

# The World Economic Forum, ‘The Lancet’, and COVID-19 Knowledge Gatekeeping

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the links that the World Economic Forum has established with organizations and persons linked to The Lancet article titled *Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19*. Guided by the Gatekeeping Theory, appended by the Political Economy of Knowledge Theory, the study implemented an integrative literature review (textual synthesis). Relevant online pieces of literature were sampled through snowballing technique using the Google search engine platform to elucidate on the funding and ownership of the Lancet, and the 27 authors of the said article and their affiliations with higher learning institutions vis-à-vis their connections with the World Economic Forum to highlight their implications to gatekeeping and COVID-19 knowledge production in journal publications, particularly that of *The Lancet*. Results revealed that the WEF has penetrated all knowledge institutions that benefit from the natural COVID-19 virus origins hypothesis and the silencing of contrarian hypotheses, including the lab leak narrative. A model of the WEF knowledge production complex against the lab leak hypothesis was presented to visually represent the influence of the WEF on scientific journal gatekeeping in the context of The Lancet.

**Keywords:** *The Lancet*, World Economic Forum, COVID-19, Gatekeeping, Political Economy of Knowledge

## I. Introduction

In the last G20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the digital response to the pandemic was lauded for its success; hence, they agreed to push it further (Hinchcliff, 2022) should another pandemic arise. The G20 is composed of top national officials from the European Union, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK, and the US (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021). While the G20 meeting is known to be a meeting attended by nationally elected officials of participating countries, Klaus Schwab, head of the World Economic Forum (WEF), of which many top-earning pharmaceutical companies are partners, was reported to have been part of the Business 20 (B20) Summit that was simultaneously happening in Bali (Sarmiento, 2022). The B20 is a part of the G20 Summit “meant to express common views from the international business community” (Cannes B20 Business Summit, 2011, para. 1). The B20 is “the official G20 dialogue forum with the business community” (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021, para. 3). In 2017, the B20 had 706 members from 39 countries (International Cooperative Alliance, 2022).

**Contested Facts.** Given the high-profile composition of the G20 and the B20, an online news and information site, *The Informant*, asked why Schwab was spotted in the G20 (Jensen, 2022) when he is not a nationally elected official. In response to a tweet by a “right-leaning commentator Ezra Levant” (Norton, 2022, para. 5) on a similar inquiry, *Newsweek* corrected that:

While Klaus Schwab was in Bali during the G20 summit and was photographed alongside world leaders, he was attending B20, a business-led event, which also hosted SpaceX CEO Elon Musk and others. Viral photos of Schwab with world leaders were actually taken outside of the G20 summit talks, and some were from a different event entirely. (para. 29)

The above clarification by *Newsweek* appearing as a Fact Check article indicated that there is a need to distinguish between the G20 and the B20 and that Schwab was not in the G20 Summit. *Newsweek* concluded that the information about Schwab attending the G20 is a “misleading material” (para. 28), despite him being photographed together with the New Zealand Prime Minister Lucinda Arden, who is a community member of the WEF’s Forum of Young Global Leaders (WEF, 2022) among other global leaders (Bantugan, 2022). While the B20 is not the G20 summit, it is part of the G20 program; they are not technically separate. The B20 is one of the G20’s engagement groups (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021).

In the B20 Summit, Schwab spoke about the need for “a structural reset of the entire world, using language that sounds very similar to what he has said previously about the Great Reset” in response to “an economic, political, social and ecological and institutional crisis” (Florio, 2022, para. 5). One is likely led to ask, then, whether or not the G20 and B20 events are truly independent of each other and Schwab’s attendance had nothing to do with the G20. Similarly, given the response of *Newsweek*, the question “how trustworthy are fact checkers?” is worth asking.

**Fact-Checking vs. Truth Checking vs. Dissent Checking.** Estrin, O’Connor, and Fox (2022), in their article titled “Who is checking the fact checkers?” wrote that fact-checkers are the latest addition to the weapons in disinformation projects. They claimed that “some channels on the app Telegram look like independent fact-checkers, but are pro-Russian propaganda outlets spreading falsities” (para. 1). Kevin Nguyen from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported that Russian fake fact-checkers use very specific language to frame and favor the narrative of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (para. 16). According to Gurri (2022) fact-checkers were instituted by tech platforms like Facebook “to appease political, media and other elites eager to reassert control of the national narrative” (para. 1) following the 2016 election panic in the US. Gurri wrote:

Truth had crumbled into post-truth. News had been perverted into fake news. Facts are now spawned in disreputable corners to confuse rather than inform and guide the public. (para. 2)

Gurri explained that fact-checkers worked on the facts but the need was to establish the truth. The truth was more difficult to establish than the facts and yet facts are often mistaken as truth. He added that “Facts were neutral and inert. They lay embedded in reality, like an ore, until science extracted and smelted them into truth” (para. 6). Nevertheless, readers expect the truth and not simply facts from fact-checkers, but social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter are not ones to decide on their distinctions for the benefit of their users.

Thus, their users are left to “decide, either directly, by the facts (they) valued, or in some algorithmic form” social media provided (para. 12). In some manipulative instances, a negative fact-checking result could serve as “an intellectual warning label for true but politically troublesome information” (para. 17) and end in their blocking of online content that favor one political turf over another, independent of what their users thought about what was fact-checked (Gurri, 2022). The problem of having individuals and groups, including mainstream media, coming from the political left or right (Tiquia, 2022; McNeil, 2021) and appointing themselves as fact-checkers and the public’s “thought police” is that fact-checking has become “a political tool to control contrarian views” (Tiquia, 2022, para. 1).

**Fact-Checking during the Pandemic.** The COVID-19 pandemic is nothing less than a contested field with respect to “facts”. A World Health Organization (WHO) survey of fact-checkers revealed “overabundance

of misinformation and unclear scientific evidence" as the greatest difficulty during the pandemic of at least 70 percent of those surveyed, the most mature of which come from the European region (Purnat & Nguyen, n.d.). Nearly half of the respondents (49%) do not work with health professionals. Nevertheless, mixed messages were coming from health professionals as well which led to confusion among the public (Rubin, Kim, & Faulders, 2020). The WHO was particularly noted as having contributed to the confusion (Edwards, 2020), and Anthony Fauci of the US National Institutes of Health has also made conflicting statements about the use of facemasks and the state of the pandemic (Putterman, 2022).

In a scenario where even the State and its endorsed institutions were caught engaged in misleading the public, social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube took on fact-checking tasks. This led to their removal of 16 million pieces of content and dissemination of 167 million warnings, and the elimination of 850,000 videos, respectively (Clarke, 2021). Both Meta (WEF, 2022) and Google, which owns YouTube, are publicly reported partners of the WEF. The WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (WEF, 2022), the National Institutes of Health Head, Fauci (WEF, 2022), Meta's Founder Mark Zuckerberg (WEF, 2022), and Google's Chief Executive Officer, Sundar Pichai (WEF, 2022), are all directly affiliated with the WEF.

**Social Media Fact Checking.** Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were found to "generally remove or reduce the circulation of content that disputes information given by health authorities such as WHO and the CDC or spreads false health claims that are considered harmful, including incorrect information about the dangers of vaccines" (Clarke, 2021, para. 6). Facebook and YouTube, in particular, rely on the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, for their fact-checking, according to Clarke. Poynter runs Politifact, its fact-checking group. US President Joe Biden is registered as one of its "People" under the Executive Branch, together with his Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden is a WEF agenda contributor (WEF, 2022) while Harris "launched the US Administration's Call to Action asking the private sector to enhance investments in parts of Latin America" together with WEF Founder Schwab, according to Amanda Russo (2021), a WEF contributor who is also the Director of Communications of the Crypto Council for Innovation.

Elon Musk, the new owner of Twitter, declared that Twitter "needs to become by far the most accurate source of information about the world" (para. 3). Twitter does fact-check through its Community Notes feature, previously called Bird Watch, "relying on crowdsourced contributions to add context to tweets" (Bobrowsky, 2022, para. 2). To avoid abuse of the fact-checking system, Twitter draws strength from crowdsourcing where "each note is run through an algorithm that is maintained by Twitter, comparing it with other notes that are ranked as helpful by users with different points of view" (para. 5). How Community Notes will end up given the operation of troll farms remains to be seen.

**Scientific Journals as Conflicted Knowledge Gatekeepers.** Research journals played a key role in appeasing the worries and anxieties of the medical establishment and the general public during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research journals expedited the publication of articles and created platforms to make articles easily accessible at a time when it was most needed. Some examples of this effort were Elsevier Novel Coronavirus Information Center, the Wiley COVID-19 Resources and News portal, the Springer Nature COVID-19 resources centre, and the Frontiers Coronavirus Knowledge Hub (Matias-Guiu, 2020). Elsevier is owned by WEF partner RELX Group. John Wiley & Sons published Schwab's *Stakeholder Capitalism* (WEF, 2022). Springer Nature is owned by WEF partner Holtzbrinck Publishing Group. Frontiers was founded by WEF-affiliated Henry Markram (WEF, 2022).

However, in light of the more recent findings on the origins of the COVID-19 virus, *The Lancet*, published by Elsevier, was released an article that insisted that the virus could not have possibly come out of a lab leak even before an official investigation was conducted to determine the origin of the virus. Insinuations of a lab leak were considered forwarding conspiracy theories that contribute to mis- and disinformation that

endangered the public during the pandemic (Campbell, 2022). More recent investigations have opened the origins of the virus open for debate, insisted Campbell, and rendered *The Lancet* seriously questionable.

**Study Framework.** This paper is guided by the Gatekeeping Theory. The term "gatekeeping" was coined by Kurt Lewin to refer to a process of blocking "unwanted or useless things by using a gate" (communicationtheory.org, n.d., para. 2). The theory asserts that "(t)he Gatekeeper decides what information should move to group or individual and what information should not" (para. 3). According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009), gatekeeping is the "... process (that) determines not only which information is selected, but also what the content and nature of messages... will be" (para. 1). Initially, it was used to describe the process of news production in mass media involving "selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating, and otherwise massaging information to become news" (Vos & Reese, 2009, in Omlette à la Chantal, 2021). This study used gatekeeping, appended by the Political Economy of Knowledge (asserting that knowledge production is transformed through changes in funding) (Fasenfest, 2020), to refer to the editorial process of research journals, specifically involving their owners, executives, editors, and authors, that shaped the sphere of public knowledge on the COVID-19 virus.

**Statement of the Problem.** Given the above issues, this study sought to uncover the relationships and interests behind the operations of selected institutions of knowledge as "truth bearers" on COVID-19. Building on the author's work on Coursera and the WEF (Bantugan, 2022), it seeks to unveil the unseen institutional associations that shape the publication decisions of research journals. It particularly looks at *The Lancet*, to surface the problematic relationships that help facilitate collusion between knowledge gatekeepers and political-economic interests marginalizing dissent and skepticism that "helps scientists to remain objective when performing scientific inquiry and research" (Climate Science Investigations, 2016, para. 2).

## II. Methodology

This case study looked at different relationships between *The Lancet*, and the institutional affiliations of their authors, editors, chief executives, and owners. Through an integrative review of literature between November 26 and December 2, 2022, specifically those found online, the study looked into the links of *The Lancet* to the larger WEF network. The author began by searching for the article in *The Lancet* titled *Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19*, which led to insinuations that it tried to silence debate on the origins of the virus. The article, once downloaded, was analyzed to identify the authors. The names of the authors were searched in Google through snowball sampling to find any relationship with the WEF or people or other organizations affiliated with it. The author read the website of *The Lancet*, its official journal description, and looked for the list of editors and executive officers; their names were used later to find, through website snowballing, any possible relationship with the WEF. The author also searched Google, using a variety of emergent keywords, to find existing associations between *The Lancet* and WEF and to validate the information on the journal's website. To investigate the ownership of the journal, the researcher used the name of the journal and the word "owners" as search keywords in Google. After finding the answer in the search results, the name of the owner was used together with the term "World Economic Forum" to find linkages between the two. An alternative way was using the search engine of the WEF and typing the name of the owner of the journal to determine if it is registered under any of these categories: partner, people, community, and contributor. The same was done for its editors and the authors of the identified article in *The Lancet*. Through content analysis, by way of a matrix of analysis, the study established the connections that exist between *The Lancet* and the WEF. The study argued through the Gatekeeping and Political Economy of Knowledge Production that the connections found between *The Lancet* and the WEF suggest likely collusion that led to the marginalization of the lab leak origin narrative as early as February 2020 and a network of disinformation within established but invisible networks of knowledge production.

### III. Results

#### *The Lancet*

*Description.* *The Lancet* (2022) describes itself as follows:

The Lancet began as an independent, international weekly general medical journal founded in 1823 by Thomas Wakley. Since its first issue (Oct 5, 1823), the journal has strived to **make science widely available** so that medicine can serve and transform society, and positively impact the lives of people.

Over the past two centuries, *The Lancet* has sought to address urgent topics in our society, **initiate debate, put science into context, and influence decision-makers around the world.**

*The Lancet* has evolved as a family of journals but retains at its core the belief that medicine must serve society, that knowledge must transform society, that the best science must lead to better lives. (para. 1-3)

*Funding.* *The Lancet* is published by Elsevier Inc. and its 51 weekly issues may be accessed online or via print through subscription (lowest for students for at least GBP 101.00 exclusive of applicable taxes as of November 28, 2022) (The Lancet, 2022). However, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Libraries (2022) and the University of California (UC)-Berkeley have pushed back against Elsevier due to its costs. The MIT Libraries (2022) wrote on its website:

Elsevier's economic model was inequitable and non-transparent. Per-article payments are costly and risk locking out scholars from less-privileged institutions and less well-funded disciplines. There were no clear explanations for how they arrived at their fees. (para. 7)

Meanwhile, UC Berkeley believes that change is due to Elsevier's business model. Its head of campus libraries, Jeffrey MacKie-Mason, was quoted saying: "[The publishers] know it's going to happen. They just want to protect their profits and their business model as long as they can" (Resnick & Belluz, 2019, para. 21). Subscription cost and its "support for legislation that would put limits on open access to research" (MIT, n.d., para. 1) have led many to boycott Elsevier in the last decade which continues to this day.

A Google search using the question "Who funds *The Lancet*?" resulted in a top result titled "Funding" which, when clicked, goes to the site of *The Lancet* Global Commission on High-Quality Health Systems in the SDG Era (in [hqsscommission.org](http://hqsscommission.org)). The landing page presents the logos of the **Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health** and *The Lancet* at the bottom of the page and the following statements by the HQSS (n.d.):

The Lancet Global Health Commission on High-Quality Health Systems in the SDG Era is supported by funding from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**. (para. 1)

The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (para. 2)

The Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health is the public health school of Harvard University (2022). Harvard University is one of the members of the **WEF Global University Leaders Forum** (WEF, n.d.). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is listed as an official partner of the WEF (WEF, 2022).

*Ownership.* Elsevier acquired *The Lancet* in 1991 from Holder and Stoughton (Snoddy, 1991). This information, however, is not found on *The Lancet's* website, despite Elsevier holding the copyright of the journal. Elsevier is one of the leading journal publishers in the world with more than 2,600 titles. Elsevier (2022) presents its future entry into the online distribution of copyrighted materials through the following entry on its website:

In conjunction with nine American universities, Elsevier's The University Licensing Project (TULIP) becomes the first ground-breaking step in making published, copyrighted material available over the Internet. It forms the basis for ScienceDirect, launched six years later. (para. 4)

A search of the phrase "*The Lancet*" in Elsevier's search engine (on November 28, 2022) resulted in 59,826 results, 8,201 pages, 47,741 books, and 2,887 journals. Elsevier is part of the RELX Group (formerly known as Reed Elsevier until 2015) and is now a publicly traded company (Publishers Weekly, 2018). In 2009, it was found through a court disclosure that Elsevier "colluded with Merck to produce a fake journal, the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine* (AJBJM) to promote Rofecoxib and other Merck products" (Jureidini & Clothier, 2009, para. 1). Jureidini and Clothier added that "*The Lancet* is used to sell ExcerptaMedica" (para. 4), the pharmaceutical services division of Elsevier. Merck is an official partner of the WEF (2022).

The RELX Group (2022) describes itself as "a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers, enabling them to make better decisions, get better results and be more productive" (p. 4). Furthermore, RELX's scientific, technical, and medical business provides information, analytics, and tools and operates under the name of Elsevier with a distribution database of 13 million documents (named ScienceDirect) an academic indexing platform (Scopus), and a desktop and web program for managing and sharing research papers and collaborations (Mendeley).

RELX also manages LexisNexis Risk Solutions which provides data and advanced analytics and data and technology solutions to businesses and governments to help them minimize risk and enhance decisions beneficial to people. **LexisNexis Risk Solutions is a WEF partner (WEF, 2022).**

*Executives.* A Google search of the top three executives of RELX revealed that they all were connected to the WEF via their education and professional practice. Table 1 shows their respective affiliations with schools and companies that are officially declared as partners of the WEF. The table shows that the Top 3 executives of RELX all came from universities that are publicly declared members of the Global University Leaders Forum (GULF) under the WEF. All of them are/were affiliated with organizations that are publicly declared as working with the WEF.

Given the above data, one can see how the WEF is woven into the fabric of *The Lancet*, from funding (**Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**) to ownership (Elsevier and its controversy with **Merck**; RELX Group through its **LexisNexis Risk Solutions**), to its executives (Engstrom, Habgood, and Luff). As such, while the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation claims no influence over its content, *The Lancet's* association with the WEF is further strengthened by the foundation's involvement.

*The Lancet Senior Executive Editors.* Table 2 shows that the presence of the WEF is more prominent among the top editors of *The Lancet* than those at the lower ranks. The **Johns Hopkins School of Public Health** publicly declared as a WEF organization, awarded Horton in 2007 and 2009, and organized a project - a high-level pandemic exercise - with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, related to the COVID-19 pandemic that happened the following year and led to his publishing the controversial article in *The Lancet*.

Table 1. Top executives of the RELX Group and their respective school and business affiliations

Name of executive	Position in RELX	WEF-affiliated university where the executive finished	A WEF-affiliated company associated with executive
Erik Engstrom	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	GULF-member <b>Harvard Business School</b> (Master of Business Administration)	<b>General Atlantic Partners</b> <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/general-atlantic-llc">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/general-atlantic-llc</a>  <b>McKinsey &amp; Company</b> <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/general-atlantic-llc">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/general-atlantic-llc</a>
Sir Anthony Habgood	Chairman	GULF-member <b>Carnegie Mellon University</b> (Master of Industrial Administration)  GULF-member <b>University of Cambridge</b> (Bachelor's degree)	<b>Boston Consulting Group (BCG)</b> <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/the-boston-consulting-group">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/the-boston-consulting-group</a>
Nicholas Luff	Chief Financial Officer	GULF-member <b>University of Oxford</b> (Mathematics)	<b>KPMG</b> <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/kpmg-international-cooperative">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/kpmg-international-cooperative</a>  <b>Lloyds Banking Group</b> <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/lloyds-banking-group-plc">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/lloyds-banking-group-plc</a>

Note: A list of GULF member schools found at [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GULF\\_Members\\_18.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GULF_Members_18.pdf)

The **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine**, another WEF organization, also figures into the lives of two editors, Horton and Das, being their employers and alma mater, respectively. **The University College London**, also a WEF organization, served as the educational home of James and Das. Two other UK universities, the **University of Birmingham** and the **University of Manchester** played key roles in the formation of Horton and Das. As such, one can surmise that these four UK schools helped shape the gatekeepers of *The Lancet*. Similarly, these schools further strengthen the connection of the WEF to the top editors of *The Lancet*. But more than anyone in the editorial team, Horton is linked the most with the WEF, thanks to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, the **United Nations (UN)**, the **Rockefeller Foundation** (through its President), and the **University of Pennsylvania**, a WEF-GULF member school.

Chaudhary and Blanchard (2021) wrote that Horton "publicly slammed conspiracy theories about China's role in the pandemic, referring to it as 'Sinophobia' (para. 10) which dismissed any suggestions of the lab leak hypothesis as racist and conspiratorial - a quick jump to negative conclusions about persons, including other scientists, holding contrarian hypotheses without due discourse and investigation that objectivity requires. His refusal to comment on the controversial article after it was deemed to quash debate about the origins of COVID-19, as reported by Chaudhary and Blanchard, reveals a lack of a sense of responsibility for his editorial decisions which he owes the scientific community and the public. James and Das were not reported as having been asked by Chaudhary and Blanchard for comment.

Table 2. The associations of the Lancet's Top 3 senior executive editors with the WEF

Name of Editor and Position	WEF-affiliated University	Areas of Specialization and professional affiliations with WEF-linked Company
<p><b>Richard Horton</b>  Editor-in-Chief (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 1990)</p>	<p>Johns Hopkins School of Public Health  <b>The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/johns-hopkins-university">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/johns-hopkins-university</a>                      (was in partnership with the <b>WEF</b> and the <b>Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation</b> when it hosted Event 201, a high-level pandemic exercise on October 18, 2019, in New York, NY)  <a href="https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/exercises/event201/">https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/exercises/event201/</a></p> <p>Finished medicine and honorary doctorates in medicine from the <b>University of Birmingham</b> (supplying authors to the WEF), and the <b>Universities of Umea and Gothenburg</b> in Sweden  <a href="https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/profile/richard-horton/">https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/profile/richard-horton/</a></p> <p>Honorary professor at the <b>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/london-school-of-hygiene-and-tropical-medicine">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/london-school-of-hygiene-and-tropical-medicine</a></p>	<p>Areas: physiology and medicine</p> <p><b>World Health Organization</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/world-health-organization-who">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/world-health-organization-who</a></p> <p><b>United Nations</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/united-nations">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/united-nations</a></p> <p><b>Rockefeller Foundation's Rajiv J. Shah</b> (President)  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/agenda/authors/rajivshah">https://www.weforum.org/agenda/authors/rajivshah</a></p> <p>GULF-member  <b>University of Pennsylvania</b>  <a href="https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GULF_Members_18.pdf">https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GULF_Members_18.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Umeå University Holding CEO, AB Marell</b>, cited in <b>UNEP Report</b> (Jansson, Johan, <b>Agneta Marell</b>, and Annika Nordlund. 2010. "Green consumer behavior: determinants of curtailment and eco-innovation adoption." <i>Journal of Consumer Marketing</i> 27 (4):358-370.</p> <p>Received the Edinburgh medal in 2007 and the Dean's medal from <b>Johns Hopkins School of Public Health</b> in 2009  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/johns-hopkins-university">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/johns-hopkins-university</a></p>
<p><b>Astrid James</b>  Deputy Editor (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 1993)</p>	<p>Qualified for medicine at the <b>University College London (Hospital)</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-ucl">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-ucl</a></p>	<p>Areas: general medicine and surgery, cardiology, oncology, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, geriatrics, and in general practice</p> <p>(No organization data accessible online)</p>
<p><b>Pam Das</b>  Senior Executive Editor (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 2011)</p>	<p>Finished biochemistry at the <b>University of Manchester</b> (supplying authors to the WEF)</p> <p>Completed MSc at the <b>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/london-school-of-hygiene-and-tropical-medicine">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/london-school-of-hygiene-and-tropical-medicine</a></p> <p>Finished a Ph.D. (1993-1998) at the <b>University College London</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-ucl">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-ucl</a></p>	<p>Areas: biochemistry, applied molecular biology in infectious diseases, cellular signaling</p> <p><b>London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine</b>  <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/london-school-of-hygiene-and-tropical-medicine">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/london-school-of-hygiene-and-tropical-medicine</a></p>



As for the remaining senior executive editors (see Table 3), except for Sabine Kleinert (no data accessible online), information about their education and professional experience was available but limited, if not scarce. The **University of London** was found to have formed the education of Duc Hong Le and Stuart Spencer. As for Helen Frankish, the **University of Liverpool** which supplies the WEF with authors shaped her education. Not much can be said about their links to the WEF before their work in *The Lancet* as most of their LinkedIn profiles say very little about it, if any (some entries in LinkedIn could not be validated or confirmed with other online sources). One could assume that, perhaps, given the higher concentration of links to the WEF at the top-most level of management in *The Lancet* compared to those at the lower levels among the senior executive editors, the WEF links of the latter would be minimal, if any. Nevertheless, the editorial powers of those below are nothing compared to those above, and, as such, reveal their lack of gatekeeping capacity relative to their senior executive editors. Given that the authors of the disputed article in *The Lancet* are high-profile personalities, they would have very little to do with deciding to publish it or not.

Table 3. *The associations of the Lancet's remaining senior executive editors with the WEF*

<b>Name of Editor and Position</b>	<b>WEF-affiliated University</b>	<b>Areas of Specialization and professional affiliations with WEF-linked Company</b>
<b>Helen Frankish</b>  Senior Executive Editor  (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 2001)	<b>University of Liverpool</b> (supplies authors to the WEF)	Areas: physiology, appetite control, neuroscience  (No organization data accessible online)
<b>Sabine Kleinert</b>  Senior Executive Editor  (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 2006)	(No data accessible online)	Areas: pediatrics, pediatric cardiology  (No organization data accessible online)
<b>Duc Hong Le</b>  Senior Executive Editor  (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 2004)	The Smart Card and IoT Security Centre (SCC) team of the <b>Royal Holloway, the University of London</b> (also supplying authors to the WEF) <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-uc">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-uc</a>  is actively engaged in a joint project with the WEF <a href="https://scc.rhul.ac.uk/smart-card-centre-newsnews/">https://scc.rhul.ac.uk/smart-card-centre-newsnews/</a>  <b>RMIT University</b> (also supplying authors to the WEF)	Areas: microbiology, immunology, biotechnology, biology  (No organization data accessible online)
<b>Stuart Spencer</b>  Senior Executive Editor  (with <i>The Lancet</i> since 2018)	<b>University of London</b> <a href="https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-ucl">https://www.weforum.org/organizations/university-college-london-ucl</a>	Areas: cardiovascular diseases, scoliosis  (No organization data accessible online)

### ***The Lancet Article***

*The controversial COVID-19 article in The Lancet.* Twenty-seven authors were behind the article titled *Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19* published on February 19, 2020 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30418-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30418-9)) - less than a month before the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta&Vanelli, 2020). According to Empower Oversight, it was on February 6, 2020, that Chinese researchers based in Wuhan posted in ResearchGate under the user account "Botao Xiao" that "the killer coronavirus probably originated from a laboratory in Wuhan" (para. 89). The post and user account were later deleted. China started silencing critics of its official narrative of the outbreak on January 22, 2020. On January 27, 2020, Facebook, Google, and Twitter started acting on "misinformation"; seven Facebook organizations issued nine fact checks; and Facebook lowered the ranks of the fact-checked items in users' daily feeds, Empower Oversight revealed. Meta (or Facebook) (WEF, 2022) and Google (2022) are publicly declared partners of the WEF.

After 22 days, the above article was published in *The Lancet* to "strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin." By strongly condemning other hypotheses as conspiratorial even before an actual investigation took place to determine the origins of the COVID-19 virus, the authors of the article were, in effect, unscientifically supporting its natural origin and stigmatizing anything contrary to their belief. More than a year after the pandemic was declared, one of the authors, Peter Palese, remarked that "a thorough investigation about the origin of the COVID-19 virus is needed" (Chaudhary & Blanchard, 2021, para. 7) - that their claims to a natural origin remain inadequately substantiated and their action was misplaced and inappropriate, despite their individual and collective accomplishments in the field. Most of the authors, until June 7, 2021, refused to comment like Horton of *The Lancet*. More than two years later, the natural origin hypothesis has become overshadowed by the "lab leak theory" after Fauci's involvement in the EcoHealth Alliance project at the Wuhan Institute of Virology was made public (Winters, 2021). Fauci is publicly declared as one of the people of the WEF (2022), as previously mentioned.

### ***The authors of the controversial COVID-19 article in The Lancet***

*Carroll, Daszak, Field, and Karesh.* Of the 27 authors, four are part of the EcoHealth Alliance funded by the **US Agency for International Development (USAID)**, an organization affiliated with the WEF (2022). They are Dennis Carroll, Peter Daszak, Hume Field, and William Karesh. Carroll, an expert in biomedical research with a special focus on tropical infectious diseases, is directly part of the USAID as Special Representative for Global Health Security (EcoHealth Alliance, n.d.). He was initially assigned to USAID as a senior public health advisor in 1991 and later led its Emerging Pandemic Threats Program (Global Virome Project, 2021). Daszak, a zoologist, is the President of the EcoHealth Alliance (n.d.) who helped in the growth of the organization One Health. Field, a veterinary and environmental scientist and infectious disease epidemiologist known for bat-related emerging zoonoses, is EcoHealth Alliance's Science and Policy Adviser (EcoHealth Alliance, n.d.). Karesh is the Executive Vice President for Health and Policy of EcoHealth Alliance (2022) who is also in the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Health Regulations Roster of Experts focused on the human-animal interface and wildlife health. The **WHO** is a publicly declared partner of the WEF (2022).

*Mazet and Madoff.* One Health is not just the WHO's (n.d.) "integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems" (para 1), it is also the name of an institute, the One Health Institute, founded by one of the authors, veterinarian Jonna Mazet of University of California-Davis. USAID-funded Mazet is a member of the Steering Committee of Carroll's Global Virome Project (GVP) and the viral emergence early warning project named PREDICT, as well. Another author,

Lawrence Madoff, working on infectious diseases, immunology, and clinical population health research (University of Massachusetts, n.d.), was reported as a member of the Information Management Team of One Health (USAID, n.d.). The One Health Institute is focused on "global health problem solving, especially for emerging infectious disease and conservation challenges" (UC Davis One Health Institute, n.d., para. 1) and is supported by Daszak of the EcoHealth Alliance (n.d.).

*Haagmans and Palese.* Other authors like UNESCO Speaker (Regional Center for Biotechnology, 2019) Bart Haagmans (cited 15 times in the 2015 Washington DC workshop summary publication) and Alexander Gorbalenya (cited twice) were part of the abovementioned publication titled *Emerging Viral Diseases: The One Health Connection* (National Academies, 2015). Microbiologist Peter Palese, a co-author, was an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in 2000 (American Society of Microbiology, 2022) and was a committee member in the 2011 NAS publication titled *Preventing Transmission of Pandemic Influenza and Other Viral Respiratory Diseases: Personal Protective Equipment for Healthcare Personnel: Update 2010* (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2011).

*Hughes, Gorbalenya, and Keusch.* The Washington DC workshop from which the 2015 publication originated included authors Daszak and James Hughes (representing the Global Infectious Diseases Program of Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia) in the Steering Committee. The latter is a member of the PREDICT Advisory Committee of USAID's Emerging Pandemic Threats Program (Emory University, n.d.). Haagmans, Alexander Gorbalenya, and another author, Gerald T. Keusch, were part of the Forum on Microbial Threats, of which Keusch was also a reviewer. Keusch, like Hughes, is a member of the USAID-PREDICT Emerging Pandemic Threats Program Advisory Committee (National Academies, 2015). Hence, Keusch joins Daszak and Madoff as directly affiliated with USAID. Fauci was already the director of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) - National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (n.d.) in 1984. The NIH requested the creation of the *Forum on Emerging Infections* which was renamed as *Forum on Microbial Threats* in 2003.

*Lam, MacKenzie, Turner, Golding, and Farrar.* Keusch and associates (2021), namely, Sai Kit Lam, John S. MacKenzie, Linda Saif, and Michael Turner, wrote on September 17, 2021, a response to an appeal for an objective, open, and transparent debate about the COVID-19 virus origins insisting that "recrimination has not, and will not, encourage international cooperation and collaboration" (para. 1). *The Lancet* noted that MacKenzie is a member of the WHO International Health Regulations Emergency Committee for COVID-19, the One Health High-Level Expert Panel advising the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN World Organisation for Animal Health, the United Nations Environment Programme, and WHO. He also has "past or ongoing academic and scientific collaborations on coronavirus biology with colleagues in China and several other countries" (para. 2) and EcoHealth Alliance's Daszak. Keusch, Lam, and Saif are part of *The Lancet* Task Force on the Origins and Early Spread of COVID-19 and One Health Solutions to Future Pandemic Threats initiative. Lam, an infectious viral disease expert, was found involved in the WHO's program on Emerging Infectious Diseases (University of Queensland, n.d.). Turner did not declare any conflict of interest; however, he is an honorary professor at the University of Glasgow, formerly **The Wellcome Trust** (WEF, 2022), where co-authors Josie Golding is Head of Epidemics and Epidemiology, and clinician scientist Jeremy Farrar is the Director (WEF, 2022).

*Pertman, Saif, Corley, Enjuanes, Roizman, and Colwell.* The article written by Keusch titled *Pandemic origins and a One Health approach to preparedness and prevention: Solutions based on SARS-CoV-2 and other RNA viruses* (Keusch et al., 2022), affirmed the involvement of Daszak, Field, Lam, Perlman, and Saif in the One Health program. Veterinary science expert Saif and biophysics, pediatrics, and pediatric infectious diseases expert Stanley Perlman, together with Keusch, were members of the Pandemic Preparedness Research and Surveillance Panel hosted by the Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases of **Boston University** (WEF, 2022) last November 18, 2022. Author microbiologist Ronald Corley is the director of the National Emerging

Infectious Diseases Laboratories at Boston University (Boston University, n.d.). Saif served as the WHO and CDC advisor during the 2003 SARS outbreak, acquired a WHO International Reference Lab for animal coronaviruses, and co-directs an FAO Reference Center for Zoonotic Coronaviruses (Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Policy & Research, 2022). She is an elected member of the US NAS like co-authors Palese, Farrar, virologist Luis Enjuanes, microbiology, molecular genetics, cell biology expert Bernard Roizman, and bacteriologist, geneticist, and oceanographer Rita Colwell. Enjuanes is an Expert Consultant for the NIH and the World Health Organization (Universidad Zaragoza, 2022). Roizman came from the **Johns Hopkins University** (WEF, 2022) in Baltimore and the WEF GULF member of **the University of Chicago** (WEF, 2022; WEF, n.d.).

*Lubroth.* Another author, Juan Lubroth, an expert in biology, microbiology, veterinary medicine, arbovirology, and epidemiology of infectious diseases, is the Antimicrobial Resistance Coordinator of the FAO of the United Nations (Center for Health Protection, 2017). He was considered “the driving force behind several key cooperative initiatives of the FAO with the WHO and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), including the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases, the Global Early Warning System (GLEWS), the establishment of the Emergency Management Centre for Animal Health, and the One Health concept at FAO” (para. 2). He worked with both the FAO and co-author Carroll of the USAID to “pre-empt the next global pandemic” (FAO, 2018).

*Drosten and Poon.* Gorbalenya, Haagmans, and three other authors, Perlman, Christian Drosten, and Leo Poon were part of the Coronaviridae Study Group of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (2019) which published an article titled *The species Severe acute respiratory syndrome-related coronavirus: classifying 2019-nCoV and naming it SARS-CoV-2* in *Nature Microbiology* in 2020. The article was uploaded as a pre-print in *BioRxiv* in February 2020. The *Nature* journals, including *Nature Microbiology*, are under Springer Nature founded in 2015 by the **Holtzbrinck Publishing Group (HPG)**, another WEF partner (WEF, 2022).

The GVP, a £10m international and multisectoral project supported by the **WHO** (Global Virome Project, 2021) describes its origins in the following words:

Between 8 and 11 August 2016, representatives from across the globe – high-level policy and decision-makers, thought leaders, subject matter experts, researchers, and representatives from international organizations (including those involved with human, animal, and environmental health), academia, donors, foundations, and the private sector – gathered at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Conference Center to develop a vision on the importance and feasibility of the GVP in building a world safe from the threat of emerging viral diseases. Below is the report on this effort. (para 2)

It should be noted that the **Rockefeller Foundation** is once again implicated in the WEF network, now officially as an activity partner, at the very least. Calisher was once part of the Rockefeller Foundation Virus Program (Monath & Murphy, 2021). The GVP links authors Carroll, its Chair, Daszak (Secretary and Treasurer), and Mazet (Board Member) (Global Virome Project, 2021) to the Rockefeller Foundation. At this point, the network between EcoHealth Alliance, GVP, and the One Health Institute has become undeniable and the WHO is part of this network. Daszak is implicated in all four organizations. Carroll is the direct link to the WEF-affiliated USAID.

*Subbarao and Calisher.* Virologist and physician Kanta Subbarao is the Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza at Doherty Institute in Melbourne, Australia, and was Emerging Respiratory Viruses Section of the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases Chief from 2002-2016 under Fauci's term (World Health Organization, 2022). Professor Emeritus of Microbiology at the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences at Colorado State University (2019), Charles Calisher, has

authored an article with Saif and Daszak (Parrish et al., 2008). Calisher finished his Ph.D. at Georgetown University, an active participant in the WEF (Georgetown University, 2014).

**Universities of the 27 Authors**

Concerning the other schools from which the authors originated at some point in their educational history, most of them have partial or full links with WEF (See Table 4).

Table 4. *Schools attended by the authors involved with the WEF*

Author Name	Name of University	WEF Links	Author Name	Name of University	WEF Links
Calisher	Georgetown Uni	P	Keusch	Columbia Uni	P
Carroll	Uni of Massachusetts Amherst	P		Harvard Uni	F
Colwell	Purdue Uni	P	Lam	Uni of Queensland	P
	Uni of Washington	P	Lubroth	Uni of Georgia	F
Corley	Duke Uni	F			Yale Uni
	Boston Uni	F	Madoff	Tufts Uni School of Medicine	P
Daszak	Uni of East London	P	Mazet	UC Davis	P
	Bangor Uni	P	Palese	Uni of Vienna	P
	Kingston Uni	P	Perlman	Mass. Institute of Technology	F
Drosten	Goethe Uni	P		Uni of Miami	P
Farrar	Uni of Oxford	F		Boston Children's Hospital	P
	Uni College London	F	Poon	Chinese Uni of Hong Kong	P
Field	Uni of Queensland	P			University of Oxford
	Griffith Uni	P	Roizman	Johns Hopkins Uni	F
Golding	Uni of London	P			Uni of Chicago
	Uni of Surrey	P	Saif	College of Wooster	P
Gorbalenya	Novosibirsk State Uni	P		Ohio State Uni	P
Hughes	Stanford Uni	F	Subbarao	Uni of Oklahoma	P
	Uni of Washington	P	Turner	Uni of Glasgow	P
<b>Legend: Uni - University; P – Partially linked to the WEF; F – Fully linked to the WEF</b>				King's College London	P

*Schools/Universities attended by the authors.* Schools with full links to WEF are those that are listed as organizations of the WEF or members of the WEF GULF, namely: Duke University and Boston University (**Corley**); University of Oxford (**Poon and Farrar**); University College London (**Farrar**); Stanford University (Hughes); Harvard University (**Keusch**); University of Georgia and Yale University (**Lubroth**); Massachusetts Institute of Technology (**Perlman**); and Johns Hopkins University and University of Chicago (**Roizman**). Schools that have partial links are those bound to the WEF through individuals classified by WEF under their people, authors, and agenda contributors (See Table 4). **No data was available online for Enjuanes, Haagmans, Karesh, and MacKenzie regarding their educational details.**

*Schools/Universities/Academic Institutions where the authors work.* Meanwhile, the schools where the authors assert influence must also be considered as they are places where the influence of the WEF is asserted through them. Table 5 shows these academic linkages after completing their degrees from other schools. **No data on the academic careers of Field, Karesh, Lubroth, and Subbarao were found online.**

Table 5. *Schools where the authors were affiliated with after completing their degrees*

Author Name	Name of University	WEF Links	Author Name	Name of University	WEF Links
<b>Calisher</b>	Colorado State Uni	P	<b>Gorbalenya</b>	Leiden University	P
<b>Carroll</b>	Cold Spring Harbor Lab	P	<b>Haagmans</b>	Erasmus MC	P
<b>Colwell</b>	Uni of Maryland	P	<b>Hughes</b>	Emory Uni	P
	Johns Hopkins Uni	F	<b>Keusch</b>	Boston Uni	F
<b>Corley</b>	Boston Uni	F	<b>Lam</b>	Uni of Queensland	P
<b>Daszak</b>	Kingston Uni	P	<b>Madoff</b>	Uni of Massachusetts	P
	Uni of Georgia	F	<b>MacKenzie</b>	Curtin Uni	P
	Columbia Uni	P	<b>Mazet</b>	UC Davis	P
<b>Drosten</b>	University of Geneva	P	<b>Palese</b>	Icahn School of Medicine	p
Enjuanes	Spanish National Research Council	P	<b>Perlman</b>	Uni of Iowa	P
	Institute Pasteur of Paris	P	<b>Poon</b>	Uni of Hong Kong	F
<b>Farrar</b>	Uni of Oxford	F	<b>Roizman</b>	Uni of Chicago	F
<b>Golding</b>	Pirbright Institute	P	<b>Saif</b>	Ohio State Uni	P
	Kings College London	P	<b>Turner</b>	Uni of Glasgow	P
<b>Gorbalenya</b>	National Cancer Institute	P	<b>Legend: Uni - University; P – Partially linked to the WEF; F – Fully linked to the WEF</b>		

#### IV. Discussion

Given the data in Table 4, except for the authors whose educational details are not available online, all were educated in universities and institutions that are currently working with the WEF. It is not impossible to think that the other four authors whose data are not accessible online may have also been similarly educated. Put together with the data in Tables 2 and 3, one can infer that the WEF has penetrated all the institutions that shape the minds of people, through their policies and programs. The top executive editors of *The Lancet*, its owners, and funding agencies aside, the WEF has undeniably positioned itself to influence future leaders, policymakers, and knowledge gatekeepers like *The Lancet*, especially those in prestigious schools that can only be accessed by the privileged and the wealthy. It is not difficult to think that the interest of the WEF would be top-of-mind among the students and graduates of such universities compared to the multitude who have no interest in the workings of the WEF at all.

As *The Lancet* recruits only the best among the best and the most accomplished, it can be surmised that the schools involved with the WEF will eventually have their student gain the greatest access to editorial positions in the journal. Given the high caliber mentors available in such universities (some of which are shown in Table 5), it is highly likely that their chances are further improved. Once inside, new editorial recruits who would have already been influenced by the WEF enough would still be influenced by it, consciously or unconsciously, through its workings invisible to the naked eye at the higher levels of management. As the data in Tables 2 and 3 point out, only those in the top-most editorial positions have direct access to the WEF. The politico-economic succession process would ensure the same access to the upcoming leaders unless the WEF network is removed deliberately from the editorial system.

The fact that the authors of the controversial article in *The Lancet* are all quite involved with high-profile organizations like the UN-FAO, WHO, and the USAID reveals much about why they decided to support the actions that led to the immediate “conspiratorialization” of other hypotheses on the virus origins, and mass immunizations they heavily promoted not long after the lockdowns were in place all over the world. Assuming that the UN-FAO, WHO, and the USAID operate within a seamless system, embodied by the One Health approach they championed years before the pandemic happened, it would not be difficult to think that the editorial processes linked to and supported by their system will work towards their and the WEF's benefit and advantage. The data show that the WEF is part of the micro and macro environments that shape editorial gatekeeping. There is a playing field biased towards their system and only ideas that promote their system will have a chance to be heard. That the lab leak hypothesis is silenced is what the article of the 27 authors may have likely aimed to ensure. Figure 1 below shows the network supporting the natural origins hypothesis of COVID-19.

Figure 1 below, based on the data above, shows the complex relationships on which the WEF has firmly established itself. Through the influence of the WHO and UN-FAO, WEF is not only shaping WEF-affiliated higher education institutions but also those that look up them as models. However, recent developments have shown that it is not only *The Lancet* that was rendered questionable by its decision to privilege the work of the 27 authors affiliated with WEF-linked universities, resulting in the marginalization of competing but equally valid theories on the origin of the COVID-19 virus, but also *NatureMedicine* (Campbell, 2022) which is also under an organization affiliated with the WEF. Clearly, gatekeeping in scientific journals is seen here as equally vulnerable to the influence of the political and economic elite, like the rest of mainstream and social media. Given that leaked and redacted documents linking Fauci to some of the authors in the controversial *The Lancet* article have emerged (showing that some of the authors were communicating directly with him before the article was published) (Peak Prosperity, 2022), and the web of relationships in Figure 1, it is not surprising that the controversial article was released in no time. “Scientific” gatekeeping and “truth”-making seems to be favoring the interest of the WEF, above all.

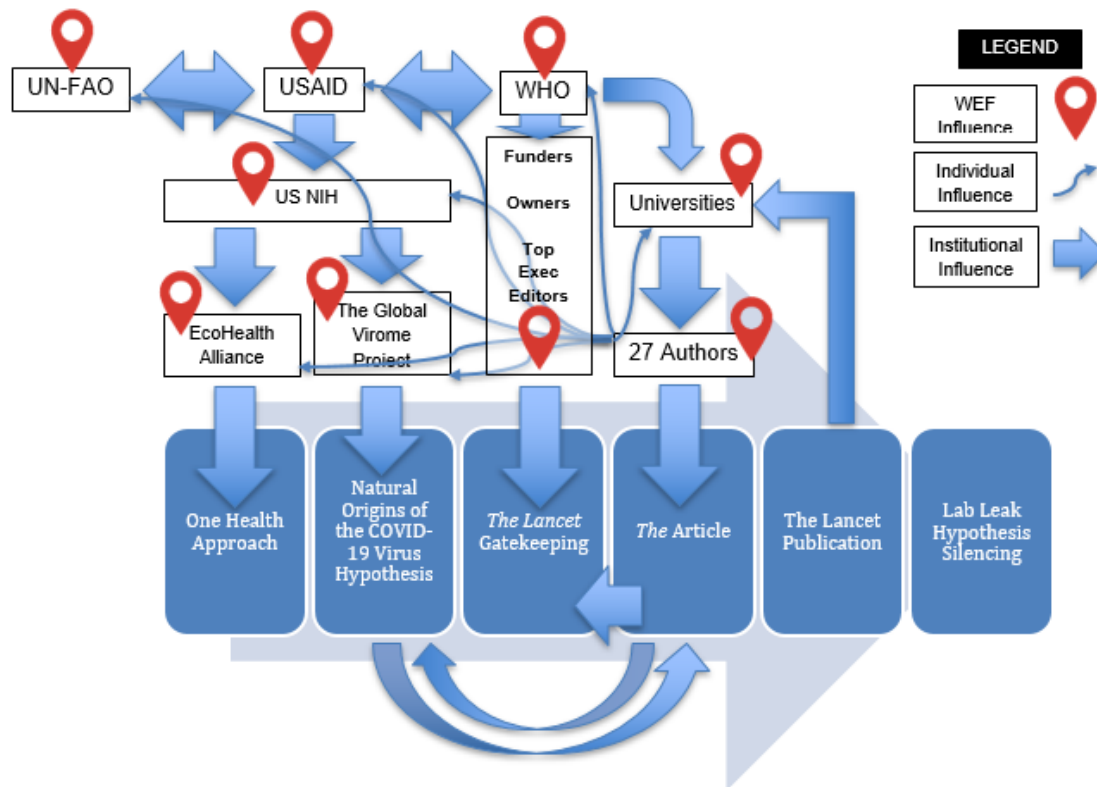


Figure 1. The WEF knowledge production complex against the lab leak hypothesis

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