"Omikron could well be the final blow to the world before corona," writes Maarten Keulemans in the Volkskrant last Saturday. The journalist, who has been tried and tested by corona, uses statements from others to outline how the virus is penetrating deeper and deeper ‘into the capillaries of society’. He himself believes that he already sees a change in our social rituals. He quotes Mayor Depla of the municipality of Breda who proposes to replace the New Year’s reception with a summer reception, to plan the summer break for football in the winter and to celebrate the carnival in the summer. Many subscribers will have read this sketch of the future with a shake of their heads.

In the acclaimed and historical novel 'Publieke Werken', Thomas Rosenboom describes how new social developments at the end of the 19th century radically changed people’s private lives. Rosenboom, for example, tells about the idiosyncratic owner of two small houses who, against his will and thanks are literally built in by the Amsterdam Victoria Hotel, while the resident was convinced that he could radically influence or stop the development of the building project. It is ironic that in 2021 these buildings in front of the central station are the backdrop for individual protest against the general measures to curb the corona virus.

Who have the demonstrators aimed their arrows at; government officials, virologists, doctors or epidemiologists? Or is it an expression of inability to prevent a viral invader from turning our lives upside down? With the advent of omikron, the vaccination race could turn out to be unsustainable and it is beyond doubt that our social interaction must be permanently and radically adapted to keep the R low over a long period of time. To provide fresh alternatives to this, we will have to sweep the dust from public health care and breathe new life into it.

The corona issue is a typical unstructured problem - ‘a wicked problem’ - and difficult to solve because things constantly change and apparent contradiction occur, leaving no room for an unambiguous solution. The advance of corona is inextricably linked to immunity, vaccinations and hospitals, but also to economic growth, travel, traditions and customs. For example, the initial approach to the epidemic leads to new issues, in other words, in-depth knowledge and skills are indispensable, but simple solutions are not sufficient to parry the pandemic.

You can learn from challenges. How much better would it be for the solution of the new “public works” ahead to systematically to do it together instead of alone?