

POSTMODERN SOCIETY AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC: OLD, NEW AND SCARY

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ABSTRACT: Critical events of a dangerous progression, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, may become the turning points in the functioning of entire societies. Such events obviously foster changes. They disrupt the sense of ontological security, generate fears and enforce change in the organization of social relations, also in a creative and positive manner. In addition to these effects, they also induce many others. They are a magnifier enabling you to see how modern societies are functioning. Therefore, a pandemic allows to see and describe more clearly the characteristics of postmodern human communities. Some of these characteristics (e.g. group functioning) are essentially constant and unchangeable for humans as a species. In turn, some features are very specific, characteristic for a given time, type of events and nature of participating communities. In this text, based on the desk-research methodology and non-systematic participant observation, I indicate the unchanging characteristics of human communities that emerge in the moments of crisis. I also present the specific features of postmodern communities that have been highlighted by the pandemic. I try to indicate the effects of the pandemic on social relations in the future.

KEYWORDS: pandemic, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, postmodernity

INTRODUCTION: ZONOTIC DISEASES IN THE HUMAN WORLD

The SARS-CoV-2 belongs to a large family of RNA coronaviruses and the disease it causes in humans has been described by the World Health Organization (WHO) as COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2 is a variant of the SARS virus which appeared in the human population in the mid-November 2002 and proved to be dangerous primarily due to its capability to transmit between humans. It's a virus that has previously functioned in other living organisms. Originally in bats, then in palm civets (*Paradoxurus*) and racoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*), but for these organisms it was not dangerous. Threatful consequences for humans have resulted from the transmission of this virus to a man, most likely through the consumption of meat from infected wild animals sold on so-called wet markets in China. However, this virus disappeared quickly in the human population - around the middle of 2003 and therefore its pathogenic presence has impacted people for around 8-9 months.

Another virus of a similar nature, that appeared chronologically later (after SARS), was the MERS virus (Gao, Yao, Yang et al. 2016). Also initially originated in bats and later transmitted to dromedary camels, for which it is lethal. The outbreak of this virus caused the disease in more than 1600 patients in 26 countries, resulting in over 600 deaths (Gao, Yao, Yang et al. 2016). However, since the virus has not been able to transmit between humans, the risk of it is still low. Humans might become infected with MERS from direct or indirect contact with dromedaries. Although the mortality rate of people infected is high (35-40%), it is not really harmful to the human population outside of the Arabian Peninsula.

Another zoonotic virus, transmitted to humans from chimpanzees in turn, is the lethal to humans HIV (Sharp, Hahn 2011). The transmission record to humans is the same as that of SARS and MERS. Other viruses living in animal organisms and causing such diseases as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, mad cow disease and avian flu have also been transmitted to humans in a similar way. The direct causes of transmission of these viruses is the consumption of meat and animal products. Infection of animals, in turn, takes place due to the man-made, unnatural living conditions of animals intended for consumption. This enables the transmission of viruses between species that would have very limited possibilities of contact with each other in the natural world.

It must be assumed that the spread of SARS-CoV-2 was made possible by the human being. This has been facilitated by keeping and killing animals for consumption at the South China Seafood Market in Wuhan. It is one of the so-called wet markets. It is believed that SARS-CoV-2 most probably also originated among bats and transferred to Chinese pangolins. (*Manis pentadactyla*) (Xu et al. 2020). These animals, which have only a few enemies in their natural habitat, are, however, intensively acquired by humans in Africa and South Asia for their edible meat and scales used in traditional medicine. These animals are sold on 'wet markets', where a lack of hygiene standards in the slaughtering of animals and cutting up of meat has most likely led to the contamination of final products consumed by humans (Kogan 2019). In such places, animals of various species are kept in abnormal density and proximity, in cages one above the other and without adequate isolation and protection. This al-

lows pathogens to move freely from one animal to another with different body fluids (feces, urine, blood). Keeping animals in such conditions is a major epidemiological problem, but it is widely accepted in China and has not been known internationally to the average consumer until the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Just as unknown as the phenomenon of totally uncontrolled acquisition of wild animals for human consumption in China. The lack of veterinary, epidemiological and sanitary supervision in such places leads to the spread of diseases. These markets operate in different regions of the world, but the most famous are those in China, especially because of the wildlife they offer. Wildlife trade, including imports from different parts of the world, is possible here as a result of previous decisions of the Chinese government. When China pursued its Great Leap Forward strategy in the 1970s, the great wave of famine that resulted from inept farming killed over 30 million people¹ (Manzoor Butt, Sajid 2018; Peng 1987). The authoritarian governments in China were unable to generate enough food products, forcing people to seek food in natural resources. In 1978, confronted with a severe production failure and food shortage, the government decided to stop controlling the agricultural production and allowed individual farming. While most farmers focused on the production of crops and meat, such as pork and poultry, some engaged in the acquisition of wild animals (e.g. turtles, snakes and bats). This activity began to play an increasingly influential role in the economy, resulting in the more and more favorable approach of the Chinese government up to the official approval of this type of practice. In 1988, the Chinese government announced the Law of the People's Republic of China of The Protection of Wildlife², which stated that wild animals constitute the country's resources and are owned by the State. It also ordered the **protection** of those who acquire, process and sell these resources. This act encouraged the domestication and production of wild animals and other zoonotic products as a source of food. Small illegal farms transformed into large enterprises where wild animals were crowded without adequate sanitary and epidemiological conditions and a veterinary supervision. This is how the commercial 'bear bile farming' began in China (often from initially several animals up to over a thousand bears). The farms started to obtain products from different animal species, which encouraged the accumulation of different pathogens in one place. In a natural way, these pathogens transmitted from one species to another - sometimes from those that would never meet in the natural environment. The legally approved trade of zoonotic products obtained in this way provided an excellent pretext for including in it the illegal trade of protected and exotic wild species. (Greatorex et al. 2016). As a consequence, many protected and endangered species, such as tigers, rhinos and pangolins, smuggled in from other parts of the world, have found their way to the Chinese wildlife markets. In 2000, it led to the appearance of the first cases of SARS, and then to the SARS epidemic. The market in Foshan, Guangdong Province, China, became its epicenter. The presence of the virus was identified in the African civets (*Civettictis civetta*) sold there. The epidemic led to a ban on trade of 54 species of wild animals. However, lobbying for this industry, de-

¹ The data is still unknown. Some sources give a figure of as many as 70 million people.

² <http://www.china.org.cn/english/environment/34349.htm> Access date March 25, 2020.

spite its small percentage share in China's total income, was very strong. It is believed that most people in China do not consume this kind of products. Rare, wild species are only consumed and used by rich and influential people. Therefore, with the strong lobbying this industry was thriving and zoonotic products were promoted as ingredients and means of natural medicine, strengthening, improving physical and sexual performance. In China, the comfort of the privileged groups has been placed above the safety and comfort of the whole society. As it turns out today, not only China's very own but also global.

Shortly after identifying SARS-CoV-2's presence in China, the government closed many wet markets. This was accompanied by numerous calls from experts and by socially initiated petitions aimed to introduce a total ban of the wet markets in China. However, as long as this kind of procedure blooms, there will be a risk of diseases. Another major problem with the existence of these markets is the alarmingly low level of welfare of the animals kept there.

UNIVERSAL (?) CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN COMMUNITIES IN THE FACE OF CRISES

The emergence of a virus pandemic and the measures taken to prevent the spread of the disease are disrupting the sense of ontological security. Anthony Giddens (1991) understands this phenomenon as a kind of unconscious predictability of the world and everyday events, which gives a sense of control over the reality. This is what enables people to function effectively every day (Rotter 1966, 1990; Seligman 1975). The disruption of the sense of ontological security, causes existential fears (Erikson 1968, Bauman 2006) and behavioral disorganization. Ultimately, it can result in psychological states of the reduced mood, and in the long term, it can lead to exogenously generated depressions (Selye 1978). These mechanisms are subject to individual modifications, but in principle they concern a man as a species in general.

The everyday life of humans is based on the social character of our species. Maslow (1970) placed the characteristics of affiliation just above the physiological and safety needs, assessing the possibility of satisfying them as important for the psychological well-being of the individual. The level of intensity of the need to be with others is culturally and individually modified. It is therefore also formed under the influence of its own activity, conscious action and as a result of the individual's own experiences. People, while functioning in communities, succumb, more or less strongly, to socially generated mechanisms of behavior, based on patterns that are basically unchangeable.

In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is obviously arousing anxiety, mainly related to the existence of many uncertainties, various social reactions to threats caused by the virus may be born (regardless of whether these threats are real or imaginary). Reactions to the outbreak of a pandemic can be divided into individual and collective. To describe these collective reactions, it is worthwhile to reach for the "Psychology of the Crowd" by Gustav Le Bon, who already in 1895 (cited publication: 2019) undertook the effort to define what a crowd is. Despite the fact that 125 years have passed since the book was written, the features pointed out by Le Bon still seem to illustrate

perfectly the sociological characteristics of the human mass. All the features that the author attributed to the crowd in the era of the industrial revolution are very visible in the group behavior even today - in view of the threats resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Le Bon's diagnosis is extremely accurate and surprises especially with the distance the author maintains to his times. He pointed out adequately that at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Western societies formed a kind of a transitional form - between traditional and postmodern communities. From today's perspective, this is obvious, but Le Bon's vision was ahead of his own times and therefore its relevance deserves a special recognition.

Le Bon (2019) defines the crowd as a peculiar creation, acting irrationally, subject to suggestions and external influence and guided by moods and adopting extreme attitudes. The French author underlined that the crowd dominates the individual, causing the individual to adapt to its behavior. The basic law describing a crowd is, according to Le Bon, the 'law of mental unity' (a crowd experiences one feeling, it is guided by one idea and follows that one direction). However, it is this mental unity that is subject to changeability, i.e. under the influence of various stimuli the directions of the crowd change, so 'it is not persistent'. The feelings of the crowd are exaggerated, it is often impulsive and destructive, it operates with images and the images appeal to it most strongly. At the intellectual level the crowd shows a lower level of intelligence than the individual, but the power of the crowd's influence causes it to draw the individual to the intellectual lowlands. What's more, the unit loses its individuality in the crowd - it adapts to the majority. The crowd does not tolerate opinions different from those it represents. A large number of people gathered and acting together creates a sense of power and impunity. Le Bon is criticized for glorifying the individual - compared with the crowd, it seems to be the personification of virtues. However, even if this is considered and adjusted, Le Bon's crowd definition remains highly universal. The author assumed though, that depending on the 'race' (i.e. culture, ethnicity) the behavior of crowds may differ. These differences in the behavior of the crowd can be seen in the spontaneous responses of individual nations to the appearance of the COVID-2 pandemic. The universal behavior of the crowd is visible in the reactions in different countries. Restrictions implemented by the governments triggered group behaviors. They have led to the mass purchase of certain products, although this was not rationally necessary³. However, the crowd's irrational actions are uncontrollable. As Le Bon indicated, they're heading in one direction and they're hard to turn around. Although knowing the characteristics of crowd reactions, it is highly probable that a behavioral scenario can be predicted.

According to Le Bon, these universally human behaviors resulting from following the crowd, are offset by the diversity of cultures ('races'). Hence, the Italian unrestrained spontaneity causes that despite the enforced quarantine, isolation and restriction in organizing meetings, the Italians still socialize. And if this cannot be done in traditional methods, there is another way to do it like for example, singing together

³ Toilet paper, paper towels and disinfectants, etc.

on the balconies.⁴ The Spanish behave in a similar way when they enjoy the concerts given by the police⁵. Such behavior is not observed in Poland, Germany or other countries. It is difficult to encourage these nations to act spontaneously in order to express their emotions⁶. The spirit of the 'race' (as Le Bon would say), dictates the unique specificity of collective behavior. In a broad sense, this kind of psychological activity should be interpreted as the defuse of emotional tension resulting from the stress and reality 'enchantment'. However, at the level of anti-epidemiological prevention, such behaviors can be questionable. Their influence is explained by the high progression of the disease in these countries.

Le Bon's opinions on the irrational behavior of crowds are a scientific reflection of the fears of many people pronouncing their concerns in a pandemic. Therefore, the fears of 'irrational crowd behavior' are pointed out, which leads to consequences for all citizens⁷.

The second source of social reality descriptions is fiction, when works can be treated as projection artefacts, but also as attempts to reconstruct facts based on analyses of historical sources. These types of descriptions can provide guidance on how people can behave in specific situations and towards specific events. Three types of questions have emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic: about its sources, specificity of its progression and forecasts. Today only the first question can be answered with some certainty. The other two still remain unanswered. Attempts to provide answers to these questions require an analysis of similar phenomena that have taken place in the past. This is done on an epidemiological, statistical and psychological level. The latter mechanisms of psychological functioning are described in the classics of fiction. Under neutral circumstances, reading literary works does not allow to confront the presented world with reality. It happens once the literary reality presented historically earlier can be confronted with the contemporary reality of the surrounding world. The appearance of COVID-19 allowed for the confrontation of reality with the world presented in the literary works, classified as classics of the world literature.

The Plague by Albert Camus, published first in 1947, astonishes with the adequacy of the disease outbreak description. In a book that was published almost a century ago, Camus describes the epidemic's realities and the feelings that people experience at that time. They are the critical discussions that most often emphasize the parabolic nature of this novel and its universalism, enabling the described plot to be used as a metaphor for a number of issues in the human life. In the case of a coronavirus pandemic, a specific layer of description becomes valuable. In the novel's interpretations,

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNxhSe4TiOQ> Access date March 25, 2020.

⁵ <https://gulffnews.com/world/europe/video-police-in-spain-sing-and-dance-on-the-streets-amid-coronavirus-outbreak-1.1584957746730> Access date March 25, 2020.

⁶ In Poland we have failed to encourage city residents to go out on balconies in an applause as a form of thank you to health professionals (compare <https://radio.lublin.pl/2020/03/oklaski-dla-lekarzy-podziekowanie-na-balkony-podziekowac-sluzbie-zdrowia/>). Access date March 25, 2020.

⁷ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/11/coronavirus-global-panic/> access date March 25, 2020; <http://theconversation.com/fear-can-spread-from-person-to-person-faster-than-the-coronavirus-but-there-are-ways-to-slow-it-down-133129> Access date March 25, 2020.

the title plague was perceived as a metaphor for war or metaphor for evil in general, but today its value is reflected in the factual description of reality, with a surprisingly accurate depiction of everyday life during a pandemic. It's not a parabola, but the concrete that has a value. In the novel, Camus posed questions about the justification of behavior and priorities in the time of epidemics. He commented on the unexpected surprise of the epidemic and the lack of preparation for it. He reflected upon the mechanisms of the rejection of realistic, objective information for the benefit of defending one's own world and its order, even if such defense of this order would lead to destruction. Then he commented that people are unaware of what death means. 'The Plague' literally describes the same problems we are facing today - the lack of a vaccine (in the novel - the lack of a serum) or the authorities' reluctance to declare a state of emergency. Camus is extremely aptly influenced by the experiences and reflections of people who were forced by the disease to stay away from home, outside the city that has just closed. He writes about restrictions in communication. Due to the abolition of postal services in the literary reality of the novel, there was an overload of telephone lines, just as today the transfer of meetings to the Internet has overloaded the Zoom and Teams platforms. Camus also writes about strategies for managing an unpredictable situation. And he shows how astonishingly different the deserted City looked like. The mechanism of denying facts and ignoring guidelines in today's reality is identical to the literary fiction of that time. Hence, the classics of literature - both scientific and fictional - indicate certain universal mechanisms of human functioning in the face of catastrophic threats. Their concreteness becomes even more important when these descriptions might be confronted with the reality of a world trapped by a pandemic in 2020. It seems that, despite the cultural differences that already exist at the present stage of the pandemic, the universal characteristics of human functioning in a crowd affected by the plague are perfectly visible today. Our knowledge of the literary classics explains many aspects and allows us to anticipate further the human behavior.

PANDEMIC: HIGHLIGHTING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF POSTMODERN COMMUNITIES

Events such as the SARS-COV-2 pandemic are a lens which suddenly enlarges the phenomena and features of the perceived world. Placing such a magnifier on it becomes an excuse to look at the surroundings from a completely different perspective. Features and phenomena not yet seen are revealed. Therefore, what has become apparent in social functioning?

From the perspective of a rural resident, which should be treated as a symbolically conventional representation of the traditional society (Mead 1970), the introduction of an exceptional epidemiological state caused by the COVID-19 pandemic changes nothing. Just as there was no intense traffic in the countryside, there is no traffic; just as the streets were empty, they are empty (there is often one street and it is this street that is empty as it always has been). People live in a distance from each other, because this is how houses are built based on the spatial plan provisions, hence only few people are visible on the streets. In such conditions the transmission of the virus is more

difficult, so the inhabitants are less afraid. There are not many of them and they know each other. They are safe for themselves and for the others, because their chances of being infected with the pathogenic virus are very low. They do not travel outside the village (how should they?), they do not communicate with strangers (why should they?). Even if they wanted to establish the contact, they do not possess the appropriate competences (e.g. linguistic skills). It makes us aware of how different were the traditional communities in terms of managing and handling the threats. On the one hand, if the epidemic appeared (exploded) it killed everyone, there was no possibility of spatial isolation. On the other hand, until the epidemic was not there, such a close-knit and small community, familiar with its members, was very safe. Every new individual, potential vector of the pathogen, was immediately visible, identified and could be isolated. Unfortunately, it couldn't be simply eliminated (or killed) as a potential threat to the community. Nowadays, it is still very often that the intruders are immediately recognized in small and close-knit communities. This is why to eliminate the threat from the outside, the level of social control in small villages was very strong. This kind of atavism, perceiving the stranger, the other as the vector of a disease, a virus or simply a misfortune is still present even in large communities. It is often used deliberately as a tool to channel the social fears. (Sontag 1979, 1989).

It is completely different in postmodern communities - let the city be their symbol. The unrestricted, intensive movement of people is dominant here. Mobility, as indicated by Zygmunt Bauman (2003), indeed defines today the possibility of participating in a globalized world. To be a citizen of the world, that is to say, to keep up with the times and be active, respected and free, means to be a man capable of mobility. Whoever is unable to participate in the mobility cannot be a citizen with full rights. Such a citizen is condemned to isolation and marginalization. Therefore, almost everyone wants to be mobile, and it is certainly fashionable to remain mobile. This mobility and the social openness associated with it are at the heart of the characteristics of postmodern communities. Nevertheless, they are also the complete opposites of traditional communities. Open, volatile and atomized, where no one knows anyone, give a sense of security to people who are new. To those who have just arrived from somewhere and who would be a threat to the local community in a traditional society. These people will easily hide, sink into an anonymous human mass. The experience of passing through four different airports from 18 and 19 of March, 2020 proved how simple it is. There were no questions about health, no somatic examination of passengers and no document checks for the previous travels and possible exposure to coronavirus. The traveler could get off at any airport and go anywhere without being tested, diagnosed or quarantined. This individual might have been a deadly threat to others. And yet, and despite the fact that postmodern, technologically embedded communities dispose of all possible means of monitoring the movement of citizens, such a measure has not been taken in this case. In how many other cases have such measures not been taken? This, of course, requires work and resources, but in view of the limited air traffic, the reduction in the number of active connections and the drastic reduction in the number of travelers, it seems that adopting measures to monitor the health of those who still travel, would not present such a dramatic challenge as in

the case of the regular air traffic. Furthermore, airports seem to be an example of an almost perfectly enclosed facility, which is inaccessible to the public and hard to exit from without any control. Perhaps this observation contradicts the opinion of logisticians planning and organizing airports. However, this is how airports are perceived by the passenger, the visitor and the subject matter. The failure to even monitor who enters and who leaves where (the German border guards at the airport informed selected foreign citizens only that they could not leave the airport) introduces a sense of uncertainty, fear and distrust. With a minimum of analytical perspicacity, the question about the level of safety comes to mind.

However, such self-awareness seems to be rare in the postmodern human community, who seems to have lost its self-preservation instincts. Among the passengers, not many had protective masks - probably 1% only. On board of the business class, it was a completely different life with sparkling wine, courteous conversations and smiles. What simply comes to mind is a comparison with the Titanic, where the music played until the end of the tragic sinking.

Empty streets of large cities cause depression among their inhabitants. The appearing contrast to the everyday hustle and bustle, gives a sense of inadequacy of the image and its incompatibility with the current reality. The emptiness that arises in cities is not convenient for the people. What's currently there on the city streets or, in fact, what's not there and should be, is frightening for the humans. These apocalyptic visions are often depicted in computer games and science fiction films where the wide city streets are empty and should be filled with life instead. Maybe that's why it's so disturbing? The feeling of depression and the drastic change of reality is highly visible in the urban space: when the noise dies, the fear appears. As in the acoustics during concerts - while it is loud, it is calm. It becomes nervous when the silence appears. The silence indicates troubles. These feelings can be depressing for people living in towns and cities, and they can lead to the changes in mood. Particularly because it is not easy to establish social contacts generating positive emotions.

In a pandemic time, when both isolation and social distancing are recommended, living alone can be difficult: both logistically and emotionally. The city does not provide support, although it does provide many other opportunities to satisfy the basic needs (e.g. supply, medical treatment). However, people who live anonymously do not know their neighbors and it is difficult to receive support in this situation. It's different in a small rural area as everyone knows everyone there, and neighborhood assistance has always been a solution to overcome the difficulties caused by the domination of natural forces. Faced with the challenges of particular seasons of the year or sudden catastrophes, neighborhood assistance was essential. In cities, however, we are witnessing the launch of some grassroots social initiatives aimed at providing different sorts of the support ⁸.

The city's social environment also involves the launch of aid measures to support the system (e.g. health care⁹) - it is the city that has the power to generate a critical

⁸ <https://tvn24.pl/krakow/koronawirus-w-polsce-ruszyla-pomoc-sasiedzka-na-sadeczczyznie-4354761>
Access date March 25, 2020.

⁹ <https://noizz.pl/spoleczenstwo/polak-drukuje-maski-ochronne-dla-szpitali/6xbklc> Access date

mass, whose action will become effective. This would be much more difficult for a traditional rural community.

Rough times verify the quality of human relations and highlight the role of social networks and the ability to create and maintain them with the aim of being effective. Crisis situations, of various kinds, enforce the reorganization of existing behavioral strategies. A drastic change in behavior is also required in the case of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic, for which no one has been prepared. These modifications are structural and systemic in nature, initiated from above but also have grassroots, spontaneous character: they trigger creativity (e.g. in the field of online learning), solidarity (selfless actions for hospitals, health care), and assistance (e.g. shopping, walking the dogs). Typical for traditional small-scale rural communities, strong social ties were most likely formed because of the need for cooperation and support in the face of overwhelmingly dominant natural forces. Postmodern communities, having a high level of security generated on the basis of the technological development as well as the division of labor stemming from the industrial revolution, have abolished the requirement to create networks of relations. However, it was only in a crisis situation, a pandemic disease, that it became clear how much these relations are needed. With enforced quarantine and reduced mobility, people have gained more free time: using it, among other things, to renew contacts and relationships, to strengthen family, friendship and neighborhood ties. The renewal of these ties also means a renewal of social control - a phenomenon that post-modernity has long forgotten about.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also changing human-non-human relations. The photographs from one of the most popular among tourists Polish city of Zakopane display animals walking through the streets after the introduction of an epidemiological emergency state, which caused the Poles to remain in house quarantine and to stop walking out on the streets¹⁰. The reduction in urban traffic encourages animals to enter cities, this applies especially to synanthropic species, which are already present in urban parks and forests. The silencing of human presence encourages other species to spread. The nature does not like emptiness. We know this mechanism from other places where disasters or catastrophes have occurred¹¹. Hence, a pandemic changes not only the human relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

An unexpected epidemiological situation caused the social reality to become a laboratory where the tissue of social life can be observed more clearly. What is more, like a lens, it shows phenomena that bring largely unpredictable consequences for the people. As of today, wet markets were closed in China and the wildlife trade was banned. These are post factum reactions, but one could have guessed that pandemic scenarios

March 25, 2020.

¹⁰ https://gazetakrakowska.pl/koronawirus-zakopane-w-kwarantannie-jest-tak-pusto-ze-dzikiem-zwierzeta-wchodza-do-centrum-miasta-20032020/ar/c1-14867723?fbclid=IwAR0eURbX6yt3WxmiN__W056ymuU3KQcqBLdD3-TOcODw7CNkx4Y5e87LOvc Access date March 25, 2020.

¹¹ An example is the natural expansion in Chernobyl after the nuclear power plant explosion.

might occur. What to expect on a social level? Certainly, we have all become immeasurable participants in the social experiment of suddenly shifting real life to virtual reality. This is a completely unanticipated turn of events in relation to the trends we lived before the pandemic: the need for real, tangible contacts between people and the abandonment of excessive participation in the Internet was increasingly underlined. Now it turns out that the whole life has been transferred to the Internet: tele-services for health care, online learning, online shopping, socializing on the phone and business meetings using instant messaging. This accelerated test of living in a virtual world can lead to a reevaluation of the current way of life: recognizing the possibilities offered by remote working, but also appreciating the quality and importance of direct interpersonal relationships.

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