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ARTICLE



Emerging ecologies and changing relations: a brief manifesto for histories of education after COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The paper draws upon photography as an active intervention into compromised environments and uses it to discover and develop new perspectives on past and future histories of education after COVID-19. These perspectives become particularly clear when seen against the backdrop of recent discussions on planetary responsibility and shared ecologies. The paper suggests that we shift our research agendas away from anthropocentric world views that have placed great emphasis on human sovereignty, modernisation, progress and/or decline, nation states and global governance, and the stratifying effects of education systems, without reflecting their ecological consequences. It argues that anthropocentric approaches to history of education have neglected the openness and vulnerability of the human body and its ethical, cultural and social proximity to other living creatures and the material world. The paper therefore focuses on what it means for historians of education to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, what it means to change research perspectives, and what it means to look at photographs that were produced in a state of exception. The paper sets out to propose a manifesto for a post-anthropocentric research agenda that anchors history of education and the history of pandemics in intertwined ecologies of the living and material worlds. The paper suggests that future histories of education cannot be written without considering the COVID-19 crisis as both a challenge and an encouragement to further develop our understanding of education.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only elicited an interest in history; it has also emphasised the urge to document human experience at what was perceived, back in early 2020, as a state of exception – a radical preliminary halt and a feeling of unease towards the world around us and how we live our lives. In the early stages of the pandemic, *Magnum Photos* also set out to present and document the COVID-19 crisis as a major historical experience. After long being accustomed to a life in constant flux, Magnum photographers around the world suddenly found themselves experiencing travel restrictions and various degrees of self-isolation as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. They became part of a globally shared extraordinary historical event and many of them were eager to document their everyday experiences with photographs and texts. Between

March and May 2020, *Magnum Photos* published its “Diary of a Pandemic”, a weekly online newsroom series of selected photographs and texts depicting and commenting on specific, often family-related and very personal moments of a globalised world in crisis.¹

Each of the 10 editions in the series includes pictures of childhood and youth and what was then perceived as “home”. Within the “Diary of a Pandemic”, these photographs are closely connected with other images of a withdrawn daily life characterised by self-isolation and social distancing. What strikes the viewer is the absence of any structures for teaching and learning. Instead, childhood and youth are shown as an integral part of a presumably nostalgic and sentimental assemblage of ecological relations, all of which place childhood in non-formal contexts and in relationship with home, friendship, life and death, the world of play, plants, and animals, rather than in vicinity to educational institutions.

The paper draws upon photography as an active intervention into compromised environments and uses it to discover and develop new perspectives on past and future histories of education. These perspectives become particularly clear when seen against the backdrop of recent discussions on planetary responsibility and shared ecologies. The paper suggests that we shift our research agendas away from anthropocentric world views that have placed specific emphasis (both positively and negatively) on human sovereignty, modernisation and industrialisation, progress and/or decline, nation states and global governance, and the stratifying effects of education systems, without reflecting their ecological consequences. It argues that anthropocentric approaches in history of education have neglected the openness and vulnerability of the human body and its ethical, cultural, and social proximity to other living creatures and the material world. The paper therefore focuses on what it means for historians of education to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, what it means to change research perspectives, and what it means to look at photographs that were produced in a state of exception.

The paper begins by offering some reflections on what might shift with the adoption of a post-anthropocentric perspective. It then looks at the assemblages of texts and images provided by Magnum’s COVID-19 photo stories and what these assemblages can tell us about the composite relationships of adults, children and young people among each other and with the surrounding world at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. This second part therefore aims to identify those ecological relations and sensitivities that emerge within a selection of photographs and texts that are also used as archival sources for future historians of education. Finally, the paper sets out to propose a manifesto for a post-anthropocentric research agenda that anchors history of education and the history of pandemics in intertwined ecologies of the living and the material worlds. The paper suggests that future histories of education cannot be written without considering the COVID-19 crisis as both a challenge and an encouragement to further develop an understanding of education that goes beyond merely anthropocentric world views.

¹The full package of the series can be accessed at <https://www.magnumphotos.com/theme/diary-of-a-pandemic/>. Some of the photographs have since been removed, but they can be found on Magnum’s Instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17851521163927647/>.

Planetary responsibility and emerging perspectives in historical research

In his book *On the Natural History of Destruction*, W.G. Sebald argued that the moral and physical destruction that took place during the Second World War resulted in an unspoken agreement among many German intellectuals that this horrific past should be immediately silenced and that there should instead be a focus on Germany's reconstruction.² In an essay on how the key hypotheses of *On the Natural History of Destruction* may relate to the COVID-19 crisis, historian Uwe Schütte argued that "Sebald perceived humankind as an evolutionary aberration that thrives on killing and destruction, ultimately exterminating itself by destroying its world".³ The COVID-19 crisis seems to be emblematic of a lingering gradual destruction of our world caused by ecological regimes pursued by humankind in the name of progress, wealth, and growth. Much like World War II and the way in which its aftermath was described by Sebald, the COVID-19 outbreak is a traumatic experience with a high global death toll that is in danger of being silenced by denial and a reconstruction of the world as it used to be. Many authors therefore see COVID-19 as a watershed moment, for better or worse.⁴

Scholars from diverse academic disciplines have refused denial and their studies have pointed out that the spread of viral and/or infectious diseases is produced by zoonotic spillover, which in turn is caused by humankind's thirst for superiority and interferences with nature. Microbes leap from animal to human hosts and are warning signs of the consequences of disturbing ecological balances and destroying habitats.⁵

In his book *Affluence and Freedom: An Environmental History of Political Ideas*, Pierre Charbonnier reflects on how the Age of Enlightenment as an intellectual and philosophical movement and its interplay with liberalism in modern Anglo-American political thought had drastic consequences for planet Earth.⁶ Autonomy, freedom, progress, and the separation of body and mind – concepts of great importance in educational traditions – have increasingly produced disastrous ecological damage that now demands immediate global attention. While Giorgio Agamben in his book *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* demonstrates strong bonds with the ideas of the Enlightenment by positing that the COVID-19 crisis gave rise to a permanent state of exception characterised by the neglect of individual freedom, Charbonnier, on the contrary, calls into question the priority of freedom.⁷

According to Charbonnier, the pursuit of human autonomy and freedom from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century and beyond gave rise not only to colonial empires but also to land ownership, the principle of property, the destruction of infrastructures,

²G.W. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), 14.

³Uwe Schütte, "W.G. Sebald and the Natural History of COVID-19," in *13 Perspectives on the Pandemic: Thinking in a State of Exception*, ed. Rabea Rittgerodt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 72. A pdf version of the full essay is at https://blog.degruyter.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/DG_13perspectives_humanities.pdf.

⁴*Ibid.*, 75–76.

⁵On the history of viral diseases see Mark Honigsbaum, *The Pandemic Century: A History of Global Contagion from the Spanish Flu to Covid-19* (Cambridge, MA: Penguin, 2020) and Andreas Malm, *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency: War Communism in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2020). On humankind becoming victims of their own victories over nature see Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); on the symbiosis and interactions between different organisms from a revised evolutionary perspective see Lynn Margulis, *The Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

⁶Pierre Charbonnier, *Affluence and Freedom: An Environmental History of Political Ideas*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity Press 2021).

⁷Giorgio Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2020).

the conquest of nature and unlimited extraction of resources, modification and growth of production and consumption, technological progress and changing energy systems, industrialisation as a norm, and finally the accumulation of monetary wealth and abundance, while resulting in the loss of any sense of responsibility for ecological balance and the health of the planet. These developments reveal the ecological, political, cultural, and social dark side of modernity as a mechanism of suppression, exclusion and, exploitation. In light of European imperialism and the consequences of colonialism, Charbonnier writes:

The intersection between the history of science, environmental history and colonial history is . . . most often based on the identification of the project to rationalize collective human relationships with nature with the project to impose a political and economic domination of the peripheries. The constant back and forth between the imperial “laboratories” of botany and zoology, but also between the discipline of labour and extraction, on the one hand, and the modernizing poles where this knowledge and these techniques are put to use, on the other, in fact means it is no longer possible to separate emancipatory Enlightenment in its domestic dimension from its dark side, which takes the form of domination and colonial violence. It is the modern project which, in the harsh light of an environmental and decentred approach, appears as a structurally asymmetrical mechanism.⁸

Indeed, the anthropocentric episteme operated as an overarching thought pattern that underwent many historical transformations well into the 1970s. Critical sociological and historical thinking and political emancipatory movements could not fully establish a paradigm shift that would overcome the existing anthropocentric geo-ecological regimes. Charbonnier argues that the “horizon of extraction-autonomy” continued to “determine the most fashionable conceptual operations of the movement of emancipation”.⁹

It was the 1972 report by the Club of Rome, “The Limits to Growth”, that marked the first step in a growing awareness of the risks caused by a long-lasting history of human exceptionalism and ecological damage.¹⁰ The report concluded that humankind was facing a political and demographic collapse caused by the destruction and exploitation of the environments supporting it. This destruction was introduced and has been transitioning within its inherent anthropocentric rationale from the Industrial Revolution onwards. That is precisely the reason why Charbonnier, very much in line with Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich, Tim Ingold, Bruno Latour, and Donna Haraway, sets out to introduce concepts of symmetrisation and decentralisation to rebalance and equalise geo-ecological relationships.¹¹ Already in 1990, the German physicist and natural philosopher Meyer-Abich, less known in the French- and English-speaking worlds, discussed holistic alternatives to anthropocentric thinking that were aimed at

⁸Charbonnier, *Affluence and Freedom*, 87.

⁹*Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁰Donella H. Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William Behrens, eds., *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

¹¹Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich, *Revolution for Nature: From the Environment to the Connatural World*, trans. Matthew Armstrong (Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 1993); Tim Ingold, *The Perception of Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

perfecting the principles of the Enlightenment. Meyer-Abich refused to use the term “environment” and instead coined the term “Mitwelt” (connatural world) to underline the necessity of symmetric ecological relations.

More inspiration for historians of education is offered by Jane Bennett in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*.¹² Bennett suggests abandoning anthropocentric hierarchies and instead acknowledging composite relations that put people and other materialities on the same plane of action within a horizontal network of interconnected relationships.¹³ In order to alter “established notions of moral responsibility and political accountability”, Bennett revises the term agency and asks us to think of it instead as a “confederation” – an ecological collective or assemblage of human and non-human elements that creates effects without giving priority to any of the actants involved:

The effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in their ability to make something happen (a newly inflected materialism, a blackout, a hurricane, a war on terror) is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone.¹⁴

Bennett also abandons the term “environment” and replaces it by “vital materiality” because it “better captures an ‘alien’ quality of our own flesh, and in so doing reminds of the very *radical* character of the (fractious) kinship between the human and the nonhuman”.¹⁵ This also implies rethinking the ways in which the relationship between the human and the natural has been reflected in Western thought and the impact of such approaches on the ethical foundations of educational theories.¹⁶ In her book *Against Nature*, Lorraine Daston reflects on the resonance of “nature” in Western philosophy and how concepts of “nature” have influenced the development of moral laws in both essentialist and liberating ways.¹⁷ The COVID-19 crisis may inspire us to revisit established ethical principles derived from a supposed order of “nature” and to consider an intellectual shift rooted in concepts of ecological relations, their balances and imbalances, and the kinship between the human and the non-human. From this perspective, the effects of zoonotic spillover should be interpreted as a sign of severe disruption in ecological relations that cannot be resolved by appealing to an imagined idea of the purity and order of “nature” but that instead requires ecological imbalances to be addressed within a connatural world.

In the light of climate change and the COVID-19 crisis, historians of education may therefore opt to accept the historicity of anthropocentric thinking and to analyse the past as a connatural world and an assemblage of ecological relations that historically has suffered from many imbalances and disruptions.¹⁸

¹²Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹³*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 21, 24.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁶On concepts of nature in education see Marcelo Caruso, Sabine Reh and Eckhardt Fuchs, eds., *Education and Nature*, special issue, *Paedagogica Historica* 56 (2020).

¹⁷Lorraine Daston, *Against Nature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019).

¹⁸The ISCHE Education & Pandemics Archive established in June 2021 offers a thematic search on “ecological relations” that runs through the full collection, <https://www.ische.org/education-and-pandemics-archive/#/explore>.

Magnum's "Diary of a Pandemic": a historical archive for future historians of education?

Magnum Photos was founded in 1947 as a cooperative of photojournalists who wanted to work independently at the intersection of critical photographic documentation and art. This also meant that photographers would become the copyright holders of their work, that they themselves would decide on their projects, and would be able to select those photographs they wished to see published. Magnum photographers created and continue to create specific stories by selecting individual pictures from a series of thematically focused photographs and by adding captions and comments to them.¹⁹ Magnum is also a commercial enterprise that sells licences of preselected photographic media for publication to the international press.

Magnum's "Diary of a Pandemic" not only represents a repository from which photographs can be licensed to the press; it is also a digital historical archive for future historians of education that offers a variety of possibilities for the study of emerging sensitivities in ecological relations during the COVID-19 pandemic. As already mentioned in the introduction, the diary consists of 10 episodes that appeared weekly in the Magnum newsroom and featured pictures and texts by Magnum photographers that were curated by Peter van Agtmael. Magnum's COVID-19 initiative invites analysis because it represents a collection of a manageable size that offers content selected by the photographers themselves and curated by an agency that stands for a certain level of independence and artistic quality, even if each of the photographs published in the Magnum newsroom was also offered for international licensing.²⁰

The first episode was published on 26 March 2020.²¹ It originally consisted of 15 photographs plus captions and small comments; five pictures have since been removed, although they are still accessible on Instagram.²² Looking at these episodes published at the very beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, it is surprising how perceptions and experiences of what was once familiar have changed: the visual and textual contributions by Magnum photographers bear witness not only to the exceptional quietness and peace but also to the slower pace of life and a heightened awareness of family ties. There was also a growing awareness of how humans relate to other living creatures and the material world in shared territories. More specifically, this first Magnum photo story was on the rediscovery of home, on watching (real and hand-crafted) birds, a variety of other animals and plants, on how home transitioned into the outer world (Figure 1), and on the exceptional experience of sharing the world of children and young adults for entire days including time for play. Homes were captured as dwellings made for sharing space with children, as places built and equipped to shield children and infants from the chaos of an alien world.

¹⁹On the history of *Magnum Photos* see Clara Bouveresse, *Histoire de l'agence Magnum: L'art d'être photographie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2016).

²⁰Apart from a few exceptions all pictures are colour photographs. While the online version of this paper shows coloured screenshots of the photographs, its printed counterpart shows these coloured originals in black and white. For the photographs, therefore, it is recommended to either look at the online version of this paper at the *Paedagogica Historica* website or to access the Magnum newsroom at <https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic/>.

²¹See <https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic/>.

²²See <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17851521163927647/>.



Figure 1. © Photograph by David Hurn, Magnum Photos. See also www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic/.

Other photographs referred to the closure of schools and showed how school children prepared to stay at home by collecting signatures of their classmates on their shirts as signs of friendship and remembrance.

Family homes and gardens became important spaces for new experiences. In a caption for a photograph depicting a child's bicycle in a corridor, Magnum photographer Olivia Arthur summarises:

Yesterday was the last day of school and so we collected Theo and a bundle of home-schooling leaflets and came home to officially start our isolation. We marked the occasion with a little bonfire in the back garden and the girls played in the garden house ... Anything different is always fun for them at first. This morning Theo made a painting of the whole "family" (everyone who lives in the house) and constantly refers to everything we do as "because of the virus".²³

The second episode published on 3 April 2020 continues in the same self-reflective and observant spirit and includes even more references to animals, plants and outdoor experiences. While Chien-Chi Chang's photograph depicts artificial animals made for children (Figure 2), other pictures refer to spaces outside family homes: one features a donkey, a dog, and two young adults on a green lawn and the other shows two little girls exploring a park in the fresh air (Figure 3). What once used to be perceived as unspectacular – human encounters with animals, flowers, and green grass – was highlighted with a new awareness and seen with new sensitivity.

In keeping with the rhythm of publication dates and much in line with the previous thematic scope, the third episode appeared on 11 April 2020. It featured wilting flowers in vases, forests, and inaccessible parks. One of the most striking pictures is by Brazilian photographer Cristina de Middel depicting a Teddy packed in a plastic bag that could be sterilised for "safe" cuddling (Figure 4).

²³Cited from <https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic/>.



Figure 2. © Photograph by Chien-Chi Chang, Magnum Photos. See also www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic-coronavirus-covid19-april-3-2020/.



Figure 3. © Photograph by Olivia Arthur, Magnum Photos. See also www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic-coronavirus-covid19-april-3-2020/.

This photograph may be emblematic of ecological relations during a pandemic, when isolation and distance were drastically tearing apart the living and material world by means of sanitation, isolation, and distancing. Since we were no longer able to relate to others and to the world in the same way, it gave us time to reflect on our relationships with other living beings and with the material world.



Figure 4. © Photograph by Cristina de Middel, Magnum Photos. See also www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic-april-11-2020/.

The following episodes included radiological scans of the human body and many depressing visual testimonies of the enormous death toll in Italy and other countries.²⁴ These images were intertwined with pictures of an everyday life that was increasingly governed by health regulations and the disinfection of public spaces. However, there continued to be a growing number of photographs showing flowers and animals (indoor and outdoor) and observations of close neighbourhoods, forests, and other landscapes, encouraging reflection on how they relate to us and how we relate to them. The 22 May episode features pictures of lakes juxtaposed with an aquarium in a family home. Other images refer to changing perceptions of space: on the one hand, the physical world seems to have been drastically rescaled and to have become bigger and less accessible because of travel restrictions, while on the other hand, the experienced world became physically smaller but at the same was more reachable than before because of digital technologies.

More generally, the overarching trend of Magnum's "Diary of a Pandemic" is an abundance of photographs depicting children in and connecting to nature (Figures 5 and 6).

²⁴The following episodes were published on April 17 and 24 and on May 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 2020. The last episode was published when lockdown measures in many parts of the world were being eased.



Figure 5. © Photograph by Enri Canaj, Magnum Photos. See also www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic-april-24-2020/.



Figure 6. © Photograph by Gregory Halpern, Magnum Photos. See also www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/diary-of-a-pandemic-may-8-2020/.

In Magnum's "Diary of a Pandemic", children are perceived as a force that can not only shape the destiny of humankind but also bring about change and harmony. Within the Magnum pandemic episodes there is not so much a sentimental or scientific-psychological notion of childhood; instead, incorporated into a network of other, often disturbing, images, the particular vulnerability of children was framed by ecological arguments and concerns. Magnum photographers unanimously agreed that their photographs documenting the pandemic were somewhat intimate testimonies and were less spectacular than their usual professional work. On a separate note, one may think critically about the silences of the Magnum diary: silences produced by inequalities and the domination of privileged middle-class aesthetics, silences produced by limited access to technology and circulation of visual media, silences produced by selected geographies, silences produced by curatorial processes and commercial interests, and, finally, silences produced by the potential reluctance of Magnum photographers to fully reveal personal pain and fear.

Nevertheless, their photographs and captions refer to an alarming situation, an emerging awareness of intertwined ecological relations that demand attention and recovery. In many of these images the world appears to be alien, but it seems that the photographs of children, plants, and animals could be a first step in befriending us with the world again, allowing us to develop a sensitivity to what sustains human life and needs to be treated accordingly by establishing symmetrical relations.

Conclusion: a brief manifesto for future histories of education

A trends report by the American Psychological Association that appeared online in 2022 speaks of the rise of ecopsychology.²⁵ A 2022 *New York Times* article and podcast also reflect on how climate change affects human well-being as anxieties and grief caused by climate change are increasingly affecting younger generations.²⁶ And environmental scientist Jason Hickel has warned of the "colonial dimensions of climate breakdown".²⁷ These are just a few examples that point to a growing unease with climate change and a globalised world in crisis.

This paper asks historians of education to adopt a critical view of the history of human exceptionalism and its educational consequences, to look at how concepts of freedom and autonomy and "the exteriorisation of something called 'nature'" has affected educational thinking, the way in which we raise our children and inhibit or foster symmetrical ecological bonding, and whether and how educational reform movements have acted as counter movements against the anthropocentric mainstream. This implies both an analytical turn towards ecological relations in future histories of education and a radical historicisation of educational norms and values from a post-anthropocentric perspective that in turn may lead to a renewed interest in the normative itineraries that have defined and continue to define our work as historians of education.

²⁵Heather Stringer, "Climate Change Intensifies: Psychologists are Learning how to Bolster the Health of Humans and the Environment as the Planet Warms," *Monitor on Psychology*, January 1, 2022, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-climate-change>.

²⁶Ellen Barry, "Climate Change Enters the Therapy Room," *New York Times*, February 6 updated February 10, 2022 (podcast and online article) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/06/health/climate-anxiety-therapy.html>.

²⁷Tweet by Jason Hickel on March 1, 2022, <https://twitter.com/jasonhickel/status/1498587298736316418>.

This shift in future histories of education also means acknowledging “the inseparable links between social relations and ecological relations” and critically analysing the consequences of these links having been broken, removed, hidden, or neglected in educational pasts and school curriculums.²⁸

In light of colonialism and growing (inter)nationalism, future histories of education may also analyse whether and how educationalisation and public care systems were outcomes and/or promoters of anthropocentric world views and, as such, were established by colonial empires, strong nation states, and international organisations in the name of freedom, emancipation, progress, and growth.²⁹

Given the prominent role of “nature” in educational thought, future histories of education should critically analyse the resonance of “nature” in educational theories and how it has been used as a metaphor for justifying human exceptionalism as a norm.

The material history of education; the educational history of the senses, consumption, children’s toys, food, and health; the history of school architecture and landscaping, of growing plants, gardening, and taking care of animals; the history of educational technology and communication; and, finally, the visual history of education have been important first steps in initiating changes in perspective. However, these shifts should more explicitly tackle anthropocentric world views, cultivate openness in what we acknowledge as historical sources, and welcome an ecological and digital turn in histories of education.

Numerous web archives have started collecting community responses to the COVID-19 crisis and many of them include an abundance of digital photographs, video clips, podcasts, and films.³⁰ These visual and oral digital collections, very similar to the Magnum “Diary of a Pandemic”, should be critically analysed as public interventions into compromised environments and as testimonies of an imbalance in ecological relations. Many of these voices show an awareness of the vulnerability of the human body and humankind’s ethical, cultural, and social proximity to other living creatures and the material world. They show an awareness that humans share their territory and that this territory should not be extracted and destroyed by human exceptionalism. It is up to future historians of education to analyse the historical sources provided by COVID-19 web archives as testimonies of a watershed moment, for better or worse.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Karin Priem is professor of public history and history of education at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History. A former president of the German History of Education Research Association (2007–2011), Karin Priem is currently President of the International

²⁸Charbonnier, *Affluence and Freedom*, 220.

²⁹Marc Depaepe, *Between Educationalization and Appropriation: Selected Writings in the History of Modern Educational Systems* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012).

³⁰Karin Priem and Ian Grosvenor, “Future Pasts: Web Archives and Public History as Challenges for Historians of Education in Times of COVID-19,” in *Exhibiting the Past*, ed. Frederik Herman et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE). Her research focuses on visual and material history; the history of media and technology; and the history of entrepreneurship and social-educational reform. She is co-editor of the book series *Studies in the History of Education and Culture* | *Studien zur Bildungs- und Kulturgeschichte* (De Gruyter), *Appearances: Studies in Visual Research* (De Gruyter), and of *Public History from European Perspectives* (De Gruyter). Karin serves as a member of the international scientific board of *Pedagogia Oggi* (Società Italiana di Pedagogia) and *Historia educationis* (Armando). She is also a member of the international advisory board of *Paedagogica Historica* (Taylor & Francis) and corresponding international member of the DOMUS Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood at the University of Birmingham. Currently, Karin is coordinating an international team of researchers who is curating the Education and Pandemics Digital Archive. In addition, she has accepted a 2022 scholarship awarded by the Swiss Iron Library (www.eisenbibliothek.ch/en.html).