Editorial Letter, Issue 4.2

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ABSTRACT

This introduction to Issue 4.2 of the journal *Community Change* describes the theme of Transmission and Transition, which unifies the collection of articles and book reviews. The authors briefly summarize each piece in the issue.

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The previous issue of *Community Change* was centered around the theme of "transmission," a metaphorical and literal reference to the far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on public health, trust in institutions, knowledge management, media messages, and political mobilization, among other areas. Two years later, many find the present moment difficult to describe. Is it *late*-pandemic? Dare we say, *post*-pandemic? The choice to use one term or another reflects individuals' interpretations of the present and predictions of the future. The endemic status that the coronavirus has attained and its attendant, lingering effects on our politics compel us to examine how this "new normal" will play out in community change processes. Hence, the collection of articles you are about to read is a continuation of its predecessor. Welcome to Issue 4.2: Transmission and *Transition.*

In Farhad Mamshai's article "'Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier': Security and Communal Implications for Iraq," the author explores the multifaceted nature of how climate change is impacting the social, environmental, agricultural, economic, and political landscape of Iraq. Climate change intensifies the threat of civil unrest and militant activity, mass migration, decreased access to educational and employment opportunities, and increased distrust in government. In addition to the five indicators of climate change as a threat multiplier outlined by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including vulnerability, development, coping and security, international conflict, and statelessness, Mamshai defines intragovernmental disputes and interprovincial tensions as two additional factors specific to the Iraqi context. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the threat, exacerbating "environmental fragility in Iraq, which is already affected by conflict, lack of significant public sector reforms and governance, lost development gains, illegal activities such as poaching, fishing, and logging, and other factors" (Mamshai 2023, 13). Drawing from a wealth of sources, Mamshai makes a compelling case for why the multiplicative effect of climate change has and will continue to compound governance challenges in Iraq and beyond.

In "Communication of Uncertainty in AI Regulations," Aditya Sai Phutane explores how regulating agencies communicate different types of artificial intelligence (AI) uncertainties as well as how communication goals differ among different types of uncertainties. Phutane discusses how the emergence of new technologies creates uncertainties with both the public and key stakeholders. As a result, scientific goals and public policy may struggle to align. One such example that Phutane cites is the evolving understanding of the COVID-19 virus and how society responded over time. "In the COVID-19 context, accepting and acknowledging uncertainty was found to generate public skepticism initially. However, researchers [...] suggested that this acceptance of uncertainty can ultimately serve as a safeguard against potential disbelief when new findings emerge that contradict initial knowledge" (Phutane 2023, 3). By analyzing a selection of regulatory documents pertaining to AI, Phutane explores the divergent communication goals associated with different types of uncertainties, shedding light on the challenges posed by rapid technological advancements. Phutane uncovers strategies employed by agencies to foster trust among stakeholders and the public, emphasizing the importance of aligning policy with evolving technological landscapes. This timely contribution underscores the critical need for adaptive regulatory frameworks to effectively address emerging technologies, such as AI, and to cultivate public trust.

Julie Schupp's article "International Organizations and Transnational Initiatives: Vital Pieces in Peace Education" asks important questions about how ideas are transmitted and implemented in the field of peace education. While recognizing the massive role that international efforts can, and perhaps should, play in the cultivation of peace education programs, Schupp also questions how the distance between local communities being affected and coordinating agencies might limit efficacy. The author walks us through the current ecosystem of peace education while elucidating the differences between international organizations, like the United Nations, and transnational initiatives, like Quaker schools. The article discusses how both types of entities can be prone to top-down thinking and struggle to develop, and communicate, meaningful measures of success. Schupp ultimately concludes that a more fluid model of idea transmission is needed, one that understands the benefits of top-down implementation but is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of the people most impacted.

Elizabeth Bucklen extends this issue's examination of transmission and transition by reviewing Keisha N. Blain's *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom*, which unearths the stories of little-known women leaders in the Black Nationalist Movement of the 1920–40s. The author contends that Blain presents a deeply researched and evocative illustration of such Black female trailblazers as Celia Jane Allen, Ethel Collins, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, figures who laid the groundwork for political strategies employed in the fight for racial justice during the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. Blain's book and Bucklen's review challenge scholars to consider their responsibility to combat patriarchal and racist exclusion in historiography by elevating and examining the stories of those who have been marginalized in the historical record. In so doing, contemporary historians can illuminate the critical roles and innovative tactics of unsung leaders who transferred knowledge for the benefit of future activists. What are the challenges of conducting such research, Bucklen asks, and what is to be gained by those who seek to learn from the past to catalyze community change today?

In "People of a Pandemic," Molly Kwitny and coauthors seek to explore the human toll of the COVID-19 pandemic in the New River Valley of Virginia. Based on stories shared during participant interviews, a team of public health students developed sixteen vignettes to provide a glimpse into how the lives of members of several disadvantaged populations were affected by COVID-19 and society's response. The vignettes allow the reader to engage in their own sense-making process. The authors recognize that these individual experiences cannot be easily reduced to one cohesive story and, instead, ask the reader to sit with these stories in their fullness. The authors conclude with a preliminary thematic analysis. Rather than suggesting generalizability, they identify trends from across the narratives worthy of further investigation, including financial (in)security and employment, access to resources, internet and technology, mental health and isolation, and resilience. There are many ongoing efforts endeavoring to understand the societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; by focusing on the irreducibility of individual stories, Kwitny et al. have provided a valuable addition to the conversation.

Thank you for reading *Community Change*. We hope that you find this issue's pieces to be illuminating as we seek to understand and navigate a landscape that has been ineluctably changed by a global pandemic yet remains grounded in the timeless dynamics of people animated by social imaginaries and working together to realize collective change.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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