

Prince Edward Island enforced its own restrictions for people travelling internally within Canada. It then became part of an Atlantic Canada travel bubble with three other provinces: from July 3 until November 23, 2020, travel for residents of these provinces was permitted within and among the bubble without quarantine or isolation upon arrival.



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# Pandemic and post-pandemic islandness

## Building and wrecking resilience

### ABSTRACT

*As the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world in 2020, many (although certainly not all) of the places with limited numbers of reported cases were island countries or territories. This suggests the importance of discussing island resilience and*

**ILAN KELMAN**  
Institute for Risk & Disaster  
Reduction and  
Institute for Global Health,  
University College London, UK;  
University of Agder, Norway



*islander resilience in the context of the pandemic and moving beyond the pandemic. This chapter does so through exploring the islandness context when focusing on the dual impacts of (i) physical connectedness being curtailed with lockdowns and border controls while (ii) virtual connectedness expanded extensively for some. Meanings of islandness and of island resilience are examined by highlighting different forms of pandemic-related isolation and connectedness as presumed characteristics of island peoples and places. Building a post-pandemic future should mean leveraging islandness, for islands and non-islands alike, to retain and enhance advantages while identifying and overcoming disadvantages. Ultimately, no single approach applies all the time to all contexts. Instead, resilience for islandness and islandness for resilience together mean developing, accepting, and having available a wide array of actions and techniques which could be started, stopped, and altered at short notice. This would take advantage of, rather than inhibit, islandness characteristics.*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the world's resilience was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic. First identified in Wuhan, China toward the end of 2019, a new virus — which likely jumped species to humans from illegally trafficked and eaten mammalian wildlife — led to the new disease (Liu et al., 2020; Petrikova et al., 2020). By the end of January 2020, the disease's spread and major health impacts were evident, so the Wuhan area was locked down. The rest of the world continued to respond sluggishly and haphazardly, but most countries had implemented some form of border control and lockdown by the end of March.

At the beginning of April 2020, 18 countries and territories had not reported any cases, of which two-thirds were entirely islands. These numbers require caution. The six non-islands included Yemen, which was not reporting accurately at the time. Meanwhile, Nunavut is an autonomous territory — with numerous island communities and a large non-island area — which did not have any reported COVID-19 cases at the beginning of April, yet it was typically not included on such lists.

By the beginning of November 2020, the list of countries with zero reported COVID-19 cases was down to 11, of which nine were Pacific islands/archipelagos. The remaining two were North Korea and Turkmenistan, each with dubious reporting. Four territories — American Samoa, Saint Helena, Pitcairn Islands, and Tokelau, all of which are islands/archipelagos — also continued to report no confirmed cases. Nunavut managed until 6 November before confirming its first COVID-19 case. At the end of November, Samoa reported its first case, appeared to retract the announcement, and then confirmed that a different individual had definitely tested positive. Meanwhile,

a balance of islands and non-islands including Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), New Zealand, Thailand, and Vietnam were verifying months without confirmed local transmission. Cases occasionally appeared, but spread was quashed — although Thailand experienced a surge of cases in December 2020.

Ambiguities remain regarding the presence and rates of infection. Asymptomatic infection (He et al., 2020) alongside symptoms sometimes similar to colds or flus (Gandhi et al., 2020) were evident from the beginning. Thus, testing is required to confirm a COVID-19 case. Many islands stated as having no COVID-19 cases would be more accurately described as having no confirmed COVID-19 cases. Even attributing deaths would not be straightforward, because testing would be required to confirm COVID-19, because many outlying areas do not typically have good health systems, and, especially in the pandemic's early stages, because deaths from COVID-19 could easily be attributed to other causes (see also Kiang et al., 2020).

Irrespective, many jurisdictions identified as having no, few, or under-control case numbers clearly did not have the rates of ill people filling up healthcare facilities as seen in many other countries such as the UK and the USA. Many, although certainly not all, of the places with limited cases are island countries or territories, suggesting the importance of discussing island resilience and islander resilience (or lack thereof) in the context of the pandemic. This chapter does so through exploring the islandness context when focusing on the dual impacts of (i) physical connectedness being curtailed with lockdowns and border controls while (ii) virtual connectedness expanded extensively for some. Meanings of islandness and of island resilience are examined by highlighting different forms of pandemic-related isolation and connectedness as presumed characteristics of island peoples and places.

**MANY, ALTHOUGH CERTAINLY not all, of the places with limited COVID-19 cases are island countries or territories, suggesting the importance of discussing island resilience and islander resilience (or lack thereof) in the context of the pandemic.**

## **COVID-19 AND ISLAND RESILIENCE**

The island COVID-19 experience, with and without resilience, matches some past history of pandemics and islands. Studies of both infectious and non-communicable diseases have often taken the assumed isolation of islands as an islandness characteristic that is ideal for understanding disease entry, rates, and spread. Examples are Iceland for measles (Cliff & Haggett, 1980) and Tristan da Cunha for asthma (Mantle & Pepys, 1974). The alleged lack of connectivity of islands has not precluded epidemics and pandemics, corroborating extensive analyses from island studies that isolation is not always a clear or definitive characteristic of islands, nor does a duality exist of “isolated versus connected”, but rather, there is an isolation–connectedness

continuum and different aspects of these characteristics can be present simultaneously (Baldacchino, 2008; Hay, 2013; Leane, 2007; Lewis, 2009). For instance, an outbreak of black plague occurred in Europe during the 14th century and Iceland did not report cases, but epidemics which were likely plague ravaged the island twice in the 15th century (Streeter et al., 2012).

The apparent isolation of islands and efforts to avoid disease reaching them have become even more tenuous in recent times. Other than boats, island connections can now include causeways, tunnels, and bridges (Baldacchino, 2007) as well as aircraft (Karampela et al., 2014). Increased transportation to, from, and between islands means increased potential for transporting infectious diseases and for inducing cultural changes, such as imported food altering eating habits and increasing diabetes rates for Pacific islanders (Dye et al., 2018). For Iceland, the plague potentially took decades to arrive in the 14th and 15th centuries, while in 2009, Iceland's first pandemic influenza

A (H1N1) case appeared only about a month after it was first identified in North America (Sigmundsdottir et al., 2010).

With respect to pandemics, are islands and islanders more resilient or less resilient than others? Much depends on context as well as on the definition of "resilience" adopted, given that the word has so many theories and definitions leading to widely divergent notions of "resilience thinking". Ideas from ecology have dominated some sectors, such as climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2013-2014) which, despite ideas evolving to be more in line

with wider literature, still base resilience on notions of "bouncing back" to the pre-problem state or a "return to normal". The main difficulty here is that the pre-problem state — the so-called normal — represents the conditions which permitted the problem to happen in the first place, so these conditions should be neither sought nor desired (Fordham, 1998; Hills, 1998). With the same argument, definitions of resilience which accept system change, but which seek to maintain core functions and structures (e.g., IPCC, 2013-2014), miss the conclusion from disasters and development research that society's core functions and structures create vulnerabilities, ranging from sexism (Enarson & Morrow, 1998) to inequity (Wisner et al., 2004).

For COVID-19, these core functions and structures were the normality of:

1. An illegal wildlife trade coupled with poor hygiene in dealing with animals, permitting the virus to jump species (Liu et al., 2020; Petrikova et al., 2020).
2. A failure to properly monitor and respond at local and international levels when a new disease was identified and reported by public health and medical personnel (Yang et al., 2020).

**THE MAIN DIFFICULTY WITH the resilience notion of a "return to normal" is that the pre-problem state — the so-called normal — represents the conditions which permitted the problem to happen in the first place.**

3. Elements of culture around the world opposing scientific investigation, evidence-based policy, and efforts to inhibit the virus' spread while maintaining livelihoods (Uscinski et al., 2020).

These three societal elements remain remarkably resilient. This resilience impedes the end of COVID-19 and supports future pandemics.

The ecology-based approach to resilience has also been used by neoliberal philosophies to explain that people and communities should and can be resilient to disturbances or disruptions by helping themselves and thus do not need or deserve external support, leading to detailed critiques of this neoliberal viewpoint (Pugh, 2014; Reid, 2012, 2018). This form of resilience becomes an excuse to reduce a government's responsibility to the people it serves, because the people should apparently be resilient enough to deal with adversity (such as a pandemic) themselves.

Other forms of "resilience thinking" from island studies instead seek to help and support people and communities. The lessons from islanders define resilience as a process always seeking to do better for society by resolving current problems and preventing future ones (Chandler & Pugh, 2020; Grydehøj & Casagrande, 2020; Lewis, 2013, 2017). Table 4.1 displays some of the emphasised topics regarding islander resilience after COVID-19. As always, no answer is clear-cut for any topic while columns 2 and 3 in Table 4.1 are not mutually exclusive. The same issue can be advantageous and disadvantageous for islander resilience, making it complicated to determine how to make a post-pandemic world resilient.

**TABLE 4.1: Examples of Discussions Regarding Islander Resilience after COVID-19**

Topic	How it might support islander resilience	How it might inhibit islander resilience
International tourism (Kock et al., 2020)	External income and connectivity.	Dependency on external decisions for unsustainable practices such as regular, intercontinental, energy-intensive travel.
Islander diaspora (Murakami et al., 2020)	Remittances and connectivity.	Dependency on external income and diluting islander culture through assimilation in destination countries.
Development aid (Santos-Carrillo et al., 2020)	Financing long-term programmes to create a better island life.	Dependency on external income and forced imposition of external development-related ideals.

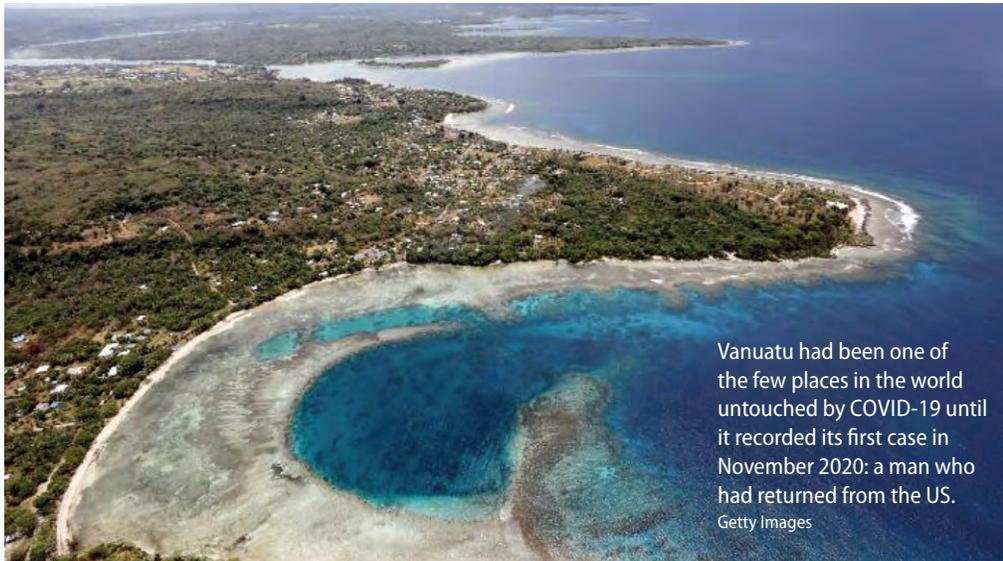
## COVID-19 AND ISLANDNESS

*Islandness* refers to presumed characteristics of islands or islanders. Discussions sometimes question whether or not islandness truly exists or applies only to island(er)s, thereby challenging, deconstructing, and presenting counterexamples to the statements that (Baldacchino, 2004, 2007, 2008; Campbell, 2009; Conkling, 2007; Grydehøj, 2017; Selwyn, 1980; Shaw, 1982):

1. Islands are characterized by small areas, limited resources, remoteness, isolation, and marginalization.
2. Islanders are characterized by small human population sizes, tight networks, prevailing community cooperation, resource-based livelihoods, and an insular outlook on life and the world.

COVID-19 and responses to it led to island-focused analyses (e.g., Mohan & Ram-sawak, 2020; Orr, 2020) and then considerations of the advantages and limitations of islandness.

A major, immediate concern was some island jurisdictions lacking the health systems, personnel, or equipment to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak. Countries such as Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands presumed that any arrival of the virus would lead to the disease running rampant with high mortality rates due to limited health-related resources. High mortality rates and near-collapse of health systems was amply demonstrated in the UK and the US despite their resources (e.g., Academy of Medical Sciences, 2020), indicating that the island governments' fears were well-founded. In a sense, lack of resilience in the islands' health systems forged the resilience they needed to close borders and keep the virus out.



Vanuatu had been one of the few places in the world untouched by COVID-19 until it recorded its first case in November 2020: a man who had returned from the US.  
Getty Images

Many jurisdictions also used other forms of lockdown, not just controlling international and sub-national borders, but also restricting public activities and closing businesses, offices, and other venues. This approach islanded households and countries in terms of forcibly creating the stereotypical islandness characteristic of isolation through reduced physical connections. That is, physical connectedness was curtailed from the household to international level.

For those with the resources, reducing physical proximity to other people led to an extensive expansion of virtual connectedness. A potential paradox of islandness emerges in that:

1. Physical isolation breeds virtual connectivity for those who have this opportunity.
2. Increased resilience building based on virtual connectivity leads to more isolation and less resilience for those without the opportunity.

This “digital divide”, alongside creative approaches to avoid problems from it, has been identified for islands from the Pacific (Cullen & Hassall, 2017) to the Arctic (Young, 2019). Furthermore, reliance on virtual connectivity can undermine resilience if the connectivity itself is not resilient. In January–February 2019, Tonga lost non-satellite internet connectivity for two weeks — also meaning that non-cash payments and international phone calls did not work — when the internet cables connecting the country to the world were cut (O’Connor, 2020). When the internet fails, people and households islanded due to COVID-19-related lockdown might not be able to increase their resilience.

**RELIANCE ON VIRTUAL connectivity can undermine resilience if the connectivity itself is not resilient.**

In the context of low-population, tight, trust-based communities and networks, one foundation is that people know each other and see each other regularly; that is, the face-to-face or eyeball-to-eyeball interaction is important (e.g., Magee et al., 2016, for the Pacific). If many virtual aspects of a pandemic society are retained post-pandemic, would increased online life help or hinder this part of islandness and resilience? The theory behind ascribing islandness characteristics to islanders is that it helps to build and maintain a society, especially for addressing external threats. Does a world with more remote interaction help island communities or does it in itself present an external threat?

A warning emerges from a popular pandemic phrase. The phrase “social distancing” has become the mainstay, even though the real issue is “physical distancing”. The spread of the virus can be inhibited by reducing physical proximity, but lack of socialization can have severe mental health impacts. Islanders’ experience of staying in touch with their diaspora could potentially assist in understanding how to remain socially

close without physical proximity, thereby maintaining resilience (e.g., DeLoughrey, 2007). Who can and cannot manage with online interactions for an extended period? Who does and does not have access to the technology required? How have some islanders developed a culture of living and working away from home for a long time, while still preserving strong ties to their island homes, when some lose the connections? What factors continue to apply, and no longer apply, within the context of pandemic-related lockdowns and travel bans? How are these factors relevant, or not, to islandness and to resilience?

**THE CHOICE BETWEEN letting a pandemic run rampant and imposing severe and harmful restrictions on individual liberty is a no-win situation, with the consequences of each being devastating, ethically and health-wise.**

Islandness is about choices to live on an island and to live as islanders, whereas lockdown is a (theoretically) temporary and involuntary measure to avoid mass death from disease. The choice between letting a pandemic run rampant and imposing severe and harmful restrictions on individual liberty is a no-win situation, with the consequences of each being devastating, ethically and health-wise. Lockdown was known to have major, deleterious health consequences, which have been documented as decreased fitness and fewer medical check-ups, along with increased stress, self-harm (including suicide attempts), domestic violence, and substance use (Bastiampillai et al., 2020; Bhavsar et al., 2020; Caballero-Domínguez et al., 2020; Iob et al., 2020).

If these consequences are seen when islanding people for COVID-19, are they seen for everyday islandness through living on an island? Social difficulties such as abuse, self-harm, and violence are not exclusive to islands or islanders. Studies do not yet exist aiming to compare degrees of islandness with degrees of social difficulties, even if either could be parameterized robustly in order to run correlations. Pitcairn Island (Oliver, 2009) and Jersey (Martin & Bray, 2015) had horrific, unacceptable, systematic child abuse, as did the USA (Frawley-O’Dea & Goldner, 2007). It is unclear that islandness, or lack thereof, must consistently affect health, social ills, and resilience, or lack thereof.

When an island culture has developed based on islandness characteristics and an island people thrives from it, then it could support resilience. Conversely, if factors such as colonialism, postcolonialism, or corruption intercede, then islandness might undermine resilience, such as for Haiti (Mika, 2019) and the Pacific (Dye et al., 2018). Similarly, people (islanders or not) who are used to extensive social networks, frequent travel, and widespread connectivity might react adversely when those are suddenly removed without much choice. This aspect of choice could be key for resilience: being able to control one’s own circumstances and having options to alter them. The connection between resilience and islandness characteristics is not so much through island

life or islanded life such as lockdown — or the opposites — but is about having the control, resources, and opportunities to make one’s own decisions regarding how islanded one lives, whether or not on an island. This point applies to individuals as well as collectives, such as governments and businesses.

## BUILDING AND WRECKING RESILIENCE

Having options and opportunities might present a crux of the meaning of pandemic and post-pandemic resilience for islands and islanders. As is already known from the multiple definitions of resilience and the multiple approaches to resilience thinking, resilience in and of itself is not necessarily advantageous or disadvantageous due to differing interpretations and characterizations. The same is true of islandness. What do the pandemic and responses to it mean for resilience and islandness during and after the pandemic?

As noted in the previous section, one major response to the pandemic was curtailing travel. Restrictions were imposed at the local level, such as the second national lockdown in Israel starting on 18 September 2020 and in France starting on 30 October 2020, each requiring people to stay within one kilometre of their home, with many exceptions. Other travel constraints were enforced regionally and internationally, including across subnational island jurisdictions.

Canada implemented strict entry requirements on 18 March 2020 so that only people permitted to live in Canada could come to the country, but exemptions included French citizens of St. Pierre et Miquelon. Provinces including Prince Edward Island enforced their own restrictions for people travelling internally within Canada. Prince Edward Island then became part of an Atlantic Canada travel bubble with three other provinces. From 3 July until 23 November 2020, travel for residents of these provinces was permitted within and among the bubble without quarantine or isolation upon arrival. Some of the UK’s Channel Islands took an analogous approach from June 2020, permitting travel within the “Bailiwick Bubble” comprising the islands of Alderney, Guernsey, Herm, and Sark. Australia has had strict entry requirements, while its states and territories, including the island state of Tasmania, had their own rules for arriving. Island countries such as New Zealand and Seychelles quickly controlled their air and maritime space to deny landing rights to craft, stopping many people from entering while quarantining most of those permitted to arrive. Non-island countries such as Thailand and Vietnam implemented similar measures.

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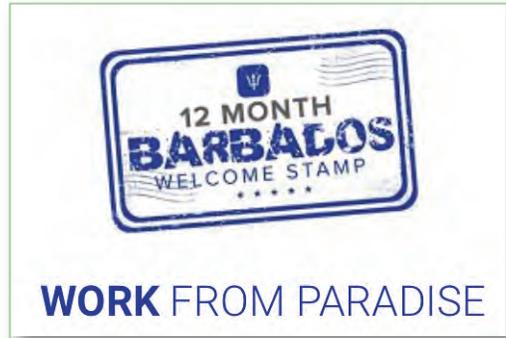


Being part of the Atlantic Canada travel bubble allowed visitors from another Atlantic province to dine at this pub in Halifax.  
Bloomberg

In effect, countries and sub-national jurisdictions islanded themselves, using islandness-based actions to prevent a mass influx of potentially infected people and to control the quarantine or isolation of people permitted into the country. Islandness and resilience coincided by reducing infection rates and deaths, yet this approach was not confined to islands. Jurisdictions aimed for resilience to infection and for resilience to lockdown measures, so that livelihoods based on local activities suffer much less, although still being harmed by the lack of international physical connections.

This latter point demonstrates that the same islandness-based action (whether or not taken for an island) supporting aspects of resilience simultaneously undermines aspects of resilience. Tourism and business travel has long been the lifeblood of many of the locations which were able to open internally, i.e., without lockdown restrictions, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions emerged for these islands and non-islands about reviving travel to and from the outside (e.g., Yeh, 2020). For islands, a major component of travel in and out is for islanders themselves, leaving for education, livelihoods, and healthcare, while returning to visit family, to engage with and reaffirm land tenure systems, and to remember their home (King, 2009; King & Connell, 1999; Randall et al., 2014; Thomas-Hope, 1980). Cutting off this flow both ways inhibits island resilience through reducing life opportunities and connections to island homes. While remittances would typically be expected to offset some such difficulties by retaining connections with the island homes and supporting those remaining at home, projections are that the global livelihoods situation due to the pandemic means a substantial decrease in remittances (Murakami et al., 2020; Noy et al., 2020). In fact, Piteli et al. (2021) summarize analyses explaining that 2020 is expected to present the largest recorded decrease in international remittances.

Yet, many islands have been creative about building resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to segue into a post-pandemic world. In July 2020, Barbados launched its Welcome Stamp Visa, offering a quick application for living and working in the country for up to twelve months (renewable) without paying Barbados income tax. The perks offered are stated to be good healthcare and internet, as well as no COVID-19 deaths since May 2020. This idea of “work from home” from anywhere in the world brings income, people, and entrepreneurship to the island, building resilience during the pandemic and setting the stage for establishing post-pandemic resilience. Some people working from the islands during the pandemic will likely remain there more longer-term, helping to build the society. Islands, though, have experienced some negative impacts from an influx of comparatively affluent migrants, through driving up prices for everyone and pricing locals out of the housing market (Baldacchino, 2018). Those who do not stay after the pandemic might contribute to an outflux of income and a glut of property on the market. Yet, the presumption is that visitors will start returning after the pandemic — especially since the international tourism industry is looking at major changes post-pandemic, but is not giving up entirely (Benjamin et al., 2020) — possibly balancing some of those who leave.



An open question regarding the remote working visa is monitoring the work being done, in terms of quality as well as type of work. Online businesses can lead to “dark entrepreneurship” (e.g., Bakker, 2012) for which the work has dubious ethics. While taking money for products or services which were never intended to be delivered would be fraud, and is banned in many countries, plenty of options exist to slip through legal gaps. Pre-pandemic, numerous island jurisdictions were embroiled in the blurry zone between creative entrepreneurship and dark entrepreneurship for many income-generating activities not requiring face-to-face contact, including selling votes in international venues such as the International Whaling Commission (Strand & Tuman, 2012); selling citizenship (van Fossen, 2018); hosting gambling and virtual currency websites (Connell, 2014; Williams et al., 2012); and flags of convenience for maritime vessels (Barton, 1999; Gay, 2014). Dark entrepreneurship is not exclusive to remote working, with face-to-face categories for islands including migrant detention (e.g., Australia using Nauru, Christmas Island, and Manus Island; Mares, 2016); extrajudicial proceedings against alleged criminals (e.g., the USA using Guantánamo Bay, Cuba for torturing terrorist suspects; Aggarwal, 2020); and quarantine for COVID-19 and other diseases (Baldacchino, 2020).

These activities are also not exclusive to islands. Panama and Liberia are known as flags-of-convenience (Barton, 1999) while Canada and Hungary are among the countries providing citizenship advantages in return for in-country investment (Surak, 2016). The link between islandness and resilience thus has nebulous dimensions regarding remote working, entrepreneurship, and dark entrepreneurship. The latter builds resilience for the host through bringing in income while potentially wrecking others' resilience through the unethical activities, although islandness is not necessarily a factor since any jurisdiction can choose to operate similarly.

Any jurisdiction could operate to increase or decrease certain aspects of islandness to build pandemic-related resilience. Restricting travel to and from a location has been

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shown to be achievable, even for non-sovereign locations and non-island locations. Such actions increase physical isolation and marginalization, which can increase togetherness and tightness of communities. There is no consensus that these traits inevitably represent islandness, but it is important to consider if it is easier and more appropriate for islands than non-islands to pivot in these directions when pandemic-type threats emerge. Some discussions suggest “yes” (Boyd & Wilson, 2020; Turchin & Green, 2019), although systematic compara-

tive studies with non-islands remain on the research agenda. Conversely, nearly immediate air travel restrictions were implemented for the USA on 11 September 2001 following terrorist attacks in the northeast (Freni, 2003) and across most of the continent of Europe for episodes during April and May 2010 when the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull erupted, spewing ash into the atmosphere and making it dangerous for aircraft (Alexander, 2013). The latter is an example of an island-based hazard interrupting a continent. In both cases, land and water transport remained viable, but countries could have closed those entry modes if they wished, as demonstrated by the closure of land and water borders during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chaudhry et al., 2020).

Many assumptions pervade regarding borders, suggesting the need for deeper investigations and more comparative analyses. The ability to monitor borders and identify incursions across them is assumed to be easier for airspace than for land and sea areas. Small aerial vehicles (drones) undermine this assumption, especially considering the zones where air and land borders overlap, such as flying a drone through a forest or a mountain pass. International travel without detection does seem to be harder to complete via air than via land or water, although much of this difference is due to the security requirements for flying compared to using one's own car or boat. Nor have the security requirements for air travel stopped human trafficking via commercial flights (Price & Forrest, 2016), hiring a private aircraft to border-hop for delivering disaster

relief supplies (Harris, 2004), or using airdrops and private airstrips to smuggle drugs between countries (Rodgers, 1991). No claim is made that island borders are the same as non-island borders or that traversing borders by air has the same difficulty as traversing borders by land or water. The statement is that the evidence base is limited and conclusions tend to be based on assumptions rather than peer-reviewed research.

Irrespective, borders are accepted as being porous (Howell et al., 2018) and the more distant a piece of land is from another piece of land, and the smaller the piece of land, the easier it can perhaps be to monitor attempted entries. New Zealand, without land borders and typically days away from Australia by boat (precluding the smallest craft from trying to cross), can monitor attempted entries much more readily than Singapore, which is in sight of two other countries and which has two causeways connecting to Malaysia. Many inhabited Pacific islands are small enough that most or all of the coastline could be regularly monitored and any new arrivals would soon be observed.

Rapidly shifting levels of border control, though, feed back to the point about both making and breaking resilience. Closing borders increases resilience to infectious disease, while decreasing livelihoods and socializing resilience if people are used to livelihoods and socializing with face-to-face connectivity. Achieving a balance between connectivity and border control is a

common debate in governance and sovereignty (e.g., Salter, 2008), although often missing is detailed discussion regarding the speed of adjustments to changing local, national, or global situations. As pandemics — COVID-19 and others — wax and wane, along with other border topics — of which migration, people smuggling, and drug smuggling are prominent (Howell et al., 2018; Price & Forrest, 2016; Salter, 2008) — resilience through assumed islandness characteristics might mean developing a wide repertoire of approaches which can be started, stopped, and altered at short notice.

That is, flexibility — and thus, as per the previous section, having choices — becomes a predominant part of building resilience, seeking to balance isolation and openness in order to balance disease-free resilience with livelihoods and socializing resilience. This approach is very much about recognizing that resilience is a long-term societal process balancing a variety of needs, not a directly measurable one-off snapshot, as has long been lessons provided by island examples (Chandler & Pugh, 2020; Farhan & Lim, 2011; Lewis, 2009, 2013, 2017). Resilience means continual action, examining what different sectors of society do to other sectors and why, while understanding complementarities and tensions between different resilience-related interests and different types of resilience, such as avoiding disease, supporting livelihoods, and socializing. Part of this processual approach is the relationality and dynamicity of islands and of

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resilience, challenging assumptions that resilience must always be positive and desirable (Pugh, 2014, 2018). Flexibility should not compromise the need to be vigilant regarding the dark sides of livelihoods for building resilience, which then wreck other aspects of resilience. Flexibility, choices, and resources to have flexibility and to implement choices might subsequently become part of the resilience–islandness interaction and, hence, part of the considerations for creating a desirable post-pandemic future.

### A POST-PANDEMIC FUTURE THROUGH ISLANDNESS

When considering a post-pandemic future with islandness, and particularly through islandness, the challenges of balancing different types of resilience while balancing opportunities and ethics lead to the questions: (i) Resilience to what? and (ii) How to ensure that islandness becomes more of the solution than the problem? For the first

question, one aim could potentially be to use islandness to create resilience against the idea of returning to a pre-existing state, against the domination of ecological ideas in expressing resilience, against darker manifestations of resilient but unethical livelihoods, and against assumptions that characteristics such as smallness and isolation are the antithesis of resilience. For the second question, there is much talk of aiming to establish a “new normal” for a post-pandemic world, which might or might not incorporate

aspects of islandness. Irrespective, a “new normal” entails accepting some form of “normal” without it being clear who would set or monitor this standard — or whether everyone would have the same “new normal”. With change of all forms being typical, as epitomized by islands, is a mode of stable “normality” really achievable or advisable?

No claim is made that island lessons are, could be, or should be panaceas. A wide variety of similarly positive and negative examples is evident from islands and non-islands. Resilience–islandness explorations and interactions have plenty to offer for challenging trite phrases and driving down into the key processes which caused the problems being witnessed — and for ensuring that long-term processes can be used to generate solutions.

For pandemics, humans exploiting nature without regard to safe and healthy interactions have led to numerous species-jumping viruses and then epidemics and pandemics, including HIV, Ebola, swine flu, and previous coronaviruses causing Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) (Weber et al., 2016). These patterns continued, leading to COVID-19. Meanwhile, much island studies literature has always highlighted lessons from island societies that

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Thailand began a COVID-19 testing blitz after its biggest ever surge in cases in December 2020. Migrant workers were heavily affected by an outbreak centred on Central Shrimp Market, around 45 km from Bangkok. Reuters

humanity and the environment are inextricably intertwined and interconnected, with many possible ways of using nature for living and livelihoods without exploiting it, ruining it, or pursuing destructive practices (e.g., Brookfield et al., 1977). Less resource-intensive ways of living do not necessarily mean a lower quality of life, less equity, less opportunity, or fewer choices (Kallis, 2018; Raworth, 2017; Schumacher, 1973; Washington & Twomey, 2016). Achieving post-pandemic resilience should be about changing the normality of the pandemic-causing factors, for which islandness can assist.

Ultimately, resilience for pandemics and other concerns means a process of always monitoring and improving long-term societal conditions, which can include islandness, rather than focusing on a specific microbe's traits. Microorganisms with pandemic potential are inevitable, so society must be ready to deal with a variety of possible contagions (among other challenges). Yet, many countries do not maintain the local presence of, or accessibility to, health professionals, equipment, or facilities to deal with regular health needs. This chronic crisis of insufficient healthcare on a regular basis inevitably invites acute health-related crises such as outbreaks. Within this context, the poor state of health systems for some islands is continually explained as being a difficulty for island life (Binns et al., 2010; Guan & McElroy, 2012; Setoya & Kestel, 2018). Consequently, islandness seems to reduce resilience with respect to health, yet has advantages for increasing resilience with respect to health-related crises such as outbreaks. Building a post-pandemic future should mean leveraging islandness, for islands and non-islands alike, to retain and enhance advantages while identifying and

overcoming disadvantages. Both activities must continue in times of rapid change, such as a new pathogen emerging which could entail sudden border closures alongside other lockdown measures.

**RESILIENCE FOR ISLANDNESS**  
and islandness for resilience together mean developing, accepting, and having available a wide array of actions and techniques, with rapid flexibility, taking advantage of, rather than inhibiting, islandness characteristics.

No single approach works for everyone and everywhere, whether an approach is a “normal” or not. A diverse repertoire is required, with this repertoire representing resilience. No assumptions can or should be made of a continually or increasingly physically connected world. As pandemics, volcanic eruptions, pollution, and other difficulties ebb and flow, so too will interest and availability of travel for people, goods, and services. Resilience for islandness and islandness for resilience together mean developing, accepting, and having available a wide array of actions and techniques, with rapid flexibility, taking advantage of, rather than inhibiting, islandness characteristics.

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