

# How COVID-19 is transforming what it means to be a citizen

Though only a small percentage of the global population has contracted COVID-19, entire populations are – and will continue to be – affected by it.

In other words: we face not merely a health challenge – but also a slew of economic, political and social ones.

Individuals, societies and economies are being dragged into entirely new – and tumultuous – futures, testing existing structures, practices and capacities.

Shoulder-to-shoulder with medical innovators who race towards vaccines and treatments options for the health challenge, the RMIT-Cisco Health Transformation Lab is rapidly mobilising to explore and solve the social and economic ones.

This pandemic is transforming what is being demanded of the citizen in radical ways.

By understanding the transformation of the citizen across key dimensions, the Lab is developing insights, tools and initiatives that address the social, economic and systemic fallouts – and opportunities – from this unprecedented global health event

## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES:

- **Signal vs. Noise:** A repository of trusted and reliable COVID-19 resources to overcome fake news and needless strain
- **Ethics and Opportunities of Technology & Open Data:** An exploration of potential global collaboration between scientists, citizens, and health networks
- **Visibility vs Invisibility:** Thoughts on how what we can see (due to scale, size, time, panic) biases our actions

## New Dynamics of Information, Trust & Attention

While health literacy has perhaps never been higher, individuals are being asked to navigate an explosion of information – as though their lives depend on it. The burden is being shifted to the individual in unprecedented ways to know where to go, what to trust and what to do.

## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES:

- **Spatial Isolation Not Social Isolation:** why isolation need not equal loneliness – from IoT to doorstep drops
- **A Guide to Self-Isolation:** tools and resources to assist those self-isolating, and those who want to help
- **Redefining the Individual and The Collective:** trade-offs, risk and the new dynamics of post-COVID citizenship
- **Kindness-as-Vaccine:** mental health, anxiety and social inoculation against panic

## Rise of the Health Promoting Individual

In all kinds of ways, the citizen is being asked to take on health system roles – from scanning and assessing risk to imposing and monitoring “quarantine”. These are uncharted territories for individuals, who are seeking new ways of coping with these roles and their implications.

## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES:

- **Reimaging Collaboration from a Distance:** new roles, technologies, cultures – and pitfalls – on the path to a more distributed workspace
- **Our Story:** a video journey through undiscovered innovation territory as the Lab embraces virtual work
- **Time to Think:** exploring the dynamic between isolation and collaboration in learning and discovery

## The Dispersion of Productivity

The organisation of work and education is now being forced – at scale and at pace – into a paradigm of dispersion and remoteness. And while we this paradigm has promised much for so long, at the pivotal moment we must explore and test it in new and urgent ways.

## A Transformed Health System Interface

The current pandemic is highlighting many of the long known yet often ignored weaknesses in healthcare systems.

But simultaneously, this time of change and uncertainty is exposing and catalysing new models and opportunities to accommodate the changing relationship between individual and the system.

## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES:

- **Catalysing Virtual Care:** from slogan to necessity, the pandemic is bringing to life models that have long dwelt at the fringes of our system
- **Mobilising Health:** from the Cisco MediBus to on-demand volunteerism, the health system is breaking its traditional walls and reaching towards communities and people
- **D.I.Y. Health:** dynamics of responsibility control are creating opportunities – for good and for ill – for citizens to “do it themselves”, and the system must learn to cope
- **Releasing Latent Capacity:** from within and beyond health – from the Good Sam app to MediStays to health conscription

## A New Embeddedness

Until recently a member of a “global family”, the individual’s sense of connection is fractured and evolving. Dynamics and relationships are shifting, at once less global and more global; simultaneously hyper-local and thoroughly atomised.

## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES:

- **Re-negotiating Globalisation:** global connection at a time of lockdowns, shut-ins and international pandemic
- **Dynamics of [cybernetic] solidarity:** street-level, global, virtual connection at a time when solidarity is perhaps more goal-driven than ever before

## Facing into Uncertainty

The quiet spectre of change has become a howling beast – demanding our attention in new ways. Not since World War 2 have individuals lived with such pervasive, immediate, urgent uncertainty in the most basic areas of life.

## PROJECTS/INITIATIVES:

- **Learning from the Past:** comparisons, lessons and predictions from past pandemics, other science-driven debates, watershed social moments
- **Supporting Innovation in a Time of Constraint:** practical ways the Lab is supporting vulnerable groups, catalysing change and scaffolding systemic innovation at a time of “stopping everything”

