THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A R T I C L E S   A N D   E S S A Y S

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EVERYDAY LIFE IN (POST-)PANDEMIC HOMES

INTRODUCTION

The slogan "stay at home" of March 2020 was to become an everyday reality for many of us. On the one hand one's house or flat, where the period of lockdown could be spent, became the foundation of one's sense of safety in a completely new situation, containing strata of risk that became real on a global scale in the space of a few weeks, with unprecedented force. On the other hand, the feeling of confinement—entailing an extreme concentration of social relations, or extreme isolation from them in the case of living alone—proved a source of frustration and stress. For most of us, the experience of home during the first lockdown meant the discovery of new resources, but also deficiencies.

The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences are almost certain to alter our reality. We do not know the scale, of course, and for now can only posit hypotheses. When looking at world history through the lens of changes brought about by large epidemics (such as the Spanish flu of the early 20th century), we can assume that the Covid-19 pandemic will also leave a mark on how the human world functions, both globally and domestically. New developments may appear: a significant contraction of global supply chains, diminishing trust in strangers, or the wearing of

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protective masks as a fixed element of attire. However, there is no doubt that we shall be observing a deepening of the societal or economic changes that have already begun, as we are living not so much in the day of the end of history as in a so-called "in-between" era, at a time witnessing the emergence of new social forms in the face of new challenges, and especially the crisis in liberal democracy, the climate crisis, and the rising impact of technology on everyday life. It therefore seems pertinent to ask about the impact of the unprecedented pandemic therefore seems justified.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analyses presented here are based on data collected in the social medium Facebook via a special research group named *Pandemia Stories PL*. This was a group that I created at the start of lockdown (on 21 March 2020).[1] As far as I am aware, it was one of the first sociological reactions to the quarantine situation in Poland. With people confined to their homes, and research in the field impossible, it was one of few available *in situ* forms of contact with respondents. Following the introduction of a state of epidemic in Poland on 20 March 2020, all face-to-face contact became impossible. Shifting research into virtual reality enabled the on-going accumulation of people's reactions to the new and profoundly challenging social situation. Being able to respond quickly is certainly a strength of this approach. In addition, for most people (though less so for the oldest members of society) the social media are currently frequently used for communicating and for sharing emotions and thoughts. During the group's growth (on 11 November 2020 there were 1873 participants, and the number had settled at this level back in May), one could clearly see a growing need for being in a group, for sharing one's concerns; people treated the study almost as an outlet for confession, as a way of seeking support and consolation in a difficult situation. As a result, it was possible to collect a large portion of material for analysis in only a short space of time.

As with any data, there are also drawbacks to the data gathered in the *Pandemia Stories PL* group. The material is not representative of the population of the whole of Poland, and the group is dominated by women, people aged 35–44, and mainly from the two cities of Białystok (859) and Warsaw (324). The remaining group members also mainly live in

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[1] The group was design and jointly run in collaboration with Dr Maciej Białous of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Białystok.

other large cities in Poland. A few active members have lived in another country (Great Britain and the United States). The content of the posts indicates a class specificity in the group; contributors were dominated by people who were able to work remotely, from home, largely meaning specialists in various areas, academics, and teachers. We received few posts from those who had to work elsewhere than at home. In addition it is worth assuming that writing a post for a Facebook group is, to some degree, self-creation. This is typical of interactive behaviour where media constitute a middleman. Posters want to show their good side, and count on positive responses from other participants (via the emoji-based system of reaction). In natural conditions, face-to-face contacts are similar in this respect, although online it is undoubtedly more difficult to control the "impression" made on the interlocutor. Simultaneously, an enormous strength of the material collected is that it was created during the course of the events being analysed, and another is its personal character— providing an insight into the sphere of emotions, of individual definitions of situations frequently reported as they happen. As a kind of whole, these posts could fulfil the function of a social archive, a record taken "live" in a new and surprising situation.

Both the written content of the posts and the visual materials were analysed. I treat the posts and photographs as digital personal documents specific to the present day. At a later stage of the research, specific posts will be used for the planned biographical interviews, thereby providing the start for a more in-depth biographical analysis. However, some time will need to have passed for that, giving us some distance from the events of the first days of the epidemic. Data collected using this method are classed as elicited netnographic data (Kozinets 2010: 155–159). To begin with, research instructions were drawn up which initiated the posts in the group. They comprised a set of open questions, concerning everyday life during the pandemic, together with a list of hashtags (#) intended to provide order to the materials submitted. The instructions, in their entirety, went as follows:

> "We find ourselves in an exceptional moment of time. The epidemic and social quarantine is a major experience for us and our families. It is important to document what is happening with us as a consequence of the unique event that the epidemic constitutes. As sociologists, we are convinced that it is worth continuously collecting all sorts of materials from you, describing everyday life in Poland, and as such we ask you to send us any materials you have: photos, short videos, drawings by children and adults, memes, quarantine diaries — everything that, in sociology, we call

personal documents :) You may also share your descriptions of interesting social campaigns, #działaniaobywatelskie [#civicengagement]. Everything concerning your lives. What is important is that you describe, for example, what a photo is showing. The more we know the better.

What are we looking for in particular? For your answers to these questions. Add an appropriate # to your posts, or make use of the categories already drawn up in the group, and we will catalogue them.

1. How does your day look now? #dzień [#day]

2. How are you working now? #praca [#work]

3. What are your contacts like with relatives and friends? #kontakty [#contacts]

4. How about your relations with the people you are currently living with? #dom [#home]

5. How are you doing your shopping now? #zakupy [#shopping]

6. How are you spending your free time? #czas wolny [#freetime]

7. What is the period of the pandemic for you? #pandemia [#pandemic]

Those who wish to remain anonymous may send materials to the following email address: pandemiastories@gmail.com

Sending materials do us means that you are sharing materials on the free CC-BY-4.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.pl), and we will be using them for academic purposes. What does that mean? Perhaps, in the future, we will write an article or book based on your and our experiences, but the materials will definitely help us better understand how the world around us is changing before our very eyes."

The vast majority of entries answered the questions in the instructions. Occasionally new themes, added spontaneously to the list by the respondents themselves, appeared. They were incorporated into the body of data and coded appropriately. 14 people used the option of sending materials by email. Altogether 326 written submissions (group posts and email content) were gathered, together with visual materials comprising 327 photographs and 19 videos. Alongside the analyses of the posts and accompanying visuals, it is also worth drawing attention to the comments and discussions that emerged beneath some entries.

A set of rules was also established for the *Pandemia Stories PL* group.

(1) Respect others' privacy: membership in this group requires mutual trust. The information shared in this group, and associated with a forename and surname, should remain within it. It is being collected for academic purposes.

(2) Promotion and spam is prohibited: self-promotion, spam, and irrelevant links will be removed. In this group, we are focusing on describing the changes in our everyday lives during the pandemic.

(3) Be polite and friendly: this group is not an ordinary wall. We are sharing important stories and feelings. Be considerate. Do not mock or criticise other posts.

(4) Share your own stories: we are asking you to write your own, personal answers to our questions. Don't share posts by others, or external links. We are interested in your personal stories.

These rules were aimed at ensuring a sense of security among the people covered by the study, and providing the authority for moderating (e.g. removing posts not relevant to the topic). The group very quickly became a private group, and anybody wanting to join had to accept the group's rules. This was also important as we wanted to emphasise its research character (to begin with we observed a high level of interest in the group among external media), while also making sure that those submitting written material had an elementary sense of security (texts or images not being used without consent). Posts published in the group from 21 March to 30 May 2020 were analysed.[2] The code "home" was used for coding 96 responses; these were posts submitted by people who worked at home during the March lockdown. In addition, on 16 November 2020 I put the following question before the group's participants: "How do you see the future? Will the experiencing of the pandemic contribute to change in our flats and houses? Will we buy different future, or for example pay more attention to tables for sharing meals? Will we split the home space into zones? Or perhaps there is something else…?" This led to answers from 21 people.[3]

THE HOME AS PHYSICAL SPACE

Home is one of the most powerful symbols in our culture, relating to the fundamental feeling of safety. It separates us from that which is alien, different, threatening. It gives us shelter, proximity with others, intimacy. And not only in the symbolic sense is the home crucial; as physical space, it has a real impact on us, influences the shaping of our relations, how we feel, our mental wellbeing. For some of us, the quarantine period was a time when the physical space of home was experienced profoundly and significantly more consciously. For those particularly active in their

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[2] Quotes from this period are marked as PS1—from the group name Pandemia Stories, while the number reflects the sequence in which the databased of entries was created, in order to perform the coding.

[3] Quotes from later submissions are marked as PS2.

work (away from home) or frequently travelling, the sudden necessity to remain confined to their own home generated time for discovering this space anew. We began turning our attention to home décor, to the comfort of the appliances we use. The sight of queues to furniture stores—appearing when the first lockdown came to an end in March 2020—should therefore come as no surprise. For many of us it was, quite simply, a time of consciously spending time at home, in our house or flat. We had been able to experience all the inconveniences, and desired a greater level of comfort in this newly-discovered space. The physicality of the home space was experienced more intensely, consciously. Some of the descriptions spoke positively of this experience; the home had become a comfortable space, a place of protection.

> *"The space around us is important. I appreciate the fact that I like my flat, and like spending time in it. The labour of furnishing it paid off. Although the more time we spend at home, the more we see. And perhaps it's time for redecorating? Well, my neighbour has clearly reached such a conclusion…"* (PS1/75).

A slogan from the first lockdown, "Stay at home", followed by the restrictions on social interaction, affecting work and education, led to many of us significantly changing the way we were living, and closed the doors to our homes for a few weeks. That was a new experience, with no events in our collective memory that could provide us with scripts of behaviour, reaction, or ways of adapting. In response we therefore drew from what we knew from popular culture, or as one of the respondents described it, *"I'd never been able to deny the attraction of postapocalyptic movies. Now I feel like an extra in one of them"* (PS1/74). This reference to playing in a postapocalyptic movie was even more powerful upon leaving the home and encountering the absolutely empty urban space.

Let us return, however, to the home—to personal space which, for those working remotely, became a multifunctional place, their miniaturised social world.

In the materials analysed, the topic of home was one of the most important. For many participants in the *Pandemia Stories PL* discussion group, home had become the true "centre of the world"—the axis around which all deeds, all activities, and indeed also emotions and ideas, were organised. In general, most posts regarding the home (with the hashtag #dom [#home]) were coded positively (59), while negative entries were less common (24), and neutral ones were the rarest (15). One of the most important challenges related to spending time at home during the pandemic was its new spatial and functional division. All of a sudden, in

a place we would normally only spend part of the day, we now had to do everything: cooking and eating, studying and working, relaxing, resting, sport, sleep. In small flats, or homes with multiple members, this was a demanding challenge. It meant that new rules had to be laid down for the division of space, or new habits needed to be acquired in a shared dwelling.

One of the most clearly described experiences was the necessity of marking out new zones and boundaries in the home space, connected to numerous people being at the same time in one place for almost 24 hours a day, searching for places to be by themselves, to carry out their work in peace and quiet or simply to cut themselves off from the many stimuli (such a place could be the garden, a balcony, or even a car parked outside), dividing the space into zones of work and leisure, or even marking off an area separate from other household members for those required to self-isolate (for example after having been abroad). This all constituted a difficult challenge, became a source of stress, and was frequently accompanied by such trying emotions as anxiety, fear, or frustration. The photographs show how the marking of borders did not always end in success, how they evoked feelings of chaos and disorder.

The new spatial boundaries were sometimes symbolic; it could be the closed door to a room in which one of the parents was working, or sometimes even "hiding" from their young children, unable to understand having to stay away from a parent in the same room, having to leave them alone. Working remotely in a household with children (especially young children) entailed the huge challenge of isolating oneself mentally, spatially, and in terms of time. As one of the women taking part in the survey wrote:

> "My day, from Monday to Friday, has looked the same for two weeks now. I get up at 06:30, shower, have flakes and milk, and sit down to the computer to start work shortly after 7. My 15-month-old daughter wakes at more or less the same time, and then spends the day till 15:00 in other rooms, looked after by her dad. I bunker down in the bedroom, and pretend not to be there. Now and again I hear her laughing, talking in that way of hers, crying. Then I wonder what caused each of those reactions. Sometimes she comes up to my door, and I can see her hand against the glass. That makes me sad. When I want to go to the kitchen or toilet, I write to my husband on Messenger, then he distracts our daughter so she won't realise that I'm at home. And the work in itself, apart from the location, practically hasn't changed. It's just quieter. And I have an uncomfortable chair. I miss my chair most of all." (PS1/184)

Makeshift places for working, their goal being to provide some separation from the others at home, took on various form—from shutting

oneself away in the bedroom, using home equipment as the place of work, or working at the table where the family would eat their meals at the same time. This was an attempt at carving out one's own space, space connected to other social roles. The setting of boundaries frequently involved frustration, exhaustion with the new situation, a feeling of being lost. Ephemeral, temporary boundaries prevailed, boundaries only able to fulfil their functions for a limited time. From the perspective of the first lockdown, such a situation might have seemed temporary, but the prolonging pandemic is bound to bring with it greater challenges and the necessity for a new spatial structuring of our homes.

> *"I'm in a privileged position, because I can work from home with little detriment to my work. I put out the ironing board in my bedroom office and shut the door. The children understand that Dad's at work, and only knock when it's time for a break —and those times are fixed. Some people in my company (production and logistics— I'm in e-commerce, in a small business producing cosmetics) go into work every day, sticking to the cautionary measures. Those who can, work remotely."* (PS1/ 73)

> *"I extended my parental leave, but my dad and my husband are working from home, my husband shuts himself away for 8 hours in the bedroom, in among the dollhouses, princess dresses and celeriac seedlings, and he has videoconferences with his workers. Dad has taken over the dining-room table and is trying to write the instructions for some complicated electronic equipment used in the railways. When he's talking to somebody over the phone we try to be quiet."* (PS1/ 199)

> *"5ᵗʰ day of remote work, and the small home office that I quickly improvised in the bedroom is expanding. It's a good job I have a scanner at home. Everything at once."* (PS1/87)

> *"I'm working remotely. For about 8 hours a day. The laptop and telephone are enough. I don't have a proper place to work, as I'd never worked at home. To begin with I was working in the armchair, then I switched to the sofa so the cat could sleep next to me and not climb onto my keyboard."* (PS1/42)

One of the most frequently submitted photos showed the place of work: the computer, books, a mug of tea, a lamp, and sometimes also a cat. Framing the photo solely on these elements showed how important the place for working had become. It was one of the first zones separated off from the rest of the home space. And these changes may well be a long-term presence in our homes, because whereas remote education seems a temporary development, remote work could become a permanent part of the job market. In the first wave of the pandemic in Poland, in spring 2020, almost 25% of working people aged 16–74 took advantage of the possibility of working remotely (GUS, 2020), while in autumn 2020 this percentage may have been even higher. The situation even forced

amendments to be made to the Labour Code regulating the rules behind remote work.

Places such as balconies took on a new function. Because people were unable to go outside and take a walk, the balcony became a fully-fledged part of the home, a place where people would spend their free time, work, be closer to greenery.

> *"I spend a fair amount of time at the computer, so walks (on my own) are essential. I also suddenly discovered that my little balcony can be an ideal nature window. If only I find a way (and some Earth 😊), then I'll plant it… with anything."* (PS1/ 65)

> *"We're shifting to the balcony today. We're taking out all the blankets and throws, the rugs and cushions, and building a base there. The girls can get some sun through the net keeping the pigeons out. Although I guess they could fly up today. I fall back into a soft pouffe and look up into the pure blue sky—we live on the sixth floor. A police car regularly plies the streets, and the girls know the announcement by heart. We're drinking blueberry shakes and everything seems beautiful, there's a kind of glamour. Today the older girl will make dinner, now she's looking through old photos on the school's website instead of doing her homework. After dinner I'll get down to making another batch of disposable masks, once again cursing and blessing my old Singer. And in the evening I plan to take out the garbage."* (PS1/ 210)

Some of the respondents transformed their previously grey balconies into genuine gardens. This longing for contact with nature, with plants, has become very important. In many posts the authors pointed out that one's garden, even if on a balcony or even as plants on a windowsill, fulfils important therapeutic functions essential for one's mental wellbeing.

THE HOME AS RELATIONSHIP SPACE

The way in which the spring isolation was experienced depended largely on whom, if anybody, the home space was shared with. The experience was by far the most difficult for respondents living with children, especially of school age; they were forced to reconcile remote education and remote work with looking after the youngsters. Those living with one other person, or on their own, wrote less often about difficulties, although of course there were also such posts during the spring lockdown:

> *"Privately, after a week, the process began of putting our relationship as partners to the test. I hope this state of sitting at home comes to an end, because I don't know how long it can last."* (PS1/ 48)

Research by psychologists (Mudło-Głagolska, Larionov 2020) has indicated that women and parents have experienced more psycho-

-emotional problems during the pandemic. In my study, numerous accounts of frustrating and difficult situations showed up in posts from women (mothers). They were often narratives illustrating a process of re-traditionalisation (Krajewski 2020). During the quarantine, women wrote much more often about being over-burdened with home chores, about having to combine home and work responsibilities. This was confirmed in studies conducted by the Sociology Faculty at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Drozdowski et al. 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic revealed how easily women were placed back into traditional roles in running the household and looking after the children. Symptomatic in the Poznań studies was how the men respondents—asked about what they were missing most during the pandemic—most often answered that nothing, while women spoke of having no free time for themselves. Women's submissions are about a sudden turnaround in their everyday lives, related to schools and nurseries being unavailable, while simultaneously having to do their work remotely. This can be seen in the following examples of posts from working mothers:

> *"I've been cooking every day for over a week, I get the impression that days on end are revolving around it. I like cooking, but only occasionally, when I really feel like doing it. It takes up a lot of my time, my thought. I can't stand cooking when I have to, or incidentally. Yet now I have that every day. I do my best to take the needs of everyone in our 4-person family into account. It takes up so much energy…"* (PS1/ 68)

> *"We get up at 6 in the morning. Every day. I think my younger son (3 years old) has already switched to summer time, so we get up at 6 a.m. and go to bed at 9 p.m. (although there are x breaks for getting up for the kid, from 1 to 10, it depends on the day). We get up and try to last till 7 p.m. when our younger boy goes to sleep. It's a kind of daily battle. An endurance test. Beforehand there was the nursery, the grannies and nannies, now it's just the parents. So it's come as a shock on both sides. I try to finish having dinner ready in the morning (let's say by 9). I try to cook for 2 days at a time. During the day I help my older son (nearly 12) with his lessons, but on the whole he's coping pretty resourcefully by himself. Collateral damage: I had to give him my private computer and instal a telephone app for an electronic diary. I get worried when there's no sign of him most of the time (only hunger brings him out). I'm afraid to ask what he's doing all day long :/ I'm only cooking by myself. I made pierogi for the first time in 12 years (or even longer), and ended up with over 100. I have enough for 4 dinners. I've also made buns and home-made pizza (while I can still buy yeast :D) 2) #work. I pretend to work. Unfortunately work at home with a three-year-old is fiction. Although I'm managing with the online classes no problem, but my academic development is, for now at least, still as it was […] My #day and #work interweave. I practically make use of every 10 minutes, even if just to answer some emails. But it's hard. We're all on each other's heads and that's a new situation*

for all of us. Maybe we'll get used to it, maybe not :/ I work when our child's asleep, when my husband tries to reign him in. The kid's also disoriented, as we'd only just managed to successfully get him adapted to nursery (after many battles), and then he was back home :/" (PS1/ 92)

"#work #freetime—they overlap. I work at a university, mainly research, I have a few classes and do some individual tutoring, and supervise a student website. For running my classes, I go in to the empty office, there's no chance of me getting 4 hours for myself in the bedroom (not with a cheeky 4-year-old at home). I do my research in the evening, at night and the early morning before the others—my husband and two kids —get up. During the day such work is out of the question, it's irreconcilable with the children's expectations and needs. Now they need not only my time (remote lessons at home for our eight-year-old, making plasteline dinosaurs, scootering around the living room), but also dinner every day. They used to eat at school, I would only worry about something quick for myself, my husband would eat at work or something. Fried eggs. Pierogi from Mum-in-law. Now it's cooking at full steam, using food we've stocked up on. Whether it's going to be work or free time is something I have to decide every day, at a convenient moment. Then there's exercising, previously at the gym or training sessions. You can't simply stop all exercise, not when you were doing it frequently beforehand. It's all difficult, and usually detrimental to the research, which is left till the evening and night, whilst daytime would be better. But during the day then maybe I'll manage to send some emails using my phone, sometimes more urgent matters over the computer, contact with the student editors, perhaps I'll compile something quickly. The division into work and free time has become really fluid, I miss the boundaries, the framework. I still manage to find the motivation, but for how long? (PS1/ 168).

Some (even most) of the analysed posts, however, revealed positive sides to the isolation. For some respondents, it was a moment for getting the family back, an opportunity to build stronger relations. The fact that the entries analysed come from the first wave of the epidemic, from the first lockdown, should definitely be kept in mind. That was a time when nobody could imagine how long the pandemic and its related restrictions would last. And that entailed a significant mobilisation, an attempt to quickly lay down new rules for the functioning of the family. Also worth realising is that writing about one's experiences in a Facebook group, in a non-anonymous manner, did not encourage the submission of posts about difficult situations, for example involving domestic violence. The positive posts concerned taking advantage of the confinement for deepening relations with other household members, and spending most of one's time with the children or one's partner.

"From my point of view, the four of us sitting at home is really bringing us closer and making us more sensitive towards various things that we hadn't noticed before. My

daughter said: 'Mum, I like being bored when you're next to me', and those words gave me a lot of strength." (PS1/ 37)

"It might sound bad, but for me it's the best time I could have had. Every day I was asking for time for myself, for the children, for us. And I have it. And I really can't get enough. I see the emotions, the moods, the tempers. Selfish… may it last as long as possible, as long as in good health. This time is like winning the lottery. Another win??" (PS1/ 11)

"I try to make sure every day is a chance for another good day with the family. Beforehand that was impossible. I'd say that new #corona-relations are being built." (PS1/ 217)

Some of the posters writing about their experiences emphasised that not much had changed in their lives. These were mainly people already working remotely from home, without children of school age, or older (retired) respondents.

"Has anything changed? Not much for now? #home—My husband and I have 'always' worked from home. I write, and prepare my lectures, while my husband practises and explores the arcana of early music. Being with each other 24 hours a day was already the norm for us, so we haven't seen either any improvement or deterioration in our relations. There's a constancy." (PS1/ 39)

"My husband and I are both in the high risk group, because of our age as well as chronic conditions. But house arrest isn't really bothering us. We're used to it, since I was looking after my bedridden mother for almost eight years, and didn't go out anywhere, while my husband has his work—painting and herbs, so he doesn't need anything else. I look out for signs of spring in the garden, and my husband sits at the computer and complains about time passing too quickly." (PS1/ 29)

A very important connecting element seen in the posts, one strengthening family bonds, was the shared preparation or more frequent shared consumption of meals. Such celebration of eating meals together was presumably rare beforehand in those families. In these descriptions, eating is not just a simple action, essential for survival and serving to satisfy hunger, but has powerful cultural and symbolic significance. As with baking bread, which became iconic during the period of isolation; it became a new and frequently elaborate ritual during the pandemic:

"Making bread is one of those rituals that now somehow let you keep life on track. We've been baking bread, rolls and croissants for ages, mainly Czech-style bread, as I have such a culinary nostalgia. But it was always supplementary. Now it's different. I'm baking a loaf of wheat bread every other day. There's the entire celebration; the day before, in the evening, I get a thick leaven ready, for the bread to rise. Then in the morning I kneed the dough when it rises, and every hour I get up from my work and go to stretch it. Then it goes into a basket, to give it a nice shape, and leave it

to rise for the next couple of hours. And then bake it. Altogether the entire procedure takes until the afternoon. If not for being confined to the home, I'd only have time for such playing around at the weekends. Or not even then, as I would usually spend my weekends in the forest." (PS1/ 253).

The forced free time was spent in one space, and sometimes involved a rediscovery of family relations while watching films, playing board games, taking walks, or exercising together. Some of the respondents therefore managed to experience a positive aspect of the isolation, involving the building of relations, the inclusion of children in carrying out the home chores, or simply through talking with one another more often.

"We get our children involved in most of the home chores. I can see that they're becoming more self-reliant, that they're capable of doing more and more at home. We also go into the forest, to places where we don't come across other people. We all miss the exercise, before the quarantine we'd go to a climbing wall to train a few times a week. Currently we go jogging, climb trees (which I'd never done before). […] We play board games, I read books—including to the children. The children most of all like reading, drawing, building with Lego. They also play on their phones or the console. We've started a mini-garden on the windowsill—with chives, dill, cress and parsley, and we watch how it grows. When on our trips to the forest we observe nature (we've really seen lots of wild animals), and I think nature's really doing well thanks to the pandemic; it deserves it. So, sort of like holidays but with a large dose of uncertainty and anxiety…" (PS1/ 229)

"Usually we preferred resting at home, getting back around 5, outdoors or trips somewhere at the weekends. And that has utterly changed. We fight for every moment outdoors, whenever and however we can—for contact with nature. I see a greater sensitivity towards our surroundings, we soak in every moment. Our little boy has become more attentive. It's wonderful that this long, enforced time of only being with us has placed us in the role of mentors—and I don't think I can recall such a situation in our lives (even though we sought it), because to begin with there was the nanny, then nursery school, then school and his peers. He really misses other children—and we organised a Zoom meeting for him on Friday, it was total madness. There's also a huge sadness—we've lost credibility in his eyes. Parents don't know what, how, why, or until when. The first tensions and frictions appeared after a week. We strive to respond and defuse things as they happen." (PS1/ 217)

The pandemic at home can also be viewed from a child's point of view. The concentration of both interpersonal relations and social roles has resulted in children participating to a broader extent in adults' lives: in jobs at home, the cooking, or discussions about the pandemic. They have become involuntary witnesses to what was previously hidden from them, as belong to the "adults' world". The sudden appearance of a child during a home-based videoconference no longer surprises anybody, and

has become a typical sign of the times rather than an exception. The process of socialisation, in modern times separating the family world from institutions (work, nursery or school), has suddenly narrowed almost as in the pre-modern family, in which children participated with adults in most activities.

THE POST-PANDEMIC HOME—A BROADENED REALITY

The home is a space where one can observe the changes taking place in culture (as broadly understood): the role of women; the division into private and public; appearance of the category of childhood; or the growth of consumerism. Will the pandemic change this part of the life of society? Will it impact the structure of our everyday lives, the intimacy experienced behind the doors to our homes?

The thing that seems most distinct in the forecasts is a deepening of the coexistence of home space with virtual reality. For many, experiencing the period of isolation in spring 2020 adopted the form of augmented reality, as known in digital technology. Our flats, our houses, were to a significant degree connected to a system tying the real world with that generated by computers. This applies not only to the area of work, but also how people spent their free time, how they maintained relations with friends, and family relationships. Numerous posts described online family meetings, new rituals of spending evenings among friends, drinking wine together, discussing, even if it was all done virtually. The impact of technology made an even bigger mark over Easter; the group saw members posting photos from their Easter tables—with a white tablecloth, coloured Easter eggs, and traditional Easter dishes. However, instead of family members around the table there were different types of screen: tablets, computers and televisions, connected to online communication platforms.

Another dimension of the technological expansion of the home space comprised remote work and education. During the pandemic and forced isolation, the home space took on new functions. Market specialists estimate that a few million employees switched to remote work during the pandemic; Poland had never seen anything like it. A Lewiatan questionnaire survey conducted in mid-March revealed that one in five employees were doing their work remotely (among 210 businesses employing a total of 110,000 people), and such an option was available at 88% of the businesses surveyed (Sowa, Kowanda 2020).

In the physical dimension, the technological expansion seems the most obvious change. Time spent before screens, whether with others or on

one's own, is growing, and the organisation of space around these screens is essential. As during the years of the Polish People's Republic, when the furnishing of the living room focused around the television set, which constituted the centre of family life, currently there may be multiple such centres around computer screens within the home space. This could be reflected in a new kind of spatial planning, with a more distinct separation of zones with screens than hitherto seen, or the construction of soundproof walls allowing household members to use different screens at the same time. In the *Pandemia Stories PL* research group, I posed a question about changes planned for the home space, and some members answered in line with the above hypothesis.

> *"Flats vary. Maybe soundproofing? I'm planning to reorganise the boys' room, to give them more space at their computers. And I'm wondering about dividing their room with a soundproof partition."* (PS 2/ 18)

> *"I'm considering replacing the doors inside :-) or putting extruded coverings on the rooms' walls, because when everybody's at home, on remote, on Zoom, Teams, with microphones and all that, then the barking of a dog left on its own in the hall risks a huge quarrel."* (PS2/16)

> *"My partner and I live in a flat of 40 m²—a living room with a kitchen and small bedroom without a door. We don't have a kitchen table (currently it's my "desk"). We've been working remotely since March, our desks are right next to each other, we find it hard to work when the other has a videoconference and is speaking to the microphone. It's also harder to hide away when you get a migraine attack or feel weak, and it ends up with you going into the bathroom or downstairs to the car. For a while we hoped that somehow we'd stick it out till the end of the pandemic, just last till we made it back to the offices—but our hope vanished, literally, in October. Now we're going to look for a flat with at least three rooms—they can be small, but there have to be walls and doors, we must have our own corners, and we want to have a kitchen table ☺. While we were still going to work it was all right to have a small and cosy home, without certain functions, but now that we're in it non-stop, our priorities have really changed and we'll probably never go back to such a small place. So, for the two of us, our flat and home is changing, and I believe for always."* (PS2/6)

> *"I'm actually designing a house in which there are more smaller and closed rooms, like a study or office, and a very large patio. There was also the suggestion of a self-contained apartment with its own sanitary unit and separate entrance (in the event of quarantine or illness). And, in the large pantry, a large freezer chest… So some things are changing."* (PS2/27)

Another change in the physical dimension of the post-pandemic home may be connected to a more keenly-felt need for contact with nature. One could therefore speak of another "expansion" of the home

space, but this time—rather than technological—related to nature. Such "green" expansions may involve the transformation of balconies into mini-gardens, starting a home garden, or even increasing the number of pot plants on windowsills.

> *"And in addition more plants, in pots, on plates, in the colours used in the home, as compensation when not really having anywhere to go… as well as decluttering the space, decluttering one's head…"* (PS2/4)

> *"Now, though, I'm wondering whether to start a small garden by our block—a garden we chose to discontinue in 2013 because nobody wanted to see to the soil and the plants. However, I'm still put off of the idea a little by neighbours chucking waste out of their window…"* (PS2/8)

> *"Not everybody can afford to build a house, but an allotment with some kind of tool shed isn't that expensive. We were given the use of such an allotment in March and saw families on walks several times who would ask us whether anybody wanted to sell their usage rights. There were a dozen or so such telephone calls to the allotments' director every day. A longing for greenery has been awakened in us. If I have to stay at home, in my own place, then let it be connected to nature somehow."* (PS2/8)

SUMMARY

We speak of resilient cities, and a similar discussion could begin in regard to our homes, our flats and houses. Just as the current climate crisis will most probably change the demand for certain functions in the home, likewise the home experience during the pandemic and its related confinement could prove the impulse for redesigning the features, spaces, and functions of the home. Apart from the technological changes referred to in the paper, or those connected to greenery, they could also embrace air conditioning, more space for food stocks, or wi-fi access as the most important technological element in the home, and a suitable number of devices such as computers or tablets. Modifications in the physical space could impact relations between household members, while also altering the home's symbolic dimension. From today's perspective it would be hard to describe such changes with certainty. However, it is worth observing and investigating the changes in the physical space of our homes—as they could prove a symptom of significantly more important social transformations.

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Abstract

The article presents the results of research conducted in March and April 2020 on changes in everyday life during the general quarantine in Poland. The analysis was based on entries and visual data (photos, drawings, memes) collected at that time in a group specially established for research on Facebook named Pandemia Stories PL. The article focuses on the observed changes in the use of houses/apartments in the context of physical space and changes affecting interpersonal relationships. The summary contains theses about the likely changes after the end of the Covid 19 pandemic: increasing the role of technology and nature in the home space.

key words: pandemic, house, space, human relations, everyday life

ŻYCIE CODZIENNE W (POST)PANDEMICZNYCH DOMACH

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A b s t r a k t

Artykuł zawiera wyniki badań prowadzonych w marcu i kwietniu 2020 roku na temat zmian w życiu codziennym podczas powszechnej kwarantanny w Polsce.

Analiza została oparta na wpisach i przekazach wizualnych (zdjęcia, rysunki, memy) zebranych w tym czasie w specjalnie powołanej do celów badawczych grupie Pandemia Stories PL na portalu Facebook. Autorka skupia się na zaobserwowanych zmianach w zakresie użytkowania mieszkania jako przestrzeni fizycznej i ich wpływie na relacje międzyludzkie. W podsumowaniu znalazły się tezy mówiące też o zmianach, które prawdopodobnie nastąpią po zakończeniu pandemii Covid 19, czyli o spodziewanym zwiększeniu roli technologii i przyrody w przestrzeni domowej.

słowa kluczowe: pandemia, dom, przestrzeń, relacje międzyludzkie, życie codzienne