Diaries During Lockdown[1]
Finishing Deborah's Wool Room in the Tractor Shed
May 27, 2020

David is feeling conflicted about rescheduling a COVID-19 delayed construction project. He proposes six principles to guide the reopening of that project. The first principle is for David himself to take personal responsibility for project safety.

Back in March when we first starting thinking about COVID19 seriously, we were in the midst of a small construction project here on New Fadum farm. We were weatherizing a 12 foot by 12-foot space in the tractor shed to serve as Deborah's "wool room"—some sort of a blend between a weaving studio for her new and larger loom and a place to store her inventory of wool for sale from our sheep.

Construction on Deborah's Wool Room in the Tractor Shed

We totally closed down that construction project as part of the state-wide lockdown and now seems a good time to re-open this construction. However, I am feeling uncertain, conflicted, and even awkward about getting back to this project. This time feels a lot like the time when Deborah and I wore face masks for the first time when we went out early during this pandemic to buy ice cream--everything again is seeming awkward and stilted.

These days, that part of my mental model that senses danger is telling me that we have now come out safely to the other side of this pandemic and it is time to get back to life as usual. It is spring and the days are brighter and longer. Surely all that ultra-violet light is helping with the COVID-19 virus. Our Governor has declared our region of the state is ready for Phase I reopening and Albany County has bolstered its public health workforce by hiring 30 new "test and trace" workers for every 100,000 population. The National Weather Service has announced that we are past the last frost date for planting and Deborah is out in the newly plowed garden planting. Importantly, our new granddaughter has been born and both mother and child are prospering. Last weekend we put the swimming raft out in the pond, and we can now spend hot afternoons swimming. What could be wrong?

On the other hand, the global systems thinking part of my mental model tells me a different story. From the start, Ali's model has shown a second wave touched off by a relaxation of social distancing and reduced contacts. The New York State Department of Health released results from a random sample survey of residents all over the state; it shows that we are everywhere way below the level needed for

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[1] You can access all of the "Diaries During Lockdown" here. "Diaries During Lockdown" is a network of professionally trained mathematical modelers (along with some of their friends and colleagues) who are using the tools of system dynamics and systems thinking to explain many of the complex choices facing individuals, organizations, and governments as we collectively grapple with the COVID19 pandemic. The apparent voice of this story is that of David Andersen, a retired Professor of System Dynamics and Public Policy who lives on New Fadum Farm. This voice is actually the synthesis of a number of different analysts and writers.

herd immunity. The number of confirmed cases is still much higher than in March in our region, state, nation, and indeed all over the world.

My mental model tells me that Ali is right. This virus is poised to bounce back. Yet something feels different. As opposed to last February and March, we know what we are facing. The New York State public health system is better staffed, poised, and alert--ready to trace back, quarantine, and extinguish even the smallest outbreak. We have better access to testing. As a population, we have important experience with appropriate social distancing techniques, including the use of face masks. We are developing and promulgating protocols for using testing to keep us safer. This time around, we can be smarter, safe, and more resilient. I am going to write out a plan for reopening the construction on Deborah's wool room. I am going to discuss it with the contractor. This plan will cover six key points:

1. **Create Personal and Trusted Responsibility**: David will take personal responsibility for the overall safety of the project and will trust that the on-site contractor is taking responsibility for his own work and that of any sub-contractors.

2. **Define the Scope and Content of Construction Activities.** The workplace will need a clearly defined boundary--both a spatial and temporal boundary--in order to define a COVID-19 safe workplace.

3. **Ensure Social Distancing.** All workers on the project will maintain social distancing following current guidelines promulgated by the CDC, the New York State's Governor's task force on COVID-19 re-opening, and relevant County regulations.

4. **Utilize COVID-19 Testing.** Testing, something as simple as regularly taking one's body temperature, will be used as to discover possible asymptomatic infected persons early on. It will be the general contractor's responsibility to devise and enforce testing procedures.

5. **Observe Quarantine Rules and Regulations.** Persons active on this job site will meet current Albany County and NYS public health requirements with respect to all quarantine measures.

6. **Stay Aware of Out of Region Travel.** Out of region travel, especially to regions where COVID-19 is still highly active or to large gatherings may require additional monitoring and attention by everyone concerned.

Moving forward, I intend to consciously override that part of my mental model that is asserting that "all is well". I plan to think globally and at a whole system level while designing locally smart plans to restart construction at New Fadum Farm.

This Story's Lessons: *Our region is coming out of the first wave of COVID-19. Now we now need to confront the likelihood of a second wave. This time, we will be better prepared. This story proposes six principles that each of us needs to apply in order to take personal responsibility for the various activities that we are engaged in.*

Technical Modeler's Notes*:*

1. ***Ali's CORONA1 Model****. You can download and run Ali's model here:* CORONA1.mdl*. Please right-click on the file and select "Save link as …" You will need to download a free version of the simulation software VENSIMPLE to open and run this model.*

2. ***Professional Presentations.*** *Ali's professional briefings with an introduction to his model and its conclusions can be found at* Spread of Corona , Waves of Corona *and* Policies to Control Corona.