

[14] "Who panic buys is too lazy to loot."

[15] It also didn't recognize that shortages were from just-in-time fulfillment and that theft wouldn't have changed the simple fact that there weren't enough goods to allow everyone to procure the recommended 2 weeks worth of emergency supplies. Beyond toilet paper and dried noodles, the pandemic disrupted and continues to disrupt global supply chains because of globalization and how surplus capacity is eschewed in favor of marginally higher profits.

there were rules against gathering in groups. Masks were ubiquitous, but despite this massive shock to the capitalist system, things went on more or less as before. The government implemented a program to allow residents to get free quick tests to help cut down on infections. However, it didn't feel like normal to the friends and family of the hundreds of thousands of dead, to those who were forced to keep working, nor to those with chronic health issues who were forced to stay inside.

Throughout the summer and leading into autumn, visions of what the winter had in store were crystal clear. Before the first wave was even over, epidemiologists warned of a severe winter wave because of reduced precautions both from the government and from individuals.[16] Over the summer, there were outbreaks in slaughterhouses,[17] refugee shelters,[18,19] prisons,[20,21] and assisted living facilities.[22] Precarious workers remained precarious, and many more people were pushed down into precarity. Politicians made absolute mockeries of their promises to healthcare workers and left them to break themselves in underfunded and profit-driven hospitals.

Radicals continued to organize, though this was hindered by regulations that restricted mass gatherings and in-person meetings. While the George Floyd Insurrection raged in the so-called United States, radicals in the BRD cheered it on but made little use of the paradigm shifts people were undergoing nor the changing material conditions. People stuck to their preexisting projects, and while there was some hubbub about the pandemic mixed in, the sort of focused effort that would have led to significant change simply was not there. When groups of youth attacked cops in parks,[23] we all said ACAB then let it slip from our memories without engaging with it.

The Querdenker and fascists also continued to organize their demos against the so-called "corona dictatorship" and drew significant influence from the QAnon movement in the US.[24] On August 29th, a large demo in Berlin tried to recreate the January 6th storming of the US capitol when they attempted to storm the Reichstag.[25,26] They demonstrated in front of and threatened hospitals and were generally hostile to journalists. Their antisemitism grew and spread on Telegram channels, and one of their healthy-living vegan icons, Atilla Hildmann, was tipped off about

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[16]Tagesspiegel. *"Wir müssen extrem vorsichtig sein": Drosten und Helmholtz-Forscher warnen vor zweiter Covid-19-Welle.* 2020-04-20.

[17]RTL News. *Corona in Fleischfabrik: Über 7000 Menschen müssen in Quarantäne — Heimaturlauber könnten das Virus mitgeb acht haben.* 2020-07-17.

[18]rbb24. *Asylbewerberunterkunft Herzberg steht unter Quarantäne.* 2020-06-18.

[19]Augsberger Allgemein. *Corona-Ausbruch: Asylbewerberunterkunft unter Quarantäne.* 2020-06-28.

[20]Tagesspiegel. *Nach Covid-Ausbruch in Berliner Gefängnis.* 2020-12-21.

[21]Frankfurter Allgemein. *Infektionen in JVA: Corona erschwert Haftbedingungen.* 2020-11-06.

[22]Süddeutsche Zeitung. *Niemand rein, niemand raus.* 2020-11-22.

[23]Tagesspiegel. *Großeinsätze in Berliner Parks: Polizei geht gegen aggressive Gruppen vor.* 2020-06-02.

his arrest warrant for Holocaust denial and disappeared.[27]

Starting in autumn and going through to early spring, there was a string of evictions: Syndikat, Liebig34, the Rummelsburger Bucht homeless camp, and Meuterei.[28] With each of these, resistance waned as the radical scene burned out and was demoralized from repeated defeats. Of particular note was the frustration some mutual aid collectives expressed during the L34 eviction when quiet spaces that were set aside for traumatized and injured protesters were packed with unmasked radicals drinking and smoking.

As predicted, come winter, cases skyrocketed. Worldwide, some one and a half million people died from COVID.[29]

At the tail end of winter, we learned of the corruption of the Maskenaffäre[30] perpetrated by members of the CDU/CSU.[31] These members accepted bribes as part of procurement for medical masks amid shortages.[32] Across the channel, PM Boris Johnson and other Tories held parties at the PM's official residence that flouted the harsh restrictions that were imposed during the winter holiday season, though this wasn't revealed until nearly a year later.[33] From the onset, the pandemic was used to fleece the populace, and the elite carried on as the rest of us lost freedoms and our health.

Vaxxed

The harshness of the '20/21 winter was alleviated in part by the use of emergency rules leading to the first approvals in the so-called West for the coronavirus vaccines.

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[24]Deutsche Welle. *The extraordinary rise of QAnon in Germany.* 2021-01-19.

[25]Frankfurter Allgemein. *Corona-Skeptiker stürmen durch Absperrung auf Treppe des Reichstags.* 2020-08-29.

[26]Elements of the Berlin left laughed this off as inept and unsuccessful (while missing that the failure still created images that served as powerful propaganda), but Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch was inspired by Mussolini's March on Rome (just as the German right is inspired by the American right), and that certainly was no laughing matter. This international nationalism led to the Bolsonaristas storming the Brazilian capital in just the same way a in two years after the US coup attempt. This was further exemplified by the variety of national flags the Querdenker waved on the Reichstag steps. Notably, many were Russian and USian.

[27]Tageschau. *Neue Vorwürfe gegen Attila Hildmann.* 2021-07-11.

[28]We haven't forgotten about the Køpi Wagenplatz eviction, but that was the following autumn, so it doesn't really fit in here.

[29]This is measuring from the rough start of the winter upswing to the rough lowest point before the wave the following spring (October 1st to March 1st).

[30]Literally "mask affair."

[31]Christian Democratic Union and it's Bavarian counterpart the Christian Socialist Union, the primary conservative political parties in the BRD.

[32]Der Spiegel. *Gierige Abgeordnete stürzen Union in die Krise: Der schwarze Filz.*2021-03-12.

[33]Daily Mirror. *Boris Johnson 'broke Covid lockdown rules' with Downing Street parties at Xmas.* 2021-11-30.

Starting with the most vulnerable and healthcare workers (and fucking cops and the military),[34] the vaccines began rolling out. By early spring, the vaccines were becoming available to the general population.

These led to yet another wave of conspiracy theories from the right-wing claiming that the vaccines contained microchips, were somehow associated with 5G, weren't effective, left people sterile, and caused other diseases such as myocarditis or severe blood clots. The right-wing misinformation machine sprung into action with politicians making wildly unfounded claims and the foot soldiers taking it upon themselves to plaster social media with lies. There were nurses who endorsed the idea that it permanently altered our blood and doctors who spoke of protein shedding that would injure people merely in the presence of the vaccinated. Not only did this cause such ideologues to skip the vaccine, but some took direct action. Some created fake vaccination cards to allow the unvaccinated to pass checks to access different aspects of daily life.[35] Others injected people who wanted the genuine vaccine with saline against their knowledge.[36] Some even attacked healthcare workers at vaccination stations.[37]

Some governments tried to create pressure to push people to get vaccinated such as gating access to flights or restaurants. Conspiracists held this up as "proof" that there was some scheme and of the unjustness of forced vaccination. This is not to say that these mandates were enacted in a just manner because, like every law, they come with the threat of State violence and were selectively enforced against the marginalized. While at least not in the BRD, in some States, access to the vaccine was gated on legal residency, and the undocumented were cut off from both the vaccine and what the vaccinated were "entitled" to such as was the case with the vaccine passport in Italy.

Parallel to the right-wing conspiracies were virtually identical left-wing conspiracies about the vaccine. People pointed to the profit motive and said that Big Pharma couldn't possibly have designed something safe under an accelerated schedule (even though there was a tremendous amount of research to build off of). They said that the miniscule number of blood clots in people who received the AstraZeneca vaccine meant that vaccines should be skipped (even though this number was lower than blood clots from the coronavirus itself). Others said that governments have historically tested medicines on vulnerable populations or purposely injected them with harmful substance or disease and that therefore this was happening again (even though doctors, nurses, and politicians got the vaccine first). Some said that we couldn't possibly know what long-term effects

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[34]Or in an anecdote from a comrade, the finance department of the Charité in Berlin got vaccinated ahead of some staff due to their alleged "system relevant" positions.

[35]Norddeutscher Rundfunk. *Das Geschäft mit gefälschten Corona-Impfpässen.* 2021-12-10.

[36]Der Spiegel. *Landrat über Krankenschwester und Kochsalz-Skandal in Friesland: "Umgehend Vier-Augen-Prinzip eingeführt".* 2021-08-12.

[37]Zeit Online. *Die Pandemie der Gewalt.* 2022-02-10.

the vaccines had (even though we knew ravaging effects of COVID and long COVID and how vaccines and immunity generally work). The phrase "my body, my choice" with respect to the vaccine was co-opted from the reproductive rights movement and thrown around by the left and right alike. There were factions of the left that were so committed to this "anti-capitalist" and "skeptical" stance that they joined the right. At the less extreme end, some simply fought against the vaccine as the very corporations and governments they opposed were hoarding this treasure and creating vaccine apartheid between the so-called West and historically marginalized regions.

The Long, Slow Decline

With the introduction of the vaccine, mandates that restricted gathering in public and private spaces were continuously loosened. Unsurprisingly, when a measure was lifted, it never went back into place. Free quick tests became quite expensive, and at the same time, the number of reported cases dropped to artificial lows. Radical groups that had been meeting during the pandemic or organizing demos had started with hygiene concepts that they touted, but these fell out of popularity as time went on. Masking slowly decreased in public spaces despite mandates or signage. This included radical groups where their social centers, bars, and other spaces became nearly entirely unmasked. Proof of vaccination or a negative quick test were also dropped. Windows stayed shut to keep the chill out, and even the most basic precautions were entirely thrown out. Perhaps one of the deathblows to anarchists and other radicals making an effort of manage the effects of the pandemic was when health officials made statements like "everyone will eventually get it,"[38] and this was taken to mean that making an effort to avoid infection was pointless.

While radicals lost their interest in the pandemic, workers who were most impacted by it organized wildcat strikes and unions. For as much as radicals love to hurl around the term "precarity," they were remarkably absent from the strike actions of the predominantly PoC migrant couriers at Gorillas and Lieferando. When the Berliner Krankenhaus Bewegung[39] picked up steam and organized hospital cleaners, midwives, nurses, and other healthcare workers, their actions too were hardly mentioned and largely unsupported despite weeks of strikes. When the Berliner Mietendeckel[40] was repealed, people faced rent hikes and back-payments of rent, sometimes thousands of euros, which were particularly harsh on those most impacted by the pandemic. A quickly organized demo turned to a riot when the cops without provocation attacked the crowd at Kottbusser Tor. It was enough of

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[38]Particularly egregious was people pointing to the authority of Christian Drosten (yet saying "He's a cool guy! I've seen him drink Sterni in parks in Neukölln!") as he said that we have to let the virus spread to build natural immunity. (dpa. *Drosten: "Virus muss sich ausbreiten – unter Impfschutz".* 2022-01-16.)

an injustice that even liberals fought back and threw rocks and bottles at cops, and dozens were arrested,[41] but the momentum and bridges that could have been built were lost and entirely recuperated by liberal initiatives like Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen.[42,43]

As time went on, the sorts of phrases that we'd attributed to the reactionary right or the (right and left-wing) conspiracists became commonplace among radicals. They said masks weren't effective and asked for how long we'd keep getting vaccine boosters. We were told that young and healthy people had nothing to worry about. Arguments were made that the point of all the health measures were to keep the hospitals from overflowing (as opposed to what is should have been which is preventing injury and death to others).

The disabled, both radical and otherwise, pointed out that such practices were both eugenicist and ableist. Spaces were no longer accessible to those who were unable to risk exposure to the disease, and those with mental health concerns—such as anxiety—were likewise excluded from much organizing. The early pandemic was characterized by a great show of solidarity, but as time went on, this slipped away.

Messages from the government said that relaxing the rules would let every individual make their own risk assessment, and this was repeated by many radicals. While the elite told us to get back to the office and that the pandemic was over, they took strict measures to protect themselves. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in '23, access badges were digitally tied to negative PCR tests, there were high quality HVAC and air purification systems, the spaces were frequently ventilated, FFP2 masks were offered to participants, and surfaces were disinfected.[44] Should the elite have gotten sick, they would have had access to far better care than the rest of us. They know the situation and are taking extreme caution, and yet many of us truly believe the pandemic is over or that it's so endemic that all precautions are pointless.

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[39] "Berlin Hospital Movement."

[40] "Berlin Rent Cap [law]."

[41] Berliner Zeitung. *Demo gegen gekippten Mietendeckel: Ausschreitungen und 48 Festnahmen.* 2021-04-16.

[42] "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co," a referendum to force Berlin's largest property management companies to sell their properties to the State.

[43] There was a documentary about the DWE campaign called "Start Wearing Purple" that cut the existence of the riot completely out of the narrative and then showed interviews with people saying they were were so mad that they just went out and canvassed *so hard.* It was some of of the grossed lib erasure of radicals we've seen in a while, especially given how many radicals threw their weight behind this project.

[44] Forbes. *World Economic Forum: Here Are All The Covid-19 Precautions At Davos 2023.* 2023-01-20.

Reflections

We're three years into to this mess. Nearly 7 million are confirmed to have died directly because of the coronavirus, and over that same period the mean estimate of excess mortality is 15 million.[45] Some of the excess deaths came from crowded hospitals being unable to treat individuals, and some came from COVID sequelae. Japan recently had its highest death toll of the pandemic,[46] and the BRD led Europe for excess mortality in December of '22.[47] Millions more are suffering from long COVID or permanent organ damage. The pandemic is certainly not over.

The question might then be: "How have we as anarchists handled it so far?" This is not necessarily a question of effectiveness. The future is unknowable, and even when guided by theory, history, and a bit of sociology, we cannot always predict the efficacy of our actions. If we put most of our effort into a general strike and it failed, one might argue that we should have been building mutual aid via community medicine. Or perhaps vice versa. Further, the radical left is massively outnumbered by the rest of society, and we anarchists are a minority within this minority. This is to say, we have a limitation, and it is expected that we alone cannot change all of society.[48]

Instead, a better question is: "Have we adhered to anarchist principles over the course of the pandemic?" To answer that, to we need someway of knowing if something was anarchistic or not.[49] Anarchism could be distilled into the singular maxim:

Create autonomy for all at the expense of none.

From this, all other principles can be derived. Hierarchy is opposed because it constrains autonomy. Prefiguration follows because treating someone's personhood as a means to an end violates their autonomy. Mutual aid increases individuals' capacities and choices thus expanding autonomy. Voluntary association follows naturally as the opposite is coercive association. Inclusivity (barring abusers, authoritarians, and the like) fosters autonomy by allowing individuals to make connections, gain access to communal resources, and expand their circles of care. Spreading accurate knowledge increases autonomy because it allows individuals to weigh the full impact of their decisions before making them. Of course, these may conflict with each other, but that's just where things get interesting.

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[45] Our World in Data. *Excess mortality during the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)*. (Visited on: 2023-03-06).

[46] The Japan Times. *Japan's monthly COVID-19 deaths top 10,000 for first time*. 2023-01-28.

[47] Eurostat. *Excess mortality rose sharply to 19% in December 2022*. 2023-02-17.

[48] But we can be the spark of the fire.

[49] This itself is an unending debate.

Direct Action Gets the Goods

The greatest successes against insurrectionary wing of the far-right was in how antifascists disrupted Querdenker demonstrations. We may have collectively missed the opportunity to shatter their resolve at the start of the pandemic, but significant disruption was still possible after the movement had more fully developed. The Querdenker demos occurred every Monday for months on end in many districts throughout Berlin, and when they weren't used to recruit, they were used to bolster existing support and show strength. Antifascists affinity groups infiltrated their organizing chats, learned of their estimated numbers and plans, and made preparations to counter them. We know of one case where a single affinity group was able to use guerilla tactics to drive the Querdenker from multiple districts despite uniformed and occasionally undercover police protection.

Fascists are fucking cowards. Repeated disruptions prevents many of them from attending events. Fear denies them public spaces which prevents them from recruiting. The most effective actions against fascists often carry some risk, but early effort and taking on that risk pays off significantly by halting them before they can reach a critical mass that allows them to take their own direct actions. Fully denying them online spaces to organize is nigh impossible, but infiltration spooks them and makes them close down, and every impediment is worth the effort. Decisive, early action is one of the best weapons against the brown plague.

The Truth (or Something Close to It)

Perhaps the greatest source of debate around the pandemic in both anarchist spaces and mass society stemmed from conflicting beliefs about the coronavirus like whether the virus was simply the common cold, how it was spread, whether masks were effective, what constituted appropriate measures against it, if the vaccine was effective, and whether any risks associated with the vaccine existed. All decisions were heavily based on what constituted facts or not. If one didn't believe the virus even existed, surely they wouldn't see masking as justified. Likewise, if one believed that risks from vaccination against the coronavirus were more likely and severe than the virus itself, they wouldn't get vaccinated.

There are many reasons why misinformation spread in radical spaces. Trust for institutions is rightfully low, but so too is our media literacy. In avoiding hegemonic beliefs or singular sources of truth, anarchists tolerate misinformation and untruths in the name of plurality. In addition to this misplaced tolerance, individuals who made strong claims that countered expert opinion on healthcare did little independent research or made little effort to interrogate the veracity of the claims made by their sources. Once something was declared truth, it was near impossible to nudge someone back towards something based more on measurable facts.

Confirming evidence was sought to justify one's desires.

We have an obligation to counter misinformation and to strive to find the truth in things. If we aim to increase autonomy, letting someone be misinformed and make decisions that can get them killed or permanently disabled decreases their autonomy in as much as it decreases the available range of choices they would conceivably make. Choice, like consent, is really only choice when it's informed. Early in the pandemic, there seemed to be a greater effort toward finding the truth, but at time went on, people accepted the simple and false narratives that let them justify no longer putting in the effort to avoid the coronavirus so they could "return to normal."

Countering Misinformation

Countering right-wing misinformation campaigns is an uphill battle due to the amount of money and institutional control the right has over traditional and social media. It's made more difficult because feckless politicians don't want to fiddle with "the free market" or the private sector until a problem has grown far too large. Determining facts and reasonable conclusions that can be derived from them is one of the first steps to countering misinfo, and it it is possible for smaller contingents such as anarchists to punch above their weight when countering misinfo.

Misinfo researchers wrote the following as the first item in their guidelines for countering misinfo:[50]

> Manipulation campaigns thrive when timely, relevant, local, and redundant information is not available. The lack of authoritative information about particular subjects—information vacuums of reputable sources known as "data voids"—are exploited by manipulation campaign operators.

We might be tempted to see online spaces as enemy territory, but it's clear that we would never say this of the town square. Public online spaces are where the public is, and people there just as much as offline can be influenced by and recruited to the far right. Something many anarchists did quite well during the pandemic, and during smaller crises, is to saturate social media with accurate information. Some continuously spend time reporting misinformation and directly countering it so that anyone who stumbles across it might see a correction right under the original misinformation.

Offline, this can mean disrupting right-wing rallies, covering their posters or graffiti, or otherwise disrupting their ability to spread information. On the flip side,

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[50]Joan Donovan et al. *Mitigating Medical Misinformation: A Whole-Of-Society Approach to Spam, Scams, and Hoaxes.* 2021-03-29.

it can mean doing our own wheatpastes and graffiti or handing out info pamphlets to people outside the core of our movement. Many groups have done this during the pandemic and with regards to other misinfo campaigns, and these successful tactics should be remembered because they are staples of antifascist action.

Prefigurations

A helpful guideline when determining how one should handle a situation is to consider how a more ideal anarchist society would handle it and then work backwards and apply the constraints of the current society. A necessary criteria of an anarchistic society is caring about the well-being of others both globally and in one's proximity[51] and creating space for them to flourish. Just as we, in an idealized society, wouldn't tolerate continued harm against persons either through abuse or ignorance, we shouldn't tolerate continued harm against and exclusion of the disabled in our spaces. If our spaces aren't radically inclusive—and they really aren't— then they exclude the marginalized. Taking bold action against the State requires some sense of safety and trust in one's comrades, and if we can't even begin to heal because we are still being injured, then our unmasked and otherwise unsafe spaces are a detriment to any attack against the current organization of society. Perhaps the greatest failure in Berlin over the course of the pandemic is the denormalization of masking and ventilating our few remaining radical spaces.

Prefigurative politics isn't just an ethical stance; it's a tactical one too. If a movement is to survive, it has to attract like-minded individuals, even those who don't yet know they share our affinities. The world can be unbearable to so many people, and if anarchism has its roots in caring for one another and beautiful collaborations, we should be intentionally open and inviting to others. Not only did our lack of prefigurations push some away, we failed to draw others in.

Reflexive Opposition

Governments' use of mandates such as lockdowns or vaccine requirements caused significant discussion among anarchists—and everyone else too. Some anarchists have pushed back against mandates (not just the laws, but the acts they required too) on the grounds that it's authoritarian creep or that by obeying anything the government says we are making ourselves more docile. Some pushed back against using the vaccine at all with the claim that its origins tainted it beyond utility. The choice was posited as being between thoughtless obedience or militant opposition.

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[51]We might call this "community," but that term is so overused as to be almost meaningless. Proximity might mean flatmates, neighbors, friends, and the people in places one frequents plus everyone an additional hop away in such a social network *even if* one doesn't personally like them.

There is no tactic without externalities. In a clash between anarchists and the State, an uninvolved someone somewhere will always suffer some consequence. We can and should avoid harming others or violating autonomy, but eventually, we will have to in some way. It is unavoidable when interacting with complex systems in a hyperconnected world of 8 billion people.

Those who argued that following State mandates made us subservient had no proof of this. Even if it could be argued that listening to the WHO, RKI,[52] or CDC made us more compliant, it was never weighed against the harms of how it would lead to increased infections which would invariably lead to increased mortality and decreased quality of life for thousands. Likewise, if the vaccines were dangerous, it wasn't shown that they were more dangerous than getting COVID. Much of this analysis simply came down to reactively opposing the State without finesseful thought that could lead us to more desirable outcomes.

As said before, a guideline to help us decide what to do during the pandemic is to think what we might do in a more utopian setting. If masks were available, those anarchists would wear them. They'd ventilate, reduce contact, and make provisions to significantly reduce risk while preventing anyone from suffering from isolation. If vaccines were freely available, we'd take them

We don't even have to look to some wonderful future for inspiration. We can look at how anarchists react to governmental regulation right now. Anarchists don't argue against safety belt laws for automobiles even as we point out racial and class bias in their enforcement. We don't argue in favor of using asbestos in construction and letting every individual assess their own risk when entering a building. We don't decry laws against polluting waterways even if we know that they have loopholes or aren't strict enough to be safe for nearby residents. There are times where we are incidentally in partial alignment with what the State enforces because it is the right thing to do. However, our morality is not what the State says, nor is it purely oppositional to the State. It is wholly independent.

Colonialism & Insurrection

Part of the reflexive opposition to the State is driven by simplistic views of how capitalism and corporations function. The common refrain is that capitalism sells us shit we don't need for problems we don't have. This is often used to imply that the problems only exist because of capitalism or that the solutions peddled should be used neither now nor in some anarchistic society. Michael Fine describes the healthcare industrial complex and its interplay with the State as follows:

> …health care profiteers use state power and the state's control of health care purchasing to extract resources from communities, resources that

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[52]Robert Koch Institute, BRD's research institute and federal agency for disease control.

we see as dollars that pay for health services. In the process, those profiteers destroy the agency of local communities, which no longer have the resources they need to provide services to their own residents or make their own choices.[53]

There is obvious corruption, blatant disregard for human well-bring, and perverse incentives in the way healthcare is delivered from the State and medical institutions, but this isn't argument against medicine or healthcare themselves. While Michael's text analyzes the US, comrades in the BRD—and the rest of Europe—should note that many of their beloved healthcare systems are just tidied up versions of Obamacare, and the capitalistic nature of many hospitals mirrors that of the ludicrously expensive healthcare in the US. Through neoliberalization, healthcare in Europe is going the direction of the US (just look at the NHS in the UK or tiered private healthcare offerings in the BRD), only it hasn't yet become unbridled capitalist extraction. Healthcare and medicine might be better seen as akin to how landlords hoard and dole out housing. We don't demand that because paying rent benefits landlords or that the State criminalizes rough sleeping that we should all abandon our flats and expose ourselves to the elements.[54]

What led Michael to the realization that modern medicine functions as a form of colonialism was when federal consultants came in and took over a community led effort to provide medicine to residents of two towns. Through the lens of colonialism, we can better understand how we can relate to a restricted resource that we otherwise need. If we are to resist this colonization of the systems that allow us to live healthy and joyful lives, we have to be able to provide alternatives that are resistant to recuperations.

In 2009, the Curious George Brigade wrote a text titled*Insurrectionary Mutual Aid*that discusses how the fractures in the State's control that arise during crises leave space for insurrection and that mutual aid is necessary for sustaining such upheaval. This text might as well have been written in March of '20 for how well it describes the coronavirus pandemic. Quoting it directly:

> It comes as no surprise that our leaders are willing to let us die while they implement their misguided plans to maintain law and order. It is during this period of government hesitation that we need to be on the ground providing real solidarity for those the state is afraid of and indifferent to. Solidarity is more than holding protests, organizing fundraisers and filing indymedia reports. Real solidarity requires commitment, risk and preparedness. Mutual aid is a direct challenge to the government and the associated NGOs and religious institutions that monopolize "helping people." Mutual aid by necessity promotes an egalitarian

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[53]Michael Fine. *On Medicine as Colonialism.* 2023.PM Press. Page 15.
[54]Though, this could be an interesting mass action.

> relationship between individuals and groups, where charity and gov-
> ernment aid have buttress hierarchical relationships of dependence (at
> best) and oppression (more often). Through the solidarity of mutual
> aid, we can show our commitment to those excluded by the govern-
> ment emergency managers and truly reclaim the tactic of *Propaganda
> by the Deed.*

Existing institutions—State-led, private sector, and non-profit—will be used to funnel money away from those most in need to those with the most connections. Autonomous structures are robust against capture by capital and can provide not just the material people need to survive crises, but they make the alternative worlds that anarchists profess into a tangible reality that can be expanded beyond the boundaries of the crisis itself. A strong, and most importantly sustained, anarchist response to a crisis can fuel immediate and future insurrections.

The End of Accelerationism

Accelerationism is, reductively, the belief that making systems of oppression total-izing will reveal contradictions that cause them to crumble. In some definitions, it's the belief that as social conditions decay, people will be motivated to overthrow that which oppresses them. In either case, there is an explicit or tactic endorsement of letting things get worse to bring about the ~~rapture~~ revolution. Some anarchists saw the coronavirus pandemic as a catalyst that would lead to the sort of mass death, crumbling institutions, and degraded conditions that would inevitably cause the spontaneous uprising of the general population. Needless to say, following those exact woes, such an uprising did not happen. The shock of the coronavirus hit nearly every strata of society in some way even if it only meant the cancellation of commercial flights for the moderately well off. The diseases, the lockdowns, the radical changes to social organizing, and the ensuing paradigm shifts on how we perceived society at large were altogether not enough to spur us to action. This has long been obvious where the conditions in the US have been abysmal for large swaths of the population and that hasn't been enough to push liberals to rise up and overthrow the State. Closer to home, one only has to compare the BRD to France. They're two States of comparable size, wealth, and availability of social services, yet they have drastically different societal responses to (certain kinds of) injustice. The pandemic not immediately leading to revolution should be the final nail in accelerationism's coffin.

In the so-called West, the largest wave of revolutionary energy of the last three years was the George Floyd Insurrection. It was an event that started just two to three short months after the start of the pandemic, depending on how one is counting. The ferocity with which radicals and liberals fought back against the State wasn't just because of the nature of Floyd's murder itself but largely because

of the years of organizing across different racial, class, and ideological boundaries (in particular in the years since the Ferguson Uprising of '14).

European anarchists are often inspired by the actions of comrades in the US, and in part this is due to sensationalized media and the remoteness and strangeness of a land across the Atlantic. In general, comrades and organizers living in the US have, relative to their counterparts in the BRD (and somewhat in the rest of Europe), done a much better job of building bridges between interlinked struggles especially across racial and class boundaries. Often what's missing from the narrative around the George Floyd Insurrection is the mundane organizing rather than the glorious militancy of burning cop cars. What made the insurrection possible wasn't the brutality itself but the years of organizing that created the foundation from which insurrection could arise.

Crises like the pandemic absolutely can be catalysts for radical change. Many were forced to work, become disabled, and die, but also many others were able to stay home, relax (as much as one could on reduced income) and spend time with roommates. Both being sacrificed to the capitalist death cult as well as realizing that most jobs are unnecessary for us to keep living had great potential to be radicalizing. We saw people die for the economy, and even (some) liberals understood (a bit) that this was happening. We also saw what a city without the hum of cars and rush hour traffic could look like. We saw what it might look like to come together to make a change, and yet when the official measures were slackened, radicals and the general population alike raced to return to normalcy.

There will be more crises. The BRD is in drought, and Europe is desertifying which will lead to food insecurity and famine, or maybe it's the wildfires and mudslides. We might see widespread pogroms like the Chemnitz Riots[55] either in reaction to other incidents involving people perceived as migrants or foreigners or perhaps simply because racial hatred boils over. There will be more police murders of members of minority racial groups and mass destruction of forests. As trans people are being attacked and persecuted worldwide including throughout the so-called West, will we repeat what we did with this pandemic and throw up our arms in defeat because it's easier to just keep calm and carry on with life? But maybe it's none of these, and it's just the next pandemic that hits us as collectively we have much weaker immune systems[56] as a result of singular and repeat infections with the coronavirus.[57] These might seem like ridiculous statements to make, but if we're not willing to put in the effort for the disabled, ill, and elderly now, there's little reason to think it would suddenly change when it's some other marginalized

group.

Our ability to respond to these will not be predicated merely on the severity of these crises but on the hard work leading up to them where we build alliances, solidarity, and alternative infrastructure. Crises will not save us, but the work beforehand will. The pandemic has been horrible with a massive death toll, but there will be worse in the coming years. Making plans and preparations under ideal conditions is certainly useful, but nothing hones skills better than applying them in real situations. We need to look carefully at how we responded in the short-term and during the long tail of the pandemic and make corrections to our analyses and praxes if we want to survive and thrive in a dangerous world.

Self-Care as the Great Absolver

The use of "self-care" and "mental health" as justifications for abandoning ethical principles—in particular, the need to help others—is a long-running problem in radical spaces, and this was certainly true during the pandemic as well. The trend became noticeable as we approached our second pandemic winter in late autumn of '21, and it was certainly widespread by the end of it in early '22. This is not to say that the pandemic hasn't been crushingly difficult for most of us or that one shouldn't pursue things purely for relaxation or joy. This is specifically about the use of some vague idea of "mental health" that could be held above everything else and excuse all unsafe or unethical behavior.

One can choose their own personal risk, but unless someone lives alone and works remote, there is still some chance—even briefly going to the supermarket while masked—that one could infect others. There is nothing unethical about choosing to go clubbing for an evening nor should there be a blanket ban on doing so, but what makes these breaks from caution complex is that the individuals doing it aren't being cautious after the fact. If someone goes to concerts, clubs, bars, indoor weddings, or whatever large unmasked gatherings, over the following week they still continue to meet others and expose them to elevated risk. Individuals can take on personal risk, but they should accept the consequences by isolating after and by being up-front about their activities.

These "mental health breaks" also didn't exist as isolated incidents. One single

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[55] In 2018 during a festival in Chemnitz in Saxony, a German man was killed and two other Germans were stabbed following an altercation. The suspects were immigrants from the Middle East. The far-right ran with a racist narrative that led to what was referred to as a vigilante Menschenjagd (literally "human hunt") the following day where far-right groups descended on the city and roaming mobs attacked people who looked foreign.

[56] Chansavath Phetsouphanh et al. "Immunological dysfunction persists for 8 months following initial mild-to-moderate SARS-CoV-2 infection". In: *Nature Immunology* 23.2 (2022).

[57] There have been worrying cases of the H5N1 avian flu, for starters. Or, who could forget the monkey pox scare?

case would be used to justify a few more cases which in turn would be used to justify the near total abandonment of precautions. The first incident was like a crack in the damn that led to the person giving up, and any criticism of their behavior was met with rhetoric that was remarkably similar to that of the far right. They'd ask if we were supposed to engage in physical distancing forever or how long we'd have to keep masking. They'd say the world changed and we just had to get used to it.

At the start of the pandemic, it was well established that we had an obligation to not infect others and slow the pandemic as much as possible, even if indefinitely. We as anarchists have some obligation to stop all harms, and this includes those of racism, sexism, and all the other forms of discrimination and domination. We're expected to do so not just at the macro level but at the interpersonal level as well. We don't get to use "mental health" as a justification for using slurs or for cat-calling, yet we tolerated our comrades putting others at risk and creating spaces that were unsafe not just for the disabled and elderly but everyone else too.

Strangely, what's lost in these discussions is the mental health burden of the isolation experienced by those who have been excluded. Maybe it's anxiety, physical health concerns, or both, but for some there is no possibility to take a mental health break and throw caution to the wind. The current trade-off seems to be for the privileged to ignore the risks of the pandemic at the expense of those who are most impacted by it.

Network Effects

As the pandemic went on and fewer people took self-imposed measures or did more than what mandates required, a line of reasoning individuals gave for abdicating responsibility was that others were going out and taking risks and that it was unfair that the person taking strict measures had to suffer (in their eyes) more of the consequences. If one's friends all went out, then one felt that they were still exposed to nearly the same level of risk, so why shouldn't they do it too?

Choosing to not mask is not an act that exists in isolation outside of one's social networks. Every time one does it, it encourages others to do the same. When more people stop masking at bars and clubs, it becomes harder to overcome the social inertia and pull them pack into more cautious behavior. Resisting collective desire makes one unpopular, and as much as we'd like to believe otherwise, we generally we do not handle criticism—especially of our ethics—with grace. Many of the people who stopped masking *know* that they should continue, and they admit it when pressed. At the same time, those who tried to enforce boundaries around the coronavirus were seen as being needy or paranoid, and in some cases labeled as divisive or as blackmailing their friends if they avoided socializing.

Any one individual might choose to accept some risk by being unmasked, and a group of friends may give informed consent to take on risk together either for a

single event or a normalize practice. Each single decision might itself be justifiable as within anarchist principles, but the compounding network effect of an entire milieu or social circle stopping their precautions might nevertheless lead to an environment that is exclusionary to those don't want to expose themselves to risk.

Most Küfas[58]are entirely unmasked and unventilated, and during the winter they only have indoor seating. The unhoused, for example, have weakened immune systems because of their circumstances and are the ones most in need of free warm meals, yet many of our spaces don't provide a safe space for them. There are events, lectures, and film nights where maybe one in twenty have a mask, and each person might be fine with some elevated risk of infection, but the collective acceptance of this risk can raise the total risk to the point that others cannot participate.

By masking and asking to ventilate, you encourage others to do the same. By taking minimal measures only during radical events themselves (regardless of what you do with the rest of your time) can significantly reduce risk for others and make spaces more accessible.

On Youth Liberation

Major discussions of how the pandemic effects the marginalized centered around the unhoused, migrants, the precariat, and service workers. A marginalized group that is too often left out or dismissed as an edge case is the youth. It was quickly noted that the disease has morbidity that correlates with age, especially among geriatric individuals. The youth were said to be unaffected by it, but this was in part due to undertesting and milder symptoms. Youth still had many severe outcomes in the short-term,[59] and as expected an estimated 2–5% had long COVID symptoms after 90 days.[60]

Much of the focus on the youth, from teens to toddlers, was on a degradation of social skills and academically "falling behind," both alleged to be caused by missing school, though general contact restrictions was at least noted in some cases for the former. Missed socialization and life milestones certainly had an impact on mental health, but there was little consideration for the mental health of forcing youth to return to classrooms without adequate ventilation or any vaccinations. Just as we used "mental health" as an excuse to justify our own unsafe behavior, we also used it to justify forcing kids back into unsafe environments.[61] When youth stayed home from school, so too did a parent. This depopulated offices which hurt the real estate market, and thus there was a push to get youth to return to in-person schooling to allow parents to return to their offices. Plus, acknowledging there was a risk to the "less affected" youth would be counter to all the pandemic minimizing that was

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[58]Küche für Alle. "Kitchen for all." Mutual aid cooking.

coming from governments.

Youth are an oppressed class, and our failure to engage with them hurts everyone. There are some radical youth spaces in Berlin, and there is some overlap between the youth spaces and "the rest" of the spaces, but many of our hangouts are bars and squats are not easily accessible for many people, much less youth. There are a ton of young people who care quite a deal about the future and are more politically engaged than we were at their age. In Berlin, there's some disdain for the "liberal" nature of the Climate Strikes and Fridays for Future movements, but these are perfect places to engage with youth to help them agitate for their own liberation. Those protests themselves might be quite tame and constrained by their own ideologies, but they are places where individuals can be radicalized. Next to none of us were born into pure anarchism, and many of us didn't "figure it out" until well into adulthood. The pandemic would have been an excellent time to aggressively pursue youth liberation and center it as a key part of the anarchist project.

Onward

We could pick apart every minutiae of every action taken over the pandemic, but in broad strokes this has covered much of how the anarchist movement had analytic and tactical shortcomings. If this deadly and debilitating pandemic affected any groups the most, they were the elderly and the disabled, and we largely have been okay with excluding them from society. There is nothing radical, countercultural, or revolutionary about excluding anyone because of something outside of their control. We have, in our spaces, recreated the status quo.

Without a doubt, there have been shining moments of ingenuity and great solidarity, and those should not be forgotten. Many comrades have put great effort in to spreading accurate information or engaging in boycotts and other social practices to shun those who won't take minimal steps to care for others. Others have engaged in mutual aid, taken direct action, and actively disrupted the corona deniers. Some were imprisoned for their antifascist actions.[62] There are individuals and groups who still regularly mask and host corona-safe events. We need more proactive people who do all of these things.

To those who don't think the current state of the pandemic justifies any measures, ask yourself: what would? How many people would have to die per week for

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[59]Anna L. Funk et al. "Outcomes of SARS-CoV-2–Positive Youths Tested in Emergency Departments". In: *JAMA Network Open* 5.1 (2022)

[60]American Academy of Pediatrics. *Post-COVID-19 Conditions in Children and Adolescents*. 2022-09-02.

[61]Not to mention how often "think of the children" is used by conservatives to push their agendas.

[62]Frankfurter Allgemein. *Mehrere Jahre Haft für linken Angriff bei "Querdenker"-Demonstration*. 2021-10-31.

you to feel like it's worth it? How many would have to become disabled for you to put the effort in? Is there some number where it's no longer acceptable? And why is that number so high that you're not taking even the most minimal steps now?

The two largest crises that are looming over us are the climate crisis and the global rise in fascism. There will have to be massive, *massive* changes to our lives to cope with and combat both. If taking even the easiest steps such as masking and avoiding crowded indoor spaces is said to be "too much" or "unreasonable," then we're going to have a very hard time convincing others to give up fossil fuels or taking personal risk to offer refuge to people targeted with violence. All struggles are related, and we must fight against oppression on all fronts.

Even if we're being pragmatic in the most vile sense, measures taken in earnest against the pandemic were and continue to be one of the best ways to combat the onslaught of capitalism and creeping fascism. If one is speaking strictly about "the fight" in the sense of some grand rupture, that necessarily requires us to be as sound of mind and physically capable of resisting as possible. Letting our comrades die and become disabled has been—even disregarding the ethics of that alone—terrible for our future capacities to organize and rise up. If you won't do it for the most marginalized, at least do it for yourself and your friends.

Disabled activists have a saying: "It's not the disabled and the abled. It's the disabled and the not-yet-disabled." With time, our bodies and minds will fail us. We'll get old or injured. Illness will take something from us. We should be working to build a world today that cares for others, and again, if we can't do it for them, then we can selfishly do it for our future ourselves so that when we need to be cared for, there will be networks of care already established.

You might be vaccinated and multiply boosted, but there's still significant risk. As we established early on in the pandemic, the coronavirus can asymptomatically spread and that every infection creates the possibility of a new mutation with immune escape. Generally speaking, but especially since the rise of the omicron variant, tests have had decreased efficacy in detecting infections, which is to say a negative test doesn't mean you're safe to meet inside with others. Each repeat infection significantly increases the likelihood of hospitalization, serious complications, and death.[63] There is double the risk of stroke and heart failure within the first year of infection.[64] In one study, 84% of people hospitalized with COVID who had symptoms 4 months after hospitalization still had symptoms after 2 years.[65] Ninety percent of cases of long COVID started with mild infections.[66] These effects are not mild, nor

is this some disease to be trifled with.

The coronavirus is still destroying lives, and we need to continue to at least take the most basic steps to manage it. In many States, including the BRD, there likely won't be lockdowns again during this pandemic and maybe even not with the next because no politician will want to deal with the subsequent backlash. So what can we do? That which we've always done.

1. Wear an FFP2 mask (or at least a surgical mask) while indoors.
2. Continuously ventilate indoor spaces with some combination of:

    (a) Keeping windows open (and wearing extra layers).
    (b) Measuring CO_2 as a proxy for sufficient ventilation.
    (c) Using an air purifier with cleanable filters.

3. Test before meeting others or at least weekly.
4. Prioritize meeting outdoors when possible.

Even doing just one of the above still reduces risk, and taking multiple steps—especially when a majority does so—can drastically reduce it. This isn't suggesting that we go back to how things were in March or even June of '20, but currently most spaces most of the time are acting like it's the carefree days of '19. Minimal steps are relatively non-disruptive to things we want to do, and doing this makes our spaces accessible to many more people.

This crisis might not feel like it matters to you, but every struggle matters because all are intertwined.[67] It's wrong when our movement disregards white supremacy or rape culture, and it's just as wrong that we leave our disabled comrades to fend for themselves. Our spaces need to be radically inclusive, and that means making significant changes to accommodate others. The changes we made at the beginning of the pandemic were so effective that we wiped entire strains of the flu from existence.[68] We could have held on to these changes and created new ways of relating and living, but we let them slip away. We could have embodied a counter to the current society and demonstrated to others that such a shift is

[63]Benjamin Bowe and Xie Yan. "Acute and postacute sequelae associated with SARS-CoV-2 reinfection". In: *Nature Medicine* 28 (2022), pp. 2398–2405.

[64]Andrea DeVries et al. "One-Year Adverse Outcomes Among US Adults With Post–COVID-19 Condition vs Those Without COVID-19 in a Large Commercial Insurance Database". In: *JAMA Health Forum* 4.3 (2023).

[65]Carl Wahlgren et al. "Two-year follow-up of patients with post-COVID-19 condition in Sweden: a prospective cohort study". In: *The Lancet* (2023).

[66]Global Burden of Disease Long COVID Collaborators. "Estimated Global Proportions of Individuals With Persistent Fatigue, Cognitive, and Respiratory Symptom Clusters Following Symptomatic COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021". In: *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 328.16 (2022)

possible. We could have built a new world in the cracks of the old.

We didn't, not really.

But we still can.

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[67]The pandemic, cost of living crisis (heating, food, rent), the impending recession, and Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine are all linked together in complex ways. The pandemic justified price gouging. Querdenker and QAnons fight against vaccines and support Putin's war. Some are even directly funded by the FSB. The war allows corporations to justify driving up heating costs. The climate crisis will increase food costs, as has the UK's nationalism with Brexit. Tying these all together in detail would be another essay entirely.

[68]Live Science. *2 types of flu viruses may have gone extinct.* 2021-06-21.

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