

**SELF-  
ORGANIZATION  
IN TIMES OF  
PANDEMIC:**

**HOW THE  
MASSES ARE  
RECONSTRUCT-  
ING SOCIETY**

**PART  
I**

Translated from: [https://gateway.pinata.cloud/ipfs/  
QmYVQ3z2YDfd1TSspzpii8xr9PtLmtdvsgiMivm9d8zXKe/](https://gateway.pinata.cloud/ipfs/QmYVQ3z2YDfd1TSspzpii8xr9PtLmtdvsgiMivm9d8zXKe/)  
By: 99 semi-literate Chinese diaspora under a trenchcoat

# A NOTE FROM PUBLISHERS

COVID-19 Mutual Aid Solidarity Network Seattle sprung out of our community's sense of urgency around the pandemic. We believe in the values of grassroots, everyday people's power to keep each other safe, through a framework of solidarity and autonomy, not charity and dependence. This manifests on the one hand, through ensuring access to everyday necessities -- food, shelter and money for example, but also in our collective organizing against the systems that profit from our daily oppression and exploitation. For poor communities and BIPOC communities, the fissures that this pandemic exposes and deepens are not new to us. Neither are efforts to keep each other alive and thriving in the midst of hardship. Our mutual aid extends into organizing with each other against employers that force us to devalue our lives and choose between health and economic survival; or with our incarcerated communities and loved ones who are fighting to be released in the middle of this pandemic. Our vision of mutual aid is critical of the state, is autonomous, is grassroots, is decentralized, and is led by folks of color.

It is timely to translate the writings of everyday people in China who had similarly mobilized and organized mutual aid formations to support their communities. Statist notions of public health uphold and glorify the Chinese state apparatus for handling the crisis. However, this is the same state infrastructure that has destroyed labor movements, conducted human rights violations, implemented apartheid-like policies for rural migrants traveling into the urban cities for work.

PART  
I

# A NOTE FROM PUBLISHERS

We reject the opportunism of the US state, of the police departments, of racial capitalism in the US to utilize this pandemic to further militarize our communities in the name of public health. More than ever, we are clear that it is the criminalization of our communities, decades of class exploitation and mindless expropriation of the land and resources, that have led to this tragic outcome we face today -- a capitalist engine that is urging to keep running even at the cost of human lives, the abject disregard for the health of workers who are crammed in subways to keep the markets alive. A different world is possible and this moment calls for us to believe in our visions, trust in our relationships, learn with our communities, to stay agile and strong for the moments ahead.

We are grateful to the self activity of everyday people in China who made this document possible, to the network of translators in Seattle, Oakland and San Francisco who have made this translation possible. Also to our fellow organizers in Pacific Rim Solidarity Network (PARISOL), a left Chinese diaspora formation based in Seattle that has been building with autonomous, anti-capitalist organizing collectives in China and Hong Kong over the years.

- COVID 19 Mutual Aid Seattle & PARISOL

PART  
I

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**PART  
I**

# **2020 IS DESTINED TO BE UNFORGETTABLE.**

As the curtain opened on the year, China experienced a societal emergency at least as severe as the 2003 SARS outbreak. The traditional levers of power were “unexpectedly” incapacitated in the midst of the pandemic, which allowed anxiety, disappointment, and anger to spread and surge throughout public discourse. Besides heeding advice from government or experts, like wearing a mask, securing your home, and isolating yourself from the outside world full of the terrifying virus floating around, what other options do the masses have in the face of this grave situation? We are paying close attention to the choices of these people — the grassroots volunteers who are spontaneously connecting with each other and constructing self-organized networks in the midst of this crisis, and becoming crucial nodes for the distribution of information and goods. With the help of internet communications and task management technology, they have swiftly achieve common objectives without needing to form hierarchical bureaucracies. When one operation is over, they invest in the next operation according to the needs of society, and they continue to self-organize without seeking personal gains of material wealth or social prestige. The subtle forces gathered by these individuals attempt to penetrate the obstacles of both the disease and state systems, permeating every corner of need. Compared to the initial “half paralysis” of government bureaucracy, the swiftness, meticulousness, and flexibility of popular self-organization are profoundly impressive.

But we also understand that this isn't the usual state of society. In recent years the space for social autonomy has shrunk. This is an indisputable fact. Let's take public-interest organizations as an example. The article “Reconstructing the Theoretical Basis of Chinese Public Welfare,” published in Beijing Cultural Review observes that “most public-interest organizations see the government as an indispensable partner. If a public-interest org strays from the local government's favor, they will have no room to act... in practical reality, public-interest orgs are the 'fur,' while the government and capital forces are the 'skin.' Without the support of the government or corporations, public-interest orgs simply could not exist.” At the same time, “within annual donation revenues from society, the proportion of donations from individual citizens cannot be compared with donations from corporations and other societal bodies. Since the participation of corporations in public welfare became prevalent, business values and logic have begun to pervade public welfare. Not only does capital insist on controlling public-interest funds according to its own will, but it also requires public-interest orgs to behave according to capital's behavior, model, and value system.

We can't deny that existing organizations within society provided part of the foundation for self-organization emerge during the pandemic; they contributed valuable experience and resources to self-organized groups. But as described in the Southern Metropolis Weekly article, "The Grassroots Volunteers of the Crisis: Forced to Become a Super Information Exchange Platform," many volunteers in self-organized groups had no prior experience doing social work. To a large degree, it was the emergency of the pandemic and the insufficiency of official government functions that "forced" these people to assemble for self-rescue and mutual aid. Therefore we must make a distinction between the self-organization emerging from the pandemic, and existing legal organizations (including companies in the market, NGOs, GONGOs [Government Organized NGOs] which are extensions of the state machine, etc.). Some analytical perspectives incorporate these grassroots self-organizations into the traditional theoretical framework of civil society, and view them as mid-level organizations that connect the state with individuals and families. In other words, they believe power flows down from the central authority of the ruling party, and in part transfers to middle-class elites (such as technical experts, intellectuals, etc), thereby forming this social group. But, on the one hand, due to how quickly these self-organized groups had to form, and their lack of legal status, it is probably difficult for them to "bear this heavy responsibility." On the other hand, although these self-organized groups are very fragile and most of them probably won't last beyond the pandemic, due to government and market "failure" their actions really did exhibit some characteristics beyond the traditional framework of civil society. These characteristics therefore cannot be simply captured by the traditional framework. ///// This article will firstly attempt to observe and investigate the background as well as the effects of the current upsurge of self-organization, drawing from reports and public opinions from society at large. Secondly, we will analyze the political positions underlying typical public discourse, and by investigating the disagreements between these positions, we will discover what social expectations have been brought to light, and what social demands have been covered up. Lastly, we will attempt to reveal both the covered up demands and the new experiences currently being generated. We should also mention that during this time of pandemic, the authors of this text can only draw from societal reports to examine the emerging torrent of self-organized activity. We lack direct contact and deep research, and so it is difficult for this article to completely avoid the perception that it has a limited view. Fortunately, a few authors have personally volunteered with self-organized groups, which more or less provides this article with some on-the-ground experience. So long as we can build upon the basis of currently existing materials, and provide readers with both a way to become acquainted with self-organized groups and an outline of such activities, then we believe this work was worth doing. In addition, in the third part of this article we extended our study of self-organization with many theoretical investigations and practical case studies of alternative social programs. We hope they will inspire our readers.

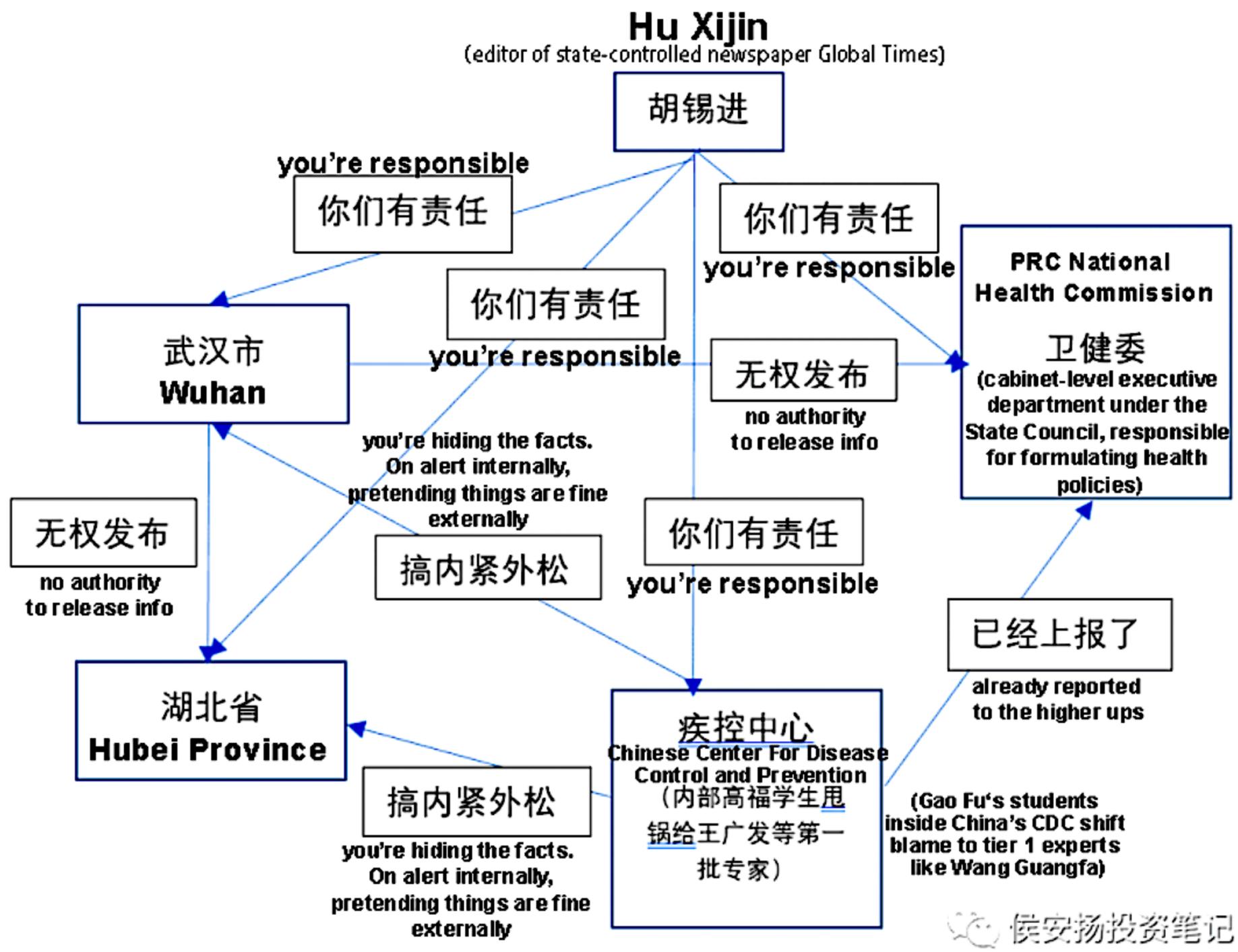
# **EMERGENCY SELF-RESCUE: COAGULATION FACTOR AFTER A RUPTURED ARTERY**

In current public opinion, the entity that receives the most intense condemnation is first and foremost the provincial government of Hubei, which is the epicenter of the pandemic. During the period from 12/31/2019 when the Wuhan City Health Committee released the first notice regarding pneumonia, all the way until 01/22 when Hubei province requested emergency support from the nation, the Hubei provincial government had no response to the epidemic, but to the contrary insisted "the epidemic can be guarded against and controlled". During the same period, on 01/19 the Wuhan Baibuting neighborhood held the Ten Thousand Family Feast, and on 01/21 Hongshan Hall held a Chinese New Year celebration. These gatherings in the early stages of the pandemic reflected the serious missteps of officials, which were widely criticized by the public. On the evening of 01/26, during the Hubei provincial government's news conference regarding the epidemic, the spokesperson representing high ranking officials repeatedly misread face-mask production capacity numbers and gave contradictory statements regarding supply shortages, all while wearing their face mask incorrectly.

## **SLOW RESPONSE VS. RAPID RESPONSE**

However, it may not at all be appropriate to simply point the finger at local government. In the article "Illogical Logic -- -- Weak Local Government Action during the Epidemic's Critical Response Period" Scholar Zhang Wenwen points out that the lazy governing style of Hubei's provincial government, which delayed the implementation of control measures, actually reflects the "logic of weak local government action" that pervades the entire political system. "Weak local governments like Hubei are accustomed to being aimless -- they are used to following orders from central government, and staying in the rut of their old habits; therefore, they repeatedly miss the optimal moment to take control measures." Moreover, this logic not only manifests in the relationship between central and local governments, but it also manifests between any pair of governmental agencies of unequal levels. The lower level agency is the "weak local government" that can only "be absolutely passive as it waits for instructions, or central dispatch, or arrangements."

Of course, this viewpoint to some extent ignores the subjective motivation of local governments attempt to evade “territorial responsibility” by covering up the epidemic in the early days, but it undoubtedly points out another critical component of our inescapable problem: in our customarily verticalized central administration system, the central authority has absolute power. This is usually proclaimed to be the most effective, especially when there is a need to “concentrate strength to do big tasks” in critical moments. Yet, this power suffers from a lack of public oversight and participation, asymmetry of information, and bureaucratic authoritarianism, in which reports are passed up through many layers, and then higher-up approval presses back downward through the ranks. This gives rise to the political theatre of “one rank lying to the other” and “one ring lying to the other”, as different departments and layers of government try to pass on the blame in an ultimate scapegoating contest.



If politicians in an electoral system are good at using political theatre to beguile voters for their approval, then Chinese bureaucrats, in their system based on "responsibility to the higher-ups," have even more clumsy or elaborate tricks when it comes to political theatre. The pandemic reveals a typical example of political theatre -- the “National Epidemic and Public Health Crisis Monitoring Information System,” a.k.a. the "Direct Reporting System," built prior to this pandemic at the cost of hundreds of millions of RMB.

According to Caijing Business Journal, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director Gao Fu announced at the 2019 Bo'ao Forum for Asia Global Health Forum, "China has a very well-established information system. For any suspicious, new, or recurring contagious disease, health departments will be informed within 6 hours since we have built a direct reporting system covering the entire country."

However, during the 28 days in December last year after the outbreak, this direct reporting system seemed to malfunction. The system was in fact circumvented instead of being put into action, "For new diseases like this, if you want to report through this system, you must first wait for higher-up CDC and other health departments' experts to convene and confirm the disease. Only then can lower-level health institutions use this system for direct reporting." There circulates the same old logic of reporting-up through layers of bureaucracy. Amidst the circles of cover-up and deception, experts and decision-makers in the central government naturally won't have the information they need to verify the truth, which leads to delays in making a rapid systemic response.

In "Institutional Logic of China's National Governance" Scholar Zhou Xueguang mentions another regulatory arrangement complimentary to the current bureaucratic hierarchy system: the administrative contracting-out system ---- "The central authority and all other levels of government pass on territorial administrative responsibilities (public order, employment, economic development, the distribution of public goods, etc.) to the next level of government in a lump package. The appointment, assessment and management of subordinate level government officials are entrusted to their direct (or next-level) superior department." Zhou Xueguang believes that this system is partly intended to ease the contradiction between central authority and effective local governance. This system maintains the premise that power and resources belong to the central authority, while improving efficiency by matching certain administrative powers with local governments that have more direct access to information. But because of its aforementioned non-public nature of power and its reinforcement of the asymmetry of information, the administrative contracting-out system has instead inhibited the government's ability to deal with sudden outbreaks.

In the Southern Weekly article, "160+ Hospitals Across the Country are Asking for Help from Society at Large, Why Aren't There Enough Medical Supplies?" it is mentioned that even though the SARS epidemic in 2003 left behind a relatively complete epidemic response plan, for a long time the stockpile and daily management of emergency supplies in many provinces have been below standard, and supplies have been mismanaged and used incorrectly. According to the emergency plan and other related regulations, the necessary funds for health protection supplies, equipment, and facilities must be included in provincial budgets. However, the reserves for disease control agencies in many places lack financial guarantee. Even in Shenzhen, which is often considered a "strong local government," "some institutions don't have enough stockpile of the essentials."

Why haven't local epidemic control systems been properly implemented? At the end of the day, it's probably because, in the hierarchy of priorities of the government's administrative contracting-out system, local epidemic control measures rank at the very bottom. Epidemic control, emergency preparedness, etc. are not the daily focus of this centralized system. Like other public service activities, they can neither bring local governments financial nor budgetary returns, nor can they bring local officials major political achievements that are conducive to promotion. This is the important background of why local hospitals have historically lacked sufficient anti-epidemic supplies.

In the same report from Southern Weekly, a hospital staff member who participated in crowdsourcing supplies stated: "The reason for choosing crowdsourcing instead of official procurement, is that the hospital procurement process is more complicated, and it is difficult to complete quickly. Crowdsourcing is much more direct."

**FROM THIS, WE CAN SEE THE CONFIDENCE FRONT-LINE DOCTORS HAVE IN CIVIL SELF-ORGANIZATION -- WHEN THE EXISTING RESOURCE ALLOCATION SYSTEM FAILS, AND THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS IS TOO CUMBERSOME TO KEEP UP WITH OUTBREAK CONDITIONS, SPONTANEOUSLY FORMED SELF-ORGANIZATION CAN CONNECT DIRECTLY WITH HOSPITALS TO LEARN OF THEIR NEEDS AND MAKE PEER-TO-PEER DIRECT DONATIONS. WE ALSO CERTAINLY WITNESSED THIS POWER IN MANY SMALL GRASSROOTS CROWDSOURCING GROUPS FORMED THROUGH WECHAT FRIENDS CIRCLES AND WEIBO, AS WELL AS ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS AND FAN CLUBS.**

Besides, in reality it is difficult for the government's broad stroke orders to respond to the various detailed needs of society in all its aspects; on the contrary the policies passed down may conflict with the actual needs of society because it is difficult to adjust rapidly to emerging information. An article in The Economic Observer "What exactly is the daily output of Xiantao masks?" points out, the biggest difficulty confronted by face mask manufacturing firms was actually local government implementation of traffic controls which created impediments to material logistics. According to "Super Communicators and Self-Organizing Networks", even though the sudden quarantine of Wuhan obstructed the spread of the infection to other areas, it also obstructed the normal transportation of resources. If a government cannot manage society and distribute goods during an epidemic situation, it clearly didn't make adequate preparations for epidemic response. Society's existing cooperation network was also shattered, there were problems with the transportation and lodging of frontline medical personnel, and medical resources were rapidly depleted.

Under these circumstances, Wuhan volunteers formed convoys to shoulder the task of saving their paralyzed transportation system. Polar Day Working Group's "After Wuhan's Lockdown, the Story of the Volunteer Convoys" reported on these self-organized personal vehicle convoys. The drivers took shifts to transport medical personnel and medical supplies. Gasoline cost, sanitizer, and masks were all paid for out of drivers' own pockets. Over 4000 people volunteered with these convoys. These volunteers risked their lives to do this work. Even though these volunteers had specialized health screening routines and prepared thorough disinfection and protection measures, it's been reported that some convoy volunteers unfortunately contracted the disease and passed away.

During this pandemic, self-organization played an impressive role in information gathering, processing, and dissemination. These groups not only provided information to civil society, but they also turned into real-time platforms for sharing information and dispelling rumors. For example, the A2N volunteer group, formed on 1/22, initiated a mission to "educate science and debunk rumors." Following the rise of other volunteer efforts, they expanded their work to include: collecting pandemic data and making pandemic maps, assembling and writing science education articles, tracing and dispelling false rumors, inquiring and verifying information about hospitals and companies, providing supplies donation channels, etc.



Popular Science

Can you use grain alcohol and Disinfectant 84 together? What you need to know | 2.7 Debunked Rumor Compilation

酒精和84消毒液能够混用吗? 你必须知道的小常识 | 2.7科普合集

哈佛医学院为何降半旗? | 2.7辟谣合集  
Why did Harvard Medical School Lower the Flag Half-Mast? 2.7 debunked rumor compilation

辟谣

A2N 合集  
Debunked Rumor compilation

昨天 下午 11:40

Debunked Rumor

科普区 popular science page  
辟谣区 debunked rumor page  
捐赠信息 contribute news  
评论 | 我涌当中, 在群情汹  
文献翻译 articles  
实时疫情 Real-time Epidemic Info

羊的辟谣? ——在群情汹性寺理性

最新疫情 Latest Epidemic Info

我们是谁 About us

Many "Face Mask Groups" across the country also mobilized volunteers to collect data on sanitation and epidemic prevention measures in their cities. Because information from independent social-media are often treated as "rumors," some self-organized media groups began preemptively saving posts.

The group Anti404, for example, collated and saved screenshots of messages about the epidemic sent between 1/25 and 2/2, archiving them as a means to resist the erasure of collective memory.

Some self-organized groups also launched social research in order to facilitate public opinion formation. We will now describe in detail how the groups formed around the idea of "Delayed Return to Work as Effective Epidemic Control" broadly mobilized netizens by disseminating articles and posters through multi-media channels, generated much discussion, and successfully pushed forth the formulation of related policies.



Left. Chinese Shuanghuanglian Elixir (a common anti-cold medicine)  
Right. Double-yolk mooncake A pun on shuang huang  
(in Chinese, Shuanghuanglian elixir and double-yolk mooncake are homonyms).  
Certain state-controlled media outlets falsely claimed that Shuanghuanglian Elixir  
had anti-viral properties. In the ensuing buying panic, both the cold medicine and  
double-yolk mooncakes were in high demand. (as usual, another state media outlet  
Global Times corrected this mistake and blamed it on Xinhua News and on rumor  
mongering by social media platforms.



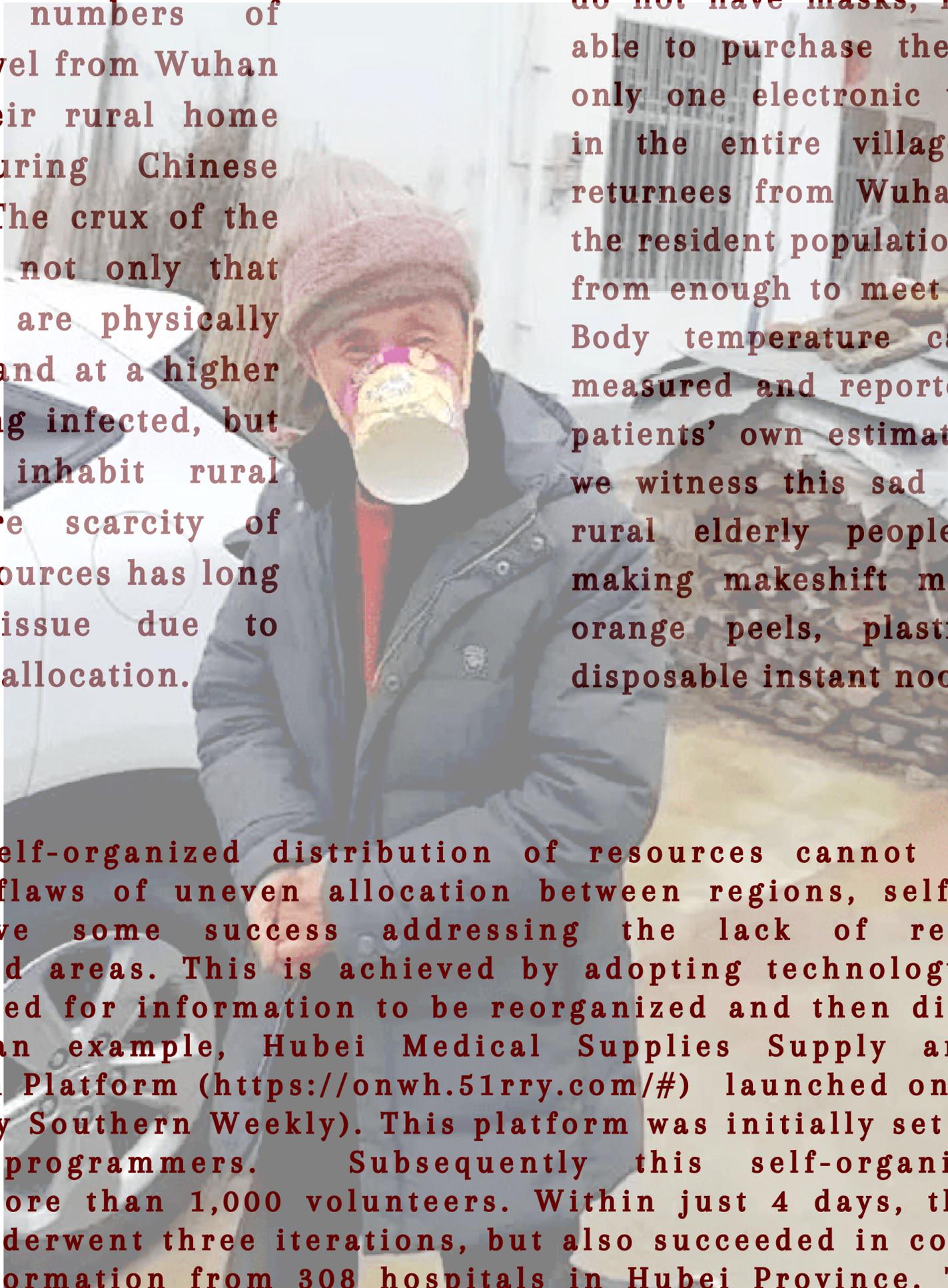
Due to numerous delays and contradictory messages from public officials regarding the epidemic, they have effectively lost credibility. Their long-standing monopoly on the flow of information has crippled their ability to engage dynamically with public discourse. Given these circumstances, the responsibility for addressing any mistakes or oversights is necessarily placed upon the government which continues to be mired in a downward spiral of public distrust. In contrast, the way self-organizing media transmit information is much more robust. Posts containing conflicting information are seen as normal. When information is allowed to flow freely and authentically in public discourse, conflicting messages provide opportunities for information to be cross-examined, confirmed, and supplemented. We have even seen the “extraordinary” spectacle of self-published internet media repeatedly challenging the messaging of official media in rumor-debunking campaigns. But why should we consider conscientious actions like these “extraordinary?”

# NEGLECTED GROUPS AND OUTLYING REGIONS

Under the system of centralized material control, distribution of materials and resources tends to be concentrated in Wuhan, the provincial capital city, while surrounding cities and rural areas of Wuhan where the epidemic situation may be equally serious are ignored. In the article "The Role, Value and Reassessment of Civil Participation in the Epidemic Response" published by the public social-media account SEED Social Innovation Seed Community, it is stated that in distributing goods and materials, the government "must prioritize central areas, in accordance with the Chinese administrative mechanism. Distribution is then expected to slowly trickle down to other areas. This rigid hierarchy is incompatible with the severity of the epidemic situation." In fact, the uneven regional distribution of resources has plagued the system for a long time; it is difficult to imagine that the inequality can be overcome in a timely manner in the midst of the epidemic.

The article "We Finally Understand Why They Risked Paddling Across the Yangtze River in a Bathtub..." (Renmin Road publication, No. 56) pointed out that the reason why some people in Huanggang, located near Wuhan, ventured across the Yangtze River to seek treatment on the opposite shore is due to the lack of local medical resources. The conditions of the three designated hospitals in Huanggang City are very basic. One is a small community hospital, another is an elderly home. The last one is an old, abandoned hospital for infectious diseases. It goes without saying that in other smaller counties, material conditions are typically poor. According to GQ Report's "The Unseen Citizens of the Epidemic Crisis: Self-rescue Actions in Cities Around Wuhan", the situation in cities near and around Wuhan is similar to that of Huanggang. Many are rendered invisible despite being so close to the center of the epidemic. Consequently, citizens in peripheral locations are forced to launch a variety of operations to rescue themselves.

In rural areas where the demographics of the residents skew heavily towards the elderly who make up the majority, an enormous risk lies in wait as large numbers of workers travel from Wuhan to visit their rural home villages during Chinese New Year. The crux of the problem is not only that the elderly are physically vulnerable and at a higher risk of being infected, but they also inhabit rural areas where scarcity of medical resources has long been an issue due to inequitable allocation.



According to the article "Observations of a Wuhan University Professor: On Epidemic Prevention in Southeastern Hubei," published by Shangguan News, "most farmers in the village do not have masks, nor are they able to purchase them. There is only one electronic thermometer in the entire village; with 103 returnees from Wuhan on top of the resident population, this is far from enough to meet their needs. Body temperature can only be measured and reported based on patients' own estimation. And so we witness this sad scene: some rural elderly people resort to making makeshift masks out of orange peels, plastic bags or disposable instant noodle bowls.

Although self-organized distribution of resources cannot resolve the structural flaws of uneven allocation between regions, self-organizing efforts have some success addressing the lack of resources in marginalized areas. This is achieved by adopting technology platforms which allowed for information to be reorganized and then disseminated. Take for an example, Hubei Medical Supplies Supply and Demand Information Platform (<https://onwh.51rry.com/#>) launched on January 25 (reported by Southern Weekly). This platform was initially set up by some volunteer programmers. Subsequently this self-organized group attracted more than 1,000 volunteers. Within just 4 days, the platform not only underwent three iterations, but also succeeded in collecting the missing information from 308 hospitals in Hubei Province. The version 3.0 of the platform, which was launched on the evening of January 28, accounted for the shortage of medical supplies in counties and cities around Wuhan by adding a pageview function to allow donors to assess comprehensively the real-time distribution of medical supplies. Volunteers are also trying to step up the collection of missing information on medical resources in many provinces other than Hubei, in order to fill the data gap about neglected areas.

湖北医疗物资需求信息平台  
Hubei Medical Supply Needs Information Platform

湖北医疗物资需求信息平台  
Hubei Medical Supply Needs Information Platform

医院需求(608)  
Hospital Needs (608)

车辆资源(66)  
Transportation Resources (66)

全部地区 All Regions | 武汉 Wuhan | 黄冈 Huanggang | 孝感 Xiaogan | 选择更多地区 More Regions

请输入你要搜索的医院名称 Search for Hospitals

信息已核实 Confirmed Information

武汉协和红十字医院 Wuhan Xiehe Red Cross Hospital  
2020-01-29 21:39:40  
Source: Weibo - Voice of Hubei  
来源: 微博-湖北之声

急需物资类型 Priority Needs [更多详情 >](#)  
More Details

N95一次性医用防护口罩 N95 - Disposable Medical Face Masks	不限 Unlimited
一次性医用防护服 Disposable Medical Protective Suit	不限 Unlimited
防护眼镜 / 眼罩 / 护目镜 Protective Goggles	不限 Unlimited

[联系医院](#)  
Contact Hospital

信息已核实 Confirmed Information

襄阳市中西医结合医院  
Xiangyang Hospital of Chinese and Western Medicine  
2020-01-29 21:39:40  
Source: Official Hospital Public Account  
来源: 官方公众号

急需物资类型 Priority Needs [更多详情 >](#)  
More Details

N95口罩 N95 Face Masks	不限 Unlimited
医用防护服 Medical Protective Suit	不限 Unlimited
医用外科口罩 Surgical Mask	不限 Unlimited

At the same time we notice that the class division caused by chronic, unequal distribution has become even more noticeable during the outbreak. According to data collected by self-organized groups such as Face Masks Shenzhen, Face Masks Beijing, Face Masks Shanghai, and Face Masks Guangzhou, although sanitation workers in various cities remained on the front line of epidemic prevention during the epidemic, most of them didn't have adequate protective gear. They were consistently exposed to dangerous waste, which puts them at a higher risk of infection. When sanitation units fail to provide their workers with sufficient protection, most workers also have difficulty purchasing the appropriate supplies through personal channels.

In response to this situation, various self-organizations have launched campaigns to donate supplies for sanitation workers, which have garnered some online attention and support. (See the public social-media account Southern Observer: "Masks Campaign of Shenzhen High School Student Volunteers, How to Sweep Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Other Cities." In fact, these surveys revealed not only the plight of sanitation workers in terms of labour violations -- especially egregious during the epidemic -- but also brought to light the excessively long work hours and perennial problems such as the lack of security and protection from labor dispatch. Additional tasks mandated by the current epidemic control mission, along with the shortage caused by the restricted return of workers from other regions, amount to an ever-increasing workload shouldered by front-line sanitation workers.

TOP.

With the escalation of the pandemic, delivery staff and sanitation workers are facing serious issues in epidemic prevention.

“Not Having 22” Art Group hereby urges everybody to care about them, and spare your extra masks for them.

Attached is the survey of sanitation workers in Shenzhen by Shenzhen-Masks, an independent research group. Under the pandemic, sanitation workers is the last line of defense, but the system tends to overlook them.

BELOW GRAPHIC.

Spare A Mask For Them

#分一个口罩给TA#

随着疫情不断发展，快递员和环卫工人们的防护问题也日趋严重。我们没有22艺术小组呼吁大家，关注身边的快递员和环卫工人，将多余的口罩分给他们。

另附深圳口罩-独立调查小组对深圳环卫工人们的防护调查。疫情当前，环卫工人们是后方最重要的一道防线，却容易被忽视。

网页链接



fēn yī gè kǒu zhào gěi tā  
分一个口罩给Ta

请各位市民一起关注快递小哥和环卫工人的防护情况！疫情当前，他们有人为我们传递物资、寄送生活用品；有人仍在大街小巷奔走，在后方为我们处理废弃口罩，但是仍有人没有得到必要的防护。

因此，我们在此号召：大家将多余的口罩分给快递小哥和环卫工人们！

力所能及，传递爱心，帮助你我他，防疫靠大家！

@22\_Forest

1-28 15:15

612

15

400

BOTTOM.

Citizens, the epidemic protection of delivery staff and sanitation workers demands our attention. In the pandemic, they continue delivering materials and daily necessities for us; they continue cleaning streets and alleys, and they are in charge of disposing discarded masks. Yet not all of them have adequate provisions. Therefore, we hereby call on everyone to spare your extra masks for delivery staff and sanitation workers! Do what we can do to pass on love. Help each other out. Pandemic prevention relies on everyone!

At the moment of the epidemic, it is not only working-class that face the violation of their labor rights. In order to prevent a large number of workers from returning from their hometowns to the cities that they work in, which might cause large-scale infections after the holiday, a self-organized organization called “Delaying Work Resumption to Control the Epidemic” started organizing on January 25. Through WeChat, Weibo, Douban and other media platforms, within 48 hours, they mobilized tens of thousands of netizens across the country to make suggestions to the State Council net platform, requesting #extending the vacation to reduce pneumonia infection #. Within the next two weeks, in response to this request, the State Council and the local Humanities and Social Affairs departments issued documents on delaying work and school resumption.

Top.  
Quick! Let's work  
together to stop  
the virus from  
spreading to  
workplaces

Middle.  
IN PANDEMIC  
it is risky to  
resume work

DELAYING WORK  
RESUMPTION  
is of great  
urgency

**快!**  
**一起阻止病毒上班**

**疫情肆虐**  
**坚持到岗有风险**

**延迟复工**  
**刻不容缓不容缓**

扫码向国务院提议延迟复工

推迟返工控制疫情

Bottom.

Scan the QR code  
to petition the  
State Council to  
delay work  
resumption

Groups ignored by the system also include people with disabilities, pregnant women, people living with HIV, and elderly people living alone. The public account "Ji Everywhere" published an article that revealed the problem. In "After the travel ban to Wuhan, we delivered medicines to 441 HIV-infected people," the author talks about the situation after the travel ban of cities and villages in the Hubei Province took effect. Because most of the staff in CDC were transferred to deal with the urgent pneumonia outbreak, HIV-infected people were unable to obtain medicines. For HIV-infected people, drug withdrawal can lead to serious consequences, including disease progression, drug resistance, and even death. Under this circumstance, the Wuhan Comrade Center and the AIDS community took quick actions. By establishing a medication support group, HIV-infected people used same-city delivery to lend medicines to others, circulating the medicines outside the official channels. Similar community-organized cases include "Popular Science and Assistance Team for Hearing Impaired People", "NCP Life Support" and so on.

## 听障人士讯息

听援团队

石墨: [shimo.im/docs/YGvkKryTJCVpdWRr/read](https://shimo.im/docs/YGvkKryTJCVpdWRr/read)

微博: 听障防疫科普与援助公益团队

公众号: 你看起来好动听

喜马拉雅: 听障科普与援助公益

快手: 听障防疫科普与援助团队

## 孕期就诊

NCP生命支援 - 武汉孕妇就诊指南  
[yf.shcnwl.cn](http://yf.shcnwl.cn)

向日葵孕产妇咨询



# 寻找“无法取菜的” 独居老人

## ISOLATED SENIOR CITIZEN

志愿者支援  
购菜送菜

| 救助范围 |  
社区扶助不完整  
行动不便的独居老人

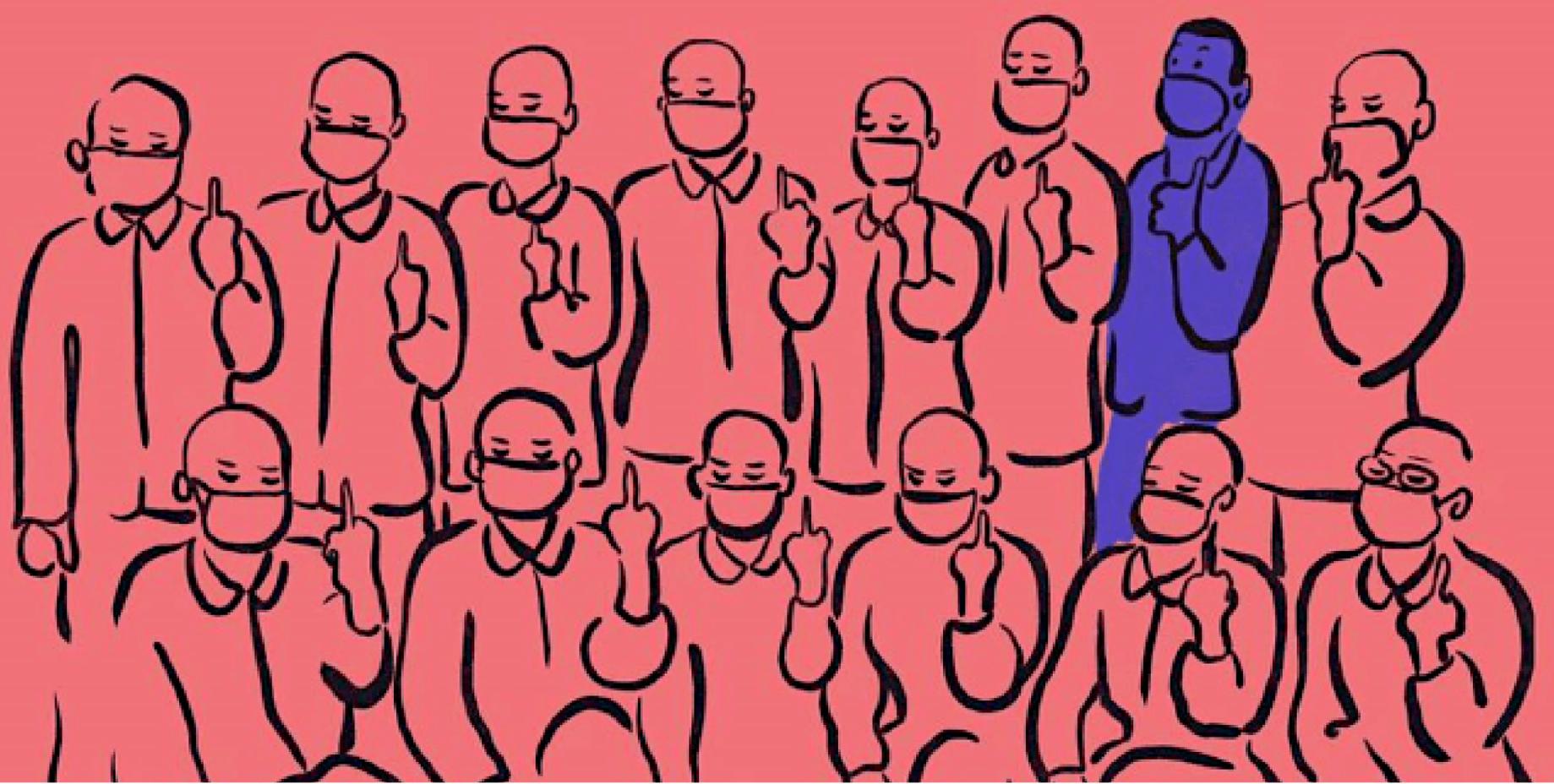
若您有符合条件的信息  
请核实后扫码填表

武汉  
仅限



Top-left. Resources for hearing impaired people  
Bottom-left: Visiting hospitals during pregnancy, a guideline for pregnant women by NCP Life Support

Right. Looking for isolated senior citizens. Volunteers will help with purchasing and delivering groceries. We aim to serve senior citizens who have mobility problems and live in communities that don't have efficient supporting systems. Limited to Wuhan. If you happen to know any seniors that meet our requirements, please verify your information and scan the QR code to fill in the form.



Another systematically neglected group are the front-line female medical workers in the hospitals. Although the female workers seem to have attracted a lot of attention from the mainstream media, as pointed out in Duan Media's article "Head-Shaving, Breastfeeding and Menstrual Pads: the Objectification, Tokenization, and Sacrifice of the Female Body during China's Epidemic Response," the mainstream media depicts female medical personnel as sacrificing mothers, girlfriends, and wives, only catering to the male gaze, and cruelly ignoring women's urgent need for menstrual supplies. The absurd propaganda of "shaving your head and going to battle" further illustrates how nationalist narratives coerce women workers into giving up their basic labor rights. In contrast, community-centered self-organizations grant female workers respect and material support. The public social-media account "Noon Story" published an article titled "Sisters, do you have enough pads and pantyliners on the front line?", and reported how the "Sisters Anti-Epidemic Relief Actions" started on Weibo on February 7th and quickly formed an active volunteer team. Donations of 85 cases of a total of 6,120 pad panties were gathered between then and February 15. As of 22:00 on February 25th, "Sisters Anti-Epidemic Relief Actions" coordinated donations of 421,389 pieces of pad panties, 303,939 pieces of disposable underwears, 77,592 pieces of pads, 700 hand creams, covering over 64,000 people in 109 hospitals and medical teams. 16

# THE BANKRUPTCY OF NATIONAL-CORPORATISM

Although the aid work of grassroots groups has had a huge impact, the authorities still continue with their old governance logic, and are trying to maintain a firm grip on the power of resource allocation. On January 26, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued Announcement No. 476, stating that funds collected by non-governmental charitable organizations for the prevention and control of the outbreak in Wuhan City of Hubei Province will be accepted by the Hubei Red Cross, Hubei Charity Federation, Hubei Youth Development Foundation, Wuhan Charity Federation and Wuhan Red Cross. In his article "The Ministry of Civil Affairs' Restrictions on Funds and Materials Raised by Charitable Organizations Should Be Revoked," Scholar Ge Yunsong argues that this regulation not only fails to fill the resources gap, but may curb the spontaneous efforts of grassroot communities, and hinder pandemic prevention and control.

What happened next proved that officially sanctioned charities, like the Wuhan Red Cross, lacked the capacity to allocate resources in a timely and effective manner, and also lacked public credibility and the ability to respond to public doubts. But such an institution had obtained a monopoly in the allocation of donated materials through the endorsement by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. This is precisely the governance logic of corporatism. In "Structural Analysis on the Epidemic: Rumors, Bureaucracy, and Statism," an article published by the public social-media account "The Philosophia Philosophical Club," the author maintains that "..., the state would always try to strengthen the control of public organizations. The state continuously strengthened the party and government's leadership in the Red Cross, infiltrating all aspects of this organization, and eventually assimilated it as part of the bureaucratic order in the state leadership." In the end, public participation in civic organizations is strictly limited by the state to a narrow and controllable range. When the Red Cross, a civic organization that was supposed to be grassroot, was forced to restrict mass participation and to become a vassal of the bureaucratic system, the top-down governance logic made it lose the opportunity to closely connect with the grassroot. Therefore, it was unable to quickly form an effective aid network. The lack of any public oversight makes it a site of corruption.

Following a similar political logic, are the traditional base-level community organizations set-up and sanctioned by the central government, namely the urban residents' committees and villagers' committees. As mentioned by Jiang Rongmeng, an infectious disease expert, in an interview with Southern Weekend, the base-level organizing work of the committees is indispensable in epidemic prevention and control. "In order to control the epidemic, everyone must participate. We need to mobilize the masses to join prevention and control efforts, not just the experts." Base-level cadres and functionaries have indeed undertaken a lot of responsibilities, but the process has also exposed a variety of serious problems in these base-level political systems. /// On the one hand, in the face of the epidemic, the already short-handed and under-resourced committees became increasingly inadequate. The public social-media account "Eight O'clock News" published a report titled "Emergency in a Wuhan Community: the Cadres are Transporting Dead Bodies Themselves with this Base-Level Organization Under Great Strain in the Epidemic," and the article described the situation of a medium-sized community in Wuhan. Beginning in mid-January, a neighborhood committee secretary led a team of 13 committee staff and 9 security team members to be on-duty 24 hours a day, addressing the demands of more than 2,000 households of more than 5,000 residents. Staff members received calls from many community residents every day.



Some asked the committee to send a vehicle to transport patients to the hospital, some asked for company with them to hospitals, some asked for help to transport dead bodies away from their homes. The sudden state of emergency strains the organizing and coordinating abilities of the committees. The death of an unattended 17-year-old child with cerebral palsy 6 days after his father was quarantined was one of the tragedies that came out of the incapability of the base-level committees (see the report of Sanlian Life Weekly, "The death of a 17-year-old child with cerebral palsy six days after his father was quarantined").

IMAGE. A sarcastic image showing how base-level cadres/functionaries should be transformed into having multiple hearts, eyes, ears, mouths, and limbs to be able to handle their jobs in the pandemic.

On the other hand, the work of the community is not necessarily autonomous. From the same report, we can see that before the city went on lockdown January 23, community workers merely echoed the government's appeal to "believe no rumors, spread no rumors," propagating the message to residents that the epidemic was not severe. After the city was on lockdown, there was a sudden change in the messaging from above. Community workers were asked to alert the public to the severity of the epidemic, requesting that residents diligently wash hands and wear face masks, and conducting sanitary disinfections or quarantine-style community management. Residents within the community not only lacked self-governance, but became the very ones being governed. According to Scholar Wen Tiejun, during an interview with [bjnews.com](http://bjnews.com), a socially participatory, prevention-oriented medical campaign should be formed to help mitigate the dwindling of medical resources as an epidemic unfolds. At present, the current work within communities does not encourage residents to take spontaneous, proactive steps. Instead, the community's base-level organizations have increasingly evolved to become instruments and appendages of the state, becoming another layer of the system that operates like capillaries that reach out to the extremities.

Even more worrying is the fact that many local governments are currently proposing models for grid governance. If we say base-level self-organizations have been largely ignored by residents in the past because of their perceived lack of real power, the contemporary Baojia system of grid-based governance has caused a sharp increase in the felt presence of neighborhood- and village-based committees. Just as suggested by the article "Will Chinese Citizens' Consciousness be Reawakened as the Epidemic Strikes?" published by Initium Media, since the epidemic has erupted, urban and rural areas in every region have begun to launch this kind of management method, dividing streets into several grids, with grid leaders of each grid going door-to-door to grasp the conditions of tens to hundreds of households, including the household composition and demographics, occupations, and routine activities outside the house, to the extent of beginning daily surveillance. Even when exiting or entering neighborhood subdivisions, residents have to show identity cards and temporary passes granting permission to exit or enter. This will only raise concerns that this policy may become the turning point where state power further expands into personal lives.

At the same time, we have seen how the term "self-governance" has been misunderstood due to the lack of experience and literacy with grassroots democratic practices, thus becoming a tool for people to isolate each other and even violate each other's rights. It's true that the "hardcore epidemic prevention" carried out in some base-level communities have been fast, pragmatic, and powerful. However, closure measures centered on the exclusion of outsiders clearly run counter to the original intention of self-government and mutual assistance, and have not provided the people with a basis for solidarity and participation. Many township base-level organizations closed roads and set up roadblocks to prevent outsiders from entering and insiders from exiting. What's more, they even doxxed individuals with a travel history to Wuhan and had their residences locked down. According to the article "Returning to the city after my holiday, I was blocked from entering the community" published in China News Weekly, village committees in some Beijing neighborhoods implemented lockdowns, refusing to let residents re-enter when returning to the city in early February. Many migrant workers who returned to the city due to pressure from employers then faced houselessness. Being labeled an outsider once again became evidence of "uncleanliness," and is abstracted into the threat of bringing disease to a supposedly closed system, and disturbing the governing order. It should be pointed out that this really isn't a problem associated with "self-governance." This problem is actually a result of there never having been enough self-governance. Residents from migrant backgrounds are never granted resident status despite "long-term dwelling in the neighborhood," nor are they permitted the privilege of participating in base-level governance. Even for native residents, do the kinds of "self-governance" without collective consultation and self-determination in local affairs really mean true self-governance? Collectively, residents lack a common understanding of the meaning of democracy, and how to apply it to local conditions, both of which can only arise from long-term practice. Moreover, individuals don't have a grasp of their own democratic rights, which can only be learned by exercising them in concrete circumstances. It is precisely due to these deficiencies that a change in circumstances might suddenly cause anyone, native or foreign, to be ostracized. Thus, we were shocked to witness the residents of a small community vote to forbid front-line medical staff from returning to their homes. Throughout the process of voting, no one voiced any objection, nor were medical staff given the opportunity to speak. If we only understand democracy as a process of voting and following the majority vote, then democracy is too simple, and it is also too simple to usurp democracy for other ends.

# UNDER THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK OF STATE CORPORATISM, THE GRAVE ISSUES OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION ARE EVIDENT.

Jiaoyanshi #46 courtyard group thread (82 members)

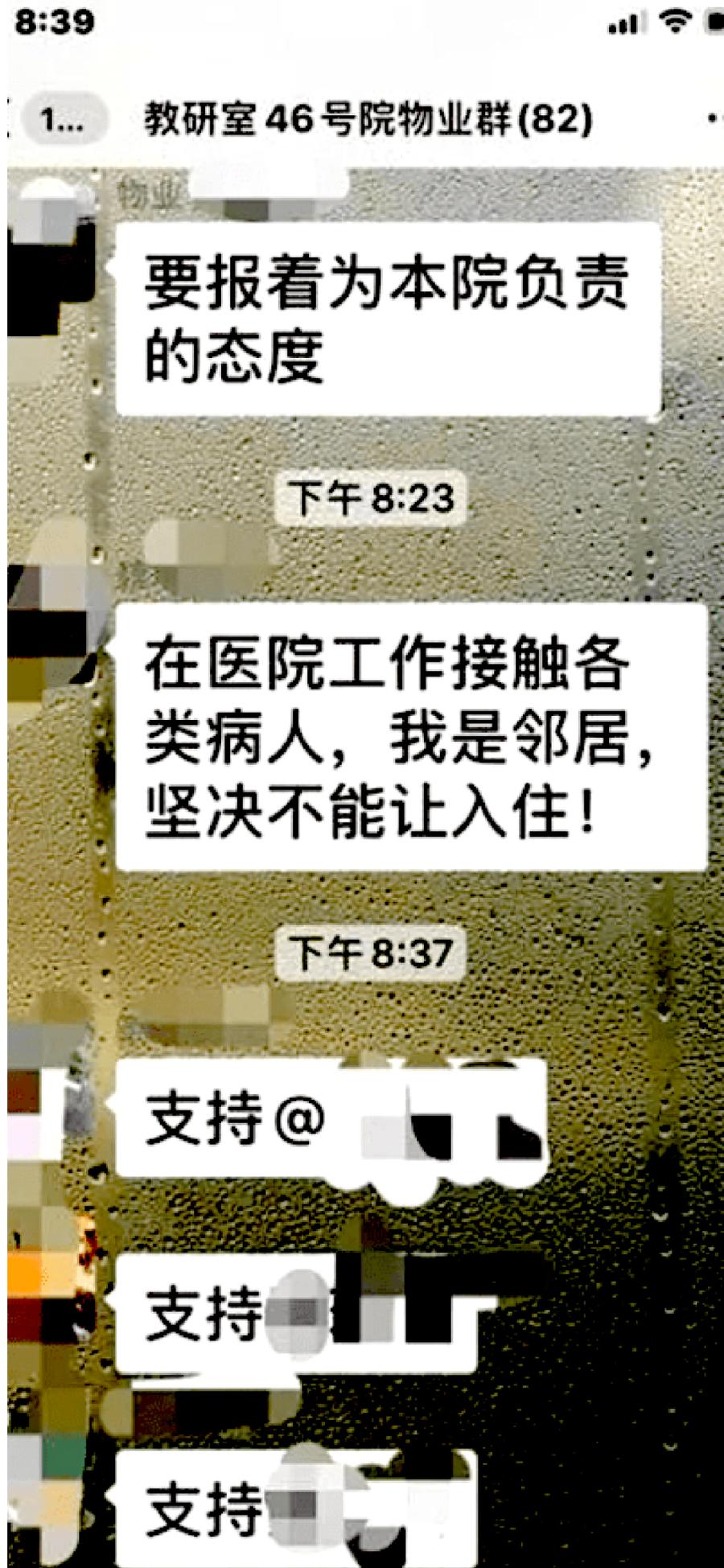
Text 1: We must prioritize doing what is best for our courtyard.

Text 2: You encounter all kinds of sick people working in a hospital. As a neighbor, I resolutely object to letting hospital workers live here.

Text 3: Agreed

Text 4: Agreed

Text 5: Agreed



"Residents returning from Wuhan, please do not touch."



# THE DILEMMA OF SELF-ORGANIZATION

While we are moved by the strength of self-organization that has emerged during this pandemic, we also refrain from seeing this too idealistically. We must recognize that due to chronic suppression of social power, this instance of self-organizing appears to lack sufficient experience. Many operations also faced numerous difficulties arising from inside and out.

In the article "Notes on a stillborn donation drive—a discussion of the role and problems of social assistance in this epidemic," author Feng Xiyi explores the example of an unsuccessful donation drive involving all the content creators and editors of a public social-media account. While certain of the usefulness of volunteer aid, the author analyzes some of the problems encountered in self-organization. Firstly, because assistance is offered in a scattered, fragmented manner, it may lack coordination and communication, where passion overrides consistency. Secondly, those providing assistance have to source materials from a chaotic market (with no shortage of scammers), possibly resulting in the delivery of items that do not meet hospital standards, which further burdens hospitals. Thirdly, there are cases where donors have sent excessively large quantities of materials without understanding the particular needs of the hospital.

These issues undoubtedly reflect the current status of many grassroots supply networks, but perhaps we should further ask what exactly led to the lack of coordination and "lack of planning" between self-organizations? What spurred the ad hoc nature of this self-organizing that it could not move more rapidly to procure materials or qualify materials to meet hospital standards? Additionally, what blocked the flow of information so that the supplies provided did not match the specific needs of the hospital? As we discuss these issues, we must recognize the context of the chronic lack of self-organization as well as the lack of timely and transparent information in Chinese society. Without awareness of the above, we would judge these instances of self-organization unfairly.

The article "Super Communicators and Self-Organizing Networks," written from the perspective of an author with experience of self-organizing within student/alumni associations that gather donations, draws this conclusion: self-organizing is not suitable for long-term cooperation and dispatch of tasks. "...The most serious issue is that of trust. Too much time and energy is spent on 'confirming' the credibility of supply, demand, and transfer points, which may seem like a simple task," and thus in the end, "We still need the government to come forward as a credible third-party to coordinate in a centralized way." The author of said article also believes that if self-organizing groups continued to evolve, they would gradually adopt functionalities and attributes that resemble the current government model, with its corresponding disadvantages. The author believes that the current internal collaboration of self-organizing groups is still an "information processing method that relies on human analysis and discussion threads," which is "very backwards." Considering the article's context, this wording undoubtedly hints to the reader that a centralized information hub that is capable of big-data analysis, (primarily the technocratic bureaucracy and internet platforms run by capital) will be much more advanced at information processing than any decentralized self-organized group. However, is the existing centralized information hub monopolizing big-data, or do the masses necessarily lack the ability to master the power of big data? (We will respond to this question in part three of this article.)

The technocratic elitism of that article forms an interesting contrast with the perspective in Liang Wendao's "What Went Wrong with the Lines of Thought in Governing Epidemics?" Liang Wendao borrowed the views of French thinker Condorcet, saying that as long as each of us is free of prejudice and can independently judge, the judgment we collectively make is often more accurate and favorable. He also cited Kevin Kelly's example of bee colony cooperation in "Out of Control," which states: although a swarm of bees does not have a superhuman brain, through simple methods of collective operation it can quickly and efficiently take collective action. Furthermore, he believes that the self-organization that emerged from the civic forces supporting Wuhan may be a similar model of collective collaboration. "This kind of arrangement is both collective and mass-based. Through open and transparent social platforms and Internet platforms, we can find a way for everyone to act on their good intentions, actively helping those in need while finding some models for open coordination."

Liang's statement is not only directed at the many self-organizing efforts that sprang up during this epidemic, but also an outlook on future social formations. However, once this outlook is compared with the reality, it cannot help but disappoint. In actuality, in late January when the Ministry of Civil Affairs announced that all donated materials must go through the Red Cross, the government took over and requisitioned materials, and donation efforts by civilians gradually stopped. Looking at the overall situation, the actions taken in this instance of self-organization were more like society's emergency self-rescue. In this "exceptional" situation where the forces that have always firmly shaped society have "suddenly" failed, the masses launched short-term measures to slow immediate losses. If the crisis is like the sudden rupture of a human artery, then self-organization is the coagulation factor. However, we all know that the physiological system can "degrade" coagulation factors until they are useless in regular daily conditions, and, even in crisis times, they are only recognized as one segment that contributes to maintaining the entire order itself. Coagulation factors can only do so much, and they have never been considered a feasible alternative.