CONCLUSION

European vulnerability and the policy dilemmas of resilience in times of coronavirus

Pol Bargues

In May 2020, at the time of writing the concluding chapter of this book, European states are gradually lifting coronavirus restrictions after several weeks of generalized lockdowns. In Europe, restaurants, shops, amusement parks and museums gradually reopen with a long list of physical distancing and hygiene measures. Even the hardest-hit countries, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and the UK, restart their economies. However, everyone seems convinced that there will be no return to normality. As Arundhati Roy (2020) expressed: "Who can look at anything any more — a door handle, a card-board carton, a bag of vegetables — without imagining it swarming with those unseeable, undead, unliving blobs dotted with suction pads waiting to fasten themselves on to our lungs?"

The outbreak was first identified in Wuhan in December 2019 and it quickly spread to reach every corner of the globe. Epidemics are not unusual in the twenty-first century: the 2002–2004 SARS and 2014–2016 Ebola caused health crises as well, and a seasonal virus such as the flu kills thousands of people every year. The meaning and legacy of disasters are always constructed by societies: solar eclipses and comets were seen as catastrophes and signs of divine anger in the Middle Ages, or the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, tsunami and firestorm inspired major developments in science and philosophy (Furedi, 2020). What is most striking in the current crisis is that most European governments and communities, at first, out of hubris, ignored or belittled the effects that the pandemic could have on their health systems, and, secondly, overreacted in the face of a "hegemon" (Harman, 2020).

Although there were some outliers, such as Sweden, and the degree of restrictions varied, the response by most European states was to order severe lockdowns, some even declaring states of emergency. The dominant strategy was aggressive social distancing measures, combined with efficient testing, contact tracing, enforced quarantines and travel bans, to control the pandemic as quickly as possible. By slowing down the spread of the virus, states

sought to avoid overwhelming their healthcare system, thereby reducing the fatality rate of the coronavirus and the collateral damage – those in need of care for other diseases who could not receive assistance (Pueyo, 2020). All these measures were sustained by calls for extreme prudence. Individuals were asked by governments, media and fellow citizens to be extremely cautious in order to stop contagion and avoid harming the most vulnerable (Taleb & Norman, 2020). As the lockdowns ease and as Europeans move towards a new normality, a culture of precaution becomes even more important.

In this chapter, I argue that the ethics of precaution required to respond to the pandemic are energizing *resilience* policy approaches, which are required and yet appear limited. Both the ethics of precaution and policy approaches to resilience assume that the world's problems are complex and interconnected and the proposed responses are necessarily mitigations – rather than solutions – that are partial and temporary as well as tricky to implement. In these framings, humans are presented as vulnerable and dangerous to themselves, reassuring the need for constant supervision measures by authorities and fellow human beings alike.

Notwithstanding the heterogeneity of narratives and critiques that one witnesses during the pandemic (we would need more time and distance to see which rise and which fall), the ethics of precaution appear increasingly dominant, flagged by journalists, politicians, commentators and intellectuals. Most sources are European, as the ideas of precaution, panic and resilience that I am scrutinizing here have crystallized most clearly in Europe. Rigorous methodologists may find the sources too dispersed, as if chosen arbitrarily. They may be right: I draw on an eclectic battery of articles and blog posts that have been published since the crisis broke out on European soil in February 2020 because these help us think about how to govern a crisis. The purpose is to draw an imaginary out of these sources to conclude that it is giving resilience policies a strong push.

In order to build this argument, the chapter is structured into three sections. The first extracts two central ideas on resilience governance from the other chapters of the book: the first is that the complexity of the world's crises requires resilience policy approaches to foster continuous adaptation and risk awareness; the second is that these approaches have not delivered successful results in practice. The second section shows how these two assumptions are also shared by the emerging ethics of precaution: that is, extreme prudence is necessary in a world of contingency and interconnectivity, and yet in practice even the most prudent gesture becomes insufficient. The final section argues that in considering people as vulnerable, sick, careless and dangerous to themselves, the ethics of precaution reduces resilience to a cumulative managerial exercise of policymaking, which to a degree challenges emancipatory understandings of resilience as introduced in this book.

The limits of resilience in governing an uncertain world

Two ideas cut through the chapters of this book: first, resilience policy approaches respond to the perception that the world's crises are increasingly complex and interconnected, thus requiring constant adaptation and risk awareness; second, although resilience approaches promise inclusive and community-based responses, they have not delivered in practice.

In the opening chapter of the book, Korosteleva and Flockhart introduce the rise of resilience in international intervention policy programs. They highlight that these programs respond to the problem of governing a world that seems increasingly uncertain and complex, no longer amenable to liberal forms of governance: "a world that is more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous," one that is full of "uncontrollable forces that present a catalogue of challenges and crises and a feeling of ever-present existential danger" (Korosteleva & Flockhart, this volume). Certainly, through much of the twentieth century, Western IR scholars also found themselves seeking to theorize and help govern a world with multiple crises and insecurities. Yet, threats to the national security of the state or to society were more easily identified, and generally located on the outside, for example, in the Soviet Union, terrorist groups or rogue states. Most importantly, emergency measures and direct actions could be (and were) taken to counter such tangible security threats: from intensifying airport safety checkpoints to projects of democratization and statebuilding abroad (Buzan & Hansen, 2009).

Today, this world of liberal understandings appears increasingly out of joint, often critiqued for its reductionist templates and perspectives, for neglecting and reproducing the historic structures of coloniality and capitalism, and the gendered and racialized violence of normal liberal politics (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019; Rutazibwa, 2020). Quite differently, resilience approaches start from the assumption that complexity is ontological: problems are "wicked" and threats are far too diffused and interconnected to be identified or just solved, and policy programs must foster constant adaptation to crises and changes (see, further, Chandler, this volume).

In her chapter, Nathalie Tocci recounts how resilience was introduced in European foreign policy in the mid-2010s, while the EU admitted "the need to build risk and uncertainty into its policies." This perception of complexity, she explains, is the product of the instability, violence and fragility of neighboring countries, as much as the growing unease with EU's liberal values and norms both inside and outside the union (Paikin, this volume). In a global context of the crises of leadership, democracy and multilateralism, the EU has lost clarity and confidence, and has sought to develop a more pragmatic foreign policy (Flockhart, this volume).

Rather than assuming preponderance and capacity to fathom and solve the world's challenges, approaches to resilience are more modest and assume the

inevitability of risks. As Korosteleva and Flockhart argue: "The best that can be hoped for is that the worst consequences of the on-going change can be anticipated and mitigated and that governance structures can be reformed and adapted to allow them to meet the challenges and risks that inevitably will occur" (this volume). Crises and their multiple unexpected effects are managed as they come along. Yet crises endure, always requiring further adaptation and transformation. In such a world, speckled with wildfires that cannot be extinguished, there is no return to tranquillity, stability, or "normal" liberal politics. A move forward is required ad infinitum: "resilience [does] not imply adapting and bouncing back to the previous state in the aftermath of a shock. A state and society will and should be inherently different after a crisis occurs" (Tocci, this volume).

The entanglement of risks and threats makes integration and joined-up approaches exigent. Tocci (this volume) explains that the EU was keen on adopting resilience as a guiding policy that could meet the demand for a more integrated and consistent foreign policy:

> resilience appeared to be a concept that different policy communities, normally compartmentalized and locked into their specific institutional logics, loyalties and lines of action, could co-own and mirror themselves in. This facilitated the task of bringing these policy worlds together, offering the scope for common ground, based upon a (seemingly) shared language.

Bending policy silos seems necessary to address problems that are deeply connected in imperceptible ways. In their analysis of how the EU fosters resilience in Syria's neighboring countries that are affected by a protracted refugee crisis, Rosanne Anholt and Giulia Sinatti in their chapter show how short-term humanitarian aid and long-term development agendas are attended concurrently. "The understanding of the connection between humanitarian and development responses has thus shifted from continuous, linear or sequential, to contiguous, non-linear and simultaneous" (Anholt & Sinatti, this volume). By accepting the non-linearity and unpredictability of connected crises, resilience-building requires sustained support and multi-sector, multi-level, multi-lateral responses (European Commission & HR/VP, 2017).

While the first lesson drawn from the book is that resilience approaches facilitate collective learning and endless adaptability to a world of contingency and unpredictability, there is a second, darker lesson: resilience programs go awry when operationalized. For example, Jonathan Joseph and Ana Juncos assess how the EU increasingly adopts a resilience turn in approaches to peacebuilding. They see as positive that, in theory at least and different than previous liberal, top-down approaches, the EU embraces complexity, recognizes local agency and ensures local ownership. However, these promises to foster resilience "from below" are never delivered in practice: "while the

literature on resilience makes the case for a distinctive approach that might offer peacebuilders new tools for dealing with conflicts and causes, we find that the EU's practice remains fairly consistent with long-standing EU approaches and interests" (Joseph & Juncos, this volume).

Anholt and Sinatti also underline how EU resilience approaches to contain the Syrian refugee crisis transfer responsibility towards local governments and communities, who must integrate refugees as a development opportunity. Local actors are understood to possess key knowledge and initiatives are taken jointly. However, at the same time, the authors observe how the agenda of resilience, when implemented, is tinged by the objective of preventing migrants from traveling to Europe. Ultimately, for Anholt and Sinatti, resilience is a buzzword, "an excellent smoke screen for ulterior political agendas" with limited "transformative potential" (Anholt & Sinatti, this volume).

Petrova and Delcour conduct a thorough analysis of dozens of EU official documents on the EU Eastern Partnership. They identify an attempt to foster resilience by means of integrating different policy areas, involving local communities, strengthening societal connections and extending local ownership. When looking at the policy implementation process, however, they still perceive the ascendency of top-down methods to impose a liberal agenda: "Our comparison between the EU's discourse and practices highlights a disconnect between the EU's narrative shift toward a hybrid approach to the resilience–local ownership thinking and the continuation of top-down practices inherited from the modernization approach in the EaP" (Petrova & Delcour, this volume). In her chapter, Korosteleva values the idea of resilience, which is linked to the effort to empower local communities, and yet diagnoses the same problem when examining EU's resilience governance: "not knowing *how exactly* to apply resilience to practice" (emphasis in original). According to Korosteleva, when implementing "a deeply attractive concept," the EU turns " 'the local', 'the internal' simply into a source of vulnerability requiring urgent security measures," … "forfeiting resilience's arresting potentiality as self-governance, instead falling into a trap of external engineering and security maintenance" (Korosteleva, this volume).

In sum, the second lesson drawn from the book is that resilience appears difficult to translate into practice. For EU policymakers, resilience is a promising idea of governance that moves away from liberal agendas of command and control and facilitates ownership and adaptability. Yet, when resilience is put in practice, promises break and policymakers get their hands dirty. According to the authors of the book, resilience policies are positive, *if only* they could have been properly applied. Thus, a sense of frustration looms over the chapters: "If only," as *the Cure*'s famous song of loss recalls, "is a wish too late."

In the following, I argue that a new invisible infectious agent, the coronavirus, has contributed to the ever-expanding world of complexity and resilience in 2020 (and beyond).

A new ethics feeds resilience: The call for extreme precaution

In January 2020, when the coronavirus was still an Asian problem to many Europeans, the statistician and risk analyst Nassim Taleb recommended that drastic social distancing measures by governments should be accompanied by a "general (non-naive) precautionary principle." For "if she or he does not panic and act in an ultra-conservative manner, they will contribute to the spread of the virus and it will become a severe source of systemic harm" (Taleb & Norman, 2020). Individuals must act cautiously and panic to avoid harming the most vulnerable – even if the risk that she catches the virus is minimal and every precaution she takes appears irrational, even absurd. This idea soon turned into a social consensus.

The point I seek to highlight in this section is that the two lessons drawn by the authors of this book when examining resilience approaches are reinforced by the demands of precaution. First, one should act carefully because the world's problems appear as increasingly interconnected and complex, where policies to address them lead to cascade effects. Second, the ethics of precaution are maddening because even the most sensible, prudent gesture appears insufficient. In times of pandemics, one cannot be cautious enough: how much distance should people keep to avoid contagion; how many seconds one should wash their hands; how much should one disinfect the surfaces that people touch? Generally for these questions, more is always a better option (see, further, Bargues, this volume).

In framings that call for extreme precaution, one single individual is a potential risk for the whole because of the high degree of connectivity of our lives (Taleb & Norman, 2020). A meme of an African funeral dance went viral, spreading this particular risk awareness: any handshake here might imply a funeral elsewhere. Interconnectedness would not be unsettling if the virus could easily be traceable. Yet there are many unknowns (such as the existence of asymptomatic carriers or the incubation period, which ranges from two to fourteen days). A contagious disease spreads unintentionally, non-linearly, startlingly, frustrating attempts to trace the pathogen. South Korea could not avoid a resurgence of Covid-19 in early May, despite being commended by many epidemiologists for ordering massive testing, strict quarantines and employing aggressive tactics of contact tracing and monitoring (Safi et al., 2020). Almost simultaneously, infections also rose in Wuhan and Germany after authorities had loosened social restrictions (ibid). The response in the three cases was more testing,

tracking, social distancing measures, and a call for ever more precaution everywhere.

The imaginary of the virus traveling far and wide feeds the perception that problems multiply down the line. Amy Davidson Sorkin (2020) writes:

> When a waitress or a shopkeeper in Paris or Queens loses income, money stops going to Senegal or Nepal. Many families in Afghanistan's Herat Province rely on income from Iran; when Iran's economy came to a halt, a hundred and fifty thousand workers crossed back into Herat, some bringing the infection with them.

Furthermore, in a world of uncertainty and far-reaching interconnectivity, social problems are aggravated by the responses to the pandemic. For example, Roy recounts how India's overnight shut down on March 24 had catastrophic consequences. "The lockdown to enforce physical distancing had resulted in the opposite — physical compression on an unthinkable scale." She described how poor people had to be cramped together in the slums and shanties of big cities; other millions of impoverished people, without jobs or home, had to walk back to their far-away villages, starving, spreading the virus; some were forced by the police to remain in refugee camps; Muslims were stigmatized, demonized, and some were attacked (Roy, 2020).

Commentators note that measures to contain the virus are not only fallible but also exacerbate the crisis. The East Africa correspondent for *The New York Times* underlines the millions of people facing starvation in places such as Sudan, Venezuela, Zimbabwe or Kenya. "National lockdowns and social distancing measures are drying up work and incomes, and are likely to disrupt agricultural production and supply routes — leaving millions to worry how they will get enough to eat" (Dahir, 2020). And these observations are not only made in distant, less affluent, places. In Italy, multigenerational families have suffered the most because the disease spreads among the members during the lockdown: "while staying home has worked, reducing the rate of infections, bringing down the daily toll of the dead and creating breathing room for hospitals, home has become a dangerous place for many Italians" (Horowitz & Bubola, 2020).

The ethics of precaution not only contribute to the perception that the world is increasingly complex and interconnected, where crisis and risks intensify. Cautiousness also spreads a sense of generalized distrust towards oneself and others, as one did not panic early enough or any gesture was not sufficiently prudent. Nothing really works. As in the critique that resilience policies have not been properly implemented, the ethics of precaution only works in theory; in practice, the ethics is frustrated by the erratic behavior of the pandemic, which spreads non-linearly and resurges or disappears unexpectedly, and is betrayed by hubristic, self-centered individuals who are not cautious enough themselves. Like resilience, the ethics of precaution seems to

be loved by everyone, and yet no one is satisfied by how they are translated in practice, exerting pressure on everyone to act always more sensibly.

That is, on the one hand, the need to "overreact" and "panic early" have become a new mantra for commentators in times of coronavirus (Cobb, 2020). The idea has traveled widely and convinced many Europeans because it shows solidarity with many others, while accommodating people's fears and revulsion. It also satisfies the appetite for isolation and distance to cope with anxiety, fear and scaremongering in the media. It comforts hypochondriac or squeamish people, or those suffering from chronic respiratory diseases. Indeed, anyone included in a high-risk group. Their friends and relatives, too. It even pleases those who are just careful, risk aware or boast about their common sense. For the relatively affluent Europeans, who always felt uncomfortable in crowded public spaces, and who preferred individualism over sharing and intimacy, physical distancing and general prudence are also a gift.

At the same time, everyone seems unsatisfied, regretful and winces at others' behaviors. Taleb himself, who was considered a soothsayer, who had predicted the pandemic, and whose article was celebrated by millions, admitted nevertheless that he was "irritated" because his recommendations had been overlooked (Avishai, 2020). The ethics of precaution turn out to be nihilistic, as people discover time and again that themselves and others are imprudent, careless, egoistic, and might cause a catastrophe somewhere else.

"What if" questions become a constant: What if the virus is in the door handle? What if I am an asymptomatic carrier? These questions not only paralyze each individual but also put a collective pressure on everyone. A guide to physical distancing in *The Guardian* summed up this concern: "Experts say avoiding close contact is the key to slowing coronavirus – but what if you live with someone who's throwing caution to the wind?" (Renwick, 2020). David Chandler (2020) notes an emerging socio-ethical consensus to judge others' behavior persistently:

> every act – from going out to buy a loaf of bread instead of staying in and making do, to writing a journal blog piece rather than helping with a community support initiative – becomes open to a community of social and ethical judgement. This is a judgement of balancing diverse needs, interests, privileges and vulnerabilities. And is no straightforward matter, as each consideration cuts across numerous other factors related to capacities and vulnerabilities of individuals.

People become judicious and vigilant, and yet there are no straightforward judgments or answers. Sometimes the most prudent people get Covid-19; sometimes the fittest suffer the most to overcome the disease. Every contact is a potential contagion; everyone can be exposed; every deed is dangerous. Everything must be considered. With too many unknowns, the preferred

option is always to slow down and to travel, speak, work, or move *less*, to protect the most vulnerable.

In sum, the ethics of precaution operate by "accumulation" and infuse a social consensus both progressive and stifling, much like the hygienists of the late nineteenth century in Europe, described by Bruno Latour in the *Pasteurization of France*. They sought to transform the health system by recommending a list of methods to be applied to prevent ill health and stop contagion. Latour (1988, p. 49) defines a "cumulative and precautionary" style:

> the rhetoric of the hygienists… has no central argument. It is made of an accumulation of advice, precautions, recipes, opinions, statistics, remedies, regulations, anecdotes, case studies. It is, indeed, an accumulation… Illness, as defined by the hygienists, can be caused by almost anything. Typhus may be due to a contagion, but it may also be due to the soil, the air, overcrowding. Nothing must be ignored, nothing dismissed. Too many causes can be found side by side to allow for any definite position on the matter. Everything must be considered… If anything can cause an illness, nothing can be ignored; it is necessary to be able to act everywhere and on everything at once.
>
> (Latour, 1988, p. 20)

This historical parallel is interesting because the hygienists tried to adapt to a health crisis before "science" could impose truth (that is, before Pasteur and others linked the bacteria to the diseases and thus vaccinations could be developed). Similarly, the ethics of precaution operate in times where there are neither efficient treatments, nor vaccination for Covid-19; and the EU operates in a world devoid of liberal values and certainties, where conflicts and crises are difficult to end.

For the hygienists of the nineteenth century, as much as for today's emerging consensus around resilience, caution was necessary and yet insufficient: "However much they might take precautions against everything and observe everywhere, disease returned, as if no fixed causes could be attributed to it" (Latour, 1988, p. 21). The hygienists transformed the health system and created wealth, although new viruses and bacteria kept defying their measures. Importantly for the argument here, they influenced society and science, "defined what was at stake, prescribed the aims, posed the problems, demanded that others should solve them, distributed praise or blame, and laid down priorities" (Latour, 1988, p. 25), as much as the ethics of precaution is fueling the need for promoting resilience (and failing) in a post-coronavirus world.

A world made safe for viruses and resilience

The ethics of precaution have made everyone aware of the suffering of the most deprived people: marginalized neighborhoods, shantytowns, or nursing

homes have been decimated by the virus (Azmanova, this volume). More cruelly, the responses to the coronavirus may have flattened the curve, but have also generated harmful consequences for those who already struggled: from the working classes who live in crowded houses and who are employed in jobs with high exposure to disease or who have lost their jobs, to women who suffer the increase in domestic abuse and do more childcare, home-schooling and domestic labor while still working remotely (Baker, 2020). Several studies have shown how decades of neoliberalism have decapacitated states and local governments. Their health care systems are short-handed and ill-prepared to respond to a pandemic, and pharmaceutical companies have little interest in investing in infectious disease prevention and treatment (Harvey, 2020; Rogers, 2020). Kenan Malik summed it up like this: "the devastation wreaked by the virus is not equally shared," "the virus does not discriminate… but societies do" (Malik, 2020).

Yet, while both the ethics of precaution and resilience policy approaches show greater awareness of the effects that policies have on global inequalities, they seem to neutralize the possibility to change them (at least in the short term). For both tend to disassociate specific risks from causes of capitalist production and consumption, or historical colonial and racialized relations. Instead, I argue in this final section, the responsibility falls on individuals and communities, who are overwhelmed by the effects of the disaster, who are vulnerable, sick and dangerous because they are potential sources of contagion, and thus assistance to move forward and adapt infinitely is deemed essential. Inasmuch as people are considered fragile, their resilience shall be cultivated and nurtured. The need for further intervention and regulation grows and cements in times of protracted crises.

Although resilience in policy thinking often adopts a language of ownership, empowerment and self-government (Korosteleva, this volume), a key assumption is that people are vulnerable, requiring constant monitoring and supervision to be capable of responding efficiently to conflicts, natural disasters and pandemics (Chandler & Reid, 2016). That is, people bear the responsibility for their problems – for example, contagion – and solutions such as extreme precaution need to be carefully nudged: they are weak and afflicted, but if helped they may recover and adjust; they are arrogant, selfish and make poor choices with dangerous effects, but if assisted can become generous and resilient. This perception of people as vulnerable and menacing, whose lifestyles and choices need to be both protected and vigilantly judged and supervised, to increase risk awareness and avoid harm to others, has become clearer during the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Recommendations and guidelines on how to act correctly and sensitively are pronounced by authorities, scientists, the media and ordinary people alike. From the top, drones conquer the skies of European cities, such as in

Spain, where the police in Madrid use drones to inform citizens of the rules of the state of emergency, while in Barcelona drones over the seaside promenade remind people that physical distance should be kept. The defense of authoritarian policies to correct people's behavior have been requested by epidemiologists and health authorities: "As a doctor I would say let's put tanks in the streets and let's do a police state," said Guido Marinoni, the president of the Bergamo doctors' association (Horowitz & Bubola, 2020).

European scientists and politicians have built on the measures to contain the coronavirus taken by Asian countries like China, which applied strict lockdowns, or South Korea, pioneers in testing and contact tracing. So, the idea that has become commonplace is that the earlier the actions and the heavier the restrictions of human movement, the better. Epidemiologists from Columbia University calculated that if the U.S. had started social distancing measures two weeks earlier, 83% of people who had died would probably have been saved (Pei et al., 2020). In the United Kingdom, Ian Boyd, a member of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies that provide scientific and technical advice to the government, similarly opined that two weeks would have made a staggering difference in the mortality rate (BBC, 2020). Although there have been many different scientific opinions, used, misused and abused by politicians (Bacevic, 2020), most have opted for the extension of emergency measures to protect a fragile population in danger of itself.

The media has also taken a leading role in educating people on how to do social distancing, becoming the emissaries of authorities. Celebrities trying to be influential have recorded videos to advise to "Stay at home" or celebrate "Quarantine life." From the grassroots, the same messages have become slogans in balconies and windows. People learn and teach tricks to be resilient – how to prepare homemade masks or respiratory droplets, disinfect the items purchased in the supermarket or open doors with the elbow.

In these top-down and bottom-up accounts, humans are seen as both vulnerable and dangerous to each other. The two images have operated in consonance, furthering care and supervision. As in the hygienists' narratives of the late nineteenth century, the idea of contagion nourishes a culture of fear and anxiety, where people are threatening and recast as little more than carriers of viruses: "*Disease was no longer a private misfortune but an offense to public order*," writes Latour (1988, p. 123, emphasis original). When the current health crises first hit Europe, Giorgio Agamben anticipated the tendency of governments to limit the freedom of people by intensifying and normalizing emergency measures that cancel social, emotional and political life, reducing it to a question of survival (Agamben, 2020a). Interestingly, a few weeks later, he added that people were embracing all these authoritarian measures: "Italians are prepared to sacrifice practically everything – normal living conditions, social relations, work, even friendships and religious or political beliefs – to

avoid the danger of falling ill" (Agamben, 2020b). What is remarkable is that Agamben's reputation was besmirched, as he minimized the threat of the coronavirus when he compared it to influenza. His critics defended exceptional surveillance measures because the situation was an unprecedented drama, an exception, due to the connectivity of our lives which increases people at risk (Nancy, 2020).

Agamben was probably misguided to belittle the lethality of the virus; also, the strategies of panic and strict surveillance may be the most efficient to contain an epidemic. Yet, his key point was to condemn the degradation of human life (as Europeans normalized states of exception and living in a permanent state of insecurity) and death (as the departed had no right of a funeral) (Agamben, 2020b). His article and, most importantly, the smear campaign he received, reveal a consensus on the fragility of people who need constant care and monitoring to mitigate the crises. This consensus is that policies to facilitate resilience are all the more necessary and a return to normality is both impossible and undesirable.

Although resilience approaches discard some of the state-centric and top-down policies put in place to contain the coronavirus, analysts tend to assume human fragility in the face of disaster. "The current crisis revealed in spectacular fashion just how fragile, rigid and vulnerable our societies had become," highlight Chris Zebrowski and Ksenia Chmutina (2020). This fragility thus needs to be fixed, recovered, *turned* into resilience. In the conclusion, the same authors write: "what is required is the cultivation of a new 'normal'— one in which resilience is decoupled from neoliberal agendas of growth and greed, and refocused on rebuilding sustainable systems that reduce the likelihood of crises (large and small) occurring" (ibid). In sum, inasmuch as the responses to the coronavirus or resilience approaches perceive people as vulnerable and fragile, resilience turns necessarily into a therapeutic, risk-management exercise (see, further, Korosteleva, this volume). Resilience always needs to be monitored, boosted, fostered, nudged, whether it is by drones and governments, or more indirectly by civil society groups or other actors. Although critical commentators want to decouple resilience from neoliberal governance, instead they seem to open the door to more initiatives and programs to foster resilience, from cooperative projects to brilliant ideas from high-tech industries.

It appears that the need for governance to enhance resilience is expected to last forever. As Korosteleva suggests: "should resilience be always associated with an emergency, or is it more about a long-term development, shaped by a sense of 'good life' and communal values, and upheld by relevant institutions?" If in a pre-coronavirus period there was little doubt that there are no short-term and straightforward solutions to crises (Tocci, this volume), the pathogen has confirmed it. "This virus may become just another endemic virus in our

communities, and this virus may never go away," claimed a top official of the World Health Organization (BBC News, 2020). There will always be reservoirs of the virus, diseased people. It is not an enemy that can be eradicated or a threat that can be securitized and abolished with exceptional measures to then return to normal politics, but a fact of life in its vivid elaboration, which requires ever more precaution and adaptability.

Because there is no post-coronavirus world imaginable, a return to normality is not possible. South Korea, one of the first countries in lifting restrictions, experimented with a move forward towards an unknown everyday life and set a guidebook for distancing in daily life: "There is no going back to the life we had before Covid-19," claimed a senior policy coordinator at Central Disaster Management Headquarters; "Instead, we are creating a new set of social norms and culture" (Sang-Hun, 2020). At the time of writing, European states also experiment with a transition from lockdown towards a new – some call it "resilient" – normality: a way of adapting routines, social and economic activities to a life with the virus, while preventing future epidemics (Cambridge Research, 2020). It is a necessary leap into the future, where resilience needs to be made safe.

Even if death rates fall and the authorities declare an end to the pandemic, who can morally defend a return to a life with racial, class and gendered exclusions, underfunded health systems, ever-growing transportation and air pollution? Now it seems wrong, risky, unnecessary, to organize events, travel for leisure or hug other people. It is also seen as careless, complacent and arrogant. Indeed, the coronavirus has humbled Europeans, who have discovered their fragility and learned that catastrophes "could happen here" (Harman, 2020). Thus, the health crisis seems to confirm that Europeans should prepare for a future crisis that they will not be able to control; rather than look back for certainties, sustaining resilience implies a move forward toward uncharted territories:

> Those who promise to "take back control" or to "make things great again" do precisely the opposite of what is required for building or maintaining resilience as a quality. Like King Canute refusing to accept the certainty of the rising tide, they refuse to accept the inherent dynamism, complexity and connectedness of the modern world and choose to instead encourage (a futile) resistance to it, which are likely to be followed by yet more frustration and bewilderment.
>
> (Korosteleva & Flockhart, this volume)

As Europeans accept uncertainty and interconnectivity, they hold on to resilience. During the lockdown, Europeans loved slowing down, spotting wild animals in the city centers and listening to birdsong instead of cars and motorbikes. The move towards a resilient normality supposes the acceptance that crises have multiple dimensions and secrets; that the health crisis is just

a "rehearsal" that "induces, incites us to prepare for climate change" (Latour, 2020). This is a future that will find resilience wanting.

Conclusion

In May 2020, as Europeans reopen social and economic activities and experiment with a new normality, it seems morally wrong and awfully strange to try something other than acting with caution and slowing down. The health crisis has revealed that a single imprudent act could spread the virus, causing a calamity elsewhere. It has also shown the racist and capitalist logics of the system, which have affected people like Kayla Williams, a black woman from London, who died of Covid-19 after she was not considered a priority by paramedics (Misra, 2020). During the lockdown, there was a growing sensibility that we should avoid a return to a "normality" that oppresses and excludes large parts of the population. The ethics of precaution, as well as of resilience policy frameworks, encourage embracing an uncertain and open-ended future to learn to live with the virus (Pospisil, 2020).

However, the argument put forward in this chapter is that resilience policy approaches are not well equipped to move us forward. Far from problematizing the socio-economic structure of capitalism (as shown by Azmanova, this volume), resilience programs start from the assumption that individuals are both sick and dangerous to themselves. Critics of resilience show the failures of policy implementation but often share this view by demanding greater regulatory efforts to support people that are fragile, and devastated by the effects of disasters. The health crisis has accelerated the perception of a generalized "vulnerability"; although this insight may seem normal during a crisis, it was unthinkable in disasters of the past (Furedi, 2020). Today, the perception of a permanent vulnerability arrests the attention of Europeans. They would feel aghast in a complex world of uncertainty, interconnectedness and long-lasting crises if it were not for resilience and its promises. Resilience policy approaches appear all the more necessary to nudge people to act with precaution and be risk aware, and help them adapt to whatever comes.

Reference list

Agamben, G. (2020a, February 26). The state of exception provoked by an unmotivated emergency. *Positions Politics*. Retrieved from http://positionswebsite.org/giorgio-agamben-the-state-of-exception-provoked-by-an-unmotivated-emergency/.
Agamben, G. (2020b, March). Clarifications. *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*.
Avishai, B. (2020, April 21). The pandemic isn't a black swan but a portent of a more fragile global system. *The New Yorker*.

Bacevic, J. (2020, April 28). There's no such thing as just 'following the science' – coronavirus advice is political. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/28/theres-no-such-thing-just-following-the-science-coronavirus-advice-political

Baker, C. (2020). Shelter in place: The feminist and queer insecurities of 'home.' *The Disorder of Things*. Retrieved from https://thedisorderofthings.com/2020/03/30/shelter-in-place-the-feminist-and-queer-insecurities-of-home/

BBC. (2020, May 22). Coronavirus: Acting earlier would have saved lives, says Sage member. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/uk-52764645

BBC News. (2020, May 14). Coronavirus may never go away, World Health Organization warns. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/world-52643682

Buzan, B., & Hansen, L. (2009). *The evolution of international security studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge Research. (2020). *Study identifies 275 ways to reduce spread of coronavirus following lockdown*. University of Cambridge.

Chandler, D. (2020, April 9). Anthropocene authoritarianism (critique in times of corona). *Critical Legal Thinking*. Retrieved from https://criticallegalthinking.com/2020/04/09/anthropocene-authoritarianism-critique-in-times-of-corona/

Chandler, D., & Reid, J. (2016). *The neoliberal subject: Resilience, adaptation and vulnerability*. London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Cobb, K. (2020, March 29). Overreacting to coronavirus? The perverse logic of panic during a potential pandemic. *Resource Insights*. Retrieved from https://resourceinsights.blogspot.com/2020/03/overreacting-to-coronavirus-perverse.html.

Dahir, A. L. (2020, April 22). 'Instead of coronavirus, the hunger will kill us.' A global food crisis looms. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/world/africa/coronavirus-hunger-crisis.html?campaign_id=51&emc=edit_MBE_p_20200423&instance_id=17876&nl=morning-briefing&regi_id=121197783&section=topNews&segment_id=25782&te=1&user_id=d5fa3f6359319d0ff5200b14a2843bdc.

Davidson Sorkin, A. (2020, April 19). The global struggle to control the coronavirus. *The New Yorker*.

European Commission, & HR/VP. (2017). *2017 joint communication: A strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action*. JOIN(2017) 21 final. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/2017-joint-communication-strategic-approach-resilience-eus-external-action_en

Furedi, F. (2020, March 20). A disaster without precedent. *Spiked*. Retrieved from www.spiked-online.com/2020/03/20/a-disaster-without-precedent/

Harman, S. (2020, May 14). It could happen here. *Discover Society*. Retrieved from https://discoversociety.org/2020/05/14/it-could-happen-here/

Harvey, D. (2020, March 20). Anti-capitalist politics in the time of COVID-19. *Jacobin*. Retrieved from https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/david-harvey-coronavirus-political-economy-disruptions

Horowitz, J., & Bubola, E. (2020). Isolating the sick at home, Italy stores up family tragedies. *The New York Times*.

Howell, A., & Richter-Montpetit, M. (2019). Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School. *Security Dialogue*, *51*(1), 3–22. doi:10.1177/0967010619862921

Latour, B. (1988). *The pasteurization of France*. Translated by Alan Sheridan and John Law. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Malik, K. (2020, April 5). Whether in the UK or the developing world, we're not all in coronavirus together. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/05/whether-in-the-uk-or-the-developing-world-were-not-all-in-coronavirus-together

Misra, A. (2020, April 10). Humanity's catastrophe: Following Sylvia Wynter in the age of coronavirus. *Critical Legal Thinking*. Retrieved from https://criticallegalthinking.com/2020/04/10/de-prioritising-humanity/

Nancy, J. L. (2020). Viral exception. *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*. Retrieved from www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/

Pei, S., Kandula, S., & Shaman, J. (2020). Differential effects of intervention timing on COVID-19 spread in the United States. *MedRxiv*, May. doi:10.1101/2020.05.15.20103655

Pospisil, J. (2020, March 25). The virus that ends us: On the ethics of withdrawal and affirmation. *CDP Policy Blog*. Retrieved from https://policyblog.uni-graz.at/2020/03/the-virus-that-ends-us-on-the-ethics-of-withdrawal-and-affirmation/

Pueyo, T. (2020, March 19). Coronavirus: The hammer and the dance. *Medium*. Retrieved from https://medium.com/@tomaspueyo/coronavirus-the-hammer-and-the-dance-be9337092b56

Renwick, D. (2020, March 23). An expert guide to physical distancing – and what to do if friends and family aren't onboard. *The Guardian*.

Rogers, P. (2020). *Austerity in the age of COVID-19: A match made in hell?* Oxford Research Group. Retrieved from www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/austerity-in-the-age-of-covid-19-a-match-made-in-hell

Roy, A. (2020, April 3). The pandemic is a portal. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca

Rutazibwa, O. U. (2020). Hidden in plain sight: Coloniality, capitalism and race/ism as far as the eye can see. *Millennium*, *48*(2), 221–241. doi:10.1177/0305829819889575

Safi, M., Giuffrida, A., & Jones, S. (2020, May 10). Global report: Covid-19 cases rise in Germany as Wuhan reports first infection in weeks. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/10/global-report-covid-19-cases-rise-in-germany-as-wuhan-reports-first-infection-in-weeks

Sang-Hun, C. (2020, May 9). As South Korea eases limits, virus cluster prompts Seoul to close bars. *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2020/05/09/world/asia/coronavirus-south-korea-second-wave.html

Taleb, N. N., & Norman. J. (2020). *Ethics of precaution: Individual and systemic risk*. Unpublished paper. Retrieved from www.academia.edu/42223846/Ethics_of_Precaution_Individual_and_Systemic_Risk

Zebrowksi, C., & Chmutina, K. (2020, May 11). COVID-19 proves that we never were resilient. E-International Relations. Retrieved from www.e-ir.info/2020/05/11/opinion-covid-19-proves-that-we-never-were-resilient/