

Ethics, Public Health & the COVID-19 response

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Ethics everywhere?

 VORGEZOGENE SPORTLER-IMPFUNGEN

Respekt vor dem Prinzip der Ethik

Athleten sollten nicht in der Impf-Reihenfolge bevorzugt werden. Die Schwächsten sollten mit Vorrang geimpft werden, nicht die Stärksten. Eine Argumentation.

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Science Weekly Coronavirus

Covid-19 ethics: Should we deliberately infect volunteers in the name of science? (part 1)

Meinung

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

GASTKOMMENTAR

Eine Ethik der Pandemie – es kursieren derzeit viele populäre, aber falsche und gefährliche Thesen



Q+A

THE COMPLEX ETHICS OF REOPENING AMERICA

Johns Hopkins bioethicist Justin Bernstein explores the many considerations—public health, economics, liberty, and justice—that should factor into decisions about how and when to relax social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and why there's no one-size-fits-all solution

Covid19 Ethical Issues

The corona virus pandemic prompts important ethical concerns. This interactive website brings structure to the ethical issues of COVID-19, allowing users to explore important questions and access reliable and trustworthy sources. Specific attention has been given to the Swiss sources and issues relevant to us here in Switzerland. Click the bullet points below the images to learn more about these ethical issues.

To find out more about our classification, please see:
[Overview of Public Health Ethics in Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)

The references on this page have been collected from a number of sources, including academic journals, blog posts and journalistic outlets. They have been manually curated by members of the [Health Ethics and Policy Lab](#) for relevance and topicality. Specifically, we have tried to identify articles that address novel ethical issues with respect to the current COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the Swiss context. New articles will be collected and periodically compiled on this page.



Individual Ethics

- Compulsively shopping for food, masks and other goods
- Disregarding travel restrictions
- Discriminating and stigmatizing individuals



Public Health Ethics

- Disruption of social norms with health measures (e.g. social distancing)
- Using drugs with incomplete evidence of safety and effectiveness
- Impact of public health measures on economy, work, education and rights



Global Health Ethics

- Planning immunisation (allocating drugs and vaccines equitably)
- Time and method of response against COVID-19
- Stigmatization of other countries by border police



Research Ethics

- Testing vaccines and drugs in an expedited way
- Coordinated and transparent reporting of epidemiological data
- Sharing data and knowledge across borders



Clinical Ethics

- Allocation of limited resources (e.g. drugs and treatment)
- Giving medical precedence to certain patients (e.g. doctors)



Technology Ethics

- Using mobile data to track movements of infected people and contacts
- Mis-information spreading via social media
- Allocating intellectual property rights of vaccines, drugs and testing

Agenda

1. Ethics & Public Health
2. The COVID-19 policy response and ethical considerations
3. A need for trust?
4. Wrap up and discussion

Ethics & Public Health

Development of Public Health Ethics

1932-1972: Tuskegee Experiments

1970s: Discussions began about consent to the use of health data for research

1980s: HIV / AIDS - new epidemic that brought new challenges

1990s: Drug and vaccine trials in low and middle income countries

Public health ethics established since the 1990s

Before: research ethics, clinical ethics, bioethics

→ Case studies enable the development of ethical standards for public health

What is ethics?

- Greek ἦθος "ethos" = "character"
- Science of moral action, analysis of various moral concepts
- Argumentation & reflection
- Justifications & change of perspective
 - Descriptive ethics: Which systems of norms do people actually represent?
 - Normative Ethics: What should you do?

Morality

- Latin "mos" = "custom" or "regulation"
- Morality = provides a concrete framework for appropriate behaviour

What is public health ethics?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

"Public health ethics involves a systematic process to clarify, prioritize and justify possible courses of public health action based on ethical principles, values and beliefs of stakeholders, and scientific and other information."

Field of study: to understand and **clarify principles** and **values** which guide public health actions to develop **frameworks** for decision making and a means of justifying decisions.

Field of practices: Application of ethics frameworks to 1) identify and clarify the ethical dilemma posed, 2) analyze it in terms of alternative courses of action and their consequences, and 3) resolve the dilemma by deciding which course of action best incorporates and balances the guiding principles and values.

(Health) Policy making during the economic crisis

Interview study (2015/2016) with EU policy-makers:

“Ethics should be a very important aspect of politics because ethics is a set of criteria that could allow politics to take correct and balanced decision.”

→ Importance of ethics in dealing with decisions

“I think had I before been exposed for example to some workshop or something for senior policy-makers, which would have introduced the concept that in times of crisis *different value sets* may need to come into play, its okay to *depart from the established norms* and to work in a different reality, maybe I would have *felt personally less bad and less troubled* and would have been more able to cope on a personal level with the decisions that I would having to make. ... These kind of master classes, retreats if you wish, for senior decision-makers involved in making these very tough decisions, could be a very useful kind of support.”

→ By receiving ethics assistance policy maker would feel less ‘troubled’ during the decision-making process



Recap: Why is ethics in public health important?

What should you do? → Assistance in decision-making

➡ Change of perspective & analysis

Ethics as a prerequisite for many decision-making processes



But: There is not always one right answer or solution!

Rather, there are some answers who are more reasonable, defensible and justified.

The COVID-19 policy response and ethical considerations

Public health ethics framework

5 steps to use the framework

- 1) What is the ethical problem?
- 2) Who are the stakeholders?
- 3) What are the underlying principles / values?
- 4) Are there possible alternatives?
- 5) Justification of the decision

Non-maleficence

(Do no harm)

- Is harm prevented by the measure?

Beneficence

(Do good)

- Is it of any good to society and the persons affected?

Maximisation

(of health or public good in general)

- Does it improve public good (or population health)?
- Does it have a long-term effect on the public's good?

Efficiency

- Is it cost-effective? What about opportunity-costs?

Respect for autonomy

- Is there 'informed consent'? Are privacy and personal data respected?
- If the intervention is paternalistic, is this justifiable?

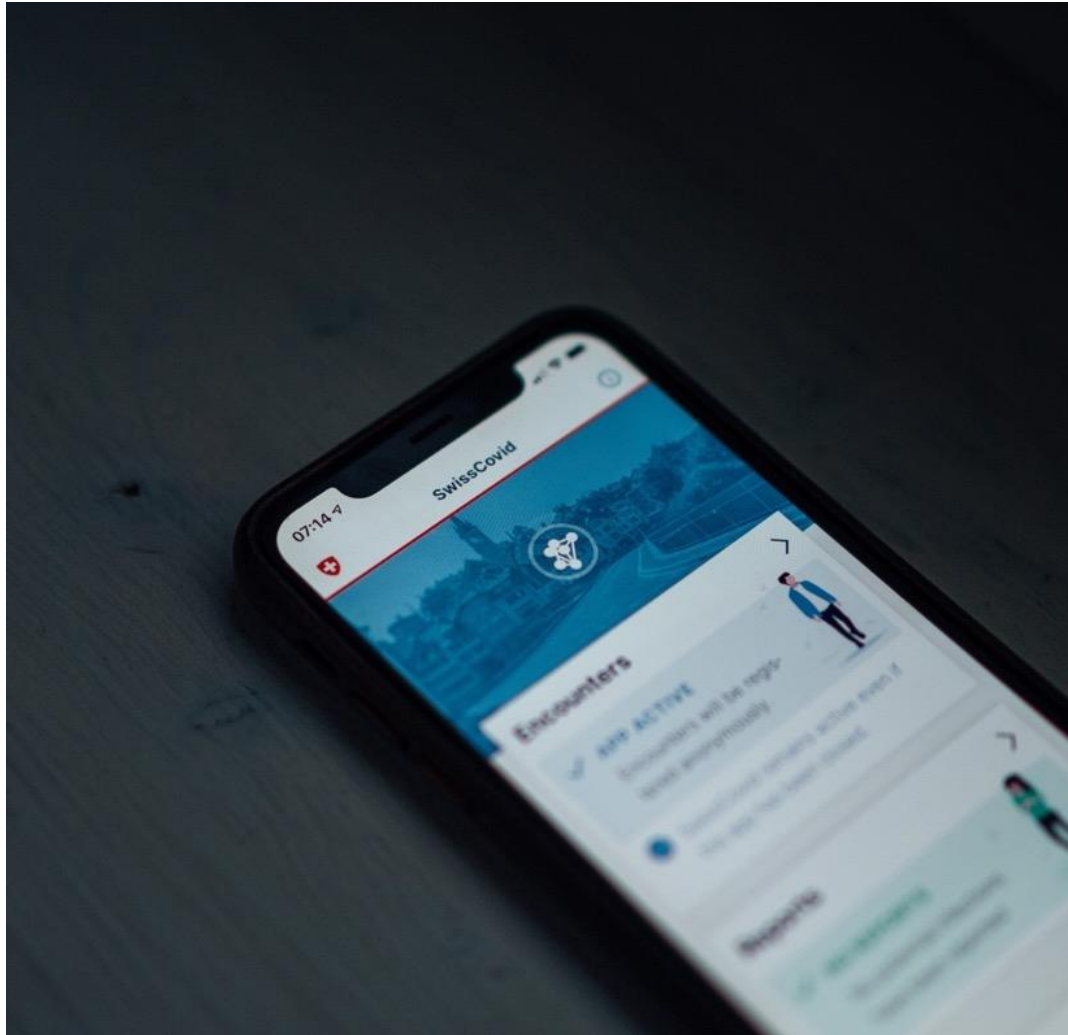
Justice

- Does it prevent social and health inequalities? Are vulnerable sub-populations considered and supported?
- Is the institution proposing the intervention publicly justified & acting transparently?

Proportionality

- Is the intervention the least infringing of possible alternatives?
- Are costs and utility proportional?

Contact tracing and the SwissCovid App



Non-maleficence

(Do no harm)

Beneficence

(Do good)

Maximisation

(of health or public good in general)

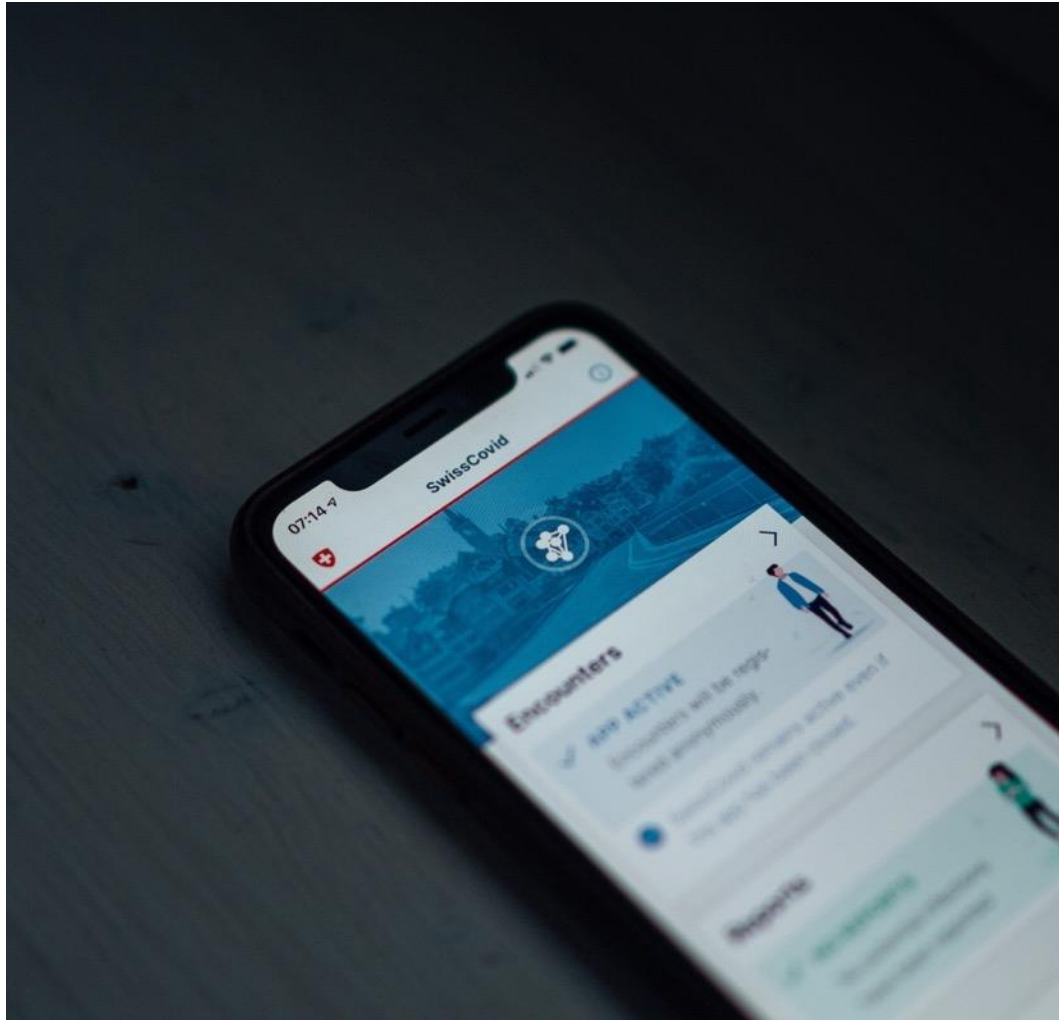
Efficiency

Respect for autonomy

Justice

Proportionality

Contact tracing and the SwissCovid App



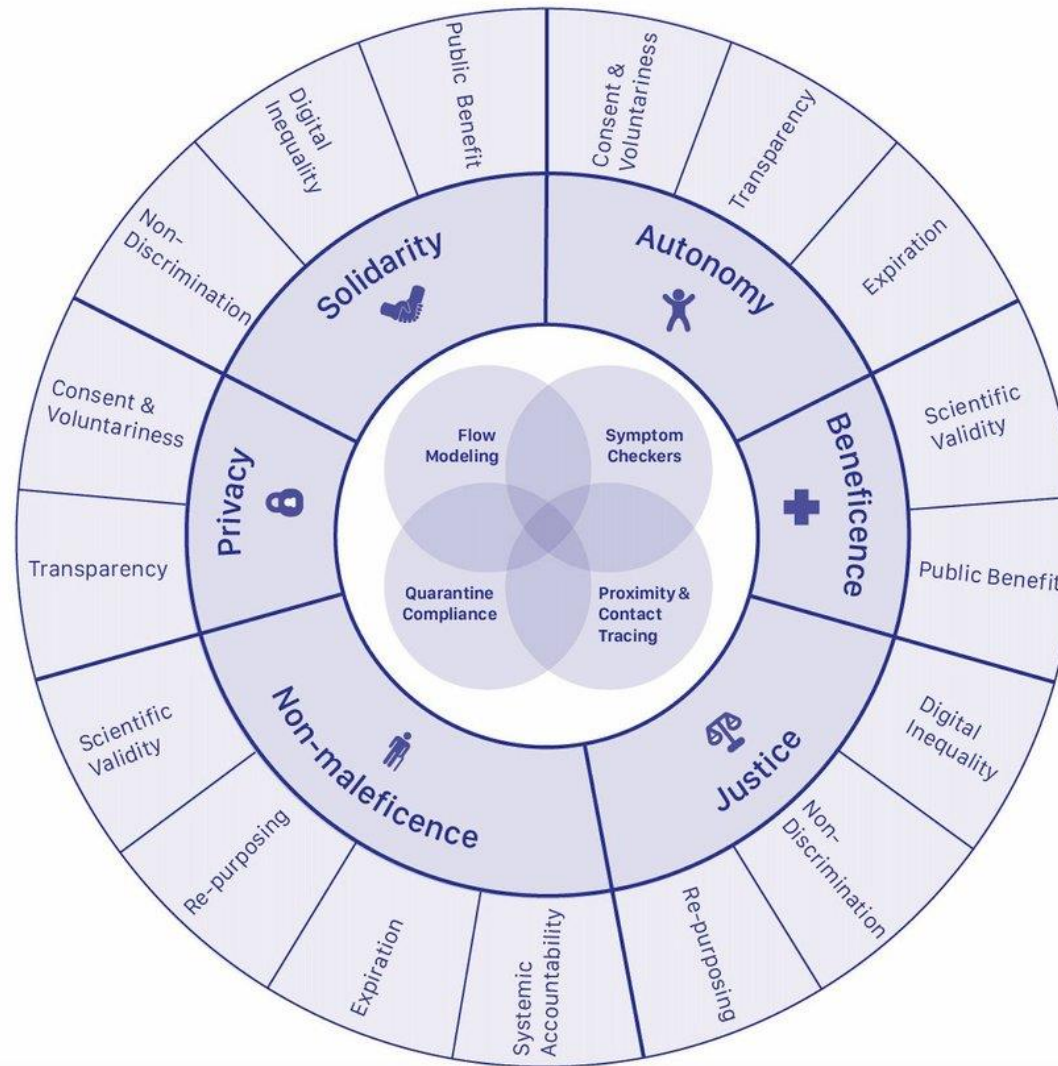
Additional underlying values:
Responsibility towards others &
Solidarity

Challenges:

- User numbers → Trust
- Privacy & data protection

Issues raised by applying Ethical Principles to COVID-19 Digital Public Health Technologies

This sunburst diagram presents how the six ethical principles of autonomy, solidarity, privacy, non-maleficence, justice and beneficence raise ethical and legal issues when considered in relation to digital public health technologies against COVID-19. As shown by the intersecting circles at the center, these principles apply equally to symptom checkers, proximity & contact tracing, quarantine compliance and flow modeling.



Isolation, Quarantine & Social Distancing



Non-maleficence

(Do no harm)

Beneficence

(Do good)

Maximisation

(of health or public good in general)

Efficiency

Respect for autonomy

Justice

Proportionality

Isolation, Quarantine & Social Distancing



Identified challenges:

- Social Inequalities
- Attention to equity & vulnerable subpopulations

A need for trust?

What is trust?

We understand trust as a relational construct existing between at least two actors where the trusting actor A anticipates that the trusted actor B will, in the future, do or not do what the actor B is trusted for.



COVID Vaccination

- Lower trust in national government links to no history of vaccination (Miyachi et al., 2020)
- Public trust in medical organizations is a crucial determinant of vaccination behavior...
 - restoring trust between public and medical organization seems to be essential for the management of future pandemics. (Gilles et al., 2011)
- Multiple levels of trust: Trust in product, provider, policy-maker (Larson et al., 2018)

Gilles, I., Bangerter, A., Clémence, A. *et al.* Trust in medical organizations predicts pandemic (H1N1) 2009 vaccination behavior and perceived efficacy of protection measures in the Swiss public. *Eur J Epidemiol* **26**, 203–210 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10654-011-9577-2>

Larson HJ, Clarke RM, Jarrett C, et al. Measuring trust in vaccination: A systematic review. *Hum Vaccin Immunother.* 2018;14(7):1599–1609. doi:10.1080/21645515.2018.1459252

Miyachi, T., Takita, M., Senoo, Y., & Yamamoto, K. (2020). Lower trust in national government links to no history of vaccination. *The Lancet*, 395(10217), 31–32. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)32686-8](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)32686-8)



COVID Tracing App & Data use

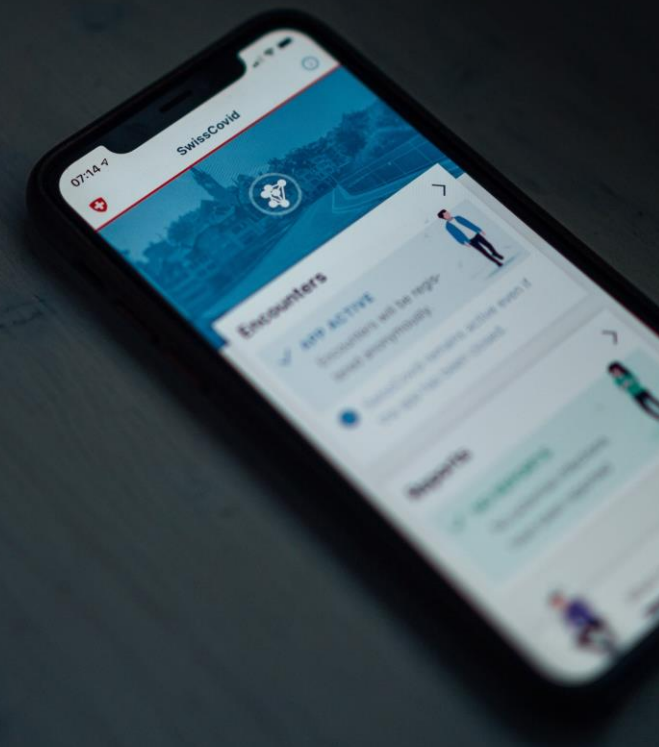
- Trust influenced by: default opt in; privacy and data security concerns; involvement of private companies; confusing communication strategy, system scandals
- Needed: Warrants of trust and social licence.
- Conditions for social license include:
 - reciprocity
 - non-exploitation
 - service of the public good (Carter et al. 2015).

Carter P, Laurie GT, Dixon-Woods M. The social licence for research: why care.data ran into trouble. *J Med Ethics*. 2015;41(5):404–409. doi:10.1136/medethics-2014-102374

Gille, F; (2017) Theory and conceptualisation of public trust in the health care system: Three English case studies: care.data, biobanks and 100,000 Genomes Project. PhD thesis, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17037/PUBS.04645534>

Leins K, Culnane C, Rubinstein BI. Tracking, tracing, trust: contemplating mitigating the impact of COVID-19 with technological interventions. *Med J Aust*. 2020;213(1):6-8.e1. doi:10.5694/mja2.50669

Photo by [Pascal Brändle](#) on [Unsplash](#)



A definition of public trust in the health system

PUBLIC TRUST grows in the public sphere from open public discourse and as a result legitimises the actions of the health care system. Public trust builds on information equally relating to past experiences, present perceptions and future expectations. Public trust is established in anticipation of a net benefit for the public as well as the system.

What can health system actors do to increase public trust?

Recommendations on how to foster public trust:

Recognise the diversity of trust relationships within the health system.

Consider gut feeling as oppose to calculated decision making.

Do not rush the build-up of a trust relationship.

Engage with the public, health system actors, and outside actors.

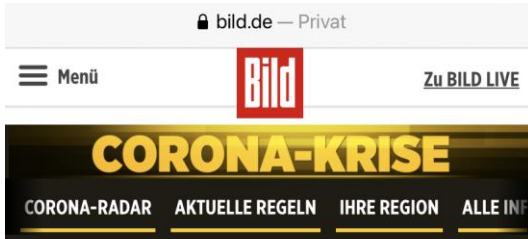
Keep the public safe.

Offer autonomous choices to the public.

Represent the public.

Work towards a net-benefit for the healthcare system and the public.

COVID 19- trust in the news and on Twitter



ASTRAZENECA-STOPP MITTEN IN DER
IMPFSTOFF-KRISE

„So wird Vertrauen
verspielt!“

Heftige Kritik nach Impf-Notbremse

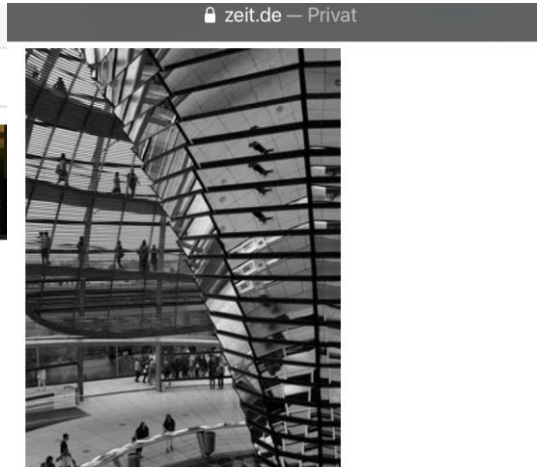


1,4 Millionen bereits gelieferte AstraZeneca-Dosen bleiben in
Deutschland vorerst ungenutzt

Foto: Frank Augstein/AP

16.03.2021 - 09:33 Uhr

Das AstraZeneca-Beben lässt nicht nach!



CORONA-POLITIK

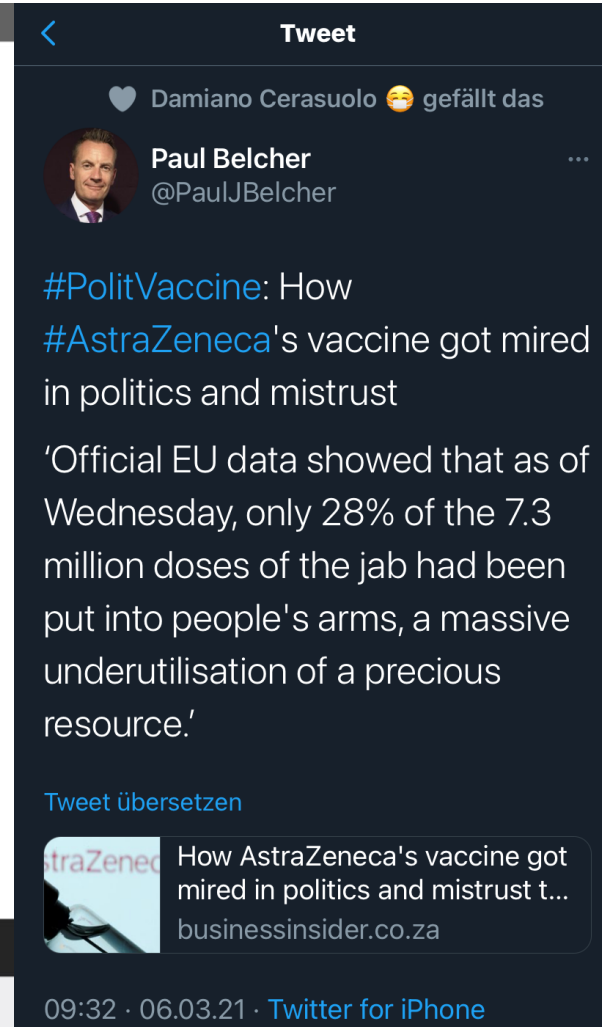
"VERTRAUE ICH DEM MANN
AUF YOUTUBE ODER DEM
MANN IN DER TAGESSCHAU?"

Interview: Sara Tomšić

Die Pandemie ist eine harte Probe für das
Vertrauen in Politik. Der Philosoph Martin
Hartmann erklärt, wie man Vertrauen bewahrt
und was passiert, wenn es verloren geht.

THEMA LOCKDOWN

10. März 2021, 19:00 Uhr · 138 Kommentare

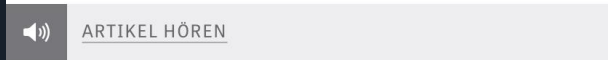


Ganz schön viel verlangt

Weil die dritte Welle droht, haben die
Regierenden den Lockdown nochmals
verlängert. Politik auf Vorschuss jedoch braucht
Vertrauen. Und das wird langsam zum knappen
Gut.

Ein Kommentar von **Ferdinand Otto**

10. Februar 2021, 22:00 Uhr / 311 Kommentare



Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel und Berlins Regierender
Bürgermeister Michael Müller bei den Corona-Beratungen
© Guido Bergmann/dpa

Responding to the corona virus

Trust is a central element for public adherence to public health measures

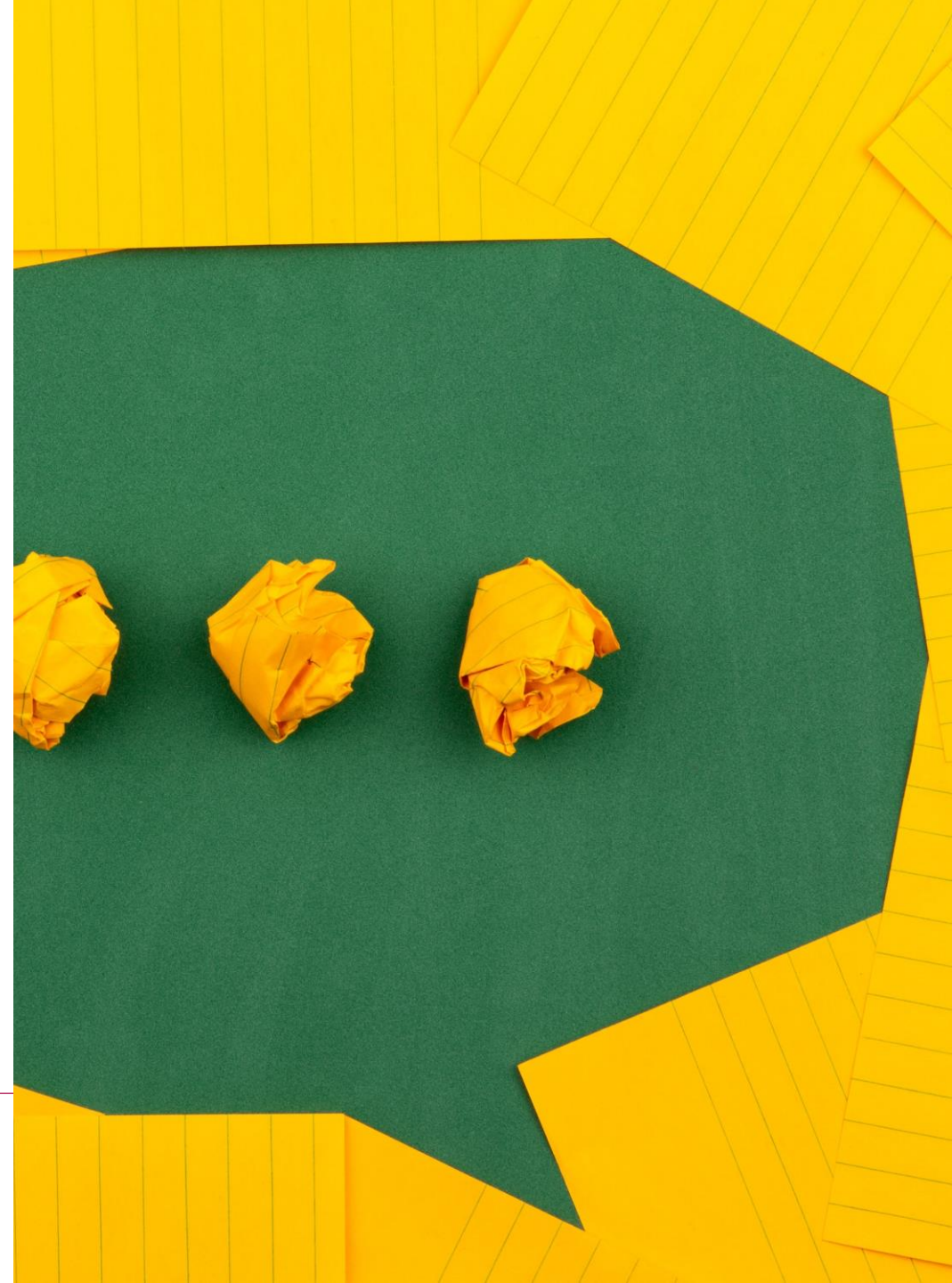
- Open and timely communication with the public
- Transparent decision-making
- Collaboration with scientists and experts in the field

‘Timely, accurate, and transparent risk communication is essential and challenging in emergencies because it determines whether the public will trust authorities more than rumours and misinformation.’ (Legido-Quigley et al., 2020)

Legido-Quigley, H., Asgari, N., Teo, Y. Y., Leung, G. M., Oshitani, H., Fukuda, K., ... Heymann, D. (2020). Are high-performing health systems resilient against the COVID-19 epidemic? *The Lancet*, 395(10227), 848–850. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30551-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30551-1)

Wrap up

- Ethics is “everywhere”
- Ethical frameworks help to analyse and dissect underlying ethical issues of policy measures
- Trust is an integral part of policy-making and national COVID-19 response
- Policy-makers should aim to increase trust, e.g. by open & timely communication and transparent decision-making



Reading suggestions & References

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Let's discuss!
ZOOM: Chat

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