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PRESS

Self and Society in the Corona Crisis

Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences

Herausgegeben von Georg Mein und Johannes Pause

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Living and Learning in Times of Corona

Experiences from a Master Program at UniLu

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When the dean of our faculty at the University of Luxembourg invited all staff and students to contribute to an anthology on the coronavirus crisis, we were immediately interested. While we did not yet have a concrete concept for our contribution, we were thankful for the opportunity to work together on a paper and share our thoughts. We strongly felt that we must grab these kinds of opportunities as they arise and be open to where they may lead us. The following reflects our collaborative, exploratory process of coming to grips with COVID-19 and, we hope, it sheds light on some issues and experiences that have been meaningful to us and the students of our programme during these last months.

Introduction

> As a preventive measure, we have decided today to **accelerate the move to remote teaching for all programmes** effective this Monday, 16 March. This means that all in-person classes are cancelled **from tomorrow until further notice...**It is important to note that while we move towards online teaching, **the University remains open** and will carry out its missions. Research activities continue as planned. Our administration will continue to serve the community. Our goal is to promote social distancing on our campuses without reducing our activities.[Bold type in original.]

On Thursday 12 March of this year, the Rector of the University of Luxembourg sent the above message to all students, teachers, researchers, and staff. Just a few days later, the Luxembourgish government announced a nationwide lockdown plan to contain the virus. After nearly two months of reassuring messages from University leadership about the low risk of COVID-19 making its way to Luxembourg, recommendations to avoid travel to China and to self-isolate if undertaking necessary travel to and from China, quite suddenly a number of students had been placed under quarantine and the university was closing its physical doors. For some students in our programme – the Masters of Learning and Communication in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts (MultiLearn) – this was a relief. It was a fulfilment of their anxious expectations that we in Luxembourg would soon be living with the virus, and a validation of their needs and ideas about keeping themselves safe by, for example, wearing masks and avoiding public

transport. For other students, this signalled the start of an uncertain, possibly boring, possibly inconvenient, possibly frightening and disruptive future. The varied reactions to COVID-19 at this point and the subsequent process of coping with remote teaching and confinement over the following weeks exposed the ways in which students in our programme are often enmeshed in different configurations of time and space, even during more 'normal' times.

While working or studying in Luxemburg, many of us contemporaneously share very different life worlds with family, friends, and peer groups, here and in other countries, geographical places, or time zones. All of these connecting points add up to a complex network of social relationships that anchors us as individuals. As the lockdown began and teaching moved online, we quickly noticed how much such diverse anchoring shapes our experiences of living in Luxembourg and of being in the classroom, and how much the experience of both would soon be affected by the pandemic.

Based on our personal reflections and the responses of first year students from our programme, this paper will explore some of the ways in which COVID-19 has highlighted our different entanglements with time and space, producing varying and distinct 'perceptions of crisis'. Some of these entanglements revealed themselves in new ways during the pandemic. In others, we have been enmeshed long before the pandemic and long before we joined this MultiLearn cohort in September 2019. We do not claim to depict any kind of absolute reality of what it means to live with, under, or during the coronavirus; rather, we seek to provide some insights into what it has been like for students to live a Master's program in this period, given their various entanglements and anchorings.

The Masters of Learning and Communication in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts is a multidisciplinary program aimed at studying multilingualism and multiculturalism, and the social dynamics these create in contexts of education, the work place, and digital media environments, all shaped by migration, global connectivity and complex local mix-ups of people interacting and communicating. Multilingualism is both a subject of study and an inherent feature of the program. Courses are conducted in French, German, and English or some combination of these, and many teachers undertake considerable effort to acknowledge and make space for students' home languages. Students are encouraged to experiment with language, to draw on their many linguistic resources, and to try out academic writing in the languages of the program with which they are least comfortable. In a similar vein, most courses are discussion-based and teachers welcome debate and the free sharing of opinions. This work aims towards a 'commoning of knowledge', understood as the process of co-producing knowledge through joint activity and experimentation, without prioritising consensus or the reproduction of a narrow set of norms (Ingold 2018). For many students, this attention to linguistic diversity and dialogic co-construction is an inspiring change from their prior academic experiences, in which monolingualism dominated and knowledge needed to be memorised and reproduced (de Saint Georges Budach/Tress 2020).

With this in mind, we wondered how students' experiences of the programme would be impacted after the university announced the switch to remote learning and teachers scrambled to find ways to move their courses online overnight. How would discussion

take place, or would it at all? What would the process of knowledge co-construction look like at a distance? How would students connect with each other, with teachers, with course materials and content? What kinds of choices would students make as they sought to balance a new array of coursework, assignments, and responsibilities at home? How might this change the ways students related to courses and their contents?

To this end, we put together some questions meant to elicit students' ideas about a particular course (Religion, Language, and Media). We wondered how the students' experience of this course changed as it moved online. Did the move evoke new questions around or angles on the course content? What choices would students make about their final assignments, for which more and new options were proposed after the change to remote teaching. We sent these questions out to the class, along with an invitation for any interested students to contact us about co-authoring the paper.

Responses were initially slow to come, as students were overwhelmed with coursework, jobs that had moved online or been lost, or negotiating their time and space with toddlers and older children who needed help with their own online schoolwork. However, as we sent gentle reminders and awaited answers, two students expressed their interest in joining our writing team as co-authors. Forming a group of four, we met seven times over a period of seven weeks in online sessions to discuss our ideas and gradually give shape to the paper. Our first meeting meandered: we talked about what had been going on in our lives and how we had been coping as confinement continued, what we thought other students expected of teachers and remote teaching and what they shared amongst themselves about their wants, needs, and concerns at this time.

By the end of this conversation, we had determined several things. First, we decided to send the same questions to another class (Critical Perspectives on Health) and to offer the option of interviews for any who would rather voice than write their ideas. Second, looking at the few responses we had received at that point, it seemed that issues of space and the management of time and work might be interesting to explore further. Normally, our time and daily work are organised and structured spatially. Time, types and focus of work, and periods of intense work are broken up by moving from one classroom to the next, to the library, to home. What happens, we wondered, when a student is confined to a single space over a long period of time in which time 'drags on', rather than flowing fluidly? How do students arrange themselves, their time and work in such conditions of relative immobility?

As the discussions in our writing group stretched out over several meetings, and as we got more responses and reflected on our personal circumstances, we continued to play with these ideas and began to entertain others when they arose—concepts of freedom and confinement in different places, emerging issues around proximity and the sharing of space with others, finding ways to be social at a distance, economic concerns. Ultimately, we felt that the (very) big topics of space and time were most interesting for us. These issues connected us back not only to some of our early ideas, but they also seemed to address an important dimension of this Master's programme as a whole. As different experiences of space and time emerged as key themes in both the students' answers shared in the questionnaire and interviews and in our own discussions among members of the writing team, we began to think about how COVID highlighted these

different trajectories, timelines and relationships across space in particular ways. We noticed with heightened clarity how these networks of relationships are structured differently for each of us, spanning out more locally for some or more globally for others, how they resonate with our individual life trajectories, and how important they are in normal times—and even more so in times of crisis—as points of reference and connectivity. They anchor our own momentary experience into a wider net of relations, helping us to make sense of a crisis, affording support and clarifying our own position and place in the world, at a time when coordinates that offered balance previously were now shaken.

We realised that even prior to the lockdown, when we were all emplaced in Luxembourg, co-present during class time, students and teachers were also enmeshed in different timelines of the virus, different connections across space, different imaginations of possible futures, all of which shaped our experiences of the semester. To some who were already living the virus through their connections to other places and people in areas where COVID-19 had broken out earlier, the threat and presence of the virus was immediate, urgent, and close. In their experiences of the semester, they watched teachers and the university continue on as if nothing was happening, as if China was at such a remove that events therein had no bearing on Luxembourg. This created increasing anxiety and frustration for these students. For other students in the program, the virus was slower to become present and immediate, such that even when the university announced a lockdown, they remained concerned about access to the library, the cafeteria, boredom, and isolation.

We reflected on the ways that these entanglements of time and space are likely to always be present in the classroom, always impacting what students bring to their courses and how they experience the programme. It is not that COVID created these entanglements, but that the conditions of the pandemic brought them to the fore and made them more apparent and maybe more tangible. Shared physical presence, we found, does not mean that what we share and live resonates similarly with everyone in the room. Our different anchorings in timelines and relationships with and across space have been at work in the classroom all along. But they remained largely hidden and unarticulated—kept away from the 'commoning of knowledge' where they could have enriched the debate by adding another perspective. Writing this paper together provided a space to articulate some of these hidden connections that were carried by our co-authors and fellow-students, and that emerged from the questionnaire responses, interviews, and from our own discussion. Maybe it took the COVID-19 crisis to discern this thread, to pick it up and to think it through as a new angle and way to explore difference and diversity in this Master's program which we had not found, considered, nor understood before.

In what follows, we discuss some of these different perspectives on the coronavirus and their entanglements and anchorings in time, space, and social relations. For us, learning from the crisis means to consider whether and how the things we learn in exceptional times can also inform our ideas and practices in non-exceptional times. In our writing, we have aimed to maintain a sense of the dialogue that emerged in our discussions for this paper. We hope that narrating our experiences of co-authoring this paper

and the lessons we have learned from it provides our readers with a view into the process and a way to encounter some of our thoughts and feelings first-hand. Our goal has been to co-produce an account that reflects the same kind of co-production of knowledge we seek as teachers and students in our classrooms; we came together to create something new by attending and responding to our multiple stances, trajectories, and ideologies (Ingold 2018). We do not seek to create any kind of 'plan' or 'map' for other MA programs, but to share our insights and the collective endeavour from which they emerged, and perhaps to spark some discussion or reflection amongst our readers.

Our paper is structured by the flow of the phenomenon of COVID-19 and the interplay between life at large and student life in its specificities, and reflects the ways that our discussions as a group unfolded. We begin by looking back at Yimin's experiences as she watched how COVID moved from China to Luxembourg. Then, with Mara's reflection, we zoom in on the specifics of student life and work under COVID in Luxembourg. In the light of her own experience and spatial-temporal coordinates, Mara reflects on the challenges some of the students in the program faced in this period. Looking forward to a return to the classroom (or, most likely, some combination of remote and classroom teaching), Gabi considers her own efforts as a teacher and program coordinator and how she might take lessons from this period into the future. Finally, we come together to reflect on what we have learned in the process of living and co-writing under COVID and how we might draw on these insights in the future.

Yimin

When the corona-confinement in Luxembourg began, I was in the second semester of the MultiLearn Program at the University of Luxembourg. During this global public health crisis, I realised how closely individuals and countries are connected to each other and, as a Chinese student in Europe, I have had the opportunity to observe and experience the situation from an intercultural perspective. It has been my pleasure to share and discuss my experience with my co-authors and any readers.

Watching Corona Arrive

"In the battle against corona, Chinese people are the main force in the first half, then the rest of the world fights hard in the second half, and the Chinese who stay abroad, they have to fight through the whole game ..." (https://p.dw.com/p/3Zq8G). As a Chinese student who is studying abroad, I understand the helplessness behind the humour in this post.

"We are not children anymore, we are afraid this time." In 2003, when SARS broke out in Beijing, my friends and I were just preschool children. Hardly understanding what was happening, we knew neither worries nor fears. However, 17 years later, as young adults many of whose loved ones belong to the most vulnerable age group, we truly felt the fear that we didn't sense in childhood. For us who are studying abroad, though the virus was geographically far away, it still brought true concerns. We are like travelling kites, and no matter how far away we fly, our family is always the kite line that

reminds us where we belong. We fear that our kite lines would be cut off by the virus. My best friend who studies in France had to turn off the notifications for all her news apps because she really needed to "escape" from the news about the increasing numbers of new cases every day. A little Spring Festival party of my bachelor fellows in Germany ended up in repressed tears after cups of beer. It's another kind of pain to be separated from the people you care about in difficult times.

COVID-19 has been like a heavy rock pressing on our chests since January. For me, the anxiety started before the first case in the Grand Duchy. I remember how I lost my temper with my mother on the phone two days before the Chinese New Year, because she was still hesitating over whether she should travel back to our hometown for a family reunion. I still feel shame thinking about how I shouted, "don't you ever think of what could happen if you get infected on the plane" at my mother. In fact, I was also angry at myself. At that time, my father had come to Luxembourg to visit me and if it weren't for this, my mother wouldn't have been alone during this most important family festival. And I even became the one who was forcing her to stay in loneliness. In the end, my mother didn't travel. This was the first Chinese New Year that I didn't spend at home. I can't really say it was an unpleasant one, but it was indeed not a very cheerful one either. I didn't really know how to vent my anxiety. "My family and friends in China are worried enough. The virus is not an issue here in Luxembourg."

Yet strangely, after COVID-19 finally caused a huge concern in Europe, my friends and I became rather calm. Most of my close Chinese friends in Europe decided to stay, and so did I choose to remain in Luxembourg. Even on the day the Luxembourg government declared a national state of emergency, I didn't really feel panic as months ago I thought I would. I have to admit when I heard this declaration and got confirmation from the university that classes would be moved online, a sense of relief and safety even squeezed away the anxiety.

I immediately told my parents and close friends. We were all relieved. "Stay home, only go out for shopping if necessary", said my parents, my aunts, my cousins and my old friends. "It's like there is a pot of boiling water and I know if I'm not careful enough and touch it, I will get hurt. So all I have to do is try to stay away from it and protect myself and that's all, it's actually nothing so dramatic." This psychological change is really interesting, because I could still remember the anxiety when reading the news about the first suspected case in Luxembourg and the huge relief when finding out that the patient ultimately tested negative. I asked myself if I was getting numb. Actually I still haven't found a satisfying answer to this question.

Seeking Understanding during Corona

At the same time, going into lockdown has not been a panacea. Besides the virus itself, we have also had to deal with cultural differences or even possible racial problems even before COVID-19 arrived in Europe: should we start wearing masks? How could we persuade our international friends to give up parties? More Chinese people are getting teased, or even beaten, in the street—should we fight back or put up with it? It's a process through which my friends and I learned how to both understand and fight.

Though angry and aggrieved at the beginning, over time we saw that people here have different conceptions of 'mask' and 'freedom'.

Before COVID-19, in European society, those wearing masks were considered to be already sick and they were supposed to stay home in order to avoid infecting others. Therefore, wearing a mask in public places was regarded as abnormal and irresponsible. On the contrary, in China masks are seen as one of the most effective weapons to protect ourselves and others against infectious respiratory diseases, but they are not a symbol of sickness. As for the attitude towards quarantine, in the beginning, the western media seemed to hold a relatively critical attitude towards the measurements the Chinese government had taken. The confinement was reported as a kind of incursion on individual freedom.

However, I felt that when Chinese people realised the severity of the matter, it was not the government who 'forced' them to stay home, but a voluntary behaviour of most people. People 'freely' chose to stay at home. 'Stay home' has become a new virtue and social norm, that later also became the case in Europe. Chinese people also understand the meaning of 'freedom'. History has already proved that if necessary, we are always ready to sacrifice our lives for liberty. But for me, when facing a pandemic, the individual 'freedom' of going out for non-necessary activities is not sacred freedom as I understand it. However, a friend of mine who is studying in Germany shared her thoughts: "I think the freedom in the European and American understanding is that you can't interfere with my own decision, even if it's only about the tiniest things in my daily life. No one can interfere with my habit or daily routine. Now the government suddenly orders me to change my life. They may think this already harms their freedom."

My friends and I have found that people understand the word 'freedom' differently, which is rooted in social and cultural contexts. We can't really judge who's right and who's wrong. But in the time of the virus, certain sacrifices must be made. We also learned that the fact that we have reached some understanding, does not mean that everyone has. We have learned that 'tolerance' does not always bring respect. To those who know no sympathy and respect, or even hold racist ideas, we need to fight back firmly.

Finding Courage during Corona

At the same time, I have found support in unexpected ways, places, and people in Luxembourg. I was surprised, for example, when an Italian classmate in my Luxembourgish class reached out to me one day just before the lockdown began. Up to that point, we hadn't talked to each other except during Luxembourgish speaking exercises.

"Yimin, comment va ta famille en Chine?"

"Oh thank you they are all fine, we are lucky."

"Sorry I forgot you don't speak French! It's just I have seen your worried face these past two weeks so I think we should talk about the issue."

I'm still not strong enough to hide the negative feelings. Moved but also a bit shy, I admitted that I was upset seeing the number of new cases going up every day.

"I'm sorry that there are also cases in Italy…"

"You don't have to say sorry. It's not anyone's fault. No one wants to be sick, we can't control such things! I get angry reading the ugly comments online, they are only using it as an excuse. Racists always have other reasons to attack others even without a virus."

I know some of my friends who are studying abroad had gone through such terrible experiences. How I wish they could also have heard these words in person!

It was our last session. Next semester, we would go to different campuses for Luxembourgish classes. Suddenly I was gripped by regret. The class was over. I didn't leave in a hurry as usual since I had to catch the train. How could I tell her I'm really grateful? "Thank you" sounds too weak. Just when I was unsure about whether I could ask her for a hug, she handed over her business card.

"Yimin, if you are willing to, let's keep in touch! I'm working in Luxembourg, don't hesitate if you need any help," she looked into my eyes, "you are alone here, far away from your country."

And then she held me in her arms.

That day was a pleasant sunny day, but my eyes were misty as if have been walking in a drizzle.

We've kept in touch via Whatsapp since then and had several chats during quarantine. She is not the only one who reached out to me in those days. Many of our classmates gave me great support via social media even though we didn't meet during the winter vacation. It means a lot to me, and also to my Chinese friends who are studying abroad. It is their kindness that gave me the power to face the possible malice. Because of them, I believe even if there are idiots out there, there are also great people so that everything will ultimately be fine.

I have even found some comfort in my interactions with strangers. One day, as I was removing my mask after leaving the supermarket, carefully keeping my fingers from touching my face, I caught the eye of a woman about to enter the market. As I sighed with relief, taking a deep breath of fresh air with my mask off, and as she reached up to put her mask on, we both smiled. With that glance, I felt we exchanged encouragement and understanding, and perhaps also a little bit of resignation.

Reflecting on Corona

Looking back on my experience under Corona in Luxembourg, I feel I have discovered several things. In some sense, I realised that I overestimated myself and perhaps underestimated some others.

Watching my fellow students initial reactions when our university closed its doors, I was appalled. They did not seem to take it seriously. I read on Facebook pages that students were asking "Is the Learning Centre still open?" "Can I still go to Mensa for lunch?" I think if I could I would shout in the Facebook reply! *Why can't you study in your room?? Is that so difficult to cook yourself a lunch??*

But soon I found that I couldn't concentrate on my university work as before. I got tired of cooking two meals every day. I really missed the nice chats we had during class breaks. My new life in Luxembourg had just begun, yet it had to pause. I didn't feel motivated anymore. Every day new questions were emerging: Should I go home or stay? What if there are cases in student residences? What if I get sick? Also the never-ending uni emails are getting me more and more annoyed. When I received the email from Christelle and Gabi asking about our ideas on remote teaching, I just kind of ignored it. "Whatever you say is fine. Actually now I just don't want to study at all." And yet the chat in our student Whatsapp group reminded me that I cannot be so downhearted and selfish.

> "Feel free to pm me if anything comes to your mind, I'll collect your ideas and forward them to Gabi."

> "Please allow me to take care of all the technical stuff."

> "I signed up for the volunteer work at the temporary hospital in Rockhal."

> "Don't hesitate to call me if you need anything."

I began to rethink, too, how I am linked with my motherland and my host country in this special time as an overseas Chinese student. I realised my responsibility to myself, my family and the countries where my homes are. I'm glad that this is the first time I was able to donate money earned by myself to help my country in difficulties, though it is only a tiny little bit. It is also a way to support my family though I'm not with them. The sooner the whole country wins the battle against the virus, the sooner my family will be safe. Also, when I argue with some people who hold prejudice against China in this crisis, I'm also earning rights for myself. People won't truly respect me as an individual if they don't respect where I'm from.

As for Luxembourg, I have developed a trust in it and I gained a sense of home even during this pandemic. It would be unfair to judge its early responses to the crisis from a 'God's perspective' (though I still think Luxembourg could have done even better in the beginning). I'm lucky to always meet nice people here, and I'm thankful to all the people who showed solidarity during this hard time. Also, I appreciate its government for all the anti-epidemic measures. When I received the masks from the Luxembourgish

government and found out all of them are made in China, a warm feeling of having two homes in two countries fulfilled my heart. I believe if I can protect myself from the disease, to some degree I'm also doing my host a favour: one less case would also mean one less source of infection in Luxembourg.

It is indeed not so easy being far away from home at such a special time. But this is an experience that makes me stronger.

Mara

I was drawn to this project because it deals with the coronavirus both on a personal level and on a more global level, and because it has raised interesting issues and questions concerning life after the crisis. As a Luxembourgish student in the MultiLearn, I was convinced that the multiple perspectives and viewpoints expressed in other people's answers and our fruitful discussions would be enriching and would help me understand and process this situation.

Stop living but keep studying? What it means to be a student during confinement

It is difficult to imagine an area of human activity that has not been impacted by the coronavirus health crisis. Therefore, it was not surprising that students, who were suddenly expected to process a considerable amount of workload at home, might have had difficulties adapting to remote learning and online classes. Additionally, it should be mentioned that many classmates were far away from home and could not be with their loved ones during this unprecedented crisis. With the interesting and thought-provoking input of my fellow classmates (Hannah (Pseudonym), Chloe (Pseudonym), Emma (Pseudonym), Michael, Melany, Laura, Kim, Zicheng, Yimin and Mara), I have outlined the most pressing issues that the students of our Master program faced during and because of the confinement, especially in relation to two courses: *Religion, Language and Media* and *Critical Perspectives on Health* (though we sent our questionnaire to both courses, ultimately the majority of responses we received were in reference to the first course).

The time when the data was collected was quite particular as it was in the middle of confinement. During this period, we did not know when we would be allowed to go out again and we had no immediate plans about how the near future was going to unfold. This is likely why my classmates' answers were quite specific and did not show any insight about de-confinement. It was a time in which we were learning to deal with being at home all day: this was our immediate reality. Therefore, this piece focuses only on how my classmates and I experienced confinement. Of course, as the questions were focused on university learning and particular courses, very little information was shared about more personal and in-depth ways of dealing with this crisis. Consequently, I want to underline that this piece is my personal reflection on this situation and my own understanding of my classmates' answers. I do not claim to have reproduced the exact and truthful account of what my classmates meant when answering these questions:

their input is thus considered as an inspiration that helped me reflect on this current situation and appreciate different perspectives.

Time and Workload

In times of confinement, you might have thought that you suddenly could have all the time in the world at your disposal: a new found time that could allow you to work more effectively than if you had been at university. However, almost immediately after the beginning of online classes, I realised that I had to rethink this idealistic belief. It became apparent over the weeks that our relationship with time was changing considerably. Our planning skills, work organisation and the balance between our studies and our private lives were disrupted. Some confined people might have managed to learn new recipes every day or to learn a new instrument; but that may not have been the case for the majority of the students and course tutors of our programme.

Moreover, I started reflecting on different 'times' during confinement. First of all, I thought about what life was like before the lockdown. Indeed, sometimes it feels strange to think that back in February, on the first day of class of the semester, almost everyone hugged each other to say hello. The coronavirus was clearly in the back of my mind, but it still felt relatively far away. At the time, I was thinking more about greeting my classmates than the low probability of becoming infected. Indeed, during that time, I naively did not imagine that the virus would have such an impact on Luxembourg. Of course, when the first positive case was announced, I remember exactly what I was doing. It was 29 February and ironically I was getting ready to go to a nightclub. In the car, I discussed this matter with my friend, and we thought "well it is just one confirmed case for now so we should be fine". So, we spent the evening in a packed nightclub, hugging people we knew and dancing in close proximity to other people.

In retrospect, it is wild to think that less than two weeks later, these clubs closed down, and this type of activity was banned. When the news started to intensely cover the coronavirus in Luxembourg with frequent press conferences by official authorities, it started to feel increasingly serious. It felt like we had to prepare ourselves for a real crisis in Luxembourg. I usually have this feeling of safety in Luxembourg: that is one of the reasons why I was not that worried at first. Indeed, to me, it often feels like the country is shielded from certain crises, as if we are living in a bubble. But I could not have been more wrong. This time, Luxembourg was not shielded and was impacted quite seriously. For a small country, the number of cases and deaths have been quite alarming. It was certainly a lesson for me not to feel too protected anywhere.

When the first cases appeared at our university, it started to feel very close. We shared classrooms with many different study programmes, and we had no idea about how many people had touched the desks or the doorknobs. Therefore, many of our classmates started to be worried and asked one of our professors on Thursday, 12 March why only some study programmes were closed and not the whole university. Little did we know that very day was going to be our last day of on-campus classes. Approximately one hour after I came back home, we received an email that all physical classes were cancelled. It all happened really quickly. But still, there had been no national lockdown

yet. It was a strange situation because many institutions like schools were starting to close, but the movement of the population had not been completely stopped yet. Only four days later, the population of Luxembourg was asked to stay at home. It had seemed inevitable, especially because we were aware of similar measures in neighbouring countries. This was when the new conception of time started. This was when everything changed.

Of course, during confinement, nostalgia was not the only element that was present in our thoughts—we were also consumed by the situation and its challenges. Maintaining a balance between personal and student life became particularly difficult. Especially because as students, we noticed that the workload was constantly increasing. Nevertheless, it was also difficult for our professors to deal with this new situation: they had to learn how to teach online classes and how to transfer class-based learning into homework for the students. Therefore, it quickly became challenging for us to follow every reading and class at once: it seemed like we were chasing after time. For example, Hannah noted that she found it difficult to focus on too many classes and tasks at the same time. Of course, we have different profiles as students: full-time, part-time, working students with or without families to take care of. For some, like Chloe and Emma, there was a certain regret that time constraints did not allow them to delve into the course content as much as they would have liked, even though they were interested in them. It is clear that the confinement had a considerable impact on our learning process.

This situation led most teachers to become more flexible with deadlines over time. In fact, there was, for the most part, a fairly good exchange between the teachers and the students. We were (and still are) in an unprecedented situation and had to make the best of it, even if sometimes that meant not being able to work to our full capacity. Kim underlined this when she said that it was natural to have difficulties with the workload and with the separation between the studies, work and personal life. On a positive note, being able to complete her tasks helped Kim stay motivated for the remainder of the classes. This also reminded me to be more indulgent and patient with myself.

Moreover, this situation made everyone learn new technical skills. I found it very useful to learn how to record my presentations as this was one of my main worries at the beginning of the confinement. It was also challenging for us to find new ways of organising ourselves. Melany felt that even though she has been distracted by the fear of the virus, she found that studying from home gave her flexibility and a certain enjoyment. She found that dividing her workload into small portions during the day has helped her.

At the same time, I and many students were also focused on thoughts about the future. How is the crisis going to influence our decision-making? Is working from home going to become the norm? Are we going to become more conscious of the environment, now that we see that nature has had the opportunity to breathe during confinement? What influence is it going to have on politics? This crisis triggered many questions for the immediate and the long-term future.

Communication and Contact

I must admit that I have been very privileged during this crisis. Not only was I going to university in my own country and living at my family home, but I had the possibility to stay in touch with everyone who was dear to me. I never had to wait for flights to re-open, move out of my student dormitory or be far away from my close family. Therefore, I know that I am lucky to be in this situation and I realise this has not been the case for the majority of people. This is why, the class discussions and the physical class-time were maybe less essential for me than for other students.

However, I still missed being in a room with my classmates, as it was one of the most enriching parts of our programme and, frankly, they are a great group of people to be around. During the first semester, one thing that seemed to alleviate the stress of deadlines was the fact that we were able to see each other and to discuss the course content together. When the confinement was introduced, it became even more noticeable how important and valuable class discussions—now held online and often optional—were for us and how much impact they had on our studies. Hannah had the feeling that there was no real exchange of knowledge between students and teachers anymore as she would have expected more heated debates in certain classes. Normally, class time would help us to better understand readings that are sometimes too challenging to deal with on our own. Michael mentioned that the confinement made it much harder for him to keep up with the content of the Religion, Language and Media class. But, in this difficult time, it was apparent that students were also capable of making suggestions. Indeed, Yimin expressed her preference for adding more online classes to discuss certain challenging points from readings and to reduce written tasks. The goal was to give the courses a more interactive shape and to reduce the workload. However, not everyone felt that communication was missing. Interestingly, Kim found that it was possible to discuss topics and to exchange valuable opinions, even in a remote way.

Moreover, as students, we are also lucky to be part of a generation that has a natural ability to use tools like social media, Skype and other videoconference options. This is unfortunately not the case for elder generations that have difficulties staying in touch. Personally, I had only had limited contact with my grandparents during confinement because they did not know how to use *Skype* or *FaceTime*. So, it was apparent that confinement had different impacts for people according to age, country, financial status and work situation. Furthermore, it became clear that marginalised groups have been disadvantaged in every way during this coronavirus crisis. Therefore, this period also made me reevaluate the privileged position I occupy during this crisis and beyond.

Spaces

Questions that many people might have asked themselves during confinement were: how important are the places I used to go to (by choice or by necessity)? Fortunately, some activities that we used to do in certain places could be reconverted to home—despite not having the same effect and efficiency—like studying, working, or eating take-out from restaurants. Other activities, like certain types of sports (collective sports or swimming) or travelling, found no viable and worthy replacement at home. Therefore,

I think that confinement also encouraged some of us to start rethinking our notions of home. If you lived with other people during confinement, you were likely to notice that there were moments when you absolutely needed some time to yourself. If you lived alone during confinement, you were likely to have moments in your day when you would have cherished some human interaction. If anything, this confinement helped us learn more about ourselves and about our personal boundaries. We learned to know what is essential to us and to our well-being. Even if it was not always intentional, this lockdown has revealed things about ourselves.

As students, when we remember our face-to-face discussions, we notice that they were intrinsically linked to the fact that we were all in the same place: the classrooms of our university. Indeed, many people found it easier to plan their days and to organise their studies when there was a transition between different spaces: home, university, work and leisure. These transitions stopped existing during confinement which meant that everything had to be done at home. This made it very difficult for many students to stay focused on their tasks. Some students did not have access to every tool they needed if they were not on campus. Emma, for example, did not have a printer at home. More-over, she could not concentrate for too long as she had other distractions. That is why she missed working at the library. Indeed, it is widely known that a change of scenery is good for the brain. For those who could only work effectively in the library, this con-finement proved to be very challenging.

A very thought-provoking point related to spaces was made by Hannah: she won-dered if education could function without being transmitted in the classrooms of the university. It is a good question, but one could also ask whether education is necessarily space-bound or in what ways space shapes educational experiences. Hannah drew a comparison with religion: does it function if faith is not expressed in the place of wor-ship but digitally? I guess that this really depends on individual people. Indeed, some people are religious but do not necessarily go to church or to a place of worship very of-ten as they feel that believing in God can be done anywhere. But for others, the place of worship is indispensable as it is indissociable from their faith. Where did these people find the community they needed in their life during confinement?

Final assignments

One of the immediate goals of studying at university is, of course, to pass one's classes and move forward. Therefore, many students were actively thinking about their final as-signments. In some cases, the confinement forced us to rethink how we wanted to work, in others they confirmed our previous choices. The majority of students taking the Religion, Language and Media class chose the mass observation archive—an option offered after confinement started—and this for different reasons (the mass observation archive was a group option for the final assignment added after the move to remote teaching. Students who chose this option were asked to collectively come up with a theme, collect personal experiences, observations, thoughts, and opinions, as well as media sources around that theme, and upload these to a shared folder. They were also given several readings about the process of archiving and the uses of archives for re-

search. Then, each group was tasked with organising the sources from the shared folder into an archive. Finally, each group was required to write a short brief describing their archiving process and choices and create a multimedia presentation about a topic or issue, using their archive and academic readings of their choosing as a base for research). Some thought it was a necessity to research the coronavirus as a topic because it made sense to link academic work to the current issue the world is faced with. Students like Chloe, Laura and Yimin thought that we should investigate the historical impact of the virus on our society and its economic, political and social consequences. This topic unites everyone as the whole world is concerned. That is why the collaboration aspect of the assignment was highly important for Chloe and Michael. As mentioned above, many students who joined the archive missed the frequent discussions and collaborations between classmates. Moreover, the link between religion and the pandemic was also important for some students who recognised that many people leaned on their faith to keep them optimistic. Others also wanted to know how religious groups coped with the confinement and how they reached out to their members. Interestingly, this assignment helped Laura reconnect with some of her friends as she contacted them in the context of her research via Facebook. For some, working on a topic that was already omnipresent and in everyone's heads seemed most logical. Indeed, Michael wanted to take the opportunity to work on a concrete and tangible topic with immediate consequences.

However, some students preferred another assignment and gave their reasons for it. Melany chose the digital ethnography but still wanted to work on a coronavirus-related topic. Emma chose the same assignment because she found it suited her well. Others, like Hannah and I, chose the original assignment, which was a research paper. In Hannah's case, she decided not to work on the archive because she did not want to grapple with journalists' opinions about a topic she felt she did not yet entirely understand herself. Therefore, she chose a topic that was closer to her interests. In my case, I had already picked a subject for the original assignment I was interested in, so I did not want to change it at the last minute. I also work better alone on final assignments. It is clear that every person had their own reason to choose their assignment that was closely connected to their work methods and interests.

New questions and thoughts generated by confinement

Since we had more time to think during the confinement—which can be both positive and negative—many interesting ideas came to the surface. Maybe the silver-lining is that this situation made us reframe our thought processes. It made us rethink personal and global matters. On the others hand, it may have made us think too much. Irrational fears, constant worries about the future: clearly, the coronavirus infiltrated everyone's minds for better and for worse. Indeed, many articles underlined the fact that confinement raised anxiety and depression levels. It was sometimes very difficult to be confined with your own thoughts, especially when they were distressing. But often, this confinement also made people very creative and resulted in interesting and thought-provoking

ideas and thoughts (though the pressure to be creative and productive could also be overwhelming).

Concerning religion, Melany started observing how it helped people during this difficult time, even if she is not religious. Also closely related to the Religion, Language and Media class, Laura started making analogies with biblical events. Interestingly, she compared the virus to plagues of locusts and the Great Flood. Moreover, the coronavirus made her think about fate, which is also compelling. Most interesting was the fact that she made those analogies without being religious herself. In my case, the Critical Perspectives on Health class resulted in an idea for my master thesis, which I linked with the current situation of the coronavirus health crisis.

Because the coronavirus was (and still is) omnipresent in the media, students like Melany also started reflecting on the role of the latter. Indeed, she recognised that the media was very powerful and had an excessive influence on the public opinion. Furthermore, she clearly reflected on inequalities that were worsened or made apparent by the virus, as well as on the lack of funding in essential public sectors, like health. Through this pandemic, questions emerged about how different countries dealt with the virus and confinement. This topic was important to Yimin, as she was one of the first in our class to be worried about the virus and keenly aware of the devastating consequences in China. This influenced her choice of course: she chose Critical Perspectives on Health mainly for that reason.

Reflection

All in all, being a student in times like these has been challenging, but it is always important to keep in mind that it has been challenging for everyone and that for some people, it was catastrophic for economic or personal reasons. Nobody can claim that this situation has not affected them in some way. As a student, lines blurred between class-time, study-time, rest-time, work-time and privacy-time. It was interesting to try to reinvent how to learn, how to communicate with each other and how to maintain our well-being. It was also very thought-provoking for me to see how my classmates dealt in similar and different ways with the global crisis. Reading their answers made me rethink my own beliefs and encouraged me to reevaluate this situation through different perspectives. There is no single story that defines the COVID-19 pandemic. This reflects and is reflected in the philosophy and essence of this Master program—exchanging and learning from each other and consequently about ourselves—a way of engaging that has definitely not been completely lost during this crisis.

Gabi

I joined the University of Luxemburg in 2014. Since the beginning I have been teaching in this master and became part of the directorial team in 2015 as depute head, seconding Ingrid de Saint-Georges as head of programme. Very quickly, the programme grew close to my heart. Although I had experienced teaching highly international groups during my previous employment in the UK, I always felt that, there, the diversity of stu-

dents and the possible riches they could have brought to the programme and to learning, remained hidden and somewhat shielded away by the dominance of English as the one and only language of instruction. During my time in the UK, I witnessed repeatedly that a particular kind of language ability—or rather the lack of it—created feelings of inhibition and inability in those students who for various reasons felt less able to express themselves in this language or according to the assumed academic standards expected by the institution. Where there should have been exchange, there was, as a result, silence. I will always remember a man in his forties from Mexico, Riccardo, who came on a three months exchange program for teachers to the UK. During a class in sociolinguistics, we talked about a text describing a research project aimed at developing bilingual curricula combining Spanish and indigenous language education in Mexico—I always tried to select texts touching on the experience of students in the classroom. After the session, conducted as was the custom entirely in English, the man came up to me and told me that he himself had actually been part of the same local indigenous research team that the study we just had talked about reported on. During class time he had not spoken a word, feeling that his English wasn't good or strong enough. I was terribly sad and sorry, and we set up an extra-session where he would talk about his experience, as a researcher and as an indigenous person studying his community and contributing to curriculum development for its schools. The session was translated simultaneously by a women and trained translator from Spanish into English who also happened to be a student of the class. It was an amazing experience, and we realised that we had all the resources to make it happen in our classroom! I was very glad that Riccardo had come up to speak to me that day after class complaining about the overwhelming presence of English—this is how he addressed the issue when he first raised it with me. I think I learnt an important lesson then.

Here, in Luxembourg, there is openness towards multilingualism and a certain indeterminacy when it comes to (a particular) academic norm. I still enormously appreciate this freedom and the room it gives us—teachers and students—to work towards creating something different than what I experienced elsewhere: a space in which multiple, diverse experiences of students (and staff) meet *and* have space to be expressed, heard, shared, discussed and, ultimately, valued. My own efforts are geared towards that endeavour, and I am striving to succeed a little more with every year of experience that I accumulate. I am sure there are still important limitations and shortcomings, as not all teachers in the program may share that vision. And while we are trying to do our best as teachers, of course, we are also always being kept prisoners of our own visions, their situatedness and the limitations of this anchoring.

In September 2019 I took over the directorship of the master's programme. With the outbreak of Corona, this position put me in the frontline of responsibility, many hours, days, weeks of working, worrying and trying to handle the situation the best I could. With the tremendous support of teachers, students and a wonderful and spirited program administrator, Christelle Karleskind, we did manage not too badly.

If there is learning from Corona and a growth in vision that we can carry forward I would put mine in words like this. If we believe we understand each other's needs because we have been in the job for a long time, or because we have met many people we

think are LIKE those we have known before, namely students, we might hit the target—or just be plainly wrong. I experienced in these times of Corona how important it is to communicate what we know, but more importantly what we don't know; what we wish for, and more importantly what others wish for. As the situation was new for everyone, nobody was supposed to have all the answers, or to be able to draw on years of experience and expertise. It was ok, normal and even the best bet to put the problem out, lay it on the table, ask for the opinion of students and colleagues, and to seek for the best solution in dialogue. Despite the difficulty, uncertainty, and the physical and mental burdening most of us experienced, dialogue I felt was the best way to find out about how others were faring, feeling and coping with the situation. The best discussions arose when we talked about workload, assignments and what kinds of topics or formats students found compelling, or would feel drawn to investigating under the given circumstances. I listened to the students and tried to make or path the way for adjustments.

The results of these adaptations are still to be seen. But the level of seriousness, responsibility and reflexivity, surely heightened by the conditions of the situation has greatly astonished me.

To be thrown into this situation has put us to the test, but it also brought out enormous courage, solidarity and creative thinking, with new ideas for communicating and collaborating, and working formats that we hope to gather, systematise, share with other teachers, and carry over to the planning for next semester.

Looking ahead, I don't see de-confinement as a rupture or caesura, but rather as a continuity that builds on what we have learnt from the times of confinement.

Each of us has lived this time in different ways. Communication has floated through networks that were more local or global, focused on members sharing (a small) physical space together, or on a large spectrum of people scattered around the word in a globalised diaspora. The way we lead our lives is highly differentiated depending on our previous trajectories, experiences, connections and relationships. The Corona crisis has brought this diversity into view and more focused attention.

Our own rootedness into a particular trajectory and setting of experience tends to limit our perception of the simultaneity of other existing horizons that may coexist in our classrooms. My aim for the time after Corona will be not to lose sight of this newly gained sensitivity and insight. Therefore, it will be important to invite and create more opportunities for sharing them among students and with teachers to get a clearer and richer understanding of such fundamental dimensions as time and space, the ways they are perceived, inhabited and made sense of by those who experience them, and the ways in which they can be shared with others within the limitations of what 'dislocated' sharing can achieve.

Finding a Path Forward, Together

Where Yimin recounts a personal journey, reflecting on the ways she has navigated the complexities of life as a Chinese student in Luxembourg, her struggles, and her resilience, and grappling with questions that matter to her, Mara explores the challenges

she and her peers have faced as students pushed to find new ways to engage with courses, work, teachers, and each other under conditions of confinement. As a teacher in and head of the MultiLearn programme, Gabi looks back across her own trajectory as an educator, considering the ways her experiences shaped her ongoing work for equity through questioning academic and linguistic norms and the lessons she learned under COVID that speak to these ends. These varied voices and trajectories reflect our experiences as well as the flow of our discussions, and we have worked to bring these into conversation by presenting them in a loosely chronological frame. While this piece may appear eclectic or even fragmented, ultimately it speaks to our work as authors: we engaged in dialogue that often took off in many directions, that revealed things we had not previously considered, and that enabled us to begin from different points but find a way forward as we came together around this phenomenon and worked to make something as a group.

As scholars, we recognise that the personal is meaningful, that the classroom is never a neutral space, and that students and teachers come to that space from trajectories that vary in countless ways, not all of which are visible. Therefore, we recognise the significance of relational effort and communication (in the sense of coming together and responding to each other) in this graduate programme, and how these have the potential to transform learning spaces and experiences. This paper is, in a way, proof of that—from our own differentiated backgrounds, we have come together in dialogue not despite our diversity, but through, with, and across it, and found paths forward together.

Ultimately, we found that the conditions of life under COVID revealed and pushed us to reflect on usually unseen or unnoticed dimensions of our own and our peers' lives. So often our academic institutions encourage or give the impression of a strict boundary between academic life, and the people and relationships we encounter and build there, and our everyday lives. This creates conditions in which we cannot see, nor make space for, the differentiated ways in which students experience and come to the classroom and coursework. In particular, we found that it renders invisible the differentiated experiences of time and space through which our students engage with and in the classroom.

Yet recognising these dimensions is a key part of the process of creating equitable classrooms. Comparative and evaluative practices that rely on a singular and abstract set of criteria assume that the classroom is homogenous and that all students can and ought to produce uniform work, providing the appearance of commensurability. In so many other arenas, we accept that there are different sets of criteria, different scales for comparison, but in the classroom there is often only one and most students do not get to be at the top (Blum 2018). While it may make sense to expect uniformity from and to "evaluate interchangeable uniform products such as ball bearings with a single scale", the same does not hold true for students – such an approach both flattens and ignores differentiation amongst students and reinforces existing inequalities (Blum 2018: 132; see also Bourdieu/Passeron 1977; Varenne 1974). As teachers and students committed to equity, we must ask at what point is it fundamentally unjust to measure every student against each other and the same fixed norms? To what extent does this process of

comparison create conditions in which someone has to fail and why should we want this (Varenne/McDermott 1998)? To what extent does this approach reflect or support student work and learning? Why should it be desirable that all students produce uniform output?

One way of moving beyond this model of comparison is by making space for students' different trajectories and experiences, including of time and space as we have highlighted here. Based on our experiences writing this paper, we further suggest that ongoing correspondence that decentres the teacher as sole knowledge holder/giver and allows for difficult conversations, for students to share, and for the personal aspects enables these experiences to be seen and, we hope, might support the ongoing work of creating equitable classrooms. We also wonder whether collective writing is one means of cultivating this kind of listening, exchange, and relationship-building. Certainly, in the process of writing this paper, we opened up new lines of communication around the conditions of remote teaching and COVID that made many variations visible even within our small group. This in itself was energising, not in the sense of productivity, but in fuelling reflection and dialogue, illuminating new angles, cultivating care, and, hopefully, reducing isolation, both personal and academic.

Of course, it took effort and commitment on all of our parts to engage in such open conversations about our experiences and ideas and to build this text (though we must say, we also very much enjoyed the process), and we envision that it will take the same kinds of effort and openness to create more opportunities for students to share their experiential horizons, and for teachers to understand and engage with these. And while we have not provided any concrete means to do so here, this was not our intention. Rather, we have tried to shed some light on what this process of making space can look like based on how it unfolded in our own interactions. We further hope that reading this text might spark some discussion amongst teachers and students about diversity and communication, about what we see and what is hidden, about what learning is, and what graduate education can be for and look like.

Afterword

Given the above discussion of our process and, especially, our suggestion that collaborative writing projects such as this one may represent a fruitful mode of making the kind of space we argue for, in this afterword we again bring our voices together to lay open and reflect on our project as it unfolded, and what we each took away from it. We wish to further illustrate somehow the idea that we sought not a single voice, nor a unifying paradigm, but a recognition that the situation at hand was life under COVID-19, even as the exact nature of this situation could not be specified and our experiences of and under it were varied (Turnbull 2003). We also want to highlight how our work has been to listen and respond, to make our experiences, our emplacements, our timelines visible to each other, thus building connections and generating new and unexpected ideas that helped us see things in new ways. To these ends, we present our voices here in dialogue, finding inspiration in feminist anthropologies and ongoing experiments with ethnographic writing that trouble ideas about representation, knowledge construction, and

the bringing together of the temporalities of 'being there' and writing up (cf. Brochner/Ellis 2016; Fabian 1990; Hastrup 2005; Mokhtar/Foley 2020; Strathern 1985 and 2006).

Yimin: Months ago, at start of the semester, before the lockdown began, I wrote a short article in Chinese titled *I Have Never Been Looking Forward to Spring So Much Before* (??????????) on my blog. At that time, I didn't expect that when spring was around the corner, even meeting my friends at the university would become an extravagant hope to me. However, once the lockdown began, I didn't really think this situation is so difficult that I can't get through, and I actually don't have the right to think so. I've just been experiencing what my 1.4 billion compatriots have already been through. Some of my international classmates said that everything seemed so dramatic and unreal. It seemed that the previous day was still in a harmonious peace, but the next day everything suddenly fell into a huge crisis. For me, everything is quite real. I may seem a little bit calmer and more optimistic than my international friends at the beginning of the outbreak, but that's not because I'm stronger than any of them, it's just because the worry became part of my life two months earlier.

Mara: One lesson I learned during the confinement was to appreciate the activities we were still allowed to do and that were neglected in usual times: for example, going for a walk in nature, reconnecting with ourselves, taking time for ourselves and for our families and friends. I also enjoyed the fact that there were no traffic jams, no noises from construction work and that life slowed down a little bit. Because in non COVID-times, days can pass by without us noticing. In confinement, routines were broken, and the future was thrown into the unknown. But then, because of the adaptive nature of humans, new routines developed.

Yimin: For me, during the confinement, I kept in touch with my Italian classmate from my Luxembourgish class. We talked about our quarantine life in Luxembourg and cheered each other up. She finds one thing wonderful, that is, though everyone has to keep social distance during this time, some interpersonal relationships have become even closer. I also came to appreciate my relationships in a new way. In such a crisis, understanding is the cure rather than judging, solidarity is more powerful than arrogance.

Even as things open up, I am still looking forward. I am longing for the day when all masks are taken off, once again we can stretch out our hands generously, and hug the people we want to embrace without any hesitation, with a smile, enthusiasm and love.

Mara: When the de-confinement phase started, I must admit that I entered it with a sense of caution. Even though we stayed confined for a long time, the partial reopening felt quite sudden to me. It felt overwhelming that we were suddenly allowed to do many things like before. Except that it was not like before, at least not exactly. For example, I did not consider shopping as leisure anymore because of the strict rules that had to be respected. On the other hand, I recognised that it was better than not to be allowed to go anywhere. Therefore, I was very much looking forward to being able to go to different places and experience things beyond work and essential grocery shopping. Of course, I was looking forward to seeing more people on a regular basis again. As time passed, I noticed that I was able to get used to this new configuration of social life. And,

over the following weeks, many rules were abandoned or loosened, which made our daily life look a bit more normal again.

As we slowly emerged from our homes, some questions were in the back of my mind: will people become more wary and suspicious of each other? Will we tend not to gravitate towards new people? I would like to think that this will not happen, and certainly I find that I do not personally see de-confinement in such a suspicious way anymore. Concerning university, I think that having been able to have online classes and to stay in contact with each other can inspire us to find a new way of working that makes people slightly less tied to specific places. It might be possible that some sectors will maintain home offices a few days a week to avoid making their employees commute too often. Maybe at university, we might be able to get more guest speakers by doing video-conferences so that they do not need to travel. As we have seen, the rectorate has already decided that next semester there will be a mixture of online and in-person teaching, which may be proof that there are some new conceptualisations of teaching and learning.

Gabi: I am also already thinking about the coming semester. During confinement, I often felt worryingly disconnected and in the dark about the students' situation and their whereabouts, when it seemed there was a strong need for connection. But maybe, connections are formed in multiple ways, not all of them conscious or obvious, and some definitely harder to touch, perceive or pin a label on. Since the situation and possibilities for teaching remain, as Mara notes, uncertain for the next semester, I am concerned with how we can best 'make connections'—particularly with and for the newly arriving students; and how we can value best the few, surely still limited, moments we will be able to share, physically present, face to face, in a material classroom.

Anastasia: I have also been thinking about how to bring the insights I have gained through remote teaching into the next semester. We have seen, as we noted in this article, that students' different experiential horizons, and their embeddedness in different space-times shape how they come to the classroom (or to online teaching), make sense of the coursework, select assignments, and understand themselves as students in Luxembourg. And I intend to further explore how to invite students to make these more visible in the classroom and how to accommodate these. What forms of work and interaction might enable this process? Perhaps, as we often spoke about during our meetings, work much like this collaborative writing project, or even ethnographic writing projects more generally, might be a way of making the kind of space we are seeking.

Mara: I'm inclined to agree. This was the first time participating in a collaborative project of this sort, so I did not know what to expect at first. However, I was pleasantly surprised that our meetings were such a safe space and that both the teachers' and students' input was valued in an equal way. I also appreciate that we all have different backgrounds and that we were thus able to share very interesting and thought-provoking insights. It was an enriching ongoing discussion that helped me, after every meeting, to reflect even deeper and push myself even more to deal with and come to terms with the situation. Hence, these regular discussions, that took place partly during confinement and partly during de-confinement, almost felt therapeutic for me. [I am therefore very

thankful for the discussions we had and for the comfortable and safe space you all created for me to share my thoughts and feelings.]

Yimin: This was also the first time I had taken part in collective writing and it is an experience I am going to cherish. I would like to thank you all, Gabi, Anastasia and Mara, for teaching me that collective writing is not only about putting words from different authors together in a cohesive way, but its true value lies in the exchange of ideas. From the contributions of Gabi, Anastasia and Mara, I learned to understand this pandemic through various perspectives. We have very various backgrounds: our roles at the university, nationalities, and even ages are so different, yet, out of differences we find the most important things in common that make this paper: understanding and respect. Also, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you, my co-authors, for encouraging me to write about my experience and to overcome the possible difficulties due to the pandemic.

Gabi: I started writing collectively with Master Students of this programme not long ago and found it an extraordinary experience. We were writing about a learning experience in a shared physical space that each of us had lived differently despite the common general framing.

This time our project felt different and very special, as we could not meet in person and talked about things that were just happening to us, fresh, raw, emotional—and to which we had not yet built any analytical, critical difference. We could speak our mind, ventilate anger, voice uncertainty, listen to each other—sometimes feeling that a pause and silence was needed as part of the process. Carried by the flow of conversation, we felt we were coming to grips with corona collectively.

What I've learnt is that when we meet in such as way we can grow in knowledge, in self-confidence, and in the confidence in others. It is good and much needed to have more such exploratory spaces in which we can discuss, think and write, without a blueprint and with an 'open end': knowledge that's novel is seldom copied or pre-thought.

Anastasia: I agree that while this was not my first collaborative writing project, it was a unique one in its open endedness, exploratory nature, and the space made for all voices at each step of the process. There was no pressure to produce something particular, nor of ownership or directive. Rather, we took the time to engage in sustained conversations, to share not only our ideas but also our struggles, and to reach some kind of consensus about what exactly we had understood.

Gabi: I want to acknowledge, too, that to put such meanderings in a readable form takes particular skill, a great gift of observation, and the ability to imagine the fluctuating waves and ebb and flow of discussion in a narrative that enables the audience to participate. We owe this gift and craft, and the crafting of this text to you, Anastasia, who has been wonderful in capturing the spirit of our discussions and the various crossings of our trajectories and thoughts, forming them into a linear text, while being well aware that linearity captures poorly the complexity of experience condensed in these lines.

Anastasia: I appreciate the very kind words! Looking back at our writing up, it really was unique in my experience. Over the course of this project, we each contributed pieces and discussed the flow and form we imagined for this paper. And as we moved toward constructing a single text, I began to look back at notes I had taken during our

meetings, reflecting on what had been said, our conversations, and our roles in these. As an anthropologist, ethnography is the bread and butter of my work, and I found myself in many ways inhabiting this role yet again: I had talked, asked questions, listened to my co-authors stories, read what they wrote, observed, took notes, and joined in as I was able to do so (Ingold 2014). When I began writing up, it was therefore no surprise that I gravitated towards creating a sort of "storied reality" of our project (Madden 2010: 6), working to piece together a linear text that at once reflected our dialogic process and collective production of knowledge, even as it inevitably flattened these. (I should note, too, that throughout our discussions I also shared my experiences of COVID-19 as an American living in Luxembourg. However, as we began writing and my role crystallised in some way, we chose not to emphasise this perspective, in part in order to highlight others.)

Reflecting on this process as a whole, I want to call attention to something we talked about often, especially towards the end of this project—whether collaborative writing projects, perhaps even specifically ethnographic writing projects, are a fruitful way of making the space we advocate in the classroom. From the beginning, our project was one of exchange, one that required us to listen and to explore aspects of each other's lives and recognise their interconnections (Shah 2017). In doing so, we were pushed to question our assumptions, engage with multiple understandings and experiences of the COVID-19 phenomenon, and to collectively produce knowledge that was new or previously hidden. And ultimately, through writing up, I felt we set the stage and made space for all of our voices, speaking together and in correspondence (Ingold 2018) without forcing coherence where there was none. I think we have all agreed that this was a process of making space, perhaps even one that can inform how we might do so in the classroom.

Conclusion

Producing this text has been, in a way, an adventure. It grew with every round of discussion we shared, with writing in private and bringing our drafts back to the group. We voiced, discussed, and dispelled our doubts, we developed a confidence in each other, and we found a space and role in the process that felt comfortable for each of us. We learned how to be daring and to share thoughts, some of them very private, and some of them not easily relatable to others.

We have tried in this afterword to share some of this process with our readers, to represent somehow the dialogic nature of this project, the ways we became aware of each other's trajectories and developed a deeper appreciation for our differentiated emplacements and experiences and, in doing so, came to new kinds of collectively built knowledge. We found this collaborative writing project to be one of opening up space, creating room to acknowledge our diversities as both foundational to our work and as enabling new forms of exploration (Strathern 2006: 198). Further, rather than reinforcing institutional hierarchies—of course a possibility in a project involving students, a doctoral candidate, and a professor, supervisor, and head of programme—we found that we tended instead toward reciprocity, correspondence, and care. For all of us, this was a

new and unique endeavour, and we hope we have been able to represent some of what was unique about it by inviting our readers into our reflective process in this afterword. We have come out of this project feeling encouraged and inspired, and wish that others might find some inspiration here, too.

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