



WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

EVERYDAY IN LOCKDOWN

WICID WARWICK INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



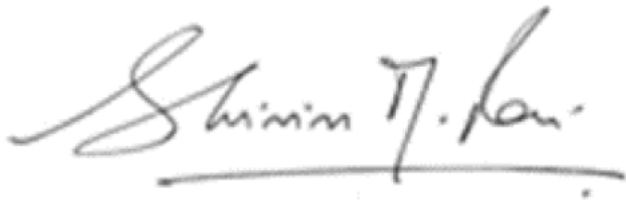
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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shirin M. Rai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Shirin M Rai
Director, WICID and Curator, Everyday in Lockdown

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Spaces Transformed.....	4
Work from Home and Away	10
Leisure and Play.....	12
Food - in Different Registers.....	15
Rescue	16
Dislocations.....	18
Resistance.....	20
The New Normal: Connects and Intimacies.....	22
A Continuing Conversation.....	25
References.....	26

INTRODUCTION

On March 22, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a global pandemic. Since then, the rhythms of everyday lives have been interrupted and our definitions of 'normality' upended. The pandemic has further deepened social inequalities and has had a drastic impact on global (im)mobilities. Governance institutions are both shaping pandemic responses and being re-shaped by them. How are people coping with this sudden shift in life? What resources do they have at their disposal to mitigate the effects of 'lockdowns', scarcities, anxieties and insecurities? How do and can they deploy these? What are the human effects of this altered temporality and spatiality? How do changed rhythms of time and space work for different people? Lockdowns have meant for some, not being able to go out to work; for others, increased levels of domestic and care work. What different forms of play have opened up as people spend long hours at home? It is difficult to capture these shifts in our everyday rhythms simply in words. With this in mind, we bring to you a curated exhibition of photographs and text sent to us by people from seven countries across 4 different continents. This exhibition tries to capture life under lockdown across intersectional and national boundaries of class, gender, caste, ethnicity, age, and religion. They build a picture (metaphorically and actually) of everyday life and labour in the times of COVID-19.



SPACES TRANSFORMED

With the beginning of the COVID-19 induced lockdowns across the globe photographs of places bereft of people flooded the internet. A few adjectives have found themselves repeated in many iterations- "eerie", "deserted", and "empty".

A sense of emptiness has pervaded our view of public spaces in lockdown – empty streets, empty city centres, empty iconic tourist spots, empty shelves in supermarkets. And yet, these vacated spaces have also started conversations about other things coming into view - falling levels of air, noise and light pollution.

Breathing is easier, birdsong can be heard, and the stars are brighter at night. Spaces are also being used differently – terraces, yards, gardens are being used to exercise, socialise at a distance and celebrate festivals.



J&K Bank, Yaripora (taken on 30.03.2020 around 10.00 am). Waqas, Kashmir



People are used to going out in the evenings but owing to the lockdown and regular police patrolling in the locality, they could be seen on terraces, playing with their kids or taking a walk. Ajinkya, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India



Nagaland University Administrative Block and Boys' Hostel. Achanger, Kohima, Nagaland, India



Empty streets, from Tehsil Yaripora to District headquarters Kulgam (taken on 30.03.2020 around 10.00 am).
Waqas, Kashmir



“Those neighbours who always roam around are now communicating from their balconies. My neighbour is pictured here, sitting in her balcony and clapping” Kamini, Delhi, India.



A neighbour exercising on his terrace. Bindu, Delhi, India

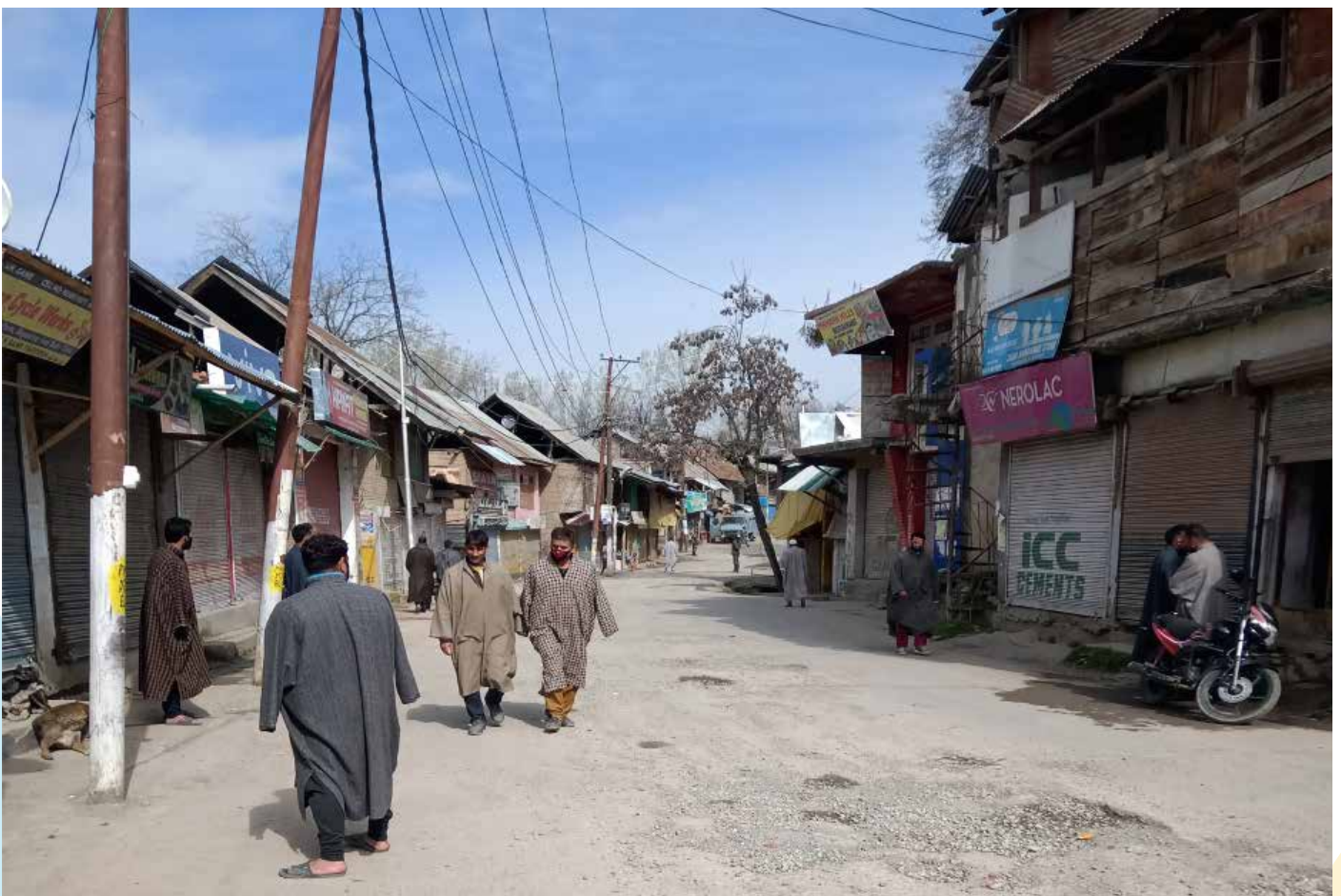


“Elderly people are quite afraid, as this disease has killed more elderly people compared to the young populace. They have confined themselves to the four walls of their homes and have been praying since then and hoping for the good.” Abid, Kashmir





Social distancing during evening walks.



View of the major market at Yaripora Tehsil (taken on 30.03.2020 around 10.00 am). Waqas, Kashmir

“Life in Kashmir under lockdown is very different compared to other states in India. Jammu and Kashmir has been under lockdown since August 2019. This current lockdown due to COVID-19 has added misery

to already present misfortune. Tension has gripped the valley that if this disease spreads, it might cause havoc, as the people fear that state would not pay much attention, and coupled with a weak health system in valley, this might push them into an abyss.” Abid, Kashmir

WORK FROM HOME AND AWAY

While spaces outside seemed paused in time, spaces within the walls figuratively expanded with the declaration of lockdowns.

Home took on a new meaning during the pandemic. Practically overnight, millions of office-workers around the world transitioned to couches, kitchen tables, and makeshift desks in their own homes, often merging childcare and other responsibilities with professional life. Homeworking became the new normal. Space became necessary to manage this new normal. The home in the lockdown has grown into a multi-use space; even more so than before as families use the same room for work, school, exercise, and relaxation.

At the same time, the pandemic has also brought the stark inequalities in working life to light. Not everyone has had the ability or the privilege to 'work from home' and many, from hospital staff to those who earn their livelihood on the streets, faced dangerous new threats during the pandemic.



People have adapted home to office, to work from their living rooms. India



Many spent the beginning of the lockdown in household chores. Dr. Mohit, Delhi, India



A barber working from his home from a makeshift barber shop (taken on 06.04.2020 around 12.45 noon). Waqas, Kashmir



A shopkeeper keeps his store open. Delhi, India.

Domestic spaces have also become spaces of negotiation – who will do the cleaning and the cooking as 'homebodies' increased domestic work? The boundaries between care, work and play have blurred. Children too have experienced these blurred boundaries – between school/work and playing outdoors/inside the home. COVID-19 is a medical pandemic but with gendered and racialized manifestations. While the virus has largely impacted men more than women, many 'frontline' professions are also overwhelmingly staffed by women, putting them at increased risk.

For example, 83% of nurses and midwives in India are women. Women have also been under greater stress due to increased domestic labour, and increased risks of domestic violence.



Some still had to go into offices, but with greater precautions and social distancing measures in place. Kenya



Retimen, Standard IV, North Field School, Kohima, helping his Dad in coppicing firewood. Achanger, Kohima, Nagaland, India



"My mother and Anamika are working in the kitchen. We used to have evening snacks occasionally, but now it's more often, since everyone is home." Kamini, Delhi, India



A common image across the globe. With school being shut, children try to complete their schoolwork at home. 22: India; 23: Chile.



When office work and playtime coincide. Marta, Chile.

LEISURE AND PLAY

Lockdowns and the extended isolation have taken a toll on people's mental health across the globe. Simultaneously, according to the WHO, critical mental health services have seen a disruption or pause, in 93% of countries around the world, during the pandemic. In times like these, leisure and play have become potent tools of self-care. Masks, although a requirement in many places, have become an opportunity for creative expression. Trends to keep fit and exercise from home in the lockdown have become popular. While leisure is not a privilege afforded to all, for those able, lockdown has provided unique ways to express themselves and support each other.



Carrom has proven to be a major source of entertainment for the entire family. Since children studying outside the city are also at home, carrom united family members across generations. Ajinkya, Indore, India



"I returned to my village in Azamgarh before lockdown. Now I'm enjoying fatherhood, agriculture, and delicious food." Belal, Azamgarh, India



"My mother spends her free time on mobile games and social media mostly." Kamini, Delhi, India



Children playing, within homes and outside. Chile





Children play with colours



Taking the kids and pets outdoors provides some relief in the lockdown. Marta, Chile.



Taking children to the playground in the lockdown. Marta, Chile



People exercise and take their evening walks on terraces. Delhi, India



A dentist, a teacher and a lawyer having coffee on the terrace. Bindu, New Delhi, India



The lockdown limited people to their homes, but couldn't stop them from expressing themselves through colour and creativity. Mouzayian, Nigeria



While gyms were shut, people took to fitness challenges at home. Savannah, Malaysia

FOOD – IN DIFFERENT REGISTERS

Food systems around the world were disrupted as lockdowns took hold. Some could procure and consume food safely despite a lack of certain items, in socially-distanced markets. However, this required others to face new dangers in the face of COVID-19. Farmworkers continued to work long days with little personal protective equipment. Residents of rural areas went hungry with no work, no pay, and no public transportation to markets. Hunger continues to be a rising threat on the horizon as COVID-19 undermines food systems around the world. As India went into lockdown without any warning, thousands of daily wage earners were left without an income and in numerous cases, a home. As Delhi activist Harsh Mander heard from many, "I won't die of Corona. Before that, I will surely die of hunger." And yet, for those who have access to food, it has also become the focus of everyday life – the rhythms of the day punctuated by the making and consuming of food. Cooking, eating, and displaying to the world what was being cooked and eaten became a reminder of health and succour, and a source of intimate bonding, creative exploration and healing.



Learning to cook new recipes. Dr. Mohit, Delhi, India



"Trying some never-tried Malaysian food." Savannah, Malaysia



"I returned to my village in Azamgarh before lockdown. Now I'm enjoying fatherhood, agriculture, and delicious food." Belal, Azamgarh, India



"The never-ending story of the sink being full." Anita, Delhi, India

RESCUE

Although many have spent their lockdown at home, essential services have continued to operate, and frontline workers have continued to serve their societies. They have faced new challenges everyday in a world drastically changed by the pandemic. Emergency service numbers have registered a spike in violence against women and girls. Emergency service workers have been called to care for and comfort sick members of society and deal with the tragic loss of human life. While people in lockdown continue to show moral support and appreciation, governments and health care systems around the world have fallen short of protecting essential workers adequately. In most countries, frontline healthcare and emergency workers were found to be at a disproportionately higher risk of contracting COVID-19.



Emergency rescue operations continued, amidst lockdown. Pictures from the Chile Fire Department. Paola, Chile



Emergency rescue operations continued, amidst lockdown. Pictures from the Chile Fire Department. Paola, Chile



Emergency rescue operations continued, amidst lockdown. Pictures from the Chile Fire Department. Paola, Chile



Doctors get ready with protective gear in a hospital in North India. Dr Shalini, India



Emergency rescue operations continued, amidst lockdown. Pictures from the Chile Fire Department. Paola, Chile



Doctors in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) inside a hospital ward in North India. Dr. Shalini, India

DISLOCATIONS

While many spent multiple months in one place, others were forced to spend days, weeks, or months on the move. In India, thousands of people were forced to return home or assume a life on the move in search of a livelihood. These dislocations have also been cyclical and disruptive – months after the lockdown, many workers returned to cities to face hardships and confusion in a fragile economy worsened by the pandemic. Over 130 nations have turned to migration management tactics that have put asylum seekers, refugees, stateless people, and migrants in particularly risky and uncertain situations. Such restrictions threaten access to work, healthcare, and livelihood for many. Furthermore, for people on the move living in camps and informal settlements with limited access to protective gear, hygiene and sanitation resources, social distancing and other COVID-19 protection measures have been hard to practice.



"An 8.5 months pregnant woman sitting on the side of the National Highway after walking for hours." Sohit, India



"A tempo carrying 17 people met with an accident, several people including this kid was injured, the driver of the tempo died on the spot." Sohit, India



"Ramdas, a migrant labourer with no money or food left was hit by a vehicle while walking at night. Few villagers helped him and provided first aid kit. His left foot was swollen as he was walking continuously, so he couldn't wear shoes and he had to wear a slipper. Sohit, India



"A 7 months pregnant woman forced to walk on national highway with her family as they had no money or livelihood left to survive in an expensive city like Mumbai." Sohit, India



"Another pregnant woman sleeping on the road and waiting for a bus to arrive so that she can travel to her native place in Uttar Pradesh state."



"People have been starving for several months now and they do not have much option but to request for others to help them and get them the food and nourishment they need." Violeta, El Salvador



"Migrants resting after walking around 40 kms. Since the temperature in May is high, people walk during the night and then rest during the day and wait for the temperature to cool down." Sohit, India



"Around 40 to 50 migrants travelling in a single truck to their native places in 40 degree Celsius. Thousands were forced to travel by foot, or such vehicles: no other mode of transport was in place." Sohit, India

RESISTANCE:

The lockdown restrictions have drastically changed working routines, social benefits, and many facets of life that were previously taken for granted. In other ways, the lockdown has spurred a search for justice in previously stagnantly unjust situations. While some of our lives experienced an abrupt pause in pace with the lockdown, societies in already existing, ongoing conflicts saw an exacerbation of crisis. The rapid unilateral action from governments in response to COVID-19 has also been used to justify violent and authoritarian governance strategies. Tear gas in India, police shootings in Kenya, and degrading treatment by police in the Philippines, for example, have become defining moments since the outbreak. Such actions threaten the fabric of democracy and normalize un-democratic responses to crises. The poor and most vulnerable are often those who suffer most protractedly. The pandemic brought the systemic inequities across societies into sharp and jarring focus. In the face of these angers, fears and changes, people around the world have taken to the streets to protest structural injustices and demand reforms. The Black Lives Matter movement gained new momentum and spread transnationally, as people joined the call for racial justice and equality in solidarity around the world.



"UhaiWetu - in the midst of the pandemic Kenyans braved the conditions to come out and protest the overwhelming police brutality exerted against the poor in the name of enforcing lockdown. From all walks of life and ages. Kenyans came together to protest." Kenya



"Since the quarantine started in El Salvador, back in March, no public transportation has been circulating the streets of our country. Many people live in rural areas, where their nearest supermarket is 15-30 min away. These images reflect the reality of our country. They can't travel; therefore, they can't make it to work, and because of this, they do not have money to bring food to their homes." Violeta, El Salvador



"We need help with groceries or with what your heart can give." Violeta, El Salvador

THE NEW NORMAL: CONNECTS AND INTIMACIES

As societies emerged from the first lockdowns, their residents came to terms with the 'new normal', which has varied dramatically from community to community. In some places, mask-wearing and socially-distanced life has been quickly adopted and accepted. In other places, the 'new normal' has forced citizens to leave home, or return, in search of a new livelihood once again. Individuals have eagerly, but cautiously, returned to some of the pre-pandemic routines. Grooming and intimate labour, at the end of the first lockdowns, came into high demand as people addressed 'quarantine hair' and other privileges unavailable during the lockdown. Through it all, there is a shared acknowledgement that there will be no possible return to the "old normal" as we knew it, of a pre-pandemic time.



People groomed their pets at home. Bindu, Delhi, India



Palm Sunday Celebration in Dimapur and Kohima. "The videos were uploaded by Dimapur Ao Baptist Arogo (DABA) and Kohima Ao Baptist Arogo (KABA) for the Ao community in Nagaland. Due to the lockdown Christian Community could not celebrate the Palm Sunday inside the Church but DABA and KABA uploaded the videos in the morning so that people could access it through smart phones, computers and TV." Achanger Kohima, Nagaland, India



The beauty and grooming industry adapting according to government measures. Terry, Kenya



As countries began slowly easing lockdown restrictions, people rushed to beauty salons. Terry, Kenya



"Meeting with Cabinet Secretary of Health of Kenya and the Nursing Council on a new #staysafe campaign." Maria, Kenya



"Traveling to the city centre but having to follow SOP (temperature scanning at train stations or mall entrances, contact trace scanning, mandatory hand sanitizing)." Savannah, Malaysia



Travelling during COVID-19. Scenes from an airport. Chile



“This photo shows us waiting in line at the El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá, about to take a humanitarian flight from Bogotá to São Paulo on the morning of Tuesday, July 28th, 2020. The airport has been closed since March to commercial flights and only humanitarian and cargo flights are allowed. The humanitarian flight was organised by the Brazilian consulate in Bogotá. Very strict social distancing and sanitary measures were in place in the airport. We were told by the Brazilian embassy to arrive at the airport with face masks and face shields, 4 hours before departure to avoid any delays.”

A CONTINUING CONVERSATION

As 'the new normal' continues to take shape and the world confronts potential multiple waves of the pandemic, considerations surrounding governance, (im) mobilities, social inequalities, and resistance are increasingly salient. The global character of COVID-19 necessitates a global response that ensures democratic redistribution of resources, equipment, and knowledge. At this pivotal moment, we may see more radical and progressive notions of society, or we may see increased backsliding into authoritarian tendencies and a loosening of regulation on key issues such as climate change, migration, discrimination, and equity. The way in which we move forward as a global society will define and shape our post-COVID world.

As countries across the globe experience consecutive waves of COVID-19 and new lockdowns, the WICID Everyday in Lockdown project continues the conversation.

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