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UNCOMMON DAILY LIFE/DAILY UNCOMMONNESS EVERYDAY LIFE UNDER CONDITIONS OF RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

Abstract. According to the proponents of the sociology of everyday life, the practices of everyday life maintain the order of social life. Berger and Luckmann argue that such practices are characterised by habitualness and unreflectiveness; they seem natural and self-evident, not requiring justification. However, their statement is no longer valid. It was not only the COVID-19 pandemic that violently disrupted the established order of everyday life. Even before the pandemic, processes of social change had occurred, and these processes shattered the unified vision of the world, the *nomos* in which all social practices found their justification. The sheer multiplicity of knowledge and belief systems that now exist, as legitimate as they are, forces individuals to be reflexive and to make choices from among different patterns of action. At the same time, new processes of change are constantly taking place that challenge the validity of previous choices. The COVID-19 pandemic did not start these processes, but it did exacerbate these processes. The question for researchers is how do individuals construct the order of their everyday life in these uncertain and risky conditions, an order whose constancy and predictability, as Giddens states, has always been a bulwark against fear and insecurity.

Keywords: everyday life, pandemic COVID-19, uncertainty, daily practices.

1. Introduction

The pandemic that has lasted for the last two years has undermined the obviousness and naturalness of the rhythm of everyday life and the content that fills it. Attending school and going out to work marked a clear separation of spheres and types of social activities and organised the order of the day. Suddenly this order was

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shattered. Daily life had to be organised anew, certain activities were removed and new ones were introduced. This was accomplished by adapting one space and one sphere of life to carry out practices that had hitherto been separated into different dimensions of social functioning, and by introducing new practices into the rituals of everyday life. This new situation was accompanied by various emotions; at the turn of 2020 and 2021, 66% of Poles feared being infected with the virus, including 22% who feared it very much (CBOS 2021), while 23% of Poles considered the restrictions introduced at the very beginning of the epidemic, in May 2020, to be excessive (CBOS 2020). Anxiety, fear, sometimes indignation and anger constituted an emotional reaction to the restrictions directly affecting the private sphere and home and family life and depriving individuals of choices. Daily rituals and habits had to be modified, which increased the sense of anxiety, for “habits and routine action are the most important bastion of defence against the individual’s threatening fears” (Giddens 2001: 55). How, then, did individuals cope with maintaining this bastion when breakthroughs appeared in it for reasons entirely beyond their control? How did they try to maintain their everyday “normality”, and what patterns did they resort to? The appearance of a deadly infectious disease, a threat out of control, was on the one hand a shock, as we no longer feared such diseases. On the other hand, the appearance of such a threat is part of the experience of the members of a societies at are at risk. Uncertainty was already a regular part of their experience. Did this experience in any way help those societal members to cope with the situation of the epidemic? The instability of the conditions of social functioning that are characteristic of postmodern society means that the ability to adapt to constant change has become one of the basic skills an individual should possess. This applies above all to cultural and structural changes, and to changes in the social order. Everyday practices, the essence of which has always been constancy and repetition, have to be inserted into this rapidly changing (Rosa 2020) framework. How, then, was this everydayness created and maintained in a doubly uncertain time, the spread of a deadly infectious disease in a society subject to such rapid change?

2. Everyday life as a category of sociological description

Everyday life has become of particular interest to those theoretical currents in sociology that have opposed functionalism. Its theorists consider that the essence of social life is what happens between people. They assume that society is the product of individual actions taken as a reaction to the actions of others. Its order is sustained and produced in interpersonal relations. The sociology of everyday life had primarily two theoretical sources, symbolic interactionism, as pioneered by G.H. Mead, and phenomenological sociology, as supported by Alfred Schütz (Szacki 2002). What both of these theoretical currents have in common is the recognition of what takes

place between individuals as the main focus of sociology. The essence of social life is the forms of individual activities undertaken in everyday relations with others.

In sociology, everydayness and everyday life do not appear as separate conceptual categories that require a clear definition of their fields of designations. They are usually treated as complementary terms that do not require an explanation of the meanings behind them. Representatives of the theoretical currents that consider everyday life to be the proper subject of sociology do not find it necessary to define them, as they are simply the social world and as such do not require a special definition. Alfred Schütz, writing about the reality of the everyday world, does not focus on explaining what he means by this reality. Rather, by pointing out intersubjective character of everydayness and the ordering and significance of individual interpretations and experience, he shows that the everydayness is that basic reality, the social world in which the individual acts, further strengthening this thesis by showing the differences between it and other types of reality experienced by individuals, such as the dream world (Schütz 2008). For him, this everyday world is the quintessential social world. The fundamental property of this reality is that its intersubjective nature is shared with others. It is the conviction of individuals that the surrounding reality means the same thing to others, that they give it the same meaning, that is central to the existence of social life. "The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification above and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity" (Berger, Luckmann 1983: 55). The fundamental feature of this reality, according to representatives of phenomenological sociology, is its unreflective character. The same forms of individual and social activity, repeated daily, sustain the conviction that the world is as it seems and as it should be. This makes the reality of the social world stable and predictable and the social order maintainable (Berger, Luckmann 1983).

In his anthology *Socjologia codzienności* (Sociology of Everydayness), Piotr Sztompka presents the sociology of everyday life as a third sociology, proposing a new paradigm in sociology that overcomes the limitations of previous theoretical perspectives. The book's title suggests that he considers the terms everyday life and everydayness as complementary (Sztompka 2008). Roch Sulima takes a different view, clearly distinguishing between the meanings of the two terms. For him, everyday life refers to the set of practices carried out within it, while everydayness is, as he puts it, a "figure of thought" linked to a specific historical time (Sulima 2011). Taking his distinction into account, it should be stated that sociologists are interested in both everyday life and everydayness. Everyday life, because the practices performed within daily life that make up what they call social life. However, in order for these practices to constitute this everyday life, they must be accompanied by a conviction that they are something obvious and natural, by a conviction that there is an order to everydayness, a mindset of everydayness is and should be. In characterising everyday life, Sztompka stresses that it encompasses all forms of

activity that are carried out in the presence of other people and in a social context. It therefore includes both the profane and the sacred (Sztompka 2008). Talking over dinner, shopping, walking the dog, attending Sunday service, and getting married are all practices that compose the content that fills everyday life.

3. Everyday life and postmodernity

Everyday life is characterised by an ordered system of realised activities that take on through their repetition the character of routine, unreflective practices. The institutionalisation of these practices ensures the stability of social life, which is maintained and reproduced through the practices. Talking about the weather with the neighbour, chatting in the neighbourhood shop, exchanging comments over Sunday lunch, arguing about who should take out the rubbish – all these practices maintain the order not only of everyday reality, but also of the social world. The importance of these everyday practices in stabilising the social order and the belief in the social order is very well demonstrated by Fritz Schütze using an example taken from Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (Schütze 1997). In the scene, Joseph K. tries to convince himself that his arrest that morning is just a figment of his imagination. He attempts to renormalise everyday reality by talking to his landlady, supposing that if the conversation goes on as usual, the order of his daily life, disturbed by the morning event, would be restored. The importance of daily practices, habits and routines in creating and sustaining different forms of social life is also shown by research. Family bonding and a sense of shared identity are achieved through, among other methods, shared meals and the rituals that accompany them (Spagnola, Fiese 2007; Wright-St Clair et al. 2005). Family rituals are also important means of socialisation (Schuck, Bucky 1997). A structured daily life has a positive effect on a child's development, well-being and social skills, and the rituals present are also conducive to a positive effect (Spagnola, Fiese 2007; Malaquias et al. 2015).

Berger and Luckmann emphasise that the world of everyday life is treated as obvious and natural and does not demand justification. It does not need to do so, because routine activities and habits are rooted in a specific, holistic, shared vision of the world containing their justifications, while their final validation is present in the symbolic universe, that is, an integrated system of shared, ultimate meanings and senses that link the past with the present (Berger, Luckmann 1983). In other words, at the core of everyday life and routine practices is a commonly shared vision of reality, a shared conviction of how this reality should be. The processes of social development and the increasing social complexity of connections between individuals, however, mean that the sense of shared connections with others is weakening. One of the main processes mentioned by sociologists is a process that accompanies the transition of societies from the industrial to the post-modern era: the process of individualisation. The increasing network of interconnectedness

between people weakens the sense of belonging and identification with specific social groups and categories. It increases the sense of subjectivity in the individual himself. The individual's identity, once constructed in close relation to the "we", is now constructed as the "I" in relation to the "we" (Elias 2009). The culture of contemporary society is a culture of individualism, in which obligations to oneself are replacing former obligations to one's group and society (Jacyno 2007). The place of the old communities is taken by neo-tribes, which are short-lived communities that are centred around commonly-shared emotions, or sensory impressions (Maffesoli 2008).

Perhaps the most important process that affects the shape of the practices of everyday life is the disintegration of an overall, holistic vision of the world, the normatively ordered system of meanings and rules that underpin the recognised social order. This is what Peter Berger calls the *nomos* (Berger 1997). Disintegration occurs when one comprehensive system of rules, knowledge, symbols and meanings relating to the entire social reality experienced by individuals breaks down into several equally existing systems of legitimation (Kaufmann 2004). Thus, different visions of the world exist side by side, justifying and legitimising different forms of the same social practices. We are witnessing the presence of this diversity in the reality that is around us. It is no longer tradition, direct generational transmission, family, community or social class pressures that shape everyday practices. It is the market and expert systems that become the source of knowledge and patterns of action (Beck 2002; Giddens 2001). Thus knowledge that is based upon science becomes one of knowledge and belief systems, and it must compete with the other systems for the attention of audiences. Disintegration was followed by a process that Beck called the demonopolisation of cognition (Beck 2002). A very good example of demonopolisation is the views on the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those connected to vaccines and immunisation. The system of knowledge and belief in which vaccines help, and the system of knowledge and belief in which vaccines harm both contain explanations and arguments that are similarly convincing to their proponents, regardless of the fact that the arguments are different and represent different visions of the reality around us. On the one hand we have faith in science, on the other hand we have distrust of science. The presence of multiple, equivalent schemes that regulate the same sphere of practice undermines the possibility of unreflective, routine behaviour and triggers reflexivity. No social practice is obvious and natural anymore, each practice requires reference to any of the knowledge and belief systems. The individual is confronted with the need to make a choice and justify it (Kaufmann 2004). Making and justifying a choice requires reference to a particular system of knowledge and beliefs creating a system of legitimisation for the chosen patterns of practice. All such choices define who he or she is and what group he or she identifies with.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann believe that institutionalisation of social practices that imposes one pattern of action has a positive meaning, because the

individual receives a clear message of how he or she should act, eliminating the need to think about which pattern of action to recognise as his or her own. However, this is no longer the case today. The individual is forced to make choices. Therefore, the following question can be asked: how is everyday life, life that is filled with repetitive activities that pass into routines and habits, created in a postmodern reality? How is a stabilised order of everyday life achieved in such a rapidly changing reality, and how are knowledge and patterns of practices deemed to be appropriate? Do the everyday worlds of individuals that refer to divergent knowledge and belief systems differ from each other, and, if yes, then by how far? Which systems do individuals reach for in an age of demonopolisation of cognition? How do they cope with everyday life under the threat of a deadly infectious disease?

4. Unusual everyday life during a pandemic

Almost all the texts in this issue deal with issues related to how individuals have functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of heightened uncertainty and anxiety. Here was the appearance of a deadly infectious disease that forced the implementation of many new daily practices (such as the wearing of masks), limitations to be placed upon many other ordinary tasks (such as walking or shopping), and the reorganisation of the order of daily life (such as the transfer of work and study to the domestic space). There appeared a kind of social laboratory, a laboratory in which conditions of uncertainty and risk intensified. The only source of knowledge about the virus and how to protect oneself from it, as well as how to deal with the pandemic in general an infected situation, were expert systems. Many such systems appeared, and they communicated different content, some of which was incompatible with or even contradictory to each other. At the same time, as is often the case in a risk society, the responsibility for eliminating the threat was placed on individuals, because, as the experts agreed, it was primarily individuals' compliance with the recommendations and norms (i.e. how to behave in a pandemic) that determined the spread of the virus and the disease. The pandemic-derived situation was superimposed upon the situation of uncertainty linked to the social changes that were already taking place. As a result, we all found ourselves in such a social laboratory, forced to function in specific, previously unknown, conditions, faced with new challenges, while at the same time having to continue our normal, everyday lives. Accordingly, we may ask several questions. How did we cope in this laboratory? What sort of attitudes to danger were revealed? What knowledge and belief systems were most frequently used? What practices and their patterns were followed in order to cope with the threat while trying to lead a normal, everyday life?

Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2004: 151) argues that "man does not have habits, but consists of habits [...]". It is these habits that determine the rhythm of daily life. At the same time, he points out that it is extremely difficult to get rid of habits and

introduce new ones in their place. This is because they are strongly internalised; even the body resists any attempt to change them. However, as they are strongly linked to individual identity, the transformation of habits is encouraged by any event that modifies some dimension of it. These types of events, such as a change of job or place of residence, occur more frequently now than before. In addition, contemporary individuals, forced to be reflexive and make choices, introduce micro-changes into their lives that do not go unnoticed in the routine of their daily lives. Kaufmann believes that in introducing micro-changes, individuals directly influence the formation of consumption patterns and the direction of social change. Through small decisions, whether they drink tea, celebrate name days, or listen to audiobooks, individuals decide which practices become commonplace, and which behaviours are institutionalised (Kaufmann 2004).

Simon Duncan sees these processes somewhat differently. Based on a study of inactive and active mothers, he concluded that their behaviour is not so much the result of reflexive choices as an adaptation to a situation existing in a particular social context, taking into account social expectations and norms (Duncan 2011).

Dale Southerton, on the other hand, points out that understanding habits and routines as automatic, unreflective practices is a significant impoverishment of the meanings associated with them. In trying to understand at least the way in which they are reproduced, it is necessary to look at them more broadly, realising that by habits and routines, we mean both the dispositions and sequences of an activity, as well as the procedures. In addition, it is difficult to talk about them without considering the temporal context in which they take place (Southerton 2013).

Everyday life under pandemic conditions could not continue unchanged. The sense of danger, the prohibition of direct contact with relatives, the limited opportunities to leave the house – all of these shattered the previously established daily routine. Routine activities had to be modified. The articles presented in this issue give at least a rough idea of (1) how this modification took place; (2) to what extent it was a result of reflexive choice, and to what extent it was an adaptation to the situation; (3) what these modifications were connected with and composed; (4) whether a procedure fundamentally changed, or changes to its the sequences or time involved were altered. Furthermore, we gain insights into which sources of knowledge prevailed, whether new practices emerged, and which practices were suspended or abandoned. The authors of most of the texts try to determine how the respondents dealt with the organisation of this unusual everyday life. I encourage you to read on.

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NIECODZIENNA CODZIENNOŚĆ/CODZIENNA NIECODZIENNOŚĆ ŻYCIE CODZIENNE W WARUNKACH RYZYKA I NIEPEWNOŚCI

Abstrakt. Według przedstawicieli socjologii życia codziennego to praktyki codzienności utrzymują ład społecznego życia. Berger i Luckmann charakteryzując te praktyki, podkreślają, że cechuje je nawykowość i bezrefleksyjność, wydają się naturalne i oczywiste, niewymagające uzasadnienia. To ich stwierdzenie nie jest już aktualne. Nie tylko pandemia COVID-19 gwałtownie naruszyła ustalony porządek codzienności. Już wcześniej zachodzące procesy przemian społecznych rozbiły jednolitą wizję świata, nomos, w której wszelkie praktyki społeczne znajdowały swe uzasadnienie. Wielość istniejących obecnie systemów wiedzy i przekonań, tak samo prawomocnych, zmusza jednostki do refleksyjności i dokonywania wyborów pośród różnych schematów działania. Jednocześnie wciąż zachodzą zmiany podważające słuszność dotychczasowych wyborów. Pandemia COVID-19 tylko pogłębiła te procesy. Pytaniem jest, w jaki sposób jednostki budują ład swego codziennego życia w tych niepewnych i pełnych różnych ryzyk warunkach, ład, którego stałość i przewidywalność, jak stwierdza Giddens, była zawsze bastionem przeciwko lękom i poczuciu niepewności.

Słowa kluczowe: życie codzienne, pandemia COVID-19, niepewność, praktyki codzienności.