

Reshaping the flagship initiatives of the Italian Institute of Anthropology in the new pandemic world

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The dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human societies has prompted us to reshape the two flagship initiatives of the Italian Institute of Anthropology (ISItA), the “Manifesto of Human Diversity and Unity” and the Open Access Initiatives (Oasis).

The ISItA is actively engaged in the debate regarding the meaning of human diversity and its social and societal implications. In 2015, we participated to the discussion concerning the presence of the term race in the Italian Constitution, proposing a modification of article 3 (Destro Bisol & Danubio, 2015). Two years later, the *Journal of Anthropological Sciences* (JASs) started the forum “What is race today? Scientific, legal, and social appraisals from around the globe”, aimed to provide a basis to compare the “state of the art” of debates in matters regarding race, human biological variation and racism in science and society in different countries. (Goodman, 2018). In 2018, we launched the “Manifesto of Human Diversity and Unity”, an interdisciplinary initiative on race and racism that we undertook eighty years after the infamous “Manifesto of race” of the fascist regime. This project embraces different types of communication activities, both academic and popular, which are still ongoing (Destro Bisol *et al.*, 2018a,b).

COVID-19 and racism are linked in several ways (Gee *et al.*, 2020; Gravlee, 2020; Devakumar *et al.*, 2020). While the pandemic at first led to an increase in anti-Chinese sentiment in Western countries, other groups were subsequently targeted, such as Vietnamese, Koreans and Japanese (in spillover effects) and even Africans in China (Gao & Sai, 2020; Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Adding to the pre-existing forms of racism, intolerance and social tensions caused by the pandemic can have two effects. Through a transformation into hate crimes, they can increase fear, injury and stress among members of target groups. By fuelling discrimination, they make it more difficult to achieve the goal of equity in health. All this means it is of the utmost urgency to make people aware of the terrible mistake of linking the spread of diseases to socially identifiable groups. In addition to helping students and the lay public to regain faith in science and facts, we will pursue this goal by making the explanation of the connections between racism, social inequities and disease a priority for the scientific communication activities that will be carried out within our Manifesto.

In 2011, JAS was the first anthropological journal to encourage authors to archive research data from their articles in open repositories (Destro Bisol & Anagnostou, 2011), followed later by the *Journal of Human Evolution* and the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* (Turner & Mulligan, 2019). In 2014, ISItA launched the Oasis project to promote the importance and values of Open Science in anthropological research (Destro Bisol *et al.*, 2014).

The studies conducted so far within Oasis have concerned the sharing of research data (Milia *et al.*, 2012; Anagnostou *et al.*, 2015). In this extraordinary year, we have decided to go beyond the boundaries of anthropology and have shifted our focus to the analysis of peer-reviewed articles regarding COVID-19 (Capocasa *et al.*, 2020). Our study made it possible to glimpse two small lights in the darkness of the tragedy caused by the pandemic. The first concerns the very high open access rate (close to 90%) that we observed for papers concerning COVID-19. Due to its novelty, the infectivity, pathogenesis and clinical course of this viral pathogen has remained under scrutiny, while various

pharmacological approaches are still being tested. In this rapidly changing situation, having new knowledge about COVID-19 readily available can be of great help to researchers and practitioners. We have also found a way to narrow the large gap in open access rates between COVID-19 and the ten deadliest human diseases. The solution is provided by the “green road”: making manuscripts available online that have been accepted for publication but have yet to be formatted by journals. While it would be straightforward for authors of medical studies to take the green road, we have observed that only a few of them are willing to do so. Therefore, something truly new and powerful is needed to change this situation. And here lies the second light. What has happened in the world with COVID-19 and its impact on scientific publishing offers us two opportunities: to raise awareness among researchers and all interested parties on the importance of open science for human health and to demonstrate that a real change in access to science literature is now possible.

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