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Foreword by Klaas Sijtsma

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than ever people have been looking to science for solutions to the numerous complex problems the world is suddenly facing. The most urgent issue now seems to be finding a vaccine that will free humankind from the immediate threat of the COVID-19 virus, but other solutions concerning economic, climate, and all kinds of societal issues have presented themselves with almost equally great urgency. Economic issues refer to the vitality of various kinds of enterprises and the related employment problems, and they mingle with climate related issues concerning tourism and global traveling but also relating to commuting and household and industrial energy use. Social issues concern the organization of health care and, staying closer to home, the nature and organization of education and research. Tilburg University's motto "Understanding Society" seems to be more relevant than ever, given that we are a university specialized in the field of the social and behavioral sciences and, therefore, fully equipped to shed our light on many of the phenomena society is facing. It gives me great pleasure that dozens of our scientific staff have put their bright minds together to better understand several of the COVID-19 related problems and suggest concrete solutions. The book *The New Common* is a collection of their contributions.

The contributions help to gain a better understanding, to solve a number of societal problems, and, by doing this, to realize the university's motto. The book covers the full range of views and approaches from understanding to advancing society. Some of the chapters reflect on the meaning of pandemics in relation to the history and culture of humankind, thus unraveling the mythical nature of the COVID-19 crisis by increasing our understanding. Other chapters propose validated solutions to the problem of handling certain aspects of the crisis in relation to elderly care or to the desired behavioral change of adolescents. The COVID-19 crisis has forced universities to transform from physical education to online education at an unprecedented speed. The book also provides contributions reflecting on the future of education, presenting first insights and solutions to problems encountered in online education and online exam proctoring. To conclude, I can safely say that Tilburg University has embarked on a journey to move away from the "old common" to discover a "new common," however insecure and whimsical this journey may be. I hope the book will provide a challenge to its readers and invite them to respond and take the discussion to the next level in an effort to better understand and advance society.

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Foreword by Esmah Lahlah

At the time of publication of this book, the coronavirus has been disrupting our society for almost six months. And, although we are not yet sure what the social and economic consequences of the coronavirus will be, we already see a significant impact on society. In my work as a policy-maker I observe how the measures taken to combat the virus affect the daily lives of people in the domains of the economy, the labor market, health care, education, mobility, and leisure.

As long as the coronavirus rears its head, life will be completely different compared to a few months ago. Our society will not be the same in the years to come. And maybe it will never be the same again: “the new normal” is a concept you hear a lot about now. Or, as the editors of this book put it, a new common is ahead of us. What does this crisis mean for society, now and in the future? What should society be like? What is needed to restore the economy and keep the social fabric intact, also at the grassroots level? How do we offer the different generations hope for work, income, and security and prevent generation gaps from widening? How do we prevent vulnerable groups in particular from falling victim to the coronavirus crisis?

Although the situation is of great concern, I also see enormous resilience, flexibility, and creativity among citizens. People are changing their ways. I see fantastic initiatives and inventive solutions, for example, setting up the social distancing society and economy. In helping people in vulnerable positions more work is done based on trust, people's living environment becomes central again, more customization is possible, and there is more cooperation between different parties, based on solidarity and new connectivity. The coronavirus makes differences in our society visible, but also brings many people closer together.

Currently, at the local level of a municipality, we are working hard on understanding what this virus means for our society, on repairing and limiting the damage, on getting society and communities back on track. We do this together with a wide range of stakeholders, including institutes for higher education, such as Tilburg University. This crisis, in which both health and the economy are affected, is unprecedented. But... Even from this unprecedented crisis, new opportunities arise. Emily Dickens wrote, “Not knowing when the [new] dawn will come, I open every door.”

Opportunities for a more beautiful, better, and more inclusive society. Let's seize these opportunities to emerge better and stronger. When thinking about the “new” normal, I would like to plead for a “new” society. A society, indeed with a new common, that opens itself up to everyone. A society that embodies the principles of equality, accessibility, and connectedness. The feeling that someone is looking after you, no matter what the situation. After all, participating always starts with being important. To be taken seriously. This is what I learned in my current job.

Especially now, it is more important than ever, if we aim for inclusion, that we make every effort to offer everyone perspective, especially for those for whom “participation” is

not self-evident. This requires strengthening the control over one's own life. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to rely on one's own responsibility and on the resilience and solidarity of society. This makes it possible to apply more differentiation and customization, so that specific circumstances can be better accommodated. Tailor-made approaches are more relevant now than ever.

To advance this “new” society, knowledge and innovation are needed, as well as a joint effort by people themselves, social organizations, education, and governments at all levels. Together we can explore, formulate, implement, and hold on to the agenda of this “new” society. That should be our common focus and ambition. That is the focus and ambition I share with the authors of this book. Together we are stronger!

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