Rosta
Lada
Jiri

"We are 'in war' with SARS-CoV-2/COVID 19."

Prague, Czech Republic, 10 March – 15 June 2020

Corona diaries: dispatches from Prague

We are a team of 3 researchers living in Prague (Czech Republic). In January 2020 we started to work on a new project concerned with human-microbial coexistence in the Czech Republic. To find a footing in the current crisis, we created a joint diary "Fieldnotes from the SARS-CoV-2 state of emergency" on March 10, just a few days before the call for Corona Diaries was issued. Initially, we kept the diary in Czech. We switched to English later. As we were translating the notes into English for the Corona Diaries project, we observed a simple rule: we did not add any new material, did not add retrospective commentary, but we did shorten some of the entries a bit. We decided to anonymize our names and the names of the people we mention in the diary (except for public figures) for the purpose of its publication on boasblogs.org.

Jiri, March 10

Last day of lectures at Charles University. Afternoon lecture: Philosophy and Poetry. One of the students claimed that he considered the new regulations to be fascist. He suggested we continue our lectures in an informal way. The teacher was pleased by his interest but declined his suggestion. The teacher would be responsible if something happened.

Rosta, March 12

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Things have been moving quickly. A month ago the virus seemed to be a concern of the far East Asia, safely localized outside of the “developed world”. Two weeks ago it was closer but still safely afar in Italy. To some, only a week ago, holiday makers going to or back from ski resorts in northern Italy looked like heroes resisting the alarmism of local epidemiologists. To others they might have looked like irresponsible individuals, but still individuals, hazarding with their own health. Within a few days China and Italy stopped being countries far away and became places that granted us insights into our possible future (only two or three weeks ahead).

Since Thursday we have a state of emergency in the country, the assembling of people, as well as daily activities, traveling abroad and many economic activities are severely restricted. We are “in war” with SARS-CoV-2/COVID 19. People are advised to observe physical distance from each other, avoid touching dangerous surfaces, wash hands regularly. They are also advised not to panic, keep working as far as possible, and not hoard food.

On Tuesday, when the gatherings of more than 100 people were banned, I could not resist going to pharmacy and get my thyroid medication, which I get on prescription from my endocrinologist. They did not have them in the first pharmacy and offer me an alternative brand (this is the first time it happens in the 10 years I have been taking this medication). I say, I will ask in a different pharmacy, but feel a bit insecure. In the next pharmacy, they do have the medication I need and I fill all the refills available on the current prescription (possibly enough for half a year). I feel a bit ashamed to fill all the refills but cannot resist the temptation.

I walk the city, meet less people on the streets than usual, everyone seems to be on the phone. Many people are trying to figure out what they will do with their kids as schools would close the following day. I buy a little more of my favorite food than usual, for instance half a kilo of Ethiopian coffee beans. In the shop I observe what I touch and how other people behave. It seems to me hardly anybody is doing things

differently than usual. There may be a longer queue. The shop cashier tries to be nice and talk to customers. When she speaks, she sputters, I think. In any case, she is a good candidate to become the vehicle of contagion.

On Thursday, as the emergency state is declared, it is also announced that the current session of the Parliament is suspended until April. Supposedly, the MPs could transmit the virus to their home regions. Understandable. However, I don't accept that we are not informed how the MPs will work alternatively. Fuck! The declaration of the state of emergency is similarly unpersuasive. The prime minister still poses as if he is going to save "our people" from the virus instead of explaining that the declaration of emergency is a strategy of expanding the spread of the disease over time, and how the time gained will be used.

The country seems to be governed by the epidemiologist Prymula, who is the deputy minister of Health. The Minister of finance says in prime time on public TV: "What the epidemiologist says, the government implements". It is good that expertise gets priority, however I would rather like to hear there is a body of experts than a single person, even if he looks competent.

"The country seems to be governed by the epidemiologist"

Jiri, March 12

State of emergency is declared. I received a phone call from a friend as I stand in the

courtyard in front of my office. My friend Alena wants to fly off to Switzerland to be with her boyfriend. Switzerland is added to the list of "dangerous countries" during our call. Images that run through my mind: emigration, stories of 1968…

Another friend of mine (currently on Erasmus program in Germany) supposedly got a "university email" that offered pieces of advice on how to cross the borders („get off the train before the train approaches the borders…"). I am not sure whether to believe such stories. As if the imagination was transformed by the images of secret crossings of the borders in the woods, images of checkpoints etc.

In the evening, I meet few friends in a cafe (situated above Wenceslas Square). Everyone is confused, they talk about the im/possibility of finishing their exams, about precarity, about a lack of financial resources… One of the friends says: „My mom got these flashbacks: pieces of advice given to her by her mom about how to survive in the war– so she bought a lot of canned food that would last for a long time…"

I feel the change of the daily rhythm: almost everything is slowing down, my attention is captivated by the present. My email box is not overfilled as usual with tasks, I cancel all meetings and clear my calendar. My diary is empty for a while. The timelessness is given rhythm by the press conferences of the prime minister.

Reading recommendations circulated via Facebook: The Plague (Camus), Love in the Time of Cholera, Homo Sacer…

Jiri, March 13

A lot of my friends (mostly leftists) praise Roman Prymula, the deputy of Czech Minister of Health – they see in him a combination of an expert and a "wise old man". I would however appreciate more complex reflection on the government measures

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and current situation: analysis of biopower in the time of Covid. The Prime Minister Babiš is personally visiting the warehouses to manifest that there is no shortage of food. At the same time, it is not clear what the government's plan for the following month is; there is a lack of information, while the restrictions multiply. Prymula says that the government can mandate wearing of face masks, while the Minister of Health admits there is a dramatic lack of masks. Babiš declares that he will personally deliver masks wherever they are needed – a performative of governance.

Bus drivers are isolated in their cabins – cabins are wrapped in yellow plastic stripes to signal the physical distance people should observe.

I fought the OCD few years back – I had to learn how to restrict some bodily acts, but now these bodily acts became an official recommendation; cleaning practices that used to be destroying my mind could now save my health.

> "Cleaning practices that used to be destroying my mind could now save my health."

Rosta, March 14

I went outside only in the afternoon for a jog in the local park. I changed the way of leaving the house a few days ago. I do not touch the door knob (touched by my neighbors) but open the door with a key, to avoid contaminating my hands. On the street, I try to avoid people.

There is a lot of people in the park, the garden restaurant is apparently selling drinks

in some form of “emergency regime”. People meet and gather, talk and laugh (and sputter on each other I cannot help thinking). The atmosphere is as if nothing extraordinary was happening, or as if Czechs will “Švejk” it.

Going back home I drop into a small shop run by the Vietnamese. I think it is better shop at a small shop rather than at a crowded supermarket. Moreover, both the cashier and the girl cleaning the shop wear face masks and gloves, I can smell the disinfectant. Those guys from Asia, they are prepared, wow! With the Vietnamese, we would manage the virus, am not so about the Czechs.

Jiri, March 14

My parents own a little food shop in the countryside. They try to procure masks for their employees and for themselves. They attempt to buy few respirators via an online shop, they end up having to block the payment: it was probably a fraud. Local mayor asks them if they could deliver food to senior citizens. They are to leave the shopping bags on the doorsteps.

Reading The Guardian: Boris Johnson relies on the “nudge theory”. Tony Yates, former professor of economics, points out that Johnson on the press conference „was flanked and followed by his scientific advisers, a visual reinforcement of the message that the government is trusting the science – and knows what it’s doing. But the UK’s strategy is an outlier. If the nudgers have got it right, why are so many other countries taking a very different view of the “science”?

Jiri, March15

My parents secure their food shop. They provide the hygiene supplies for their

employees. In addition, they create corridors between shelves marked by a rope to navigate customers movement inside the shop (for example to keep the distance from the till). It is a rope-labyrinth. Their friend, a glassblower, is going to make a Perspex shields for them – my parents are going to put it up as a protection when sitting at the till. They also put away few of the shopping carts to be sure that only few customers can go inside the shop at a time. The customers can't form a long queue inside the shop. These are improvised strategies negotiating security, a safe space implemented by ropes and shopping carts and Perspex.

Rosta, March 16

Wow, Jiri's parents are the heroes of everyday. Responsible and inventive. Much respect!

A quotation from an email sent by my colleague from my university department: "We will see how many lectures will be missed. The dean's measures have been further tightened. From tomorrow on, individual consultations, state exams etc. will be banned until further notice. Today, one of my PhD students defended her thesis, we were holding our breath till the last moment afraid that the defense will not happen. Thankfully, it did."

I replied: "I hope you all had face masks today and kept the physical distance, otherwise this was rather irresponsible. You will not know 'what actually happened' for another 2 weeks. I would expect that people with a PhD will be more aware of the risks and will model leadership."

His message pissed me off, rather. By the same logic, people returned from Italy 5 minutes before the midnight to avoid the duty to self-isolate for 14 days.

I was feeling low in the afternoon, ideas of what all can get fucked as the whole

Europe is shaken run through my head wildly. In the evening, I joined a yoga class posted online daily by Prague Yoga Collective. It was nice. I felt calm afterwards and thought that it was really necessary to live in the NOW, not in the future.

Rosta, March 17

It is deep night and I have just eaten my dinner, my time schedule totally shifted. I get a good night's sleep every day, even if I don't sleep longer than usual. I even have not needed much coffee over the last days. In some respect, the quarantine suits me very well. It in fact codifies my way of life as a new norm – work from home, social distancing – I do not need to explain to anyone that I am not all too keen to attend a departmental meeting at 9am. Yesterday, I didn't even go out at all, except to take out the trash. Normally I cannot imagine I would not go out for a walk, but now I do not feel any need to do so. I exercise at home, a bit of kettlebell training, and hour of yoga and feel like I have enough movement.

My dad calls in the afternoon. He is standing in front of a pharmacy where he bought a disinfectant, he tells me. Before that, he bought beer in Billa. He tells me he is having a smoke in front of the pharmacy now, but it is difficult with the face mask. I imagine him. My mom is at home and is going a bit crazy from COVID, he is fine. Dad asks me if I have a face mask and when I say "not yet", he offers to bring me some the next day. Supposedly they have 20 masks at home, two respirators which my sister gave them and some two more masks of higher quality that my father bought recently. I am rather surprised how well-equipped they are.

In the evening, I take the yoga class, and afterwards I feel calm and centered. I finish commenting the students' annotations to Annemarie Mol's *The body multiple*. Only two out of 23 students discuss COVID in their assignment.

The empty streets give me calm and I hope they will never fill up again with tourists

as they were before the pandemic. Venice is crying, it will be poorer, but there is an opportunity to "do" cities differently. I think that nothing else than such a tough strike could turn down the madness of global movement.

> "The empty streets give me calm and I hope they will never fill up again with tourists as they were before the pandemic."

It is amazing to see the energy with which the ordinary Czechs started to sew, share and distribute face masks. It might not have a strong epidemiological effect, but it has a huge significance for the society's good spirit—the masks connect people both metaphorically and literally. It helps people feel as if "we" have things in "our hands" again. Even if there is a risk that people would feel illusive safety with masks on their face, it is definitely good for the immunity of the society.

Lada, March 17

I stopped by to check on my neighbor on Sunday to see if she needed anything. It was her 76th birthday, it turns out. She is taken care of. She invited me in, as always. I made sure I did not touch anything, tried to sit away from her, but still felt uneasy: A conflict of the social codes and a novel sense of responsibility not to endanger her.

The balconies in the house are being repaired. Quarantine, or no quarantine. More importantly, to access the balconies, the workers keep passing through my

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neighbor's flat. This is a nuisance on its own. She talks about how it tires her (she needs to get up at 6 am, cannot lie down to rest during the day till they are gone). It only dawns on me later how much this practice puts her in danger. The construction works carry on without any protective measures being taken– both the workers and my old neighbor might be exposed to the virus and infect each other.

Masks: Yesterday, I "scolded" my mom for not wearing a face mask when out in public (she lives in a small town). She would feel weird to wear a face mask, since no one else wears them. Yet today, she shares instructions with me on how to make one even without a sewing machine (I told her yesterday how I had been regretting not to have one, mostly to mend my clothes, but now it would come in handy for the masks).

Walking the streets: Yesterday, I did not see many face masks, today most of the people sport one. Moreover, most of the people have a proper one-time-use face masks. Where are they all getting them? Supposedly, there is a lack of such masks, but so far most of the people wear store-bought masks, I only see few of the home-made ones. P. made herself an improvised mask out of a shawl, I covered my face with a "I love my clit" T-shirt. Since we have moved only recently, most of my clothes is still elsewhere. I really do not have a choice of T-shirts I could use. But it also feels as an excuse, as an opportunity to be ridiculous and unruly in the public space and make preposterous masks. I take the "mask" off to catch fresh air whenever there are no other people around.

We meet a man without a mask – I watch him judgingly. Yesterday, I was not wearing a mask myself, today I observe it as a norm, as something I have to wear not to put other people in danger.

Once we get home, P. improvises more functional face masks. My close friend sends us a picture of her new mask that her partner made for her as she needs to go to work the next day. I jokingly ask if he will do some for us too, she asks ironically, if

they should send them by a post – we do not expect to be able to meet face-in-face soon. Earlier in the day, she shared her frustration over her neighbor repeatedly offering to lend her a sewing machine. My friend is angry that everyone assumes that all women can sew, simply because they are women. “Is it an automatic woman’s capacity?” In the past, she had been incessantly called out for not being good at “women’s jobs”. A badly sewn-on button once makes a forever stigma, she says.

We skype with another friend in the evening, we all parade our masks. She found an old respirator. Wearing it outside makes people take elaborate moves to avoid her assuming she is infected/infectious. But, she also passed two men who wore a mask and they exchanged a nod of recognition. The wearing of a mask creates divisions. But it also functions as a new symbol of belonging and solidarity, a sign of the newly emerging collectivity.

Amidst all of this I experience a strange sense of security. Why? It might be the calmness of knowing that P. and I can stay together, at least for now.. I know complications will return as we will need to –again—deal with the visa and residency permission. I know it will also get more complicated as we watch the crisis unravel in the US. Already now, we read the news with fear, we are scared to see how quickly the situation gets worse. We are enraged with how the state gives zero fucks about its people and how it fails to protect its citizens. We are scared for our family, for our friends, for our disabled/crip community. I am more scared for A’s parents than for my mom and my family here. Seeing all this, it feels like living a “phase shift” – the US being several days delayed. Looking at the situation in the US, it feels as if we were recognizing ourselves a few days back in our ignorance and negligence.

Lada, March 18

As I read Rosta’s fieldnotes, I look out of the window. The paving of the street is

being repaired. I watch the workers confer with each other, two of them wear improvised masks made out of a scarf. A postwoman passes by, not wearing a mask. As she touches her face and rubs her nose, I want to shout to her 'Don't, nooooo'. This morning, a colleague from Germany writes to check in. I am moved by her concern if P. could leave safely/or stay. I too write to friends and colleagues abroad, to see if they are okay, and how they are doing. It has become a regular round of check-ins. reaching out also to those I have not heard from in a while.

Perhaps I am slowly adjusting? It is calming to see how much the number of emails reduced, it seems to me people are gentler with each other. It seems that it is understood that many negotiate care — which is normally overlooked. The students at my department send all the teachers a collective email sharing how difficult the situation is for most of them. They are finding it hard to keep up with the requirements of courses in the new on-line mode.

Jiri, March 18

My friend told me that I should thoroughly observe my cat's behavior because cats are professionals in handling quarantines. They are genetically developed to live in an isolation, I was told. It sounds a little exaggerated, but I´ll give it a try.

I organize my day into shorter periods of time. I work, I rest, I exercise, I take a shower, I fall asleep with a cat on my lap. Sunshine makes her fur look like golden leaves. For a brief moment I feel like a cat: my perception of time and space is becoming more sensory.

I meet my girlfriend L. after a week of separation. We watch a movie. Main character is in the woods, it is a thrilling scene but L. just asks me: „Do you hear it? There is a lot of crickets in the wood! They would make a great supper!" She got a little chameleon and she spends a lot of time with him – now she starts to think like him!

Crickets – yummy!

I guess we are "becoming *with*" our animal "companion species".

Rosta, March 18

My dad came by today to bring me a few face masks. I feel he is coming mainly to have a "good reason" to go outside, and simply to see me. In front of my house he only hands me the plastic bag with the masks and a small bottle of disinfectant. We talk very briefly. We do not embrace. We keep distance. It is sort of sad. I tell him to limit smoking now. He replies: "Not this!" and smiles. I smile back and say, "OK, smoke adequately". I could and should have saved the commentary to myself, I thought later. My dad is 76 years old, he never quit smoking because of the possibility of getting cancer, so why should he quit smoking now because of covid? He likes smoking.

For the first time, I have a feeling of normalcy for the whole day today – or some predictability of the exceptional situation we find ourselves in. I feel personal and social resilience. In the previous days I could feel a possible system collapse in the air. Now I am sort of curious what will come next – in two, three days.

> "I am fascinated by the increasing body of knowledge on the Sars-CoV-2"

I am fascinated by the increasing body of knowledge on the Sars-CoV-2: How long can "he" (I think about the virus as "him" in Czech) survive on different surface

materials? How can he be destroyed? Everyone is eager to learn practical chemistry and physics of the virus. So much information produced in such a short time on a single object. Natural scientists and technicians will gain much recognition in wider society after the COVID crisis. I guess the Academy of Sciences will not have to worry about public funding even in the economically difficult period that is about to follow (this would be a very different situation than back in 2008 when public funding for research was severely cut).

“So much information produced in such a short time on a single object.”

Jiri, March 19

I take a walk with my brother. The woods are crowded – people are jogging, walking their dogs. We decide to explore some old, abandoned path. We pass by few forsaken houses, we do not know where we are. I think this experience of being lost is somehow connected to the current situation: tomorrow is an uncertainty, we have to live NOW. We experience a spatial form of this temporal uncertainty: we don’t know where we are heading to. We are only HERE.

One hour of walking through an unknown forest. Suddenly, we see a tennis court between the trees! We come closer. A ruined pub and an enormous hotel stand next to the court. Not a living soul, everything seems abandoned. Empty buildings forgotten between the woods and a highway. Just few trucks are parked in front of a hotel. We definitely got lost – in the middle of a civilization!

Just walk and hope. Finally we discover some sumptuous suburb and fortunately we

catch a bus. I browse the internet to find out what was the hotel we visited. I find few old articles about the strange building: the secret police in the state socialist Czechoslovakia (STB) used it as a meeting place for its informants. In mid-90s, a "Russian gangster" was killed by a submachine gun during a mob gunfight in front of the hotel. Last owner was a conman and somebody set a fire to the building few years ago. Ever since, the hotel is abandoned, forgotten in the woods. I guess I´m so amazed by its history because this place resonates with my thoughts and feelings of the recent time. A hotel full of pools, rooms, equipped by tennis courts... and yet it stands empty today, a weird juxtaposition of luxury accommodation and emptiness. A world for people but without human presence.

Rosta, March 19

In the morning I skype with colleagues, business as usual. Then I get a phone call from the deputy mayor of Prague whom I met in November, as a member of the Scientific Council of the Prague Climate Commission. He asks me if I could provide social science expertise on the social implications and management of the quarantine so that people can cope. How to ensure that seniors will get out of their homes again after the quarantine is over? What can the City do? I am happy to hear that the municipality is thinking about these questions and appreciates the relevance of social science expertise. Then he starts talking in a more apocalyptic way: we closed borders, others will do the same, what if German yogurts stop coming to the country and there only will be flour and milk in the grocery shops, and eventually there will be nothing? The water should still run and electricity as well, he says. I want to tell him "stop telling me this, this is overstated!" I feel again shaken a bit in my feeling that things are getting under control. But I really think he is overdoing it and someone should calm him down. He sounds nervous and tired at the same time – and the tide of the epidemic here has just started to gain momentum!

I eat my breakfast only at 1pm or so. I read *Guardian*: the numbers coming from Italy are horrible but I must admit I am no more moved by them emotionally. For a while I am thinking about the collapse of global economy but put these thoughts on hold quickly and "relax" by doing a regular academic work. In the evening we have a Skype call with colleagues from Europe and the US to talk about the large conference scheduled to Prague in summer. Should we cancel or move it online? I am rather surprised how shaken all the colleagues are and how difficult it is for everyone to digest, emotionally and intellectually the new developments, including the senior well-off and always self-assured academics.

Lada, March 19

A friend and I went out of Prague to get us and her dog some fresh air yesterday afternoon. Might this be the last trip out of Prague, we worry.

An extremely stressful night. US issues "travel ban level 4" urging American citizens to return to the US or to be "prepared to stay abroad indefinitely". The travel back now is out of the question (so unsafe and nearly impossible), but P. is scared that she might lose her job in case she will not be able to come back plus the access to her medication. What if Czech Republic ends the "emergency declaration" and thus withdraws the pardon for overstaying visa? What strikes me as we feverishly run through options and plan for the unknown is how different our understanding of the state in this moment of crisis is. I build my arguments on the presumption that the state will behave rationally, will offer solutions and will be accountable. P. is basing hers on the expectation that the state will withdraw and its citizens will be called upon to rely on themselves only. The recommendation issued by the US Embassy is read as a performative act of releasing the government of any responsibility.

As for the medication, P. got–for now–what she needs. What a relief.

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Rosta, March 23

I did not leave the flat between Monday and Thursday, except for brief trips to take out the trash. On Friday, I go out and feel it is an important contact with reality, even if I do not talk to anyone and only walk in a park. I also go to a grocery store. I put on plastic gloves provided by the shop and wrap all the items I buy with quite a lot of plastic. In other time I would find such use of plastic disgusting, but now I would not put anything into the shopping basket without a plastic protection. I tried to keep distance from people and when someone got closer to me I felt offended. It felt like a penetration of "my" space. Everyone had masks on in the shop but people did not keep much distance between each other.

At home, I felt like I have to think about every and each step – about where I put things, in which order I touch them, when I (repeatedly) wash hands while taking items out of the bag – to avoid contaminating the flat with the coronavirus. This is crazy, I am sure this is not the way forward – I may protect myself from covid but go mad or spent half of my life with anti-covid logistics. In the following days, I feel a bit more relaxed about "getting contaminated", yet I know that I tend to rather overdo the hygienic standards than to fail adhering to them.

Most of the people in the streets wear face masks. Yet, some of them don't — for instance when they are on the phone or smoking, I try to avoid such people in particular.

I think about what would be the difference if the virus behaved more predictably and only killed old people. When all people under 70 would feel beyond risk. If it were the case, I think it would be much more difficult to enforce all the protection measures. I moreover often think we are actually lucky that SARS-CoV-2 is highly contagious but the mortality is still relatively low. If it had mortality of SARS 1 or MERS we were in

deep shit. That would cause a total panic.

Jiri, March 23

I watch the news. Andrej Babiš, the prime minister, does not wear his respirator anymore, he is using a simple mask. It seems to me like a compromise of sanitary measures and PR ("doctors don't have any respirator but the prime minister gets one, right?").

I realized that my perception of the flat has changed. Spaces that were previously only "pass-through", now become a useful space with new and more precisely designated purposes. *This* is where I work, *this* is where I relax and over *there* is a "sacred" place just for a peaceful dinner – no work is allowed there. *This* is a shelf for the novels, *this* is a shelf for my science magazines... and beware: *this* chair is reserved only for the cat! I don´t walk through the flat anymore – I travel in it. My flat has transformed into an interior landscape, each place has its own culture, rhythm, its own mood.

"My flat has transformed into an interior landscape, each place has its own culture, rhythm, its own mood."

Lada, March 23

A crisis hit me yesterday. My daily schedule and rhythm start to fall apart. Or more

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precisely, with all of us sharing the space, I find it harder and harder to divide the work time from the “family” time. Also the incessant checking-in and care drains me emotionally.

As I exchange emails with a colleague, he tells me that he still keeps his routine of going to his office every day. It feels as if he lived on a different planet.

I need to go downtown soon to pick up some supplies and it feels like a trip across the globe. I need to figure out the mask for the trip — can I really undertake this with my DIY mask from a kitchen towel?

I reinstitute the long walks with the pup. I need to be outside, in the fresh air, in the sun. I venture to a different section of Prague today, there are so many people in the streets. After days when I found the empty streets poetic and calming, the emptiness starts to weary. But the people I meet, we greet each other, wave to each other across the street, into the window.

I write to a friend living in northern Italy, close to Venice. They are entering week 4 of a lockdown, no one is singing from the balconies anymore, no more cheerful transparents in the windows.

Did the mask become new Barthesian myth, similarly as condom has become one in relation to „safe sex“? The myth of security, responsibility for oneself and others, the myth of responsible citizenship in the time of crisis; ‘we’ (the nation) sew and secure masks for ourselves when the government is failing?

We seem to be living the loaded contradictions of the local and the global, the national (the borders are closing, we shelter-in place and retract to ‚home‘, into family, we cut physical ties, disinfect the doorknobs) and the transnational (the pandemic in Italy is ahead, the US is delayed in time of the epidemics, people get stuck abroad).

P. is starting to feel sick, she keeps the mask on even at home. She is improvising and instead of gloves (which we do not have) uses plastic bags over her hands. I am moved to the couch in the living room. But can the dog be the vector of the virus transmission? I am not scared to fall ill with Covid, I worry more about what it would mean if we both fell ill at the same time.

The news overwhelm me. I still search and browse the news, but I don't read all and leave them for "later" in the open tabs. Who knows if I get to them later. My computer is a mess, the browser with millions of open tabs.

I keep bringing flowers, flowering branches from outside. I paint the walls. I also started with the fermentation experiments. Long time planned. Today I start the sauerkraut, looked over various recipes of what I could ferment next. I plan to set a bread sourdough starter.

Rosta, March 25

All day I am at a meeting "in Brussels". It is a meeting with an EU officer and the consortium of a project I was asked to evaluate mid-term. We are meeting on the Webex platform used by the European Commission. Day before I planned to wash my hair and "dress up" for the meeting. But I got a message from the chair of the meeting that we should not use video and we should always switch off our mikes when not speaking to prevent the breakdown of the connection. This results in a fact that I wake up last minute before the meeting, don't wash my hair, wear my usual home clothes and during the morning session, I sit on the floor, do some stretching, have breakfast, read a bit of newspapers when the presentation is boring. And in spite of it, I feel pretty wasted when we finish around 4pm!

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Jiri, March 25

My younger brother is my roommate. I'm glad I can spend the isolation-time with him. It's late afternoon and we are exhausted by staring into the screens of our notebooks. We order some Thai. 30 minutes later, the delivery is waiting outside. We use an elevator to get to the ground floor. The house has a special entrance space. There is a small extra hallway right behind the entrance door with a dial mechanism on a wall. You have to dial a code to open another set of door – only then you can enter the house.

This small hallway finds a new purpose now. The tenants use it as an impromptu safe-space for picking up their orders. This is the procedure: the delivery boy is standing outside, the customer is waiting inside. They both wear masks to cover their faces. The hallway between them, they see each other through the glass of the two subsequent doors. The delivery person enters the small space in between the two sets of doors, leaves the delivery on the floor and departs from the space. When the door is closed, the customer enters to pick up the delivery and then leaves the room too. They nod at each other. The handover is finished.

The room between the doors is a liminal space for a negotiation of a contact; space where "inside" and "outside" can cooperate in a limited way. This handover of the food is a result of our imagination of creating a safe-space. I´m not sure if it really works. However, our "liminal room" helps us to ritualize our safety, to perform our safe-space.

Lada, March 26

I have not written fieldnotes since Monday. Couple of hard days — I have felt overwhelmed and struggled to process all the new information. I struggle the most to process the information affectively. I am running out of empathy. The care work-

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even if mostly virtual–and then the stress of the last days concerning the legal status of P., the access to essential medication she needs exhausts me. Slowly, I am starting to feel more grounded again. I am avoiding the catastrophic information coming from the US, India, the refugee camps. Still trying to find a balance of how to read and reflect and not to crumble.

I am no longer surprised at the quieter streets. At night, as I keep the windows open, I am struck by how loud the trams are and am surprised to hear that they run so frequently. P. has been feeling sick over the past few days, today she tells me that she has been reducing the pain medication out of fear she may soon have no or limited access. This is possibly what made her sick, not the virus. Talking to a doctor about a prescription of pain medication for P., he repeats several times that “in the US, doctors overprescribe, we do not do this here….” I despair that this “opioid narrative” and moral panic that I know have hurt many of my friends living with chronic pain and/or disabilities seem to really become the global and hegemonic narrative. I am temporarily relieved that P. got what she needs, but worry about the future.

My friends and colleagues in the US, many of them people with disabilities, are terrified about the new proposed guidelines for doctors on how to decide who gets ventilators and life-saving care and whose life is already compromised by “underlying conditions” and thus should not be risked to be saved, presumably while the resources are seen as wasted. P. comes into the room to tell me this and counts people in our family, and among our closest friends who would be affected — there are not many who would be not. I finally bought us a pair of masks. It felt as if I was giving in — not to the imperative to cover face, I have been very observant of this. But somehow, the whole frenzy of ‘we all have to contribute and make masks’, and the emerging mask fashion makes me uncomfortable. So far, I was holding out and using a shawl, masks made out of kitchen towels (supposedly the most effective material). However, it is tiring and every walk down the stairs, every dog-walk, I have to look for what to use. Seeing that we will need to live with masks much longer, I

look for more ready-made masks. Planning for the future use, am now looking for the ones with a pocket for a filter. A new nano-technology of filters is being developed and produced at the University in Liberec. In the meantime, P. figured the best and easiest filter to use is the coffee filter.

P. and I got into talking about our feelings of shame or guilt that we are not/cannot do more to support others. P. says, the crip wisdom is 'surviving is resistance'. Then again, she talks about how she is catching herself thinking "who will it be", "who will not survive", a response grown out of repeated experience of heightened bio-precarity. We then talk about my Czech friends with disabilities, if their assistance needs are met. E. is staying with her parents, other friend is also out of Prague with family — not a choice. E. is stressed, she doesn't like to be dependent upon her family, she has often talked about how uncomfortable she is with them. I suspect many people with disabilities are now forced back into family-care. P. and I discuss the possibility of me volunteering as a personal assistant if needed, but then decide against it because of A's immune-deficiency. As I glimpse over the news, I catch info that a senior care-house has several cases of death from corona and find myself frantically checking that it is not the 'home' where my close friend's grandmother lives. It is not. The number of deaths in the CR has risen over the last days (9 today) — mostly they are 'explained away' as deaths due to "multimorbidity", patients did not "die of the virus but rather with it" (an actual quote).

Rosta, March 27

I am supposed to hand in a chapter for an edited volume exploring the concept of performativity in 5 days. I planned to write it in March but since the coronavirus broke in I could not concentrate on "other" things that were not completely necessary. This morning I decide to focus on viral performativity to avoid the tension between what the brain is drifting to all the time and the need to focus on writing

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the chapter. I am lucky I can shift many of my work commitments to address the coronavirus concerns.

> “Since the coronavirus broke in I could not concentrate on “other” things that were not completely necessary.”

In times of this crisis, new alliances between academic institutions, public and private sector and civil society emerge. They cut across the usual “ideologies”. I really like this! Not only can it help the management of the pandemic but it also disrupts the established political economy assumptions (including my own) and it forces me/us to think differently.

When I go out today, I cheat with the mask. I only cover my mouth, not the nose and I breathe through the nose as usual. It is great, much better than yesterday when the mask quickly started to get wet, I had to adjust it repeatedly… I don’t think I endanger anyone by the cheating, I am only doing this in open-air areas, and keep distancing from people. In the evening I watch a TV show with a physician who cares for the patient receiving the experimental treatment of Remdesivir (the only patient in the country). His nose too is not covered by the mask. The reporter points this out by noting, “You have a special way of wearing the mask. I too wore it in this way at the beginning, before I had figured out this was not appropriate.” He brushes the comment off and keeps his mask as is. Evidently, he has his own opinion about the epidemiological effect of the masks. He really is a whizz – it is great to see all those new, interesting faces out in the public space, professionals with various backgrounds – from the healthcare sector, academia, start-ups.

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Jiri, March 27

I visit my parents, they live in a small village. I have been considering the trip for a few days because I don't want to endanger them by arriving from an „infected city". However, my parents own a little convenience store and their customers are commonly people from Prague – they are passing by on their way from the capital city, some of them own a cabin or a weekend-house in the village.

My parents present their new masks to me. They need them for themselves and for their employees. They use masks with rubber laces as well as masks with cotton laces made by my aunt (she works in a food shop in a village nearby my parents' house; she used to be a seamstress). Rubber laces are not unduly tight, therefore is it more comfortable to wear them, but these laces usually cause a little bruises around the ears; breathing in the masks with the cotton laces is not easy but the cotton is more gentle on the human skin. Every component of the mask becomes substantial when you have to wear the mask for 8 or 10 hours.

My parents have to deal with a lack of gloves – they procure enough plastic gloves for the customers but their employees need solid rubber gloves. Unfortunately, the rubber gloves are almost sold out everywhere. „You cannot wear a one pair for a whole day", says my dad. "Hands usually get sweaty and become sore." I see Perspex shields protecting the till. When my mum sits behind the shield, she looks like a bus driver in the driver's cabin.

Lada, March 29

More than two weeks in, well, nearly three into the "emergency state" and quarantine and I still did not find a modus of engaged functioning. As I was washing

the floors on Saturday, I listened to several interviews with epidemiologists and doctors (they mostly discuss predictions of the development and administering of experimental drugs), I was struck by the fact that all the reporters seem to have turned into a health-care professionals and scientists. One of the reporters has been even patronized ironically by the older doctor (note the gender dynamic) “I see, you have studied for today.”

One of the interviews is with a doctor I know from my other research. He was the only doctor in the 1980s who spoke out openly against the stigmatization of HIV positive people. I have met him repeatedly and liked discussing with him. Now I am surprised to hear him suggest that the corona virus was developed in a Chinese lab. On the phone a bit later, my mom notes that the Chinese tests are very unreliable. . Later I read stories about faulty Chinese respirators that need to be recalled after they have been distributed in the hospitals. China clearly becomes a target of blame.

On Friday (yesterday), I got an immunization shot against the tick-borne diseases. I did it in preparation for the summer that I hope to spend hiking and in the woods. I fantasize about sitting in the summer meadows. Rosta tells me later she would not go anywhere near a doctor’s office now. I have felt safe there, though also extremely cautious. Also, I prepared myself before going to the doctor’s office. For the first time, I wore plastic gloves.

As we were walking, P. and I (it was a beautiful sunny day and we wanted to take the opportunity and walk the city for a bit), we held hands in the plastic gloves. It felt surreal. Watching our gloved hands, I remembered that new regulation of the movement was issued — only groups of 2 or family could be outside together. But what collectives are a family? Who will and who will not be seen as “family”? Walking downtown, I was surprised how normal it feels, I did not even think that there were fewer people in the streets until I look through the photos P. took. The streets felt busy to me even then. I have already become so accustomed to the decreased density of people.

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We see several protest banners calling “No rent without income” or “No income, no rent”, there are protests in other cities and towns across Czech Republic raising the fact that many people will not be able to pay rent and thus the increased danger of homelessness due to the corona crisis.

Walking home, I want to buy a beer, but I don’t have cash. I am given the beer to pay for later. It felt lovely and an exceptional gesture. As if new codes were emerging, new space for generosity.

Today, we did not wear gloves and I refrained myself from catching P. hand, I presumed my hand/s can be contaminated.

Lada, March 30

The neighbors below us were moving yesterday. Had to. They did the moving with the masks on. And today, the drilling started. I am angry at the lack of consideration — a reconstruction work with all the drilling and invasive noise when people do not have a choice and have to stay home. Working from an improvised standing table at a window, I watch a magpie build a nest on top of the pine in the backyard. A green woodpecker comes to feed on the grass in front of the window. She is beautiful. I also see the closed children’s playground — yesterday, the sport areas and children’s playground were closed– juxtaposed to the abandoned and cordoned off playground, a washline full of fresh laundry — why is one of them seen as a possible source of contamination and the other is not? What is seen as essential and what is seen as expedient play?

It snowed last night and frost returned and I wonder whether our masks, still hanging outside, perhaps got disinfected by the frost.

Listening to the news, we learn that scientists now presume the virus to be able to

survive in the air up to 3 hrs after someone sneezes/coughs. This feels like a game changer, it shatters my sense of security in the public space. P. notes we have to be more careful when we meet other dog-people and stop to talk/greet each other. I propose we might suggest we were coughing and we want to keep them safe from us, thinking this might be a better and more socially acceptable strategy to enforce this strategy of distance-keeping.

The news report notes, “In the Czech republic, 23 people died infected with coronavirus. […] All of the diseased were elderly and with other accompanying health issues.” — I am angered by the news bagatelising the tragic dimension of their deaths.

Rosta, March 30

Lada, why do you see these deaths as tragic? Or are all deaths tragic? It is horrible when people die in the hospital corridors without proper care, as it is happening in Italy now, but this is not happening here. And I don’t think you can prevent the virus entering the institutions caring for seniors. Else the costs would be enormous, not only economic costs but also the social and psychological costs. Flattering the curve makes sense to me as you can provide good care to as many people as possible. But some deaths cannot be avoided.

Later in the afternoon, a telco meeting with my two colleagues from the Institute, one of whom is French living in Prague. She tells us she is not feeling well; she has a headache. I say, half-jokingly, “you got him!”. She says: “No, it is just a mild flu”. I laugh again and tell her: “That’s exactly it!” But I start calming her immediately, surely she will be OK. Even if she needed healthcare, she will get it here – most probably much better quality of care than she would get in many places in France right now. She agrees. I do think she has got COVID 19, as most of us will contract it

sooner or later.

In the evening I go out, the summer-time feels great, it is rather cold but the sun is getting stronger each day and I appreciate the light. Many people are outside, they run, mostly with masks on but many wear it somewhat at half-mast and they only put it on fully when they approach other people. World does not feel deserted. It just feels nicely not overcrowded. It does not pulsate as usual, it is lazier and sort of relaxed. Monday feels like a weekend.

Watching TV in the evening I again appreciate most of the experts they invite. Knowledge calms me down, reassures me. It is also apparent that, compared to most of us, these guys encounter death more often, and while it is evident they respect it but are not shaken by death.

New faces, new masks on the TV screen – the team apparently changes in a 2-week quarantine rhythm. For sure, a fortnight will be a key unit of time for us in the coming weeks.

Rosta , April 2

I read the latest fieldnotes from Jiri and realize that none of us three is concerned in any way with the economic impacts of the pandemics. At least not personally. What a luxury! I actually do not know anyone imminently hit by the economy put on halt as most of my family and friends are employed in the public sector. I assume that the people working in a private sector who are now acutely threatened by the frozen economy will also be mostly surrounded by people affected by a similar (bad) situation.

I listen to the Guardian Today show with an NHS healthcare workers working in the ICU of a hospital in an area hit hard by coronavirus. One of them observes that a lot

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of her COVID patients have diabetes. In the CR nearly 1 million people have diabetes. And they definitely are not only seniors. How would/will SARS-CoV-2 map onto this population?

Lada, April 2



Big grocery delivery arrived today. I still refrain from doing the shopping on a more day-to-day basis as I/we would normally do. Anytime P. wants to pop in for something, I rationalize that we do not need it and we can hold off till more things need to be bought. I am not totally consistent though, so it is more or less to create a semblance of a system where the structures and usual rhythms do not work. Bringing the shopping inside, I create a system of home quarantine for the groceries. Stuff that needs to be refrigerated is washed off in soapy water, I let it sit with the soap leather, rinse only after a period of time to destroy the lipid surface of the virus. I organize the rest in boxes to stay in the hallway. I however do not have any precise information about how long the groceries could be contaminated with the virus for. So, again, a version of a laicized expertise – also reinforced through the debates and sharing of our everyday practices (that may slowly become ritualized) in our small research team. I do know that the efficacy of all of these procedures is dubious, yet

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all of it feels like a fun play too, so I carry it through even though I know very well that I will not be holding it up for too long. As I wash the groceries, I take a picture of the juxtaposition of items on the counter that I recognize as items representing different relationships and different modes of cohabitation with microbes: the organic waste for worm composting, a sauerkraut-in-progress (not visible in the image) and a jar with fresh sourdough starter that I am trying to set up for the first time. Since the beginning of the quarantine, I have been experimenting more with fermentation. This juxtaposition makes me think about how we differentiate between the 'good' and 'bad' microbes; between the ones that we fear, ones that we cherish and multiply, ones that we wear masks to prevent from entering our bodies, and the ones we welcome to enter us and our bodies to inhabit our intestines and help us fight the unwanted, 'dangerous' microbes (such as the SARS-CoV-2).

> "I create a system of home quarantine for the groceries."

I am noticing how much the virus–or the awareness of its possible presence, even if invisible–has changed our everyday practices, even our bodies — my hands are chaffed from the incessant washing, my lips crack from the mask wearing. P. neck hurts from the way she holds her head when wearing the mask. A friend fell off of a bike because the mask was limiting her vision, we move differently as we refrain from touching surfaces.

I catch myself often wanting to know how many times we have come in contact with the virus already. I wish I could visualize the amount of the virus caught on my hands

when I come back from a walk. When I touch an item, I want to see the traces of the virus. It feels as if it is an invisible yet very material presence constantly in my proximity. I still get intense and sudden fears that the virus could have contaminated my phone. Last week, I panicked and got up after going to bed to clean and disinfect. I was panicking that I might have put P. in danger.

Lada, April 3

I finally went to pick up P.'s prescription. I have been putting it off for nearly a week. The pharmacy around the corner has been closed since early days of the pandemic. I have to go to another pharmacy in a shopping mall. I hate the malls. Now, the shopping mall makes me even more uncomfortable. As I enter, there are two policemen standing by the entrance, but I do not slow down to figure out what they are doing, are they controlling whether people wear masks? The DM drug store is nearly empty. I again try to get supplies to hold us for long. Another sign of a financial security-net Rosta talked about in the earlier post.

Jiri, April 5

Me and my girlfriend L. go for a walk. My girlfriend´s mother is immunosuppressed, therefore we decide to follow our own measures and our own system of isolation (alongside of the prescribed measures): we see each other only outside, we go for a walk, walk the dog or do the shopping. We try to avoid a public transport etc.

We roam through the neighborhood, we choose only the lonely places, we avoid meeting other people, take turns to avoid them. This time we cross an old rail track, now overgrown with grass and bushes. We finally sit on a bench and take out a disinfection, few beers and wet wipes out of the bag. We wipe the wet wipes

packaging, we wipe the cans of beer, we wipe our hands, we use disinfection. We don´t want to endanger L.´s mother.

Both of us had an experience with OCD (Obsessive–compulsive disorder) – now, this experience is really useful. OCD produces not only "thoughts" but also a certain type of imagination (usually hurtful kind of imagination): what could go wrong? What is a possible trajectory of the danger/infection? Which objects have been contaminated? What are the ways of transmission? How to stop spreading the danger?

We have already overcome the self-destructive phase of OCD years ago – maybe we can now control this kind of imagination and use it for our own benefit. We can imagine trajectory of an infection quite precisely. We can use ideas and images which used to be destructive to protect the health of our relatives.

Lada, April 5

In an attempt to recreate some sense of time and its rhythm and to mark off the end of the week, I make pancakes for breakfast and we cordon off the morning and early afternoon as "free". P. notes, "I am giddy with relief", referring to having gotten her medication. Later we take a walk through a close-by cemetery. Cemeteries are the only larger green spaces we can easily reach around here and as we are 'quarantined' in Prague. When we come to a place where there are no graves I collect nettles. I feel closed in the city and miss being in the forest, or in nature. With the weather being so sunny and beautiful I viscerally miss being in nature. While P. gets pensive and acutely aware of the death and dying in the pandemic, walking through the cemetery, I am feeling more grounded and more at ease than I have felt for some time.

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Rosta, April 6

Today, 20 degree C outside, full sunshine. I decided to walk to the city, after more than two weeks. I felt like I have to break some glass wall. Even if I have been going out every day now, it was only in the neighborhood and in a rather cocooned way. Today, I dressed up a bit, used perfume, it felt transgressive. I walked across the river, over the railway bridge, bought some good fair trade Ethiopian coffee at Smíchov. I wish the city would remain this calm! It is not so much an issue of the number of people in the streets (there are surely less people but streets are not empty) but the traffic is much lighter and drivers are communicative and friendly. At least three times there was some sort of nonverbal communication between me and a driver in a car or a tram, they gestured to me and gave me priority to cross the street, even if they had the right of way. I felt safe, robust. The sun is mighty.

Since a few days ago there seems to be emerging controversy between medical experts on how to proceed with the existing epidemiological measures. On the one hand, there are loud voices, represented perhaps most prominently by Roman Šmucler, the chief of the chamber of dentists, and Tomáš Zima, a physician and the rector of the Charles university in Prague, both of whom with explicit political ambitions in the past, that measures have to be quickly loosened. They argue that otherwise the huge economic losses will impact the quality of life (including health) of many more people than COVID 19 itself. On the other hand, there are voices that see the premature loosening of the measures as very irresponsible. 'We won a battle but not the war', they caution. Omar Šerý, a molecular biologist at Masaryk University, who also runs a private company providing genetic counselling, is probably the loudest of these voices. I am not sure really where to position myself but I don't like the tone of neither of these sides. I suspect private interests behind their positions. But I also have to admit my own position will be co-determined by my private interests. For example, I enjoy the fact I do not have to go to office at all, I don't have to feel strange that I don't meet people very much, I don't have to—or I am

not expected to—travel abroad. Which means that I personally do not mind many of the measures; on the contrary, they make my life easier, they normalize my proclivities.

Rosta, April 8

The ministry of health proclaimed today that we flattened the curve significantly and that the country will start returning to "normal" life again. It seems the government wants to quickly re-programme the population's behavior. A few days ago, the life was to be determined very much by imminent threat and the need to strictly observe the relatively tough rules of the quarantine. Now, they want us to resume the operation of the economy as quickly as possible, and start gradually flirting, in a controlled way, with the virus in our everyday lives. Rationally it makes sense. But how quickly will people be able to reshape their emotions and collective affects—from fear and a sense of imminent danger from an unknown viral agent to life as usual, only including a few "minor" additional elements like the coronavirus, covid-19, masks, disinfectants, smart quarantine apps?

Jiri, April 10

I travel to a countryside to see my parents and my younger brother. My brother tells us about his friend and her strategy to avoid the coronavirus. When a visitor walks into her apartment, they have to take off their shoes and mask, put the mask onto a special shelf, then they have to wash their hands, take off all their clothes which was "contaminated" by the touch with the outside world. They have to put on clean clothes, wash their hands once again, scrub everything they have touched upon entering the apartment. After this procedure, they are allowed to enter another room.

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My parents say they could not follow such a complicated protocol even if they wanted to. My brother´s friend is a therapist and she can avoid people these days, but it is impossible to keep people away when you work in a convenience store. “When I’m about to have a lunch,” says my dad, “I take off my mask and my gloves, wash my hands, wash my face, I use a disinfection, I wash my food and I sit behind the table in my office in the back of the building – but at that very moment a delivery of meat or pastry or vegetables arrives! So… I put on my gloves, my mask, I take over the goods, I sign the delivery paper, and I can start my disinfection process all over again!”

However, my parents follow a lot of rules. But they have also reconciled with the risk. They meet people, they serve the customers, they cooperate with the employees – they are exposed to the risk on a daily basis. “Maybe, this simulates the way in which immune system builds the protection”,” my mum says, “you shouldn’t stay in a completely sterile environment, you have to expose yourself to the germs a bit…”

They placed a container with disinfectant next to the front door according to a new state rule for convenience stores. The container was stolen a few hours later. They replaced it by a new one and bolted it down.

At the beginning of the week, they received the order of respirators, but the employees refuse to wear them because the respirators make their breathing difficult.

My adoptive sister send us a message. She and her partner live in Ostrava (in the Northeast part of the Czech Republic). They have a newborn child, but they cannot come to celebrate Easter Sunday with us. She writes: “[W]e’re alright but being stuck at home all the time is crazy. I go for walks with our baby to a park or somewhere else – it’s better than being at home. P. [my sister’s partner] still goes to work and he’s busier than usual. The employers have reduced his salary so it sucks. It’s terrible. I feel awful.”

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Lada, April 10

I bake the sourdough bread for the first time. Since we have started this research project exploring cohabitation with microbes, I wanted to try things hands-on. During the quarantine, I have tried to set my own starter. Over the last week, I have been fermenting the flour, watching the starter rise and deflate, run out of the glass, form bubbles, I have been tasting its sourness, and tried to judge the progress by its smell. The bread baking is a relatively long process of smaller steps. Kneading the dough, I realized I had visual memories of my grandmother baking running through my head. I have even replicated her movements, her posture sitting on a chair, the bowl with the dough held by her thighs, kneading hard. I recalled her teaching me to knead the dough to form the bubbles. Since I do not do much baking, this might be one of the first occasions that I can follow her advice. It soothes me to think of her and feel her presence through my treatment of the dough.

The town is quieter. I realize that I have kept distance from the news. I am trying to detach.

Lada, April 11

Easter Saturday. It is again a beautiful sunny morning, it is so quiet – even more than it has been during the quarantine days. As we are getting ready for a walk, P. reads on the news that in the US, cystic fibrosis is now named as one of the conditions that is to disqualify people from getting a ventilator. One of our good friends and close colleagues lives with CF. P. has not heard from her in a while, we are worried and assume she must be incredibly stressed. More bad news, more stressed friends in the US. Several of them worried they caught the virus, many of them with compromised immunity systems.

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Lada, April 15

Reading through texts that try to think through what the life after the pandemic will look like; whether it will be possible to return to 'normal' (while often pointing out how unsustainable what we have seen as 'normal' is), Alexei Yurchak's work on the collapse of 'communist' regimes comes to mind. He famously titled his book *Everything was forever, until it was no more*. I think how well this phrase captures the seeming 'unquestionability' of the life as we have known it, but also calls up the question of how much we do not know about what the world that will be in the 'after' period.

I walk the dog at night, he has been throwing tantrums nearly everyday. We have been half-jokingly calling him an ADHD dog (another crip dog in the family). I also wonder whether the fact that we are all always together now also wear *him* out.

Lada, April 16

I hold zoom classes for the first time. I held off to take the classes fully online. There are many good reasons to go online, accessibility is definitely a major one (it is hard to watch how suddenly so many things are made accessible through adjustments that have been withheld for so long when only people with disabilities were calling for it). But as other people that have written about it more extensively, I too am worried what the new imperative of online teaching will mean for academic jobs and job precarity. I was also trying to respect the ways in which the shutdown has impacted my students' lives and imposed new responsibilities. Yet, talking to them today, hey do say they feel lost without the seminars and we make a plan for regular online meetings. They also talk about how their ability to focus on work is affected. Some of our international students returned home, some of them are isolated in the

dorms. Two of them were under two-week isolation orders at the onset of the quarantine since they felt they might be sick. One of the students lost all their income, is living in a studio with their partner who works from home, and thus occupies their shared table computer. This strikes me as a particularly challenging situation. The student seemed rather dejected.

> "I too am worried what the new imperative of online teaching will mean for academic jobs and job precarity."

Even though both of my the seminars were shorter than the regular sessions, I still come off really tired, something I have noticed other people to comment on how differently exhausting the online teaching turns out to be.

Rosta, April 17

Since morning we have a breakdown in water supply in the street. Something happened to the water tubes in the neighboring house. I was woken up by a digger working in the street. Last drops of water came out for me to brush my teeth and make tea and that was it. Nothing major, I am sure, and they will be able to fix it during the day. But I of course cannot stop thinking about all the people who do not have water or good quality water available during this pandemic in some countries. It is also a reminder of the fact that the other major emergency in this country–not so urgent as COVID-19 but a bit more longer term but definitely more grave is drought. This year again, outlooks look pretty dire – at least this is what the hydro-

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meteorological data show. I was not in nature for many weeks now, so I mostly have to rely on what is mediated through data (the same as with COVID-19). However, the athletic stadium that has been recently reopened to the public, and where I love to go for a run, definitely is very dry. It was so dusty yesterday that my nose was full of black dust. (I wore my mask over mouth only, breathing through the nose). I cannot say that the droughts are not a political topic – they became one after the extreme summer in 2018. However, the measures are still relatively limited and at time contradictory. Definitely nobody ever suggested slowing down the economy or reshaping our everyday lives completely in order to solve the problem. COVID and the droughts are treated very differently. I am curious if Czechs will become more sensitive to the imminent ecological threats as a result of the corona experience. I am not sure. Mostly I observe that we (me included!) try to cope with the current uncertainties by insisting (even more strongly) on our views, feelings and worries from the pre-corona times. Those who have been concerned with ecology think corona is the latest warning for humanity to start systemically dealing with the environmental issues (limit flying, international mobility, reduce meat consumption), while others – including the PM of this country – argue the EU definitely needs to abandon the Green deal.

The water supply disruption was actually on of the few novelties in my “normal” quarantine life during the whole week which is also the reason I do not feel urged to write much fieldnotes. I still keep moving only between home, a nearby park and/or stadium and grocery store in the neighborhood. No reason so far to leave the home-office. I just got two more face masks yesterday as it looks like they will be required for a long time and I only had one so far, which was insufficient. Even if I do not wear the mask properly when outside (I always wear it properly in enclosed spaces), I still keep pretending I am doing the civic duty.

At my local park, a lot of people without masks today. Running, drinking beer, smoking… And a big notice written by chalk on the pavement: “Wear mask, you

dicks!"

Jiri, April 25

My cousin M. lives in a small town near Prague. She will re-open her small store (she sells mostly handmade jewelry). M. set up her store a few months before the start of the state of emergency. She is preparing a new commodity for the re-opening: hand-made face masks. A few days ago, I came across an article that describes the face-masks as an important mediator that will help transform Czech economy from a state of emergency to a regime under which functioning economy will be restored.

Although few journalists consider wearing face-masks to be an echo of the earlier socialist régime and in particular of the period of „normalization", for others it means the possibility of restoring "economic freedom", i.e. doing business while ensuring health security and mutual safety. It's fascinating how many meanings and practices are connected to the face-masks.

My friend, a philosopher, wrote interesting notes on „FACE MASKS AND POLITICS OF VULNERABILITY": „(...) By wearing a face mask, you publicly announce that the conditions of your existence do not end at the tip of your nose. (...) This brings me to the question of how counterintuitive is the reason to wear a face mask from the liberal, individualist point of view. You do not wear it to protect yourself, but to protect others—even if you have no symptoms of a disease, and you might very well be a completely healthy individual. By doing so, one problematizes one's own individuality, one's knowledge and transparency of one's body to oneself; one places themselves publicly as a vulnerable body. In the philosophical framework that I have offered in my recent book *Introduction to Comparative Planetology* (2019), such a gesture can be interpreted as a statement of one's own exteriority. (...) We admit that we are all bodies first, and that these bodies—in the spirit of Jakob von Uexküll's

concept of Umwelt—become inseparable from their environment.“ I’m reading these notes while taking off my own face-mask and putting it into a pot – I have to boil it and evaporate the leftovers of the outer world which remained on the external side of the mask…

Rosta, April 26

I have not been writing fieldnotes/the diary regularly in the last days. Partly due to the lack of time, partly due to the lack of need. While during the first weeks, keeping a diary felt like an effective and at time the only way to calm down, sort out my thoughts, share with others and connect to my colleagues, with the increased feeling of normalcy and also more opportunities to meet and talk physically to people (be it a friend or a seller on a farmers’ market), writing the fieldnotes becomes more a “work” responsibility, or a “luxury” but not an existential necessity.

Thus, I do not pretend writing the diary in a real time and rather offer a reflection of some of the more noteworthy observations and developments during the last week.

Last Sunday, I was out with Lada, which was my first physical meeting with a friend after the start of the quarantine. We walked in the outskirts of Prague, in “urban nature”, there was quite a lot of people but I actually did not mind. It felt sort of good to be with others. It was one week after the Easter and it was still unknown how the Easter traffic (supposedly increased contacts) would manifest in the numbers of positive tests and people getting sick. People looked relaxed, mostly wearing masks but also taking them down at times to drink etc. It looked reasonable to me how people behaved: with a proportioned level of precaution. I myself took the mask off and walked without it most of the time, while keeping safe distance from Lada. She mostly wore hers and tended to sometimes drift closer to me. We talked about how we felt about this: we agreed keeping the distance of about 2m is a good thing, but

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she had to pay more attention to really keeping the physical distance. It was more of a reflex to me, stepping back when I felt she is squeezing into my personal “safe space”. I think this has to do with the fact that she lives with another person and is used to being close to her while I have been consequently distancing myself from everyone and already internalized it pretty much. Having said that, I think that when the social distancing is not necessary I will still very much like to hug and touch my friends. (But let’s see what happens in the months to come.)

On Thursday, the government suddenly announced significant acceleration in the softening of the epidemic measures. The post-Eastern numbers look very good, the epidemic in the country is slowing down significantly and the testing and tracing infrastructure has been strengthened which means we should be prepared for an increase in cases now. Also, a court in Prague decided that the procedural forms of how some of the epidemic measures were declared by the government are actually not in line with existing laws. (The decision concerns the procedural not substantial aspect of the measures). Moreover, there is an increasing number of voices in the public (including physicians and academics) who claim that the measures are no longer proportional to the covid disease dynamics in the country. Further they argue that the collateral damage of quarantine (in terms of economy and social and psychological well-being of the population) is too significant. Some of the epidemiologists in the governmental team would apparently want to proceed in a more cautious way, but they did not openly criticize the decision to speed up the process of softening the measures. I have not felt happy about the decision either. It seemed to me as an act of resignation (of the apparently tired government) rather than a well thought through and (if possible) evidence-based decision. I am afraid that–should the second wave of the epidemic come–it will be extremely difficult to tighten the measures again. Also, I am concerned that many people expect certainty where there simply can’t be any.

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> “Also, I am concerned that many people expect certainty where there simply can’t be any.”

Yesterday I met a friend on Letna, who is an owner of a “ladies only” gym. We walked in the city park, had a drink which we drank sitting on a bench overlooking Prague. It was rather cold, compared to the previous days but a lot of people were out anyway. J. told me, she actually found some comfort in the quarantine and she didn’t feel happy about opening the gym again on Monday. She feels sort of pressured to do so from some of the clients who are eager to start attending the gym even if in a provisional mode (according to the rules face-masks have to be worn during indoor sport and cloakrooms and showers cannot be used by clients). Some of them sent her money to support the gym during the total lockdown and now they seem to feel they have a right to ask her to “Open!”. She feels uneasy about this “obligation” – actually there is a thin line between solidarity, gift and debt. (I am not telling her to read Marcel Mauss to interpret her feelings but I am of course thinking about his classical analysis.) There are so many uncertainties, economic, epidemiological, sanitary, logistical… If anyone tests positive, it will be a major problem–the gym is not big and probably all the staff will have to go to the quarantine at the same time. I realize how terribly difficult it is to be in this sort of business in these days and the uncertainties will last for months to come.

As we walk through the park I spot an ex-partner of my friend sitting on a bench with his family. I have not seen him for 4 years, I guess. There is a short moment of hesitation on both sides but then we recognized each other and have a short exchange. He did not have a face mask but I had mine. I am actually amazed how easily people recognize each other even with the face-masks on. I have the same

experience on my local farmers' market a few days after. All the sellers recognize me immediately, even with the mask on.

As we sit on the bench with J. and drink, I don't feel fully comfortable. My personal "safe space" does apparently have a larger radius than hers, I feel she is too close to me and I also would prefer her to not look at me when speaking–especially as she speaks with emotions I imagine her "aerosol" drifting directly into my face. But when I raise it, she tells me "I think I am healthy, I actually think I have already gone through covid even before the quarantine was imposed as I was not feeling good for several weeks." I feel uncomfortable to repeatedly ask her to keep the distance and sort of give up. But I think that in case she is contagious, I certainly got my dose.

I will have to develop a better strategy – more assertive strategy – to negotiate my comfort when meeting people, which will now be more and more often. Even if my expectations are not excessive and they are actually perfectly in line with the epidemiological recommendations (rules actually!) it still feels awkward to ask friends to follow them. As if I do not trust them. Well, that is indeed the point nobody is epidemiologically fully trustworthy / transparent in these days while we are not used to be judged as "suspect" by other people and it surely contradicts the definition of a friend.

Rosta, May 1

The softening of epidemiological measures has been speeded up repeatedly during the last few days. Given the numbers and modelling, it looks completely appropriate. I am happy the situation is so good in the country. But I must admit I feel certain ambivalence. The current regime felt OK for me, especially after the farmers' market got reopened I have not missed much in my daily life while I was able to avoid work commitments and physical meetings I do not fancy. Now there will be no "good

excuse" anymore. I will have to schedule a trip out of Prague to fully appreciate the re-gained freedoms, I guess!

Lada, May 1

As Rosta writes above, things seemed to have been settling into a sort of routine over the last days, perhaps weeks, and thus there was not the urge to keep up the diary writing. But I come here to think about this non-urge, and the fragile sense of–dare I say–normality. Most strikingly, the feeling of not being able to see and observe new things — now, coming to think of it, is strange. The official measures have been actually changing rather rapidly. And yet, I do not seem to observe it in the small bubble that has become my world. The most intense feeling I have, is of a somewhat unbearably prolonged present. It feels like "enduring time", in Lisa Baraitser's words. Time and space keep on both contracting and expanding at the same time. I feel over-socialised (never really having the opportunity to be alone), I long to be alone for several days. At the same time I feel deprived of social contact. I have not seen many/most of my friends and colleagues since weeks. It was such a relief to be having regular walks and evening hangouts with J. and walks with Rosta. Do I even miss the passing encounters with complete strangers in the streets? Did the pandemic draw out social ties and lines of shared vulnerability that we were not aware (or not so intensely)? The space in which most of us are moving has shrunk dramatically. And yet, it seems to have gained certain depth and expansiveness that I have not seen and lived through previously. One day it feels comforting, next day I might suffocate. Today, especially, my small world sounds so quiet as if most people have left for their weekend "chata".

The feeling of pressure and being overwhelmed is coming with new intensity, it might be related to work stress — the growing density of important deadlines and not having space to properly work is weighing on me. Insomnia has been coming

back. Not badly, but I am worried that it might get worse.

I have been checking the website of the National Library (where I go to work regularly) with growing frequency. I was amused (even if disappointed) by their note expressing their frustration at the government announcing the first easing of the measures on Thursday night (April 23rd), expecting institutions to open on Monday (April 27th).

It has not rained for so long — finally, this weekend the weather forecast promises rain, showers, perhaps even storms. Draught has again become an issue of public debate, the minister of agriculture acknowledged that the draught is of "catastrophic" levels. In the shrunken world, I worry about the trees in the courtyard garden. Most of them are already fully grown and adult trees, but even the birches (trees that are now considered as well equipped to handle draught) are losing their top layers and are drying up. We start collecting the grey household water and bring it to the trees in the garden. This is not a new strategy, we have been doing this for a couple years now, but this is the first year I have started in April.

Rosta, June 1

Hmm, it seems I am coming back to the diary after one full month. Many things have changed in that month. I had my 43th birthday, the epidemiological situation in the country has been stabilized and many measures imposed by the government were lifted. Wearing of face-masks in the public is no longer obligatory, restaurants and pubs got reopened, public gatherings (up to 300 people, soon the number will be raised to 500 people) are allowed and borders with the neighboring countries became a bit more permeable.

The political quarrels started. Other issues than coronavirus are allowed back into the public space (for example, the geopolitical relations with Russia). And yet, my

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days have not changed much. I still spend much of my time at home, avoid in-person work meetings, do not go to cinema or any other cultural events, I don't use public transport at all. Do I try to avoid coronavirus, or am I avoiding people?

I notice that from the three key epidemiological measures–keeping physical distance from people, washing hands and wearing face-masks–I definitely tend to rely on the first two. I don't like coming too close to people or, rather, I don't like them to come too close to me. I tend to notice and dislike when people "breathe into my face" (e.g. when speaking with emotion or breathing deeply after climbing stairs). My personal bubble, what I perceive as my comfy "safe space", has expanded in space.

Last Thursday, I had a work meeting at the Ministry of Culture. I did not take public transport and walked across the river to get there. I now realize that I can walk most of the places in Prague within an hour. And as the weather is nice and there are much less people in the streets than in the pre-pandemic times, walking is my preferred (well, actually an exclusive) means of transport. I walked there with my colleague, we did not wear face-masks but put them on upon entering the building. The Ministry was rather ridiculous with regards to their epidemiological measures. We were asked to provide ID cards at the reception and fill in a questionnaire asking a few questions regarding COVID-19, such as if we visited a risk territory within the last 14 days, or whether we were in contact with someone infected or quarantined. Yet, we were supposed to use a shared pen to fill in the questionnaire... So many vectors of contagion I was thinking!

The porter walked us to the office of the vice-minister we were supposed to meet. The two guys in the office did not wear face-masks. We did not shake hand. There was a short conversation if it is OK for us to take the facemasks off, actually we concluded that the two guys represent more risk for us than we do for them: they meet many people daily, they were in the Parliament recently, while A. and myself are still mostly at home. I tried to keep distance from others when finding my place at the table and also avoided touching communal stuff in the office. My thinking and

acting upon the coronavirus is much more consequential than the Ministry's it seems to me.

I realize that I stopped touching my face altogether when outside and/or when I don't feel like I have completely (COVID-)clean hands.

When walking to the ministry, I asked my colleague if her kids returned to school in May. They did not. She tells me that parents voted on that issue and only 4 pupils from the whole class would go back to school. This means that their regular class teacher keeps teaching the group online and the students who come back to school will attend a classroom mixing students from different classes.

On Saturday I met a friend at the farmers' market who lives nearby. It was great to meet her after some time. However, I did not feel completely comfy about her invading "my" personal space. She simply kept coming too (unnecessarily) close to me. I kept moving away from her and as she did not get this nonverbal message, I told her (smiling) that I still practice social distancing. She said she probably does not.

We talked about attending some yoga classes together which let me realize that my "multisport" card will be again functional since June 1. Later in the afternoon I booked some classes in June in the two studios where I used to go before the pandemic. I am, however, not totally sure I will enjoy going there. Will I feel safe? And will I feel comfortable being close to people? In any case, there is a complication: the cloakrooms and showers cannot be used in sport centers. I will have to test how all this feels.

Most people do not wear masks in the streets any more. But some do. I am surprised to see some young people (boys) wearing the masks. Today, crossing a mostly empty bridge over the Vltava River, I passed by a young man with full mask and black gloves on. It was a very sunny, beautiful day. The scene looked rather surreal.

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Lada, June 1

My (our) last entry was made precisely one month ago — it does not feel so long, actually. I believe Rosta has started our field notes stating something along the lines "things are moving quickly" — and this is what I want to say now — since the last entry, the state has started to ease the lock-down and the epidemiological measures. Last Monday, eventually, the face masks ordinance was significantly eased out — for now, the masks are required only in enclosed spaces (shops, public transport, schools). Days immediately following, interestingly, many people continued wearing the masks. But walking through the town today, the masks seem to have disappeared from the streets. So did the social distancing. At the farmers' market on Saturday, the space was packed, no one kept distance. At one point I did ask the man behind me in the line to step back. But I did not think he knew why I was asking. The sense of shared sense of what to do and how to protect oneself and each other might be gone. Even if some people still wore masks.

Last week, social media was full of people sharing experiences of how they were disciplined for wearing a mask. Some were 'kindly reminded' to take it off, because it is no longer mandatory. Some recounted being actually shouted at and accused of being a "sheep" giving in and following the mandates of the state. As we write elsewhere, new significations of masks emerged, viewing them as a 'blast from the socialist past', a demonstration of the Czech's propensity to follow orders without questioning them, the national mark of socialist totalitarianism.

The lockdown is over, the public spaces are open again, yet it seems that my social world continues to–more or less–continue to be shaped by the everyday structure set during the quarantine. I still work from home, walk or bike, try not to travel by the tube and enjoy the fact that many things can be accessed online. The only thing that changed is that we have visitors at home. After long months few friends came

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over for a coffee, or a dinner. I have hugged someone other than my partner for the first time. I am still gauging for signals from the others if and what contact is welcomed and okay. And I too, for myself, deliberate every time. So I was surprised when another friend pulled me in for a kiss when we met on a street.

One of the things that seems to remain for now is the 'locally focused life', and I am surprised how much I revel in it. As the world contracted, I found it expand in new ways that surprised me. One of the most intense sensory experiences of this spring are smells — first the violets, then the lilacs, then elderberries, jasmine and now I cannot wait for the linden trees to start blooming. I mark the passage of time through these smells. Gardening: due to the move we have lost our big terrace with our plants and bushes and trees. But I get excessive on the window sills and experiment with vertical gardening and expand into the yard. Soil, tending to the plants, sitting next to the tomato plants in the window makes me happy and regrounds me.

Amidst the euphoria of reclaimed life — it is palpable watching people sipping wine in the restaurants' gardens and patios–a new covid hotspot emerges. Many of the mineworkers at Darkov test positive. By now, the infection got into their families. My social media feed reports how angry people are pointing that kindergartens and schools closed down immediately when as few as 2 cases were reported. The mine supposedly continued operating despite the knowledge that the infection got there. I listen to an interview with the manager of the mine and feel so unconvinced that all necessary measures were taken to protect the miners.

But, as our lives here seem to get calmer and less stressed, in a harsh contrast, we have been following the crisis in the US. Over the last two weeks, several people passed P. knew personally or who were parts of the larger disability activist community we are attached to. Earlier in the pandemic, Amanda Baggs, the autistic activist died. Amanda's "In My language" was the first material I knew about nonverbal autistic people. It is so rich and beautiful, I still teach it. Then in the

middle of May, Stacey Milbern Parker, 33 year old disabled autistic activist and organiser of colour died. Shortly after, P. mourns the death of her colleague at Independent Living Center, a black man with intellectual disability. I see her struggle and mourn. Now, on the heels of the Covid crisis, the police brutality came to the fore again.

Over the last weeks, the intensity of P.'s chronic pain got worse and more 'acute' — chronic but acute. P. was not able to get out of bed for a few days, could barely walk. The crisis is lasting long, it has been over two weeks and she is still very fragile and hurting. Last night as we took our nightly walk, she was wondering how much her intensified pain is related to the stress of the last months and to the emotional stress she is living through watching another crisis evolve in the US.

Today, our close friend texted us from the US. Last night as he was driving with his kids home, they got caught up in the crowds, gunshots around them, he broke out crying (he grew up in one of the "bad neighborhoods, several of his family members got shot, and yet he is scared watching the present crisis). P.'s father called today, saying how he never thought that it would ever get as bad as in 1968 again). The fact that George Floyed tested positive for Covid posthumously only proves what activists have been pointing out — how much these two crises intersect, how much they speak to systemic devaluation of black lives and how much these necropolitical strategies only see black death as important.

It strikes me that not much media attention (if any) was given to how much the virus spread in the Czech republic in the public housing and "projects" — places that are also mostly inhabited by poor and racialised (mostly Roma) communities.

Jiri, June 1

Well, wearing of face-masks outside is not an obligation, but it becomes a source of

Rosta
Lada
Jiri

conflicts. My parents told me what they saw in a small town (near the village where they live): an older couple went for a walk and they sat on a bench by the town square. A middle-aged man walked past them. He noticed that they had face-masks. He stopped and began to make fun of them: why are they still wearing face-masks? What are you afraid of? (Sometimes it looks like whoever wears the face-masks is a coward). The old man explained to him in a calm voice that they preferred to be careful and that they kept face-masks for safety. The symbol of "national solidarity" has turned into a cause for conflicts.

> "The symbol of 'national solidarity' has turned into a cause for conflicts."

I observe that as we near the-business-as-usual mode, I receive emails suggesting job-meetings. If possible, I refuse. Media report on new subjects of less intensity than the „war against the virus". For example: a businessman is launching an initiative to support „tipping". Our waiters deserve at least ten percent, he says. He runs a wine shop and his business doesn't prosper after the covid crisis. I don't know how this helps. Instead of spending time and money on a tipping campaign, he could spend those resources on better wages for his employees. Or we could just applaud the waiters just like we applauded the paramedics.

I met my friend after a long time. It feel a little weird to see people face to face. He had a meeting with his former high-school classmate yesterday who is now a lecturer at private university in Prague. He earns a lot of money, he wears a luxurious suit. He suffers from depression. He doesn't like people, he doesn't like students, his free time is like suffering to him and he always counts down the hours before he can

go to bed. That is why he liked the state of emergency and is looking forward to the second wave of coronavirus. He calls the virus “my little corona” and can’t wait for the virus to cut him off from other people again. Coronavirus is a way to the coveted solitude for him.

Rosta, June 4

Each day, visibly less and less people wear a facemask in my neighborhood. I like it. It feels reassuring. Yesterday at the farmers market I felt, for the first time, strongly connected to the environment – the people and objects I encountered. The coronavirus was no more present, no longer forming an insidious barrier between me and the other lives and beings.

Lada, June 5

I felt out of the habit of taking notes, of the close observation of life around me — I think this is also how the decreased sense of danger and acuteness manifests. The feeling of normalcy reducing my observation and lessens my relating to the lives around me?

Rosta, June 15

We had MA state exams at the department today. People behave as if the virus was not present. No masks, no avoidance of shaking hands, people close to each other and talking directly. The only exception is that students have to sign a declaration before the exam starts that they have not had, in recent 2 weeks, any symptoms of viral infection and they are aware of legal consequences if this declaration is not

true. (I find it strange that we, teachers, are not asked to sign any similar declaration.) Also, there is a big bottle with a disinfectant in spray in the room and my colleagues use if from time to time. I am the most restrained person in the room it seems, still avoiding to get very close to other people (of possible) and not shaking hands. But I had to explain that and why do not shake hands. For me it is much more reasonable to avoid the touch than shaking hands and using the disinfectant repeatedly as my colleagues did (or running the bathroom to wash my hands). I only shook hands with one of the students, for whom I served as a supervisor of the thesis and I was happy and moved she defended successfully (and I wash my hands then immediately).

Rosta, June 16

Taking part in an evening discussion in studio Alta as a panelist. As the day before, no masks, people shake hands, come close to each other. The persistence of the old, pre-corona patterns of sociality is apparent. I rather resign and behave as others do – even if after shaking hands with strangers I still feel my hands are "contaminated" and I would definitely not touch my face with them (or so I think). Walking back home I was thinking that I might really be overdoing it and should be careful not to get frozen in the corona-times. And in the evening the member of the municipal council of Prague, whom I personally know, announces that he contracted COVID-19. And as they had a 7-hours long meeting of the municipal council a day before, the whole leadership of Prague has to be tested (plus additional people, including some MPs) and they all have to be quarantined. Suddenly my own cautiousness seemed in place. It would be awful to be strictly quarantined for 2 weeks now, even if or in spite of being healthy!

I must admit I do not follow that debates on post-pandemic economic impacts and recovery measures so much. I neither feel personally concerned not intellectually

Rosta
Lada
Jiri

interested (compared to how interested I have felt in the epidemiology and virology issues and debates).

Jiri, June 15-28

Meeting people without face-masks is unusual – so many faces, so many expressions, so many grimaces. It's very similar to the LSD experience. Too many perceptions, too many colors, too many nonverbal signals. After so many months, it takes me a while to get used to it. Every now and then I forget about my own face-mask and enter the subway or the shop with an exposed face. It is difficult for me to get used to the "normal" regime. Here we go again: business meetings, appointments, plannings.

The virus has manifested itself significantly in my own life, albeit indirectly. The owner of the apartment I am renting called at the end of June. I thought she wanted to negotiate an extension of the contract as we agreed. Instead, she said her daughter is going back from the UK: because of Brexit, because of coronavirus. I have a month to move out and find new apartment.

I spent the whole state of emergency in a shelter from the coronavirus, in an apartment that I have to vacate now because another person is fleeing from the pandemic. There was a hope during the state of emergency that a decrease in tourists would reduce rental prices. I don't think so.

My brother and I are browsing the ads: some people offer even just a single room: without a bathroom, the bathtub is in the middle of the living room. The nomadic virus prepared a nomadic summer for me.

Lada, July 1

This is the very last entry in our shared corona diary from Prague, how appropriate to end in the moment when most of the epidemiological measures have been lifted (July 1). The face masks are no longer mandatory (with few exceptions), but also on a day when we have just ended self-imposed quarantine because P. has been having temperature for the last 5 days. When we called to ask about the testing, it turns out that access to it is more complicated. Unless one pays out of pocket, one has to exhibit serious symptoms to get the prescription for the tests. So much for the 'testing, testing, testing'. As both Rosta and Jiri write above, with the end of the epidemiological measures, the safety measures (in particular social distancing) seem to have lost their hold, people revert to the codes of social behavior from the time 'before' — it is expected that you shake hands. Travelling on a train several times, I was the only one observing the mandate to wear the mask. It was understood that I need to wear the mask for myself, that I have medical problems for which I need to protect myself. The motto of the pandemic of "I protect you, you protect me" is gone. The collective care seems to have shifted again to individualised responsibility.

"The motto of the pandemic of 'I protect you, you protect me' is gone. The collective care seems to have shifted again to individualised responsibility."