Uncertainty, pandemics and publics

Judith Green

Professor of Sociology

University of Exeter, UK
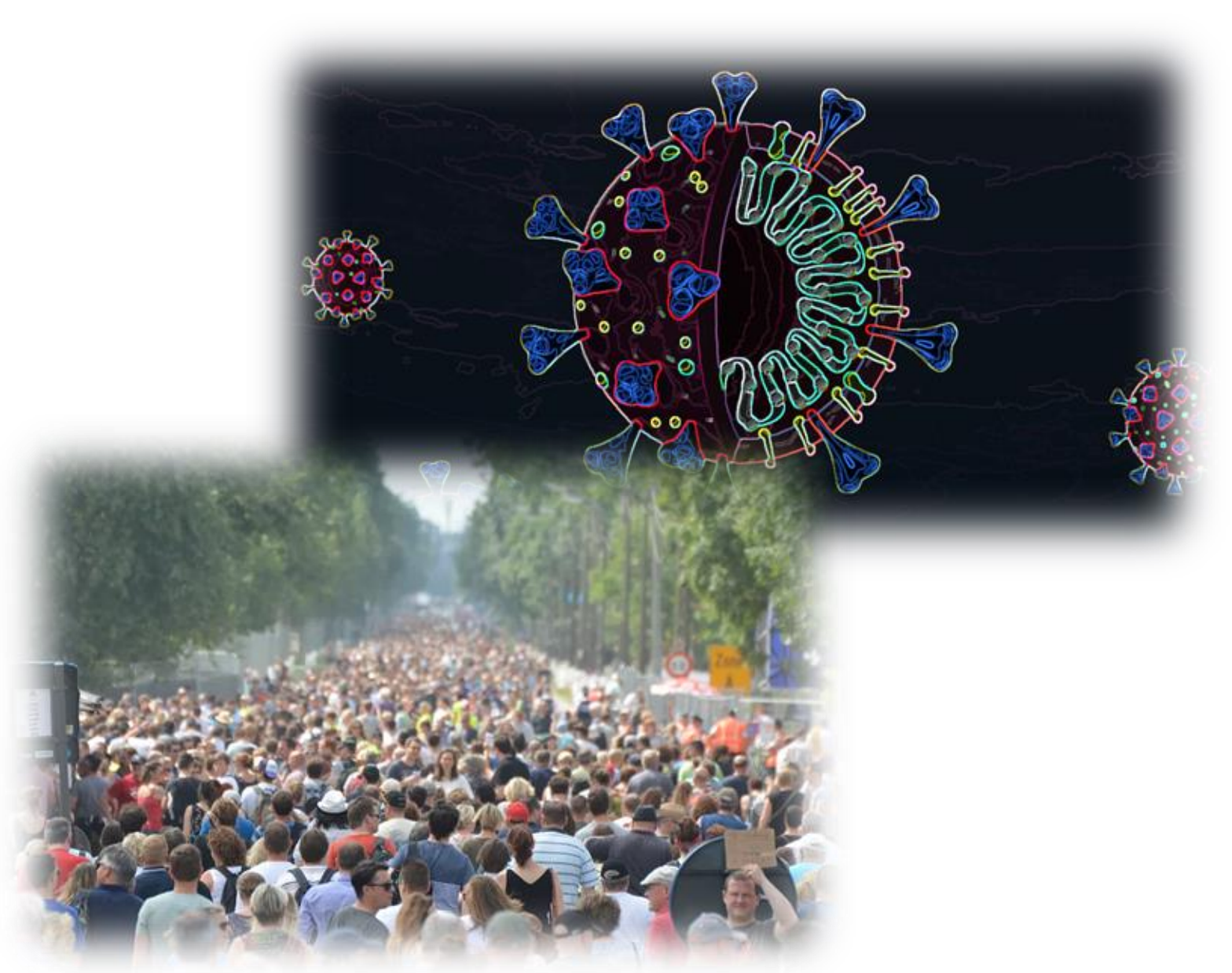
H5N1 avian influenza preparedness, Zambia

2004 International response: contain in 'at source' countries, manage in 'at risk', protect global north?

Knowledge exists, but not integrated:

- Backyard/small poultry sector unlike SE Asia
- National trade & development priorities
- Limited veterinary capacity for effective biosecurity across 'porous' borders

(source: Mwacalimba, K. 2012, 2014)

COVID-19: the publics of public health

Passive	Empty vessels, to be guided by experts
National	Bounded populations to be defended, nationalistic rhetoric
Ignorant	Resistant, duped by fake news
Knowledge-able	Making Long COVID; managing uncertainty; "public virology"
Resilient, active	Neighbourhood self-help

Source: Green et al 2022

Key roles for social science in planning

- The 'social' is a complex system: need more than 'behavioural' accounts of social action

- Mapping public expertise

- Rapid reviews of range of social science and humanities knowledge

- Syntheses that focus on tractable, (general) principles – e.g.
  'trust not facts will convince on vaccines' (GAVI)

- Crafting ways of **communicating** uncertainty

Sources

Mwacalimba, K. (2014; 2012) on Avian influenza preparadness in Zambia:

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GAVI (2024) Anthropologists explain why trust rather than facts will convince people to take vaccines:

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