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Virus as Medium

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Abstract The COVID-19 virus has given us numerous vague signs which serve like information transformed into messages. These messages have been interpreted in various ways by scientists, crisis headquarters, political parties and governments. In this sense, the COVID-19 virus has become more than just a message. It is a medium to be interpreted or instrumentalized; just like modern mass media, it imprisons us within a 'prison without walls'.

More than any other text, book or author, COVID-19 has been successful in turning our attention towards the manipulative character of mass media. This small virus knows no borders or wires, the differences between skin colours or account balances. This is why it reveals the fact that every individual in the world is important, that dialogue and comparison of different views are important, as well as the issue of governments and corporations using the media for their ends.

The impact of the media becomes dangerous if allowed to follow only the rules of the market, since the free market is obviously more free for rich investors, who are mainly not so keen on truth or the common good. This text interprets the current infodemic as a confirmation of the diseased media dimension of the world and as another call for critical reflection on the systems of media representation which are still not being taken seriously enough.

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Ključne riječi virus, medij, poruke, infodemija, slobodno tržište

Sažetak Virus COVID-19 poslao nam je mnogo nejasnih znakova. Oni su kao informacije prevedene u poruke. Te poruke su različito interpretirane od strane znanstvenika, stožera, političkih stranaka, vlada. Virus COVID-19 je u tom smislu više od poruke. On je medij koji se interpretira, instrumentalizira; koji nas poput suvremenih masmedija zatvara u 'zatvore bez zidova'.

COVID-19 je uspješnije od svih dosadašnjih tekstova, knjiga i autora uspio skrenuti pozornost na manipulacijski karakter suvremenih medija. Mali virus koji ne poznaje granice, žice, boju kože, saldo na računu – podcrtava važnost svakog pojedinca u svijetu, važnost dijaloga i sučeljavanja argumenata, te problematičnost instrumentaliziranja medija od strane vlada i velikih korporacija.

Poguban je utjecaj medija ukoliko se oni prepuste isključivo zakonitostima tržišta jer je slobodno tržište logikom stvari slobodnije za bogate investitore, u pravilu nesklone istini i općem dobru. Infodemiju tekst interpretira kao potvrdu bolesti medijske dimenzije svijeta, te kao još jedan poziv kritičkom promišljanju nikada dovoljno ozbiljno shvaćenih sustava medijskog posredovanja.

I Contextualization

1. A sick society

Once upon a time, philosophers were also often doctors. Among them was Ibn Sina (980 - 1037), better known as Avicenna across Europe. In his medical encyclopaedia *al-Qanunfi al-Tibb* (The Canon of Medicine), he mentions 'al-Arba'in-ya' ('the forty'), meaning the forty days of isolation needed for those who might pass an infection to others.

In modern times, almost universally, philosophers are not doctors. Neither am I. The only contribution I can make, is to suggest two possible trains of thought, relating either to the possibility that someone dabbled with coronaviruses in a medical lab, or the possibility this is actually a dangerous warning to humankind sent by nature.

In accordance with these times that prioritize the exploration of consequences instead of looking at the causes, I must also delve into questions delineating the paradox of behaviour patterns taken by politics, media and the general public when dealing with the phenomena of the current pandemic and infodemic. These paradoxes reveal how belatedly we have become aware of decisions being made in our name. If sentences that follow are laden with irony or cynicism, it is merely because this is the only available outlet for our protest, as we dwell within our catacombs.

The first thought by such a catacomb-bound cynic might sound something like this: How come there is such fear of the coronavirus when all countries in the world (those taking themselves and their skies seriously) are buying increasingly modern and expensive military aircraft? From great heights, these can be used to shoot at invisible targets. Supposedly super-precise projectiles of the all-powerful warplanes may be capable of hitting even invisible targets...

Decreased funding for scientific research (in countries that need to protect their skies), certainly increases the competitiveness among scientists. No doubt among them will be also those who in order to survive, will invent national variants of the vaccine. (The short history of the corona crisis is the history of including more and more teams from countless countries

in the production of vaccines). We'll support them it seems, in the same way we support different political parties, religions, sports teams or opposing parties in court. Vaccines are thus adorned in national uniforms and aligned with the East or the West.

In transition countries of the Balkans, the healthcare system has for decades been, like so many other things, a way to 'legally' transfer budget funds into private companies, who then return these funds to the political decision makers who made possible the original transfer. This laundered money is then invested into 'sadly' visible movable and immovable property, and every once in a while, we are entertained by Kafkaesque situations. After three days of a media virosis, the temperature decreases and the problem simply disappears. A precursor to our modern pandemic was the scandal of transforming social ownership into private (through legalizing theft or stealing without legalization).

In Zagreb where we have built the Arena (a sports-recreation market on the outskirts of Zagreb, nearby a site for a new hospital), we are quite aware that (in Fromm's sense), we are a 'sick society' and that we are in need of large healing centres. The Arena seeps out money, but the corona crisis has created the illusion that it might be used as an infirmary for those infected with the virus.

We are then reminded of the national football stadium because the football club playing on this field in Maksimir could not be more embarrassing. The team makes huge amounts of money and lives the high life, while playing on a shabby stadium into which so much has been invested that two such stadiums could have been made with the same amount of money. All of this lays forgotten, but a new idea springs to mind – a national stadium could probably house even greater numbers of patients than it would be possible at the Arena centre!

We minimally adjust regulation on the media although we know that the dependence of all media in this country on the political power of the ruling party will not be changed. If we had truly independent media, there might even be some shameful faces among those 'fighters for the common good' – that is, among the politicians. This might happen if it becomes public knowledge how they have been using science, the media and the integrity of scientists, in their project of transforming

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reasonable conversation into statistical lists and graphs. (Each day we track the number of the newly infected along the same media line of tracking the numbers of incoming tourists). This crisis has sent us a virus which manages to reveal instrumentalized non-free media and Potemkin-styled regulation.

We have left our faith in reason to the age Enlightenment and self-incurred immaturity to Kant, while we transform democracy into a ritual of abandoning politics, this ritual being re-enacted every four years when we turn all our knowledge and capabilities into a great big zero on a small paper containing numbers and names of a new arrogant structure. We thus choose a new oligarchy in celebration of this 'holiday of democracy'.

Is it any different in the rest of the world and what have we adopted? At the global level, we have given up morality, thought, humanistic values, discussions on the reasons for human existence, creativity and the development of human sensitivity as a precondition for a better world. Local sheriffs overuse the trend of turning everything living into unliving matter so there are always new political, religious, academic and business structures. Their chief motto: 'As long as we support each other's interests no one will be able to think through our web of regulations, laws and decisions, and if necessary, we'll have someone teach them a lesson.'

Due to its negation of everything living, human and creative, *homo sapiens* currently has a good chance of simply – disappearing. To make it clearer, we don't need war or nuclear heads for our self-destruction, we don't need any fighter planes. We shall be destroyed by something to which we ourselves are habitat. Just as we have destroyed the Earth that provides us with life, we shall be destroyed by a virus that will remain alive as long as there are living creatures on Earth. A biological war is being waged against us. It is almost irrelevant if this is nature rebelling or if some Malthusian project is at work. At the same time there are too many of us and we are headed in the wrong direction.

Followers of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766 - 1834) remember his words: 'All children born above the number needed for keeping the population number at the required level, inevitably need to disappear, unless room is made for them through the death of grown-up individuals... This should be an active

policy of the government... We must encourage nature's work in creating this mortality instead of stupidly and hopelessly preventing it. And if we fear frequent visitations of famine, through rebellions we must entice other forms of forced and natural destruction. Instead of promoting hygiene among the poor, we must encourage other habits. Our cities need to have narrower streets, with more people crowded in their houses, and we need to provoke the return of the plague. In the country, settlements are to be built close to standing water and especially in swamps and unhealthy conditions. But above all, we must strongly discourage specific medication against diseases and those well-meaning individuals who are actually mistaken in thinking that they are doing humanity a favour in finding resources for the total annihilation of a particular disease.¹

The words of this 'demographic prophet' now seem to have come true. A great number of people on Earth represent a –surplus: they produce garbage, live in unhealthy conditions, fight for human rights, point the finger at the rich and overly rich. The virus of awareness on the unsustainability of neoliberal capitalism is unstoppably spreading across social networks, anarchist webpages and obscure communities that still value opinion. This makes the difference between the rich and the common people even more visible. It is no longer possible to peddle dreams through movies, soap operas or novels. The walls of social structures can no longer be demolished by the glamour of cable tv. Everything is boring and has been seen before. People now demand to have real life gladiators in real life arenas. This is why we are frequently served stories taking place in the interiors of villas, yachts, luxury airplanes, distant islands and unfamiliar protected destinations.

Setting up financial heavens on earth was a development that introduced the insatiable onto a new level of the game. The rich asked themselves the 'logical' question: Why shouldn't the whole planet Earth be a sort of tax oasis? That's a good idea, but what if all the nations of the world oppose it? Their thoughts perhaps went in this direction:

After becoming the owners of the means of production, as well as of corporations used for manipulation, and institutions that make their decisions legal, the noblemen come to a joint conclusion: The Earth is too beautiful to belong to everyone. It can only be the property of those who can afford it.

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¹ https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Robert_Malthus

Followers of nature as a self-renewing Logos that creates magnificent beauty on Earth, unfortunately have no power at the moment. They are trapped (alongside all the rest) in the stampede of escaping the deserved punishment. They can only occasionally, as they are running, shout to the public no longer there: Told you so!

But all is not lost. We are now faced with the times of recognizing structures, configurations, ways of action which we already know and somehow remember. It seems that modern communication of health recommendations includes numerous elements of the marketing and religious sphere. These similarities simply cannot be hidden anymore.

This of course does not lessen the concern of any human being on earth today for the medical dimension of the problem. It also does not mean that all thought needs to be narrowed down to non-medical elements. This is just one of the possible ways of thinking. Possibly the least important one. However, it is indicative...

2. The invisible brings change more visibly

The Earth has not been the centre of the universe for quite some time now. The Sun no longer revolves around the Earth, and human reason has not fared too brightly in comparison with subconscious structures of the human being. Throughout history, egocentrism has lost its battles. In order to survive, it has hidden under the guise of imperialism, nationalism, eurocentrism, colonialism and neocolonialism. It invented the idea of progress as a mask to hide the well invested (robbed) treasure of 'uncivilised' peoples. Finally, it hid inside the idea of democracy, as it understood that stealing is simpler if it is done in the name of democracy i.e., its introducing into 'uncivilized' parts of the world.

At the same time, everyone knew this but not many tried to oppose it. Repressive systems have managed to close down all communication channels, and developed subtle euthanasia methods, in addition to making fun of and marginalizing any

serious critical thought that might question the existing system of lies and manipulation, or of human hypocrisy.

And then a virus came along, closing us within ourselves, enabling us to have the time to think about everything: ourselves, the value system we live in, false democracy, how we are condemned to prestige, competition, crushing anyone on our way to success. It gave us the time to acquaint ourselves with the strangers inhabiting our own houses and apartments... Suddenly all the things we swore we could not live without, became irrelevant. Sports came to a stop. Media stars stopped shining. We could no longer brag to each other how we experienced a religious ritual, concert of a world-famous celebrity, or a cruise visiting tourist destinations across the world.

We have spent our lives running away from ourselves, joining football, political, national and religious masses, and then a half-living virus condemned us to ourselves. How will we manage? We are used to 'crazy' football events and the 'crazy' emotions of their supporters. We are used to 'crazy' concerts, parties and celebrations of winners... but we were not prepared for the 'crazy' facing of our own loneliness. If this does not make us actually crazy – there is still hope for humanity.

There seems to be a secret link between Bacon's suggestion that 'understanding must not be supplied with wings but rather hung with weights', and the supposedly odd fact that sometimes illness and misery can provide us with the greatest progress in self-knowing and understanding of what is important. When we are healthy and strong, we often run towards the unimportant, prescribed and stereotypical. We think we are the ones directing events, even when seduced and manipulated by the media, we merely perform someone else's program which has been subtly imposed through the media.

The current situation tells us that no matter how 'big' we are, our destinies may be decided by tiny viruses. It is interesting that these, balancing somewhere between life and death, may decide on the life or death of as all, members of a species that has proclaimed or feels itself to be the centre of the universe.

Life however, warns us yet again that we are not so high up in the hierarchy and any attempt to seek an exclusive position for ourselves may end up fatally. It is now clear that we must

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be aware of the necessity to give 'due respect' to the demands of invisible viruses that know no differences in borders, sex, gender, skin colour, worldview, religious or any other creed. We ironically 'long' for the times when we fought only about Ustashes and Chetniks, different skin colours, followers of this or that religion.... Slowly but surely, we come to understand that life is much more than our divisions and that we are actually quite small in comparison with the invisible.

There are almost infinite levels in understanding the pandemic, its source, spreading and impact on humanity. Facebook serves as a modern encyclopaedia of associations people think of as they try to make sense of what is happening to them. Instead of systematizing the serious and less serious, the funny and the stupid, the arrogant and the religious approaches, I shall rather try to understand the consequences from a philosophical and sociological point of view, since these point to a new value system emerging in our world.

The fact remains that one small virus is currently putting into question the whole of visible reality into which we have enclosed the surface of our Earth. This might not be the intention of the virus (regardless of whether it has been produced in a laboratory, whether it mutated or was sent down by a universal supernatural force we call God). The virus knows no boundaries, and any obstacles are apparently only ways of putting off the time when billions of these tiny dead-alive beings shall become part of us and decide who lives or dies.

No social theory, including that of Marx, has managed to convince people they are actually – or that they should be – equal. No words are strong enough to warn loudly enough that we must search for forms of equality and our own self-realization, which are truly possible only in a world where people see they are enriched by each other. Every day this invisible virus reminds us this equality is necessary and that we need to keep searching for ways to achieve it.

For example, the virus might teach a nation that wants to be the biggest and best – that the healthcare system in which we don't take care of everyone, but only of those who have enough money – is filled with holes through which disease can pass easily. If we don't protect everyone, how can we protect ourselves from a virus that does not discriminate among its hosts? Is there a limit this virus will not break and is there a

magic amount of money to isolate its owners from the rest of the world? An ironic question for the system that refuses to protect everyone might be: Are weapons useful in the defence against the invisible?

The paradox of American democracy, or mediacracy (influencing voting behaviour through mass media) is in the fact that the arrogance of a democratically chosen leader can cause the death of a large part of the population that actually brought this arrogance into power. Weapons cannot prevent human contact regardless of isolation, drone deliveries or piling up weapons in the basement.

The carelessness of rulers leads to an *infodemic* of the highest degree, this media illness that may spread different tangible forms of the same arrogance throughout the population whose anxieties are to be alleviated, by the media that often shares its corporate interests with politics. However, the awareness of the almost unstoppable character of this invisible threat which has managed to shake up the healthcare system of numerous nations – serves as a warning against the unsustainability of the human world if it continues to focus on identifying differences among people instead of focusing on equality, if it is blind to the dying of famine victims and holds ‘the right to revenge’ every killed person from an invading country, the right to colonial and neocolonial impoverishment of the third world and punishing this world by wars and sanctions when it dares to rebel.

Philosophers interpret our world, but a tiny invisible virus may soon change it more efficiently than it has ever been achieved by philosophical ideas. And even if we manage to tame this virus, the current value system of the world will sooner or later see the spread of a new and probably more fatal one.

Since a virus cannot be killed (as it always exists somewhere between life and death), our activities might only make it stronger. Somewhere in its living-dying depths, the dead-alive virus feeds on Hölderlin’s lines on being strengthened through that which cannot kill it...

Like a being that feeds on hatred and the wish to exterminate humanity, the virus is changing, upgrading, building new systems of defence and attack. We are the ones who give new names to new virus models. These names are like infinite

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shades of colour. When shall we realize that we cannot name all the colours? Can we understand that in attacking viruses through coordinated action, we actually coordinate the birth of their new models and new power?

3. Colonizing the human psyche

Instead of medieval theologians and representatives of religious hierarchies, today we have global players who rely neither on God nor man. Frightened by the threat of impending collapse of the social system that has enabled them to materially exploit that part of the earth's population not yet hungry, they acquire new avenues in producing surplus value by the wages of fear produced through the global media and global bureaucratic structure. After colonizing countries, enslaving nations and waging imperialist wars – they have now decided to – colonize the human psyche.

Just as they 'brought civilization' to the countries they colonized i.e., saved; proclaimed people of a different skin colour to be of a lower race (to be treated like animals); after killing millions in their war squabbles on the distribution of influence and spoils – similarly today they offer the human being a new kind of salvation, which might not be theological, but medical.

The secret to salvation in a tangible form has always been in the surplus value and the expansion of the market. In this way salvation was offered to those with the power to save the ones offering it. The logic of global players continues to be as follows: Let's offer them salvation – The idea of salvation will save us as well!

On the other hand, the human and until recently, the divine in man, has been left to 'antiquated thinkers' who still question concepts such as *will, freedom, truth, morality, justice, equality, spirituality* or *God*. Their number is decreasing however, as spiritual matters do not fit into scientific measurements, and negating the omnipotence and applicability of scientific methods means to stand in heresy against the rational logic of capital and its eternal quest for new colonies, new gold deposits and new countries that hold potential slaves and oil fields...

The colonization of the human psyche is based on the production of fear. In a similar way that the pharmaceutical

industry first produces an inferiority complex in tv viewers (through show programs presenting 'photoshopped' or 'surgically enhanced' individuals), and then within advertising segments offers a solution that brings 'security' and 'confidence' – global players have decided to produce a *global fear*, to turn governments into advertising agents, and medical scientists into mere extras. Salvation is – the end of fear. To achieve this, it is necessary to believe that salvation is possible and that all facts not supporting it represent a scientific heresy.

Old overused ideas such as wars, repressive national systems or dictators and terrorists, could not work in the production of fear at this scope. What the global fear required was an invisible enemy.

It is basically irrelevant whether this invisible enemy first appeared as Nature's attempt to draw our attention to ourselves, or whether a viral 'artificial insemination' was at play – the result is the same: a chance that the global players could not pass up (unless of course they already prepared the whole thing in advance).

The global screen produces fear in people. National bureaucracies, which are all deep in debt, accept the game of skirting around problems and postponing the solution for the age of salvation. Fear produces the need for a product (medicine) which may liberate us from this fear. Global players (former slaveowners, feudal lords, knights, capitalists, owners of corporations) then become saviours and saints.

But not for long. Their greed is also global. They explain that the product will have to be consumed regularly in order to avoid any possibility of new descents into a state of panic. This preventive treatment against fearing an invisible enemy is achieved by paying visible amounts from national budget funds to people and corporations whose incomes are increasing so fast they will soon buy out all the scientists who know how to count those infected or dead.

We no longer need to wage war, conquer countries, enslave nations, manage slaves, force workers on 16-, 14-, 12-, 10- or 8-hour shifts of hard labour. The colonization of the human psyche through producing fear of an invisible enemy is the ultimate invention of global players. It is better even than terrorism.

The immorality of producing surplus value now turns into a moral judgment on those who do not agree to take the 'cure against the invisible enemy'. We are prepared to hate those who do not see the invisible enemy. We run to the other side of the street when we meet someone not afraid of the invisible enemy. This must be a heretic questioning the extra profit of an ultra-small group of people that holds shares in companies producing the drugs against the invisible enemy. This heretic probably finds it strange that an ideal system for making money has been created and no one can't and won't do anything about it. Finally, this is salvation as the final act of history.

Rich apostles now replace poor ones, and the richest people on earth are the ones to lead us to heaven. Well isn't that nice...

4. *Covido ergo zoom*

Thinking has always been linked to a specific medium. In the beginning we uttered our mythical, religious and philosophical judgments, without noticing how we adapted these 'words of wisdom' to the medium of orality in which we were then 'swimming'. We wrote 'wise songs' or short sentences (so others might easily remember and share them) and these mesmerized their audiences just like modern slogans.

The muses inspired us to write these songs. Strict men of ancient times with no ear for music rebelled against poetry because among the poets there were also people who probably weren't inspired by the muses and yet wrote poetry (this 'sophism of the poetic form', this lie in poetry survives today as well). Poetry was accused of separating men from the gods, and prose was offered as a more dignified approach.

And so we fell into prose. Grammar took on the garment of logic. Geometry gave birth to ideal shapes which serve as prototypes for all future ideals to seduce human souls.

Since the muses were not in charge of prose, these texts became more and more ordinary, common, empty... We made a deal with the devil.

Alongside muses and poetry, we grammatically and logically excluded from public life the poetry within us, the possibility of creating a true spiritual community.

Faith was taken over by prose as well. Religions were caught in the medium of prose, thus falling victim to the rational approach. The greatest believers were those who could argue their beliefs best, the ones who knew all the sacred lines, people who proved themselves to be far away from any kind of poetry and mystical sense of the divine within.

In such a situation it is no wonder that currently there is little interest in religious hierarchies. Patterns of political action are obvious within them. These similarities push the object of religious action into the political arena. The scent of heaven is lost in earthly instructions on how to politically position oneself, what to do, who to cheer for, which worldview to adopt... Modern political hierarchies grow from the same delusion, are more efficient in the short term, but the lives of individuals are also such that, rationally speaking, the individual is mostly interested only in the short term.

Religious hierarchies now learn from political ones and make the same mistakes. Muftis and imams suddenly take on the role of politicians, thus failing everyone who believed in them. Christianity has operated on the principles of politics for a long time. God has become a means of division instead of connection...

Weapons for killing people of other faiths have been blessed. Religious education is introduced in schools, without realizing that as a school subject it will serve as the strongest opponent to faith as such. It might produce a certain number of religious nerds, but it will irrevocably deprive many children of exploring their own approach to faith. In an education system organized according to strict rules, as a subject of cramming, God will be reduced to a mere fact. Faith will be replaced by knowing the facts, and spiritual conversation by competing in the knowledge of dogmas.

When letters became the main medium, the Scriptures became Holy. This is the first mediological recognition of the importance of media representation. The medium of the letter is the medium of a 'portable God', to use the words of Régis Debray. The fundamental difference between Christianity and Islam is in the mediological instructions: Christianity says 'read', and Islam demands 'learn' (in the mediological sense this means 'utter', along a particular melody, that is – sing)

The electronic age has introduced the 'death of God'. We intuit that the God of Scripture is dying and there is a vacancy on the throne of the Absolute. The media emerge from the shadows, looking for a place they deserve. The tv set becomes a new pulpit for priests of a new order to talk down to the citizens. There is almost no room for faith anymore.

The digital age of social networks calls into question not only religious education in schools, but the school itself as an outdated form of religious education. Large corporations are silently preparing to take over education systems. Zoom, Google Meet and similar platforms are not merely ways to offer education. They also give us a taste of 'perfect' lectures available at low prices, which might push out the idea of education we have been used to. The global destruction of identities will explode most strongly through changes in the education system. In the age of literacy, our allegiance was with *Cogito ergo sum*. And we have lost. The slogan of the new era is rather 'Covidio ergo Zoom!'

A new revelation awaits and it will be of a medical nature. Salvation will be offered through its slogans like commandments that must be unquestioningly obeyed. Anyone who disobeys these commandments will be considered a heretic and as such banished from the New Church.

II THE MEDIA DIMENSION OF THE CORONA CRISIS

Since the medical dimension of the coronavirus crisis cannot be analysed in this paper (as I am no expert and have no wish to discuss it), this text can only examine its media dimension, which has at times escalated to such a degree that comments on social networks labelled it a world war. Disregarding the medical element might be considered a handicap, but I suppose an analysis of media behaviour may discover quite interesting issues to be addressed by the medical profession and its scientists, as well as owners of the media or even journalists. My aim is to structure this segment in relation to phenomena that have appeared in addition to the corona crisis, and became more obvious as time went on.

1. Dialogue

There is no culture that will not advocate for a critical approach and the necessity of open dialogue on any possible subject as part of a democratic society. Dialogue should help us all in shaking off the legacy of groupthink and through confronting opposing views, allow the truth to appear in all its 'openness'.

But what happens when there is a need to coordinate the behaviour of all citizens within a country? How can dialogue survive in a situation when politics takes the reins of mainstream media and chooses what is good for the society as a whole? As a rule, this is done by the party currently in power. However, during the pandemic, in Croatia and other countries, there appeared a great and unexpected 'understanding' between position and opposition.

In other words, it is interesting how the media have abandoned the opportunity for a direct confrontation between different approaches to the corona crisis. The main media representatives of all possible approaches were generally the followers of the central line of defence against COVID-19. Others could only take to the streets or social networks.

The absence of any real dialogue could be interpreted as the effort by the people and institutions in charge to stand united against the coronavirus crisis. At the core of this is the clear and understandable idea that unless all of us follow the instructions responsibly – the virus has a larger scope of action and might last indefinitely.

This 'self-evident' idea is unfortunately not supported by the fact that all totalitarian societies also invoked a similar 'wisdom'. All such societies profited from such an approach. But behind their success there were always horrors perpetrated against those who did not accept the totalitarian idea.

What is present here then is the absence of any real dialogue or discussion with clear arguments and different approaches i.e., the total lack of objective media reporting on all possible aspects and approaches related to the corona crisis.

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2. The propaganda matrix of public presentation

BE RESPONSIBLE. STAY AT HOME. FOLLOW THE MEASURES. USE DISINFECTANTS. AVOID SHAKING HANDS AND HUGGING. AVOID PUBLIC GATHERINGS. KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE OF 2 METRES. TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER. These are some of the messages/slogans offered by the propaganda segment of the anti-coronavirus action.

Advertising messages have been shaped by media outlets, retail marketing, by national, regional and local headquarters (most active in finding the 'solution' to the coronavirus crisis), as well as various companies and creative participants on social networks.

'THE INSTRUCTIONS ARE THE SAME FOR EVERYONE. HELP EACH OTHER IN THE RIGHT WAY. HELP THOSE WHO KNOW WHAT TO DO. BE SMART. STAY AT HOME. PROTECT OTHERS AND OURSELVES.' These are messages from a TV commercial which even made the effort to complement these sentences with 'apocalyptic' movie scenes.

If someone was to collect all the information on the broadcasting of these messages/slogans i.e., on the amount of space taken by these messages in the press, on billboards and elsewhere – it would definitely prove that never in history has there been so extensively funded advertising activity, and this is true for Croatia as well as other countries.

One possible issue emerges from the fact that these messages are not the product of a unified global strategy by relevant scientists, but just those selected few who have created an image of the corona crisis based on research that was never completed and inconclusively defined results of scientific debates among the world's most relevant immunologists and other experts.

Messages appear as slogans aimed at changing the behaviour of the public. It is realistic to ask: How can a citizen/viewer behave when advised to stay at home, 'be smart', avoid handshakes and hugs, keep at a distance from other people if going out etc.

The daily repetition of these messages, the inclusion of political, sports and cultural authorities in their transmission,

creates a strong sense of excommunication among the citizens if they merely question the meaning of any of these sentences (for example, the advice on hand-washing was the subject of many jokes).

What is at work then is a medical-political campaign, implemented through public media services, but also taken over and upgraded by the commercial media. What is at work here is a marketing campaign of considerable strength. This represents the most intense shaping of the global population ever since the campaigns for the First and Second World War.

The ridiculous aspect of these campaigns becomes obvious as the interest for vaccination decreases and the general public gains insight into alternative opinions by medical experts who were not included in discussions reported by mainstream media. Then local 'peculiarities' begin, in the form of travelling buses, prize tickets and other ways to encourage vaccination. A recent measure was to limit state subsidies supporting companies hit by the corona crisis to those with a sufficient number of vaccinated employees.

Regime authorities that have managed to prevent critical confrontation of opposing views now have the opportunity to present their mistakes as successes. The purchase of too many doses of vaccines is now a chance to propose the vaccination of children. Political games sometimes take the form of suggesting the free vaccination of citizens from other countries or one's own nationals in other countries. People who make any discussion impossible are seen as benefactors. This is part of the salvation strategy that aims to save the saviours from the ones supposedly being saved.

3. Recording the nasal condition or re-cording the disease

Social networks enabled citizens to gradually join discussions on the corona crisis. They expressed their scepticism in various ways and through various experiences. One woman for example did a PCR test three days in a row, and even though she was positive on the first day, the subsequent test results were negative. The (recorded) explanation by an expert was

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particularly absurd, suggesting that the first swab picked up all of the coronavirus, so it was not present during later tests.

Such cases open up numerous dilemmas, but are also interesting for uncovering the system as a whole. It is important to note, of which evidence already exists, that PCR tests do not detect the disease but only the presence of the virus in the organism. Such presence can result in disease, but not necessarily so. The disease can be severe or very severe, and in combination with pre-existing conditions, may even lead to death. But it can also manifest in mild symptoms and a relatively quick recovery.

Light contains an infinite spectrum of colours. We perhaps have countless viruses and this leaves space for the invention of new enemies. Some other virus may take the place of COVID-19 already tomorrow, perhaps a virus that has lived in humans for millennia. However, only the modern combination of politics, medicine and big business can reveal that this enemy is indestructible and unknowable, but we must fight it in a coordinated way – by supporting the efforts of those who have invested the most in the production of untested vaccines.

Examples from social networks of course cannot be taken as evidence of anything. Even serious research into attitudes on social networks cannot be considered relevant. Headquarters with brave thinkers of medical and political calibre will treat such cases as viruses, a viral infection on the highway of agreed positions by crisis headquarters and policies.

The inclusion of such discussions and situations in a more serious discourse on the coronavirus crisis might shed some different light on the propaganda efforts of political-healthcare (para) institutions. All the more so as public space seems to be always reserved for the same authorities who always say the same things in the same unconvincing manner, always using similarly unconvincing reasons.

4. The political organization of scientific authorities in medical science

One phenomenon that will surely be the subject of research in years to come, is the impact of politics on scientists, and immunologists in particular. The advice that we should listen

to science is now reduced to the level of caricature as scientists have become spokespersons for particular political views. If they do not comply with serving political intentions they are replaced.

The so-called headquarters have become a puppet theatre run by centres of political power. These of course operate from a large enough distance and remain invisible. Aided by the media, scientists have finally admitted that science is also in the orbit of political values, and there are no independent scientists, or confrontations between differing expert views. Those who think differently are simply ridiculed and often sidelined to the margins of society.

One day more detailed research will surely be done into how some scientists claimed one thing before the pandemic, and then changed their views after receiving funds for research into COVID-19. Scientists who simultaneously worked as advisors on projects for vaccine manufacturers and starred as opinion makers in the media will also come under more scrutiny.

By transforming scientists into rows of soldiers, politicians have opened up new ways of disciplining their citizens/viewers.

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5. The Covid contagion of news, prime time and tv specials

All programs of the most popular tv stations have come to serve the political idea of disciplining the general public for the sake of ensuring defence against the virus. This may be interpreted as the final useful inclusion of media in the realisation of essential needs of the society. Especially when it comes to distance learning through a public service tv program. Classes have been carried out mainly without interruption, and employees of the Ministry of Science and Education could record the successful implementation of the curriculum.

In addition to classes for elementary school students, public broadcasting offered prime time for Covid coverage on tv news, discussion in tv specials as well as constant commercials and messages. The propaganda contagion took over tv program creators and through them spread to the nation/nations. Unsurprisingly, social networks frequently included

angry attitudes towards anyone who dared question anything from the compendium of accepted views. Those infected with propaganda aggressively attacked others who wanted more analysis, dialogue, facts, studies, research – in one word, some common sense. This proved to be useless as all common-sense views had to be proclaimed by the united propaganda of mainstream media.

6. In search of untested vaccines

Media hysteria had to end at some point. Since there was no way to go back or deny all that has been said – the discussion on vaccination as the solution became inevitable. The vaccine appeared as a *deus ex machina*, an instrument of total catharsis.

First steps that suggested the impossibility of finding a cure for the virus (since any attack on a virus provokes it to adapt and become more resistant), were soon replaced by a winning combination: vaccines were suddenly presented as the new magic wand to cure all ills with just one or two tiny needle pricks.

Those who warned of the necessity for serious research spanning several years, were stigmatized. In such circumstances, vaccine manufacturers were able to negotiate unbelievable and unacceptable (hitherto unknown and non-medical) conditions. They could offer their vaccines without being accountable for any side-effects.

Years of work that were once needed to introduce a drug on the market were now replaced by a sense of safety that propaganda instilled in future consumers of the vaccine. The media repeated the necessity to vaccinate as many people in the world as possible in the shortest period of time possible. What was suggested then, was carpet bombing the population with an untested vaccine that surely has its side-effects (for which no one will be responsible).

In the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, an atmosphere of searching for sufficient quantities of vaccines was created. This was a matter of reputation, resourcefulness of national leaders, their negotiating abilities in providing their citizens with a sufficient number of vaccines on time. Opposition critics could use the lack of vaccines as potshots against the ruling party.

Some politicians suggested the surplus vaccines could be given as donations to other countries or toyed with the possibility of opening the country to vaccination tourists.

As time went by, an increasing number of scientists started claiming that the vaccine is more dangerous than the coronavirus itself. As the number of such views increased, the rhetoric of policies that invested in vaccines which were now not used became more aggressive. Children then became the new possible consumers of the vaccines.

7. Wandering around with or without masks

Masks have become a way to differentiate between followers of Propaganda Action and those anarchist individuals who might most easily be called antivaxxers. Arguments on the failure of masks to keep out viruses seemed irrelevant. It was forbidden to talk about the harmfulness of masks for the older population whose protection was a priority. In many countries not wearing masks prompted physical abuse by the police, public transport officials or other institutions.

Comparing citizens to slaves of colonial masters or seeking answers were of no use. Animated videos and infographics vividly presented the idea on wearing masks as a useful way of reducing the possibility of infection.

8. From lockdown to the Swedish model

Some regimes benefited from the corona crisis in introducing curfew to silence protests of their population. All political problems seemed irrelevant in comparison with the invasion of a virus that spread at such a rate that governments had no choice but to partially or completely stop the economic, social, cultural, and to some extent religious life of the community. The same thing that once served as a direct call for rebellion, protest or even overthrow of the government – a ban on gatherings – was now smoothly allowed. Faced with an invisible enemy, restrictions now seemed well-intentioned. Violent

actions by the police were now justified as protection of 'the rest of us'. The individual was no longer a subject, but an object of concern to prevent the spread of the infection throughout the community.

At the same time, the Swedish model was not much commented upon or discussed. Any discussion of this type would lead to old questions and doubts about the accepted measures. The media could now only occasionally wheel out new data on the infection incidence in Sweden. They failed to mention that these figures related to the number of people who had the virus in their system. Differences in the numbers of those deceased before and during the corona crisis were also disregarded.

Playing with closedowns of entire companies put the private sector under state bureaucracy control. At the point of ruin, it was now almost completely dependent on state subsidies. One does not need too much imagination to conclude how these subsidies were distributed as the system of developing a trusted relationship with only a select few companies has been carefully nurtured for decades.

9. One bat as a trigger for the possible clash of civilizations

Looking back, we think of the scenes from the Wuhan market. These were supposed to make us disgusted with eating habits of the Chinese, thus linking them to the outbreak of the pandemic. Images of countless coffins in Italy simultaneously served to heighten the hatred against China. Occasionally there were also discussions on the possibility that the virus was artificially created in a laboratory and then 'released' on purpose or accidentally.

Without discussing this idea further, it should be noted that something quite similar to an attempt of unleashing a pandemic clash of civilizations did happen. This would have united western powers in accusing China for enabling conditions in which COVID-19 was born (whether naturally or artificially).

This of course prompts stories on the co-ownership of institutes and organizations that work both in the research and development of vaccines. All this has an unpleasant stench of business carried out at the highest level, making the rich richer and the poor even poorer in the process. Instead of Huntington's division of civilizations along religious lines, we now have a new medical division in terms of the attitude toward the pandemic.

In this context, the great enemies Iran and Israel have been given 'adequate' labels. Iran 'proved' itself to be a conservative country in which the number of those infected grew to catastrophic levels, while Israel served as an example of responsible behaviour as it managed to vaccinate almost the entire population in quite a short period of time.² This population did not include Palestinians who ended up as the losers of the story yet again. Time will tell whether this administrative decision that failed to help them, actually just exposed them to a virus that will later be considered similar to the common flu.

10. Have the creators of terrorism found a more lucrative business?

One important phenomenon in these times of Covid, is the almost total disappearance of terrorist attacks across the world. This can be explained by the closedown of borders and their strict control as well as the frequent checks of medical documents on border crossings. Time will tell whether this constitutes an argument or an illusion.

It seems somewhat odd that sophisticated terrorist organizations would be stopped by certificates they are supposed to show at the border. In any case, ' sleeper cells ' are already located in the countries where terrorist actions are planned. But miraculously, terrorists seem to be otherwise engaged.

Terrorism appears to be an outdated means of disciplining the population. Elections will now be won not by leaders fighting terrorism, but rather by those brave fighters against an invisible enemy in the form of a virus.

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² 'It should be added that previous information from Israel noted that vaccination cannot prevent the spread of the infection at the same level as naturally acquired immunity. New data from Israel shows that up to 55 percent of new cases are recorded among the vaccinated population. Any penalization of young people who do not take the vaccine makes no sense in this context.' <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/poucak-iz-izraela-ucinkovitost-pfizera-poprilicno-pala-u-zastiti-od-zaraze-ali-smrti-nerastu-15085921> Accessed: 6 July 2021

The total absence of terrorism during the corona crisis could be more significant than it is generally commented upon. The scope of what the corona crisis is hiding will become more obvious in time when new actors take the scene after this particular crisis passes.

11. How the pandemic obscures the refugee crisis

The corona crisis has helped in neglecting problems of inequality in the modern world that have led to migration. Not in the sense that inequality has disappeared, but the prevailing attitude was that limitations on the movement of all people, including refugees and migrants, were now acceptable. The media have lost their sense of empathy towards people in refugee camps who have been dying, getting sick, freezing and otherwise living in inhumane conditions. Refugees ceased to be a news item and the difference between rich and poor countries was no longer an issue under media analysis.

12. Love at a distance

The fundamental human need to be realized as a complete human being through love has been significantly obstructed during the corona crisis. All advice by political headquarters' experts called for life on a distance. In order to save itself, the human species had to stop being what it is. In order to be happy one day, people only have to give up spontaneity, closeness, socializing, travel and everything that makes life interesting and beautiful. Institutions in power have erected psychological fences between people without thinking that these will exist even when (and if) the fight against the virus is successful.

13. The medical argument for denying access to medical services

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Healthcare systems of numerous countries are currently in crisis. State bureaucracies are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with growing expectations of their citizens and decreased budgeting possibilities. This problem goes hand in hand with global issues currently hitting capitalism.

Without going into analysis of possible causes and effects, some tendencies can still be identified.

An invisible virus has managed to cause a visible lack of healthcare services for citizens of the world. The excuse of course being that doctors are too busy with the current crisis and all space is taken over by Covid patients.

The lines of people waiting at their GPs are similar to the lines forming on state borders. They both have the same level of impatience, anger and lack of understanding.

Operations are often postponed and a visit to the doctor becomes an illusory attempt to explain something to your doctor in an environment resembling a factory line.

Situations like these help us develop the habit of not expecting healthcare to be at our service, but to be obscured by some wall impossible to jump over. Even if we managed to get through, the spaces expecting us would not be medical but industrial.

14. Covid passports

Something unimaginable to the old libertarian spirit (our everyday life being under surveillance by Big Brother) has now become a looming danger. The excuse of course is that same invisible virus which has been given mythical strength in order to move weak mortals towards eternal labelling. All previous differences among people can now be reduced to owners of databases on all of us as citizens of the second or some even lower order. The danger of COVID-19 yet again goes unchecked,

there are no questions and comparisons of death rates, no autopsies, additional controls of PCR test reliability, no exact scientific data on vaccines etc.

In comparing dystopian scenarios with the reality of ignoring debate and questions posed by numerous Nobel prize winners, academics, doctors and other experts – the bleakest scenarios come to mind.

15. How the media produces fear

Ever since Orson Welles and his War of the Worlds, the effect of creating fear through mass media is well known. Of course, fear had been created before, but never as intensely and successfully as with the radio play which with no explanations or announcements launched into a 'live coverage' of an alien invasion.

The modern immersion in mass media means that the word 'viewer' should always be added to define the word 'citizen'. The trust of citizens/viewers in various truths may vary, but in situations like these, it is so great that success is guaranteed.

Announced in various disaster films, the apocalypse seems to have moved over to the news and TV shows on real life events. Bodies of those who have died from COVID-19, coffins that couldn't be transferred to the cemeteries, burials without the presence of families, images of doctors falling off their feet, getting sick, dying – all this played a part in the drama that had to have an effect. Citizens/viewers across the world prepared for the coming of the real modern apocalypse which had been frequently announced.

Fear became the strongest emotion which then disabled life in all other dimensions. Locked in fear and plugged into the media, people kept looking for new information on possible sources of fear.

The horror is now part of everyday life. Everyone knows someone who died in horrible pain, who didn't make it, died on the respirator etc.

Orwellian minutes of hatred now have their regular slots in news programs, and are present everywhere in the form of caring for people, advice given by doctors, press conferences by

political-healthcare headquarters, reports from hospitals and constant counting of those infected or dead.

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16. The dubious strengthening of political bureaucracy

Political bureaucracy has evolved further. Democratic principles could be pushed aside and the general public would most often not even know about it. Measures introduced were partly made according to instructions of the World Health Organization, but were also partly implemented as a way to discipline the population. This is particularly obvious now when looking back on all the events that have taken place.

A particular dimension that points to the questionable strengthening of political bureaucracy comes in the form of attitudes on the vaccination of children and not issuing subsidies to business entities that fail to vaccinate their employees. The wrong tower started shaking with this news and a worm of doubt found its way into the minds of numerous citizens. There was a danger that the exclusive given by COVID-19 to the politicians might become their stumbling block. The fall would of course be 'apocalyptic' for anyone who had participated in the spreading of fear in the media, asked citizens to use untested vaccines, that is, everyone who took part in the creation of panic as part of the corona crisis.

17. The virus as a good business opportunity for large capital

In a way, nothing particularly surprising has happened...

The sophisticated instincts of big business realized long ago that they could increase their sales by playing to the sentiment of stereotypes which is always a pleasant tune to the ears of readers/listeners/viewers. Multiplied indefinitely, stereotypes become our world.

We live in stereotypes, buy what is closest to them, say stereotypical sentences and do not feel we ourselves have become a more or less smooth stereotype living according to the expectations of those around us. Our stereotypes are the ones that choose presidents of all democratic countries in the world. We reach for a new president in the same way we reach for detergent at the supermarket. We advertise our presidents in the same way...

The system of 'values' based on stereotypes, hypocrisy, silence, uncritically accepting decisions by incompetent authorities, stepping over corpses, fighting for privileges, conformism, nepotism, corruption, false morality of false mediators between earth and 'heaven'... all this can more or less function until someone appears, so 'small and naive' to barely be visible, and until they tell the flock and its shepherds: 'The Emperor has no clothes, his crown is false'.

Then it will suddenly become clear that no military aircraft will help us, that fountains (as in all other public procurements) are refreshing not our environment, but someone else's pockets. We shall then realize in an instant that those who have become rich are people in politics or people close to the people in politics. We might suddenly realize we have brought into power people who thanked us by surrounding themselves with their own flunkies and used their position to gain even more, through legal loopholes and media campaigns.

Democracy, freedom and equality are today merely a scenery hiding interest groups of political, business, academic, media and other interconnected interest lobbies.

On the other side of social networks there are much stronger networks of interest-linked structures that take care not to step on each other's toes. And while we as sheep put our photos on social networks, agreements are made through those other networks, determining who broke the mafia code and who is to be thrown at the feet of the public.

Sacrificing those who took something too far and through this endangered the whole structure of this other network, represents a ritual for satisfying an amazingly resilient but also amazingly naïve public. With every new announcement of a sacrifice, the public is pacified and with possible evidence and punishment for members of the hierarchy, the public is

paralysed/euthanised. The public is the fairy tale monster whose hunger can be quenched only by occasional sacrifices of that other network – the hierarchy.

A healthy society is given strength by the public, and a sick one by silence. In a healthy society, if someone from the government sets up a job for a friend, this is clearly a symptom of a disease and a sign that the organism needs to be treated. In a sick society on the other hand, this becomes a rule. In a healthy society positive energy of all people in a community would accumulate. Sick societies dispossess individuals of the little energy they have left. In a healthy society we would use the media to make our lives more beautiful, interesting, better, more noble, healthier, spiritually richer... In a sick society we can only conclude that the media themselves have helped the disease to develop i.e., through them the virus of evil spreads.

We must not forget: In the beginning there was Logos, meaning the word, but also order. Not a word to be used as an excuse and dusted off whenever one needs to hide different forms of evil. Every moment demands from us a new word to build Logos as a harmony in which we can grow as human beings. Every moment is a new beginning. That is why our words always have to be new, creative, responsible, alive, lively... And are they?

The pandemic offers us with an answer as it makes us take a long look at it as if in a mirror, making us explain to each other how and why we fell into such a deep hypnotic sleep so that it seemed everything was alright and we were on the right track – on the road to progress. Half-awake we say what first comes to mind. We don't see the plan of the network outside our 'social networks'. We don't see that for them we are in the way on this lovely place in the Universe.

A few more words need to be said on unmasking media trash during times of a virus pandemic. Some ideas by Marshall McLuhan sound like a warning only now. What would he had to say of the world today?

He would probably conclude that the coronavirus has shown how we truly are a global village. He would say it is only now obvious that our nervous system is outside ourselves and that we have the ability to momentarily react to everything happening in any corner of the Earth. Also, that the virus can

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show us how national distinctions are fragile and a product of technology that has enabled us to recognize ourselves within letters of the press. That the virus is a message, and the content of the virus media is our life which is being tested. He would probably say it was high time we realized we cannot go on unpunished in failing to understand the world we are creating through media we do not understand.

McLuhan would see the current infodemic as an invisible danger because we have failed to see the media as a potential source of danger. We belatedly become aware of that which is closest to us, into which we are submerged, and for us people, these are – the media. Today we are with them and within them like fish that live in the sea but will be ‘the last to become aware of the surrounding water’.

He would probably compare the infodemic to how the scientific community behaved towards the French chemist Louis Pasteur, who warned doctors that the greatest enemy they needed to face was actually ‘invisible’. Pasteur was misunderstood in a way similar to how messages by media theorists are disregarded as they warn that without understanding the almost imperceptible influence of mass media we are rushing towards a mediocracy – a society shaped by corporate interest groups, politics, pharmaceutical industry, oil and weapons manufacturers – all linked of course with owners of mass media.

Mediocracy is a premortal state of a democracy in which the voice of the people is bought through marketing campaigns not much different from campaigns selling any other product. Mediocracy is a caricature of democracy in which the people pretend they are making decisions and those chosen by them pretend they are working in the interest of ‘their people’.

Royal crowns are still in danger of being toppled by an invisible viral crown. Alongside all our future expenses, we might also inherit the experience of how it is necessary to stand against false idols, self-imposed and ‘chosen’ kings, false envoys of God as well as lies by the economy that leads people into ruin.

The virus is a mirror. It is our choice whether we can stand to look at our reflection.

18. World Cup with an invisible football

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One of the visible forms of global coordination in the position and roles of nations in the modern world may be called the World Cup played with an invisible football.

Prime ministers are selectors with strong teams. Each team is dominated by medical experts on the invisible ball and tactic. And although the word of the prime minister leading the team is final when it comes to tactic and strategy, the medical part of the team is the one calling the shots.

The teams have different tactics. One wants to send the players to the field only if they wear masks while others think this will not stop the invisible virus, but will make it more difficult for the players to breathe. Some prefer the tactic of ignoring the invisible ball, while others use the opportunity to fix things outside the field by manufacturing fear based on the mere possibility of losing a player or the game.

Judges who sometimes run to the field also need to observe all safety measures. They might wear policemen's uniforms but also their own. They listen to their governments so sometimes they might beat up a player not wearing a mask or put him in jail. Sometimes they take off their masks because some governments prefer the game to be played with lungs full of air.

Organizers of the World Cup worked long and hard on setting up the competitive climate and rousing the national fire for the successful game of invisible football. National alpha males wear their sports uniforms and are followed obediently by women who have some criticisms but are too scared. Every day the media reports on the chart position of individual nations and whether they are leading or failing.

Only some commenters are allowed to publicly speak on this competition. These are the experts for this type of sport who claim they have actually – seen the ball on the field.

19. The bureaucracy spectacle

Analysis of additional (and some would say unimportant) non-medical segments of the global corona crisis, sheds a bright light on the medical dimension of the problem – all different hues are fading into each other and can be interpreted differently. At the same time this mainly media dimension of the phenomenon also shines upon old mechanisms which only now become visible. Structures of action are recognized, configurations come to light. Times behind us seemed to intuit and announce them. The same intention seems to be at work, only now it has gained strength and 'legitimacy', especially in terms of the destructive impact of the corona crisis on culture.

Most politicians in a transition society would say that a society without culture and art would be an ideal society. It is simpler to discipline all other segments of the society (forms of action) than artistic individualists, those researchers of the unimportant, anarchists in love with the idea of independence and freedom. A society without culture is a negative utopia of people depending on paragraphs and political power. Without people to comment on how the system works, all this could be much easier.

Modern culture has already been marked with the stamp of political bureaucracy. It is an already established political cultural passport (a cultural passport pre-dating the Covid passport). With it you have confirmation that you are a 'cultural person', can take part in projects, be given awards, travel, read your verse to children.... You gain access to culture if you are microchipped and labelled as a good citizen who agrees to vaccination and all the regulation of the ruling authorities. If he was alive today, in these circumstances Janko Polić-Kamov would write his most famous work *Curse!*

Art and culture have long been on respirators maintained by the Ministry of Culture. What is happening today is more reminiscent of kitchens where starving artists with 'certificates' can get some food. And if someone had tried banning cultural movements, socializing, plays, concerts, performances, theatre and film performances a few decades ago... the barricades of resistance would have grown like mushrooms on the streets. However...

The invisible aggressor of unknown origin made it possible to introduce measures that the cultural community would never have allowed. The manufacture of fear in people, unfortunately, has disciplined us so much that people of culture are ashamed to remember – the freedom they hold within.

Misfortunes never come alone. Sometimes they are announced years in advance in symptoms that societies may recognize or not. Just as journalism lost its fight to PR, the freedom of critical thinking has lost to – propaganda. Propaganda could easily win when politics and big business punched the air from journalists' lungs. Lawsuits against journalists announced totalitarian tendencies at the level of our global *brave new world*.

The man who understood the importance of spectacle in human history, who saw spectacle as a precursor to religious rituals – Gay Debord – would be both pleased and miserable today. He would be pleased because it turned out yet again he was right, and miserable because a global spectacle with an invisible aggressor has shown all the power of seduction and manipulation. We have become part of the *Religion of Propaganda by Headquarters' Preachers*.

The authors of the new global spectacle seem to have set themselves the task of checking to what extent it is possible to shape the collective consciousness of people on the whole planet. So far, they are surprised by their own success.

Since building a camp for all the people in the world is too great an investment, they had no choice but to produce walls within people, fear of the other, of socializing, fear of walking and talking freely. Prison rules (masks, distancing, ban on socializing, being inside...) was to be introduced – without walls. The paradox is that, in an Orwellian fashion, *global propagandists* have presented their imperial aspirations as – caring for people.

Pessimism as the spiritual state of the nation can make most use of severe, sincere, moral and knowledgeable followers of propaganda slogans. They pose no problem to manufacturers of untested vaccines. They simply remain responsible because the key media slogan tells them: 'Be responsible'. They stay at home because an order in the form of a suggestion promising health tells them – Stay at home. These are then

prison slogans for a campaign that has brilliantly branded an unexplored and untested product i.e., service.

Politicians on the other hand, who have always dreamed of being the arbiters of culture, star as spokespersons for propaganda campaigns by global players of seduction and manipulation. They confidently utter sentences they later abandon quite flexibly. They are convinced of the things they will soon disown. They seduce the people to whom they will soon explain that they themselves have been seduced. This is neither a Croatian nor a regional story. This story is totalitarian.

And instead of calling this a new totalitarianism, there is the 'new normal'. Instead of thinking of ways to resist the onslaught of global propaganda, today we are talking about the number of rented apartments on the Adriatic coast. In countries that destroy critical thought, ignore the development of humanistic thought; in countries where journalists are key enemies of the truth – a different outcome cannot be expected.

Culture is unnecessary for disciplined people. If global propagandists have succeeded in their intention of turning people into prisoners in the open – culture no longer makes any sense. But, to the great regret of all totalitarian systems in the world, the truth is like water – it finds cracks and gathers in small puddles that slowly grow into small lakes. Rivers will flow from them soon.

The spectre of a global propaganda campaign has long been felt in how the government has been treating culture. Political systems were destroyers and saviours. They destroyed conditions for the significance and survival of culture, only then to emerge as co-financiers and leading saviours. They destroyed what they were supposed to enable, in order to employ verified personnel, to verify incoming personnel at the door of culture.