

Call for papers for a special issue of *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 11, no. 2 (May 2023)
COVID-19 Now and Then: Reflections on Mobile Communication and the Pandemic

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Although our history with pandemics is long, our collective memory of pandemics is short. The 1918 influenza pandemic, for example, infected almost a third of the world's population and claimed more than 100 million lives, and yet it has been scarcely mentioned afterwards (Crosby, 2003). This tendency to forget lessons learned from pandemics is problematic because it leads to the lack of proper public funds allocation for scientific research, public health, and pandemic preparedness. In addition, with the urge to go back to "normal," we might forget important lessons that a large-scale public health crisis might have taught us about the way we communicate and experience spaces. Understanding these lessons is especially important to mobile communication scholars since mobile communication can distribute and diffract our ability to move in the world. Mobile communication can make our movements legible, as in the examples of contact-tracing apps or of aggregating location data to visualize mobility patterns at the individual and the community level (Ekong et al., 2020).

Our experience of spaces, mediated by mobile communication devices, has also drastically changed with the pandemic. While the traditionally mobile global elites (Castells, 2000) are privileged enough to become immobile and work remotely, many low-income populations with limited access to technology or the infrastructure that supports mobile communication are forced to keep moving in order to work or to find access to these infrastructures. Noticeably, refugees and migrants, as well as low-income communities in rural or "less developed" areas in the Global North and South, developed creative forms of mobility to deal with the required immobility imposed by the pandemic (de Souza e Silva & Xiong-Gum, 2020). For example, for many people with no computer or internet connection at home, their mobile phone became the most important instrument for mobile work, connecting from home, reaching out to clients, taking orders, and paying bills. Mobile phones became systematically used as interfaces for tele-medicine, locating testing sites, and contact-tracing. For those who shelter in place, mobile applications that support delivery services for food or grocery items play a critical role in the continued circulation of goods in the growing of a mobile-guided gig economy. In locations without access to mobile communication such as signal "dead zones," people have to travel to engage in mobile communication and in locations where others cannot travel, mobilities are outsourced. As a result, a network of mobilities emerge as our mobile capabilities inform our mobile communication capabilities and vice versa.

The COVID-19 pandemic may soon be over, but we know it won't be the last one. Preparing for the next pandemic includes understanding the past and planning for the future. It also includes rethinking "normal" ways of interacting with others and the spaces in which we live. What else have we learned during this time of forced immobility that might challenge the traditional roles of mobile communication in our everyday lives? Will the way we experience public and domestic spaces via mobile technologies change? What are some of the more sustainable futures of urban networked mobility? How can we re-think the meanings of social interaction while immobile and at distance? And, will some of these shifts permanently stay with us and change how we communicate, play, and socialize? These are just some questions that emerge when we consider the future of mobile communication and networked urban mobility after COVID-19.

In this special issue, we are looking for future oriented pieces that analyze how the pandemic has shaped and changed our mobile communication, sociability and networked urban mobility practices around the world. We welcome papers that might take the lessons learned during this pandemic and consider how

these lessons can help us in the future. We particularly welcome contributions that analyze the impacts of the pandemic in the practices of minoritized populations, especially in the Global South.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- The future of urban networked mobility in both Global North and South
- The shift to more sustainable forms of micromobility, particularly focusing on the integration between transportation and mobile apps
- New forms of experiencing urban and public spaces via mobile technologies that take into account active mobility and walking
- The mobile-guided gig economy for delivery of services
- The development of location-based apps that can help us prepare for the next pandemic
- The future of contact-tracing apps, and their relationship with privacy and surveillance
- The shift in the nature of hybrid spaces from urban to domestic spaces
- The role of mobile augmented-reality and mobile videoconferencing for remote work
- The role of mobile communication in helping low-income and minoritized communities

Submitted articles can come from various theoretical and methodological perspectives, as long as they engage with mobile communication scholarship and focus on the future and lessons learned from the pandemic from a mobile media and communication perspective.

Important dates:

- Extended abstracts submission (1,000 words): 30 August, 2021
- Full papers submission (8,000 words): 1 March, 2022
- Final acceptance: 15 January, 2023

Guidelines:

Please submit an extended abstract of no more than 1,000 words (including references) that states the paper's main argument, contribution, and takeaway. The abstract should clearly explain how the full submission will contribute to the aims of this special issue. Please email extended abstracts to covid19nowandthen@gmail.com by 30 August 2021. Abstracts should be accompanied by a short biography for each author (approx. 200 words). Also, include the names, titles, and contact information for 2-3 suggested reviewers.

Positively reviewed abstracts (notification by 15 October 2021) will be invited to submit full articles by 1 March 2022, through <http://mmc.sagepub.com>. Invited submissions will undergo a blind peer-review process following the usual procedures of *Mobile Media & Communication*. The special section will be published in Volume 11, no. 2 of *Mobile Media & Communication* in May 2023. Please note that manuscripts must conform to the guidelines for *Mobile Media & Communication*. In case of further questions, please contact the guest editors.

References:

- Castells, M. (2000). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Blackwell.
- Crosby, A. W. (2003). *America's forgotten pandemic: the influenza of 1918*. Cambridge University Press.
- de Souza e Silva, A., & Xiong-Gum, M. N. (2020). Mobile Networked Creativity: Developing a theoretical framework for understanding creativity as survival. *Communication Theory*.
- Ekong, I., Chukwu, E., & Chukwu, M. (2020). COVID-19 Mobile Positioning Data Contact Tracing and Patient Privacy Regulations. *JMIR MHealth and UHealth*, 8(4), e19139. <https://doi.org/10.2196/19139>