The Model of Development of Precarious Practices during Covid-19 Pandemic: Society, Religion, and Individual

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THE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF PRECARIOUS PRACTICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: SOCIETY, RELIGION, AND INDIVIDUAL

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Abstract. The article examines the phenomenon of precariousness and its development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is postulated that precariousness is a process of instability, which primarily affects the working class and destabilizes social relations at all levels, including the level of personal relationships. The human way of life has been shifted as a result of the epidemiological situation in the world caused by the COVID-19 infection. This process can be observed in the spheres of employment, medicine, religion, family, leisure activities, etc. Against the background of social turbulence, the processes of precariousness began to develop, which worsen the already difficult situation of humanity. The danger is primarily that this phenomenon is hidden, and the average person is usually unable to identify it and to begin to resist. Challenges and changes usually force a person to look for a better way out of a crisis situation, but precariousness in society, especially in the field of employment, has created a phenomenon of hopelessness for a better financial situation, giving birth to the scheme, "We must survive here and now." Precariousness in the religious sphere cooled the feelings of the faith: some people were disappointed in the heavenly realities, focusing on earthly problems; and the others relied only on the heavenly realities, waiting for God to solve their current problems. Today's average person is usually lost in himself/herself because he /she cannot answer the question, "How to better build the present and the future?" The lack of individual planning of one's life for the year ahead due to lockdown, which constantly adjusts the life plan of the individual and society, has given rise to regressive individual and to social practices of precariousness, whereas timely identification of which would help to facilitate problem solving of present-day issues. As a result of the study, a visual model of the spread of precarious social practices during the COVID-19 pandemic was built.

Keywords: precariousness, the model of precarious social practices, COVID-19, society, religion, individual.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic spread rapidly in 2019-2021 and became a real global event, dividing the daily lives of people around the world into the periods "before" and "after" COVID-19. This stagnation manifested itself not only in the processes of state and municipal strategies, but also in the everyday social practices of people. The pandemic has become a real challenge and a test of endurance for all countries of the world, supranational entities, numerous public associations, human communities, societies, and for each person in his/her daily life. In record time, there was a need to restructure the basic principles of coexistence and cooperation. The stable spheres of life of countries and people, which include education, the medical sphere, the satisfaction of religious needs, and the process of personal self-identification, were destroyed.

Along with them, those spheres in society that were already in an unstable state, such as employment, the political and economic situation, and family issues, have also changed. As a result, the processes of precariousness began to develop dynamically in the above-mentioned spheres, to which not only the state but also the citizens themselves were not ready, because to solve the problem with detailed knowledge about it is one thing, and to solve the problem which you cannot even identify is a completely different circumstance. It is this problem, which is closely related to the inner life of a human, but caused by external factors, that we will try to describe and identify. People ask numerous logical questions: "What will happen next?", "What will happen to me?", "Who am I?", "What is the direction and the general goal of my life?" etc. Finding answers to these questions will help us to understand how the key spheres of human existence were transformed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to identify in which of the spheres the destructive processes of human precariousness developed.

This research is aimed at an attempt to build a viable model of precarious practice developments under the COVID-19 pandemic in the social, religious, and individual spheres.

Firstly, we should define the term of precariousness, characterizing this phenomenon in the context of negative and positive factors. Precariousness is a notion transferred from the theory of economy to the sphere of social philosophy, and if in its original meaning it defines a complex of non-guaranteed and non-protected legally practices of employment, yet in its derived one it defines a specific way of life, born out of a feeling of non-stability and absence of any and every guarantee whatsoever in almost all the segments of human activities. Precariousness is an ambiguous social phenomenon, it has certain positive sides, e.g., demands

an individual to be flexible towards the changing and unpredictable circumstances, as well as maximum individual responsibility for the life choices one makes, it transforms an individual into an actively involved subject of its own life; individual initiative, active worldview, and maximal involvement at any given moment are the necessary conditions for the survival of people under precarious circumstances, therefore maintaining such lifestyle motivates it to be on the edge of all the events and absorb any new information that may one or another way concern the individual. However, on the other hand, since precariousness does not envisage the development of any prolonged living strategies, the milestones a person has developed are to mutate, sometimes radically, according to the senses and benefits of a current fleeing moment. Situations of that kind tend to deplete the inner resources of a person, the problem of adjusting oneself to the everchanging conditions of today takes the leading role, taking the place that once belonged to the question of creative implementation of a person's talents and abilities, its work aimed at a distant prospect. Hence, human life becomes more and more "animalistic": it gets rid of its very human phenomenon of transcendental and social immortality.

Starting from the given notions, we must state that whenever the negative factors of the precariousness process lead in most spheres of human life, it leads to destruction of the basic social, religious, and interpersonal settings. It is connected to the fact that precariousness is a basic tendency in the social practices of a society with a neoliberal economic model of views, which is characterized by the absence of long-term strategies which envision a prognosed result in the distant future. Instead of that, there is an orientation at a current moment of reality, with all the benefits and risks in it. Extrapolating from the sphere of social and work relations onto other segments of individual social practices, such as interpersonal relations, political activities, civil initiatives, and others, the precarious strategies bear such way of living and such an existential reality that, if taken at a current given moment, seems to be the sole possible space and source of sense. "Life is a thing with no warranties;" "No one owes anything to anybody;" "You only live once" –these sayings are being proclaimed by a modern person in a mantric way, which, on one hand, frees a person of a burden of social planning, and on the other hand dooms the person for a lifetime in a whirlwind of situations. The very same tendency is typical for any civil society and the state strategies in the whole–momentarily benefits, spur-of-the-moment risks in a social environment with no guarantees and perspectives remind one of driving along the highway through the mist, where every second may change everything.

We propose to have a closer look at the typical types of precariousness in the day-to-day practices of an average member of modern society in the basic spheres of human activity before COVID-19 pandemic and after it.

Work relations' sphere. Small and mid-size businesses could not withstand the economic blow, which caused massive shortages and firings. Precariousness at a typical person's workplace has two crossing tendencies. The first being the absence of entitlement and protection of a person's employment practices, prejudice, bullying, and misconduct from the superiors; permanent indefinite state of tomorrow and thus the inability to plan one's life and/or employment-based social practices (like starting a family, having children, purchasing real estate, taking care of elderly or indisposed parents, etc.). The second being a person's orientation onto precarious jobs instead of holding onto them for some time. As a result, such a person can switch jobs for any similar ones whenever facing problems in a workspace. A "nomadic" way of life is oddly beneficial under precarious work conditions since there is no sense in putting much effort into a project that will bear no dividends, it is way better to always be on the move, free from any long-term commitments against the employer who can turn into a slave holder at any time. Therefore, people tend to gradually lose the skills of a settled, forecast life, it is far calmer for them–and more funds-efficient–not to root anywhere. However, there is another side to that coin: "nomadic" precarious life as an integral heir of precarious work practices does not lead to any stable result, yet takes up massive amounts of vigor aimed at readjustment of social practices, which in its turn does not allow any prognosis of one's own life and prediction of possible risks and dangers.

As a result, a stratum of society is born called "economic precariat"– people working without any protection of their work right by the active legislation. They can earn relatively significant amounts in comparison with the workers in the spheres that are traditionally protected by existing legal practices, yet they pay for it by tolerating bullying and/or harassment from their superiors, working extra time, and having extra obligations. Such people are not protected from being fired from the positions they currently have. Sudden firings, especially in the services' sphere, small and mid-size businesses' going bankrupt and insolvent during the pandemic has caused a state of forced unemployment of large quantities of population, many had to find atypical for themselves and their initial competencies niches of employment, thus being sucked into the vortex of precariousness even more. Interesting is the tendency that the employees involved in the sectors where their positions were protected on a legal basis had the chance to stay away from being forcibly led into economic precariousness, whereas those who already were prone to being precarious before the pandemic have fully converted into even more chaotic work practices.

Such work practices strengthen the existential state of indefinity, mistrust towards tomorrow, alienation towards the fruit of one's labor, and thus a crisis of social identity. There

is an exemplary story from the Internet "Kill Me Please" project (the quotation below keeps the authenticity of the post and the formulations of it): "I quit right before the pandemic started, it just happened so. I was heading nowhere, I had a new job, I had passed the job interview and was expected to start. Later, however, a decree was issued by that company not to employ new staff until the pandemic situation is cleared. And since my resignation letter had already come through the system, I was kicked out of my old job. The alleged new job superior called me, telling me that he realizes I had quit the old job to work for them, and apologized that there was nothing he could have done because the decision came from above. He did make a promise though, that if I still were up to it when the crisis ended, he'd hire me as soon as the company gets out of the crisis. It has been 6 months and… well, I am still up to it, but I have not found a job so far. I distribute flyers in the street (got this side job from a friend), and in the evenings I work as a dishwasher at a café closest to home. I get just a little of the minimal wage; barely enough for the staples. That company is still not hiring; I have been monitoring their vacancies' page; they are nonexistent. There aren't any new vacancies close to my job description, and the ones far from it deny me employment." October 12, 2020, 9p.m. In other words, precariousness leaves people in a state of hopelessness, where a person faces constant day-to-day problems and having to deal with them, has no time to concentrate on any future dreams or plans.

Workers involved in the traditionally legally protected spheres such as education, medicine, social work, state enterprise, etc. (people holding onto their positions instead of moving to the private sector) have ended up into a winning position regarding workplace turbulence, unlike the "undefended from precariousness" layers of society: private entrepreneurs and hired staff. Although the salaries of the former are significantly smaller than the one of the latter, even under the conditions of the pandemic the former have kept their income stable. Their material well-being relies totally upon the state and national politics, yet it is much harder to rock the system of state regulation with its sturdy levers of reaction and legislative protection than a single private entrepreneur. Although during a stable period in the country workers who are working for the state are getting certain social stigmas, during the time of the pandemic they are paradoxically in a winning position regarding the ability to keep their jobs, maintaining stable pay, unlike those who built their businesses by themselves and the hired staff. The ability to survive on less, yet stable and guaranteed income, in this case, has led to stabilization of state worker's social status in such tumultuous times for the state labor system.

Family and interpersonal relationships. The number of divorces in the time of pandemic has drastically risen, as well as the levels of domestic violence and abuse within the family during the isolation period. China was the first to face both the spread of the coronavirus and strict quarantines, as well as a large number of divorces, when the epidemic stopped and restrictions were eased. In mid-March, the *Global Times* reported that marriage registration offices in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province, had received a record number of divorce applications.[1] As statistics show, the increase in cases of domestic violence is a global trend. Wei Fei, founder of a non-profit organization to combat domestic violence in Hubei province, told the Chinese newspaper *Sixth Tone* that reports of domestic abuse have doubled since the imposition of a strict quarantine regime.[2] In his opinion, the reasons for this were fear and economic hardship, as well as the weakening of the victim assistance system. China has had a domestic violence law since 2016, but most police officers were busy with other issues during the coronavirus epidemic. French Interior Minister Christophe Castagnier spoke about the rise in domestic violence by 30% after the announcement of quarantine.[3] The official promised to develop a system that would allow victims in isolation to seek help, for example, from a pharmacy worker. This is what the authorities of the Canary Islands did: if a woman asks for "Mask-19" at a pharmacy, pharmacists understand that she needs urgent help. The authorities in Italy and Spain, which have also recorded an increase in domestic violence, are developing online help systems.

The deputy chairman of the Russian State Duma committee on family, women, and children and co-author of the bill on the prevention of domestic violence said that more reports of violence not only against women, but also against elderly people began to arrive. "The elderly are bullied by their own children-- they take out their dissatisfaction with life, take away their pensions," the deputy clarified.[4] In 2006, 355,000 marriages and 179,100 divorces were registered in Ukraine. The following year, Ukrainians married more often and divorced less often. In 2008-2010, both the number of marriages and the number of divorces decreased.

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[1] "Chinese City Experiencing a Divorce Peak as a Repercussion of COVID-19," *Global Times*, March 7, 2020, https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1181829.shtml.

[2]   https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1005253/domestic-violence-cases-surge-during-covid-19-epidemic.

[3] Марика Димитриади, "Пандемия жестокости: в мире резко увеличилось число случаев домашнего насилия," *Euronews*, March 31, 2020, https://ru.euronews.com/2020/03/31/coronavirus-domestic-violence. [Marika Dimitriadi, "A pandemic of violence: the number of cases of domestic violence has increased dramatically around the world."]

[4] Андрей Колосов, "Разводы, свадьбы и — насилие: что карантин вносит в жизнь самоизолированных," RTVI, April 1, 2020, https://rtvi.com/stories/razvody-svadby-i-nasilie-karantin/. [Andrey Kolosov, "Divorce, weddings and - violence: what quarantine brings to the life of the self-isolated."]

In 2011, 355,900 marriages were registered (+ 16%) and the number of divorces rose sharply to 182,500 (+ 45%). The number of marriages in 2016 decreased by 29% compared to the previous year—229,500 thousand. There were 130,000 divorces that year in Ukraine. In 2018, Ukrainians got married again less often—228,400 marriages (-8%) but divorced more often—153,900 divorces (+ 20%). In 2019, the number of marriages increased by 4%-- to 237,900, the number of divorces decreased by 10% - to 138,000. Over the past year, 168,000 marriages were registered in Ukraine (29%) --the lowest rate for the period under review. The number of divorces fell by 14%--to 119,300. Sociologists suggest that the decrease in the number of both marriages and divorces is associated with lockdowns in the pandemic, when people did not have the physical opportunity to contact the appropriate authorities and formalize their relationship.

For three months of 2021, 37,100 marriages and 6,700 divorces were registered. In 2019, Cyprus (8.9 per thousand), Albania (7.9 per thousand) and Lithuania (7 per thousand) were the leaders among European countries in terms of the number of marriages. Ukraine was the leader in terms of the number of divorces--3.6 per thousand people. Lithuania, Latvia and Luxembourg were also in the top--3.1 per thousand people.[5]

In the sphere of family and interpersonal relations, there is an analogical situation on entering the "no strings attached" types of relationships, both romantic and those of friendship, partnership, "civil marriage," etc. The understanding emerges that human relations are to be those of comfort, bringing joy, profit or benefit, and efficiency. Whenever a party of such relationship is not okay with it, she/he leaves such relationship with little or no guilt. This setting is backed up by numerous dating apps like "Tinder," "Mamba," and "Badoo," where a "romantic" interest is basically being ordered by targeted features much like pizza delivery. Consumerism settings are also to be observed in terms of friendship and partnership; the assumptions that "nobody owns anybody anything," "a $1M surrounding," "don't talk to losers," etc.

Many families have faced problems during the isolation period. It has become harder to co-exist with close ones and kin. Some families ended up on the brink of divorce; some did fall apart. The relationships that were formed on the premises of, "I feel good with you for

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[5] "Сколько браков и разводов регистрируют в Украине и других странах," *Слово і Діло*, June 11, 2021, https://ru.slovoidilo.ua/2021/06/11/infografika/obshhestvo/skolko-brakov-i-razvodov-registriruyut-ukraine-i-drugix-stranax. ["How many marriages and divorces are registered in Ukraine and other countries." Word and Deed]

now" (a precariousness principle), as a rule, did not weather the pandemic storm.[6] They faced the crisis and were smitten by it because such relationships were initially formed under the condition that things would be "feeling good" and as soon as this orientation fell out of the picture, it has disintegrated the structure of such relationships.

Relationships that endured throughout the pandemic had partners who chose the relationship according to the notion that, "This person is my choice for life (my soulmate), and I will stand by this person; I have already made my choice (or it was destined to be so)." Quite often such a setting helped people to redefine the attractive features of a close one, not relating to her/him as to a "project that has run its course," but as a unique human being with whom a relationship is a veritable cornucopia of finding senses, irrelevant to whether they are "successful," "efficient," or "resourceful" in times of crisis. Even though the times are critical, there are plenty of reasons to preserve, develop, and better these relationships.

Religious sphere. The absence of the ability to fully congregate in a church, chapel, or prayer houses for believers has led to two extremes: some have moved away from the idea of being actively religious, others have been drawn to conservative criticism, ignoring state restrictions, and trying to gather in eparchial buildings to conduct masses. In the sphere of religious reverence and striving for something transcendental, precariousness can be observed through an eclectic approach towards choosing a religious practice and/or beliefs. Quite often in the modern media society, a person is driven towards a chaotic choice of beliefs, settings, or superstitions that are "easy," "comfortable," "light," "comprehensible," or "usual" to believe in. A person chooses to believe in something that feels familiar to her/his worldview, not more. Often enough the tendency towards the absence of obligations in the religious sphere, as well as the orientation towards one's own religious understanding of the world, finds its reflection in the fact that a person does not visit a specific temple or a prayer house, does not become a part of a congregation in the traditional understanding of the word, thus does not appear visibly in front of the religious congregation, does not have a designated pastor or preacher, is driven solely by his/her own choice and inner voice when performing a certain religious ritual. It is not surprising when a Christian says things like "We should act so as not to spoil our karma," when he/she changes course upon seeing a black cat cross the road, is ready to go full 'Jihaddist' on those who disagree with him–without even the slightest hint of discomfort. The absence of responsibility and the need to report to a certain religious union drives a person into

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[6] Emma Ailes, "'Covid Ended Our Marriage': The Couples Who Split in the Pandemic," BBC News, December 3, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-55146909.

the darkness of reckless religious ignorance. One starts to believe in things and ideas that do not have any system or structure, such religious eclectic sample lacks common sense.

Religious issues and practices always touch the spheres of transcendental and inner measure of a person's spiritual life, where a person chooses a type of religion on its own, agrees to a certain manner of worship, connecting on a subconscious level the two sides of their being – the inner one (spiritual, soul one), and the outer one, regulating the material side of being by the chosen way of religious worship. As a result of the restrictions that emerged out of the COVID-19 pandemic, people who belong to certain religious organizations have faced the fact that the secular state began to intrude into outside regulations of inner religious processes, for instance, due to the temporary ban of church attendance it became impossible to communicate and conduct common prayers in a religious congregation, to join communion, etc. The state has altered the regulation of the invisible intimate spiritual processes, and it forced the believers to react differently to the bans and restrictions on conducting religious practices and rituals. As a result, the entire sphere of religious life has undergone drastic transformations, to which neither the state nor the church appeared ready. This non-preparedness is clearly visible in two aspects.

First, the state was not ready that there would be events of sabotage and unrest from a core part of religiously radical citizens who disregarded the restrictions of the quarantine and continued to congregate *en masse* in religious buildings. Their adamant religious position concerning "God keeping the contagion away, unless it is His intent," or "me coming to Easter mass not wearing a mask because it is a celebration of a man who defied death by dying" has led to an interesting phenomenon: the members of congregation started to place their own responsibility for their choices onto God's shoulders, sabotaging not only the quarantine restrictions given from the outside but also the inner God-given ability to make decisions and bearing responsibility for them and their consequences. This can be regarded as a specific case of religious precariousness–the absence of desire to carry any long-term commitments to God, people, and one's own consciousness for certain religious decisions, while maintaining momentarily "religious" needs, one's own immediate gratification; in other words, "I want this, and have to have it!"

Secondly, without any supervision from the side of religious congregation a part of believers who stayed at home appeared disoriented in the face of various eclectic religious proposals they came across on the Internet. It is especially true for newly joined members of the church of religious community who have not yet managed to obtain a solid frame of understanding and accepting the core values of the religious system they joined. These

newcomers, being left alone, relatively quickly became susceptible to an antagonistic set of religious doctrines they deem plausible and real under their own comprehensive abilities. Such religious eclectics have spread especially wide in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, when people in states of disarray and loss started looking for answers to eternal questions and ways of calming themselves down on their own, without any sort of religious tutoring. This proportionally increased the impact of religious cults, pseudo-Messiahs, gurus of various pseudo religions, instilling apocalyptic thoughts into society, thus rocking the not very stable situation with the spiritual and mental well-being of people.

People who are used to self-restriction, despite the fact they have fully committed their lives to the church, or the life of a certain congregation have accepted governmental restrictions of church gatherings with no panic at all, concentrating on employing their religious practices within the family, as well as attending religious services and gatherings online. They made a point that such a situation is a trial for them to successfully overcome. Some of them realized that attending church or a prayer house, meeting their spiritual guide, pastor or preacher, other members of congregation is not only a moral duty of a person that considers himself/herself a member of a certain religious group, but also a privilege, a luxury, a spiritual pleasure that is currently unavailable due to the pandemic. Guided by their moral setting saying that each pleasure has its own place in the hierarchy of secular and spiritual needs and actively practicing the restrictions of these pleasures (systematic physical and spiritual fasting), such people do not feel as religiously restricted, having found new horizons and space for their implementation in this complicated situation, have changed the prospective they observe their religious affinity from. The outer symbolism has shifted towards a deeper understanding of the motives and values a person who is guided by in certain life challenges. For instance, skipping a weekly mass because you want to sleep in is a sin because you are indulging yourself, which is a sin, but skipping it based on the fact you do not want to get yourself or other people sick while interacting with a crowd is a truly spiritual act of self-restriction.

Educational sphere. The un-preparedness of educational systems to transfer fully to the online form of instruction has impacted not only the quality of school and university education but also on all the individual students, teachers, and lecturers, who appeared to be psychologically unprepared of sitting in front of the screen all day long. In this very sphere of education and teaching we observe the same aforementioned tendency towards eclecticism and absence of system and structure, orientation on personal comfort in acquiring and absorbing new portions of knowledge. Systematic knowledge requires a prolonged and planned absorption, and often those kinds of effort that do not bring any immediately visible results or

practical implementation. So, it is moved aside to give space to the utilitarian knowledge, applicable to achieve some narrow and clearly put goals. There is a widely spread thought these days that university serves for obtaining professional knowledge; skills have become "obsolete" and that it is far more beneficial to get a certificate from a specifically oriented course, which would immediately give a possibility to practically implement the gained knowledge. However, these specialized courses are oriented at a very narrow segment of educational services and/or customer needs, they do not give a fully formed systematic scientific vision of the world around us, giving just a view to a segment of it. A narrowed worldview is an heir to such approach towards education, an aggressive heir that quite often sires bellicose ignorance of those who favor fragmentary education. Besides, the quality of such courses available at the mass education market is dubious at best. Most often their developers are guided by the principle of their production being attractive visually for the potential attendees, blithely neglecting the quality part of the material and the system and structure the planned material is based upon.

Educational practices under conditions of COVID-19 pandemic have also suffered from the impact of eclectics and rhizomity.[7] People who are not used to building a system of knowledge entering their minds and binding each and every element of it have bravely swung themselves into the open arms of chaotic self-teaching. During the harshest lockdown in spring of 2020, one could find a cornucopia of free on-line courses led by the leading professors of the world, however, the informational content they were producing proved to be too peculiar and complicated for a regular network user, as it requires a systematic approach and certain skills to be fully comprehensible. On the contrary, there were many bright and enticing courses to attain certain skills. Overall, such knowledge is indeed useful, but not when it destabilizes the system of practical disciplines absorbed earlier and is subpar to them and the previously existing scientific narrative. It refers especially to the massive amount of knowledge in Humanities, like, for instance, Public Relations, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, etc. Subpar education in these fields may cause harm to the customer of educational services, lacking the formed skills of critical thought, and therefore negatively impact the clients such person will deal with later.

Nevertheless, for some people, the quarantine period was a huge help in obtaining the lacking skills of systematic knowledge absorption, in developing a filter to sort out the fake

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[7] The concept of "rhizome" expresses the fundamental postmodern attitude to the presumption of destruction of traditional ideas about the structure as semantically centered and stably defined, being a means of designating a radical alternative to closed and static linear structures that presuppose a rigid axial orientation.

and true information, in gaining a possibility to enrich their skillset due to free and pre-paid courses on various educational platforms. It was the time of the quarantine and isolation that became the most resourceful period for them to enhance their knowledge, to acquire new learning tools without falling into the abyss of scientific or educational eclectics.

Medicine and Health Care. Pandemic has become a veritable challenge to the medical professionals and organizations all over the world, who, despite their best effort, equipment and development have not yet succeeded in finding a universally accepted COVID-2019 vaccine. The hesitation regarding the effectiveness of such a vaccine pushes people to take some radical steps, inter alia suicide. Taking care of one's own health and well-being is a marker of a precarious or a non-precarious state per se, for it could be maintaining appearances with the purpose of appearing attractive, which, according to J. Beaudriard, is a primate of symbolic capital. The health care sphere shows a tendency towards shifting to such practices, promising a quick visual effect. It is quite fashionable these days to go to the gym not keeping in mind the purpose of enhancing one's strength or stamina, but to look bigger and sportier, hence the graphic selfies from the gyms or locker rooms featuring new sportswear, equipment, etc. In accordance with the Beaudriard concept, the visual aspect of one's health is a symbolic capital, for people tend to appreciate the wealth and social status of a person by the way s/he tends to her/his physical appearance. At the same time, such a person may not only neglect one's health but deliberately cause harm to it by relentlessly pursuing visual beauty: for years there has been quite a few cases where people used heavy drugs in order to quickly lose weight, sabotaging one's metabolism to gain more muscle mass, enduring inhuman loads to gain the so-called etalon looks, visiting plastic surgeon in order to change their appearance via surgery, etc.

The orientation on efforts made to maintain one's body in physical shape and good health supported by immediate results and constant social praising has failed during the COVID pandemic. People who were maintaining their physical fitness on a regular basis and according to a well-planned program to feel better (which was their main motivation), have turned out to be in a better situation, as the outer effect was a sort of a pleasant bonus for their developed system of self-discipline. People who are used to complex support of their health, aiming not at the visual effect, but at the value of keeping and enhancing the possibilities of one's body, have felt relative independence from the beauty and fitness salons. It turns out, that doing some elementary physical exercise to prevent hypodynamic and muscle fatigue is possible during the isolation merely by exercising willpower and not concentration on your own reflection in the mirror.

The civil society sphere is imbued with numerous paradoxes and dilemmas depicting the situation where the citizens are at a loss when facing a common danger. The civil practices reflect some rather antagonistic Pleiades of values "individual freedom vs collective responsibility," "tolerance, respect and unbiased thinking vs criterial thought and judgment upon amoral non-ethical actions that can cause general danger," "responsibility for the members of your family vs responsibility for the collective at work, people we meet in the street," "primate of individual freedom and valuing the freedom of others vs necessity of systematic arrangement of the situation that might require neglecting certain principles of personal freedoms," etc.

As for the civil life–there is a tendency towards atomization of individuals one from another. On the one hand, social networks allow people to consolidate quickly to discuss the most diverse issues of any given society, but on the other hand they mean all the activity stays online, which may not result in any offline (real life) actions, and sometimes even if it does find its outlet in real actions, they tend to be of short-term effect. It is much simpler today to gather masses of people to solve some problem in a square, but the question of true solidarity, preparedness to self-organize to produce some prolonged and consolidated action when the crowd is gone is what remains dubious yet.

Civil life and precariousness from the local authorities' point of view. Due to vague and quite often contrary recommendations on the efficiency of means of individual protection during the pandemic, one can find both on the official information channels and in the network, society never managed to consolidate to work out a unified strategy for these means to be actually helpful. Therefore, people have segregated into those who wear masks in public places, and those who do not. A medical mask has turned into a universal social symbol depicting an individual's attitude towards the pandemic, towards the danger, and somehow crystallizes a person's understanding of the horizons of his/her own responsibility for the lives of others. Despite the absence of a unified civil opinion on the matter, there has not been formed considerable tolerance towards any of the groups mentioned above – the wearers and the not-wearers. The wearers' intolerance can be understood as it derives from a natural serious fear of danger of contagion during the pandemic (making it essentially a matter of life and death), whereas the intolerance of the non-wearers is barely an irrational desire to triumph over the death menace, gaining control of the situation with the sole tool of attitude towards it.

The wearers are often being "trolled" in everyday life (negligent looks, mocking pranks, unacceptance from the close ones; the social networks are no less cruel, calling them "panic dogs," "tin hats," "chipped ones," and many other insults. Thus, the situation of total anomia

on wearing/not wearing individual protection means in public places has actually caused a phenomenon of stigma cast upon the wearers. This orientation on one's own comfort, on the existence of "one and only entirely true opinion" causes a situation where the space for a civil dialogue, common understanding and the ability to be heard by the other party of a discussion is, unfortunately, shrinking non-stop.

Up until recently the precarious model of society in the individual, civil, and state-building spheres can exist, but in the frames of a historical process it is subject to durability checks and a wide social practice has shown it does not often pass these checks with flying colors. The COVID-19 pandemic has become the challenge and the durability check for all the precarious strategies in individual, civil, state practices of virtually every country in the world.

People who are used to the practices of self-restriction have reasonably regarded the necessity of keeping to the quarantine-based restrictions and regulations: wearing masks and protective gloves in public places, constant usage of soaps and antiseptics, keeping social distance, avoiding crowded places, etc. They were keeping calm even if they saw people not wearing a mask, they even tried to gently tell them about the wrong of their ways, being guided by the idea that during the pandemic personal actions taken by each and every citizen affects the safety of the collective directly. Civil solidarity in times of pandemic, a desire to act collectively aimed at one common goal of stopping the disease spreading as fast as possible is a position of a concerned citizen, which has a complex vision of the issue, is guided by the long-term prognosis of the events taking place, not just by his individual momentarily needs for comfort and regular unchanged behavior.

The state regulations sphere has achieved a collapse of systematics and balance, yet there emerged a disbalance between articulation and aggregation of political interests represented by different layers of society, having different views as what the measures of the government should look like to prevent the pandemic from spreading. The same tendencies are to be observed in the political sphere. The autonomy of the political leaders and their close circles, orientation onto the current problems without the commitment to the long-term problems, ochlocratic mechanisms of political decisions' forcing–all of it allows one to state that politics of today have a lack of prospective view, which, in its turn means that the politic has all the signs of precariousness, and it is shown in many ways.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the norms of keeping quarantine restrictions also collapsed, the cause being not entirely in the civil and individual irresponsibility, but also the crisis of systematic approach among the authorities and governing organs towards planning, introduction, and control of quarantine measures. For example, the declared fine for not

wearing a mask in a public place in Ukraine was set at a mark of UAH 17,000. In real life, though, this fine was something purely nominal, having been fined several times at the early stages, it did not weather the storm of civil criticism; representatives of protective services were patrolling the streets, giving oral warnings to the non-wearers, yet not pursuing any further legal actions. A similar situation was with the public transport–formally all the passengers and the driver were supposed to wear protective masks, while in fact the regulation had been breached multiple times, and quite often the driver himself was the guilty party. The drivers of municipal transport, however, were more eager to keep to the rules as they were more tightly controlled by the superiors. Drivers working for private contractors neglected the quarantine regulations far more frequently.

Another quarantine restrictions collapse was the situation with the people working abroad, facing the necessity to go back to their homeland after the borders had been closed. There was no active form of control instilled as to what activities and travels the returning ones from the coronavirus-infected countries had, therefore they had a rather large number of contacts with other people in public places, spreading the pandemic forth. The situation with the workers of the cultural sphere and the services' sphere (cafes, barbershops, hairdressers, beauty salons, etc.) also made people question the decisions made by the local and municipal authorities, judging whether they were weighed and unbiased. The representatives of these spheres of the economy were at the very edge of survival, and yet they had to lock down their businesses due to the danger of infecting the clients. Yet the government did not offer them any adequate reimbursement at the time, nor any tax privileges. Later, these enterprises were reopened again, despite the growing rates of infected people. All the decisions taken by the local and administrative authorities ended under a threat of a logical collapse for they were oriented exclusively onto the conjuncture of the given moment, and sometimes even contradicting themselves.

All the aforementioned precarities in the individual, civil, and state forming practices given on an example of Ukrainian population that escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic escalated due to the social anomia that had totally captured the society. Social anomia is characterized by a state of indefiniteness, vague social norms; the norms that used to be considered etalons in social processes are rendered obsolete; instead, the long-forgotten skills and settings gain relevance. Yet the previously gained skills and orientations never disappear, and it takes some time to adapt the new forms and norms, and not just the time, but also determination and clear understanding of operated notions. Social penalties such as fines and stimulations secure the new norms in the society, however, the Ukrainian system never saw a

strict set of defined sanctions and penalties. Social anomia, spread and instilled by the state power and local authorities, has multiplied the impact of precariousness in people's attitude towards their health, understanding their individual responsibilities for the health and well-being of others. Therefore, the very state system is precarious, oriented at the current moment, and not envisaging any log-term commitments.

Surely, the state-ordered practices only depend on the will of any given individual very indirectly. However, even at this scale, we can see a certain connection: in those towns and cities where the local authorities and the society had been treating the individual and collective demands related to quarantine responsibly and dutifully, they acted systematically and in a balanced manner, offering a certain strategy comprised of anti-epidemical actions that were monitored and supervised. In those towns and cities where the society started sabotaging the quarantine restrictions and regulations, the state was forced to give up its firm positions, in favor of the society, neglecting even the basic rules of safety. A bright example of that is the situation in Mykolayiv. In October 2020 the city was officially assigned the status of a "red zone" according to the rate of a pandemic spreading within the population. It implied restrictions and bans regarding the functioning of leisure institutions and gatherings in public places without keeping the required social distancing. Yet, using the conjuncture of the moment–the elections for the position of the city mayor–which was currently ongoing the representatives of leisure establishments and cultural institutions approved an event in the central square of the city, where they practically forced the mayoral candidates into promising them that even in the "red zone" Mykolayiv will have no restrictions regarding people attending said public institutions and cultural establishments. By such civil pressure, not by the majority of Mykolayiv's citizens, but merely by those who had managed to consolidate and quickly take actions into their own hands in order to protect their businesses, such a decision was forcibly acquired out of the acting mayor and passed onto the President of Ukraine, which eventually resulted in that proposal being accepted. So have the active representatives of Mykolayiv society shaken the whole system of governmental regulations, thus endangering the principle of systematic and planned governing, as well as its orientation at minimizing the pandemic impact in the far perspective.

Entertainment and recreation. Diminishing the number and locking down the entertainment and recreational complexes has had its negative impact not only on the recreational facilities but also on the consumers and customers of said services: during the isolation, a lot of people felt sudden urges to change their boring surroundings–a craving that they could not satisfy. The leisure establishments are mostly the ones of passive rest, not the

creative hobbies and pastimes. By passive we mean leisure that involves consuming certain information, goods, or services without the necessity to actively interact with people–producing and exchanging ideas, feelings, thoughts, gaining experience. Consumer oriented passive leisure practices have become a matter of deep spiritual and mental concern for many people.

In the dominant parts of the society, consuming products and services by the individual defines the chief criteria of one's social identity. A lot of people were genuinely upset with the fact they are no longer allowed to visit cafes, shopping malls, bowling lanes, nightclubs, etc. Some tried their best to protest and appeal against the quarantine restrictions of the state, sabotaging their sound minds and self-preservation instincts, trying to get together as many friends and acquaintances as possible to collectively attend such establishments or provoke people into gathering in a crowd. The tendencies to be noted here are, as follows, the feeling of protest against the government putting its paws on freedom of leisure and transportation; secondly, a fear when facing forced loneliness, the unwillingness to change the common behavioral patterns.

The quarantine restrictions and regulations for those who are used to restricting their momentary desires for entertainment have turned into a time for learning, mastering new hobbies, expanding creativity. The ability to creatively organize and structure one's leisure, skills to find new things to do and to systematize one's living space became the key factors in maintaining mental health and psychological comfort during the isolation. Those who can actually organize their own leisure appeared superior from those who kept waiting for some sort of a personal provider of services who would get paid to do that.

Personal identification sphere. The fact that people have lost their stable foothold in matters of education, religion, employment, family, medicine, economics, etc. makes people facing the questions like, "What is going to happen next? Is there a place for me in the future? What is my role in the situation that is going on all over the world?" This sphere has a critical impasse–prolonged professional, interpersonal, civil, and other living strategies act as important psychological "anchors" allowing the person to answer the question, "Who am I?" both as a part of a society and as an individual, and yet their number and sphere of action is rapidly shrinking in the precarious world. Therefore, an individual is to observe the self-identification processes in a new way. Despite the widespread postulate that life without any attachments to any specific sphere of activity is a sign of personal freedom in the modern world, truth be told, such state is one of huge stress; a person does not have enough data to define its social mission and falls to antagonistic social practices ruining the integrity of the frame, the

very narrative of its life. Life with no sense has transformed from a human one, laced with spirituality, a life envisioning transcendence in the narrow meaning of this notion, a life aimed at transcending over oneself, into animalistic, purely biological, immanent in the narrow meaning of the word, where the primacy of adjustment and survival under complicated and unpredictable conditions of the social jungle is considered imperative.

Personal identification, because of these precarious practices, tends to become more and more rhizomic, unidentified, indefinite, situational. When answering the question of "Who am I?" the person tends to be guided solely by the conjuncture of the moment, hence grows its profound internal non-freedom, total dependence on the circumstance, be it favorable or not, frustration towards spiritual creativity, loss of the ability to construct one's life with the help of creatively found senses. It all makes life even more chaotic, with accident starting to play the first fiddle, including the matters of spiritual and psychological development, and it turns a person from the creator of one's own fate and the inner self into a sufficiently sentient animal whose basic task is survival of the fittest and fitting onto the current situation. However, the COVID-19 situation makes said adjustment significantly more complicated and atomic, with circumstances falling out of control, data becoming false, and the results of these events and changes have a prolonged effect that practically cannot be predicted. The survival of the fittest principle suddenly stops functioning properly, for even the fittest ones are on thin ice under the global pandemic' conditions.

It should be noted that this deep dive into the situational precariousness, escalated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has not impacted all the layers of society. The definition of those who end up falling into precariousness and who will appear opposed to it is in the current case not a matter of any social layer or class, but rather social and individual markers and settings a person is guided by. People who tend to build their lives around a prolonged and viable basis, aimed at the implementation of certain goals and values implying self-restrictions and the ability to wait for the effect that is to come in the distant future, have managed to grasp themselves quicker under the conditions of a global pandemic and find the vector of implementation of certain social practices. Let us analyze their behavioral strategies in comparison to those who have dived into the vortex of precariousness in times of the pandemic.

Self-identification of the people who made a bet on their own self-made senses, independent of the everchanging circumstances, has gained new aspects. Those who have self-identified have felt deep inner freedom unlike the state of the forced situationality, having realized one's values' program to the full. Although the set of their practices has significantly shrunk due to objective reasons, they have gained inner autonomy in the matter of choosing

their own unique attitude towards that fact. The art of living under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, we firmly believe, is –under these changing and alternating conditions –rooted in the ability to seek and find new possibilities to implement one's own values' program. We believe this to be evidence of the deeply creative potential for any individual and emphasizes how necessary is the development and exercise of creative freedom for the welfare of an individual, which can be implemented in these uneasy times full of social turbulence.

Therefore, the people who have chosen their inner freedom to be the marker in its understanding to choose freely the way they regard the alternating circumstances of today (whereas this freedom is based on self-restriction of situational desires in favor of long-term commitments and prospective), appear to be more existentially protected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only have their lives kept, but also multiplied the set of practices and senses in comparison to the pre-pandemic period. In their own turn these life senses, acquired and implemented under severe living conditions, are an anchor of stability for any individual's mental and spiritual well-being, allowing it to be fully involved in social reality and act accordingly. Those people who were guided by the markers of precariousness in their lifeways (ergo, the everchanging moments of the current fleeing point in time) have become more frustrated in the pandemic circumstances: they ended up in a situation of uncalculatable risks, which can potentially have a prolonged effect and demands certain primal social guarantees and protection of individuality. However, having used to being situationally oriented, these people have not coped with the construction of the bespoke "stability anchors" which would serve them as a basis in the prolonged consequences of the pandemic.

Based on the material given above, we offer a visual model of the spreading of precarious social practices during the COVID-19 pandemic:

The model of stable social practices

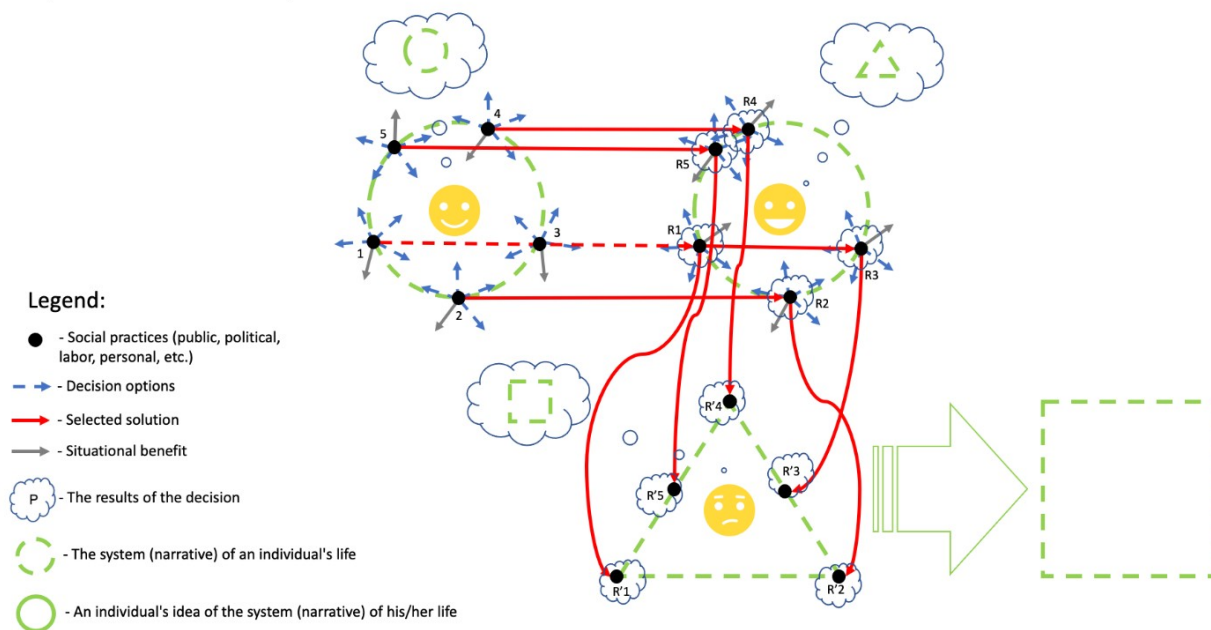(based on the values of an individual)

Figure 1. The model of stable social practices

The model of stable social practices involves a pre-developed strategy of action of the individual at all stages of his / her social ontogenesis. In other words, he/she is guided by a pre-developed scheme of the approximate result that he/she wants to get in the future in his/her life choices and in the available life circumstances, which can be both planned and completely accidental. For the sake of this result, the individual is willing to go for individual self-restraint, often rejecting fleeting situational benefits if they directly deny the previously chosen life strategy. The life strategies of an individual during his/her life can be changed, but their implementation is always preceded by a pre-thought-out action plan, a certain plan, and appropriate worldview guidelines. The distant predicted future for an individual is the same reality as the current moment.
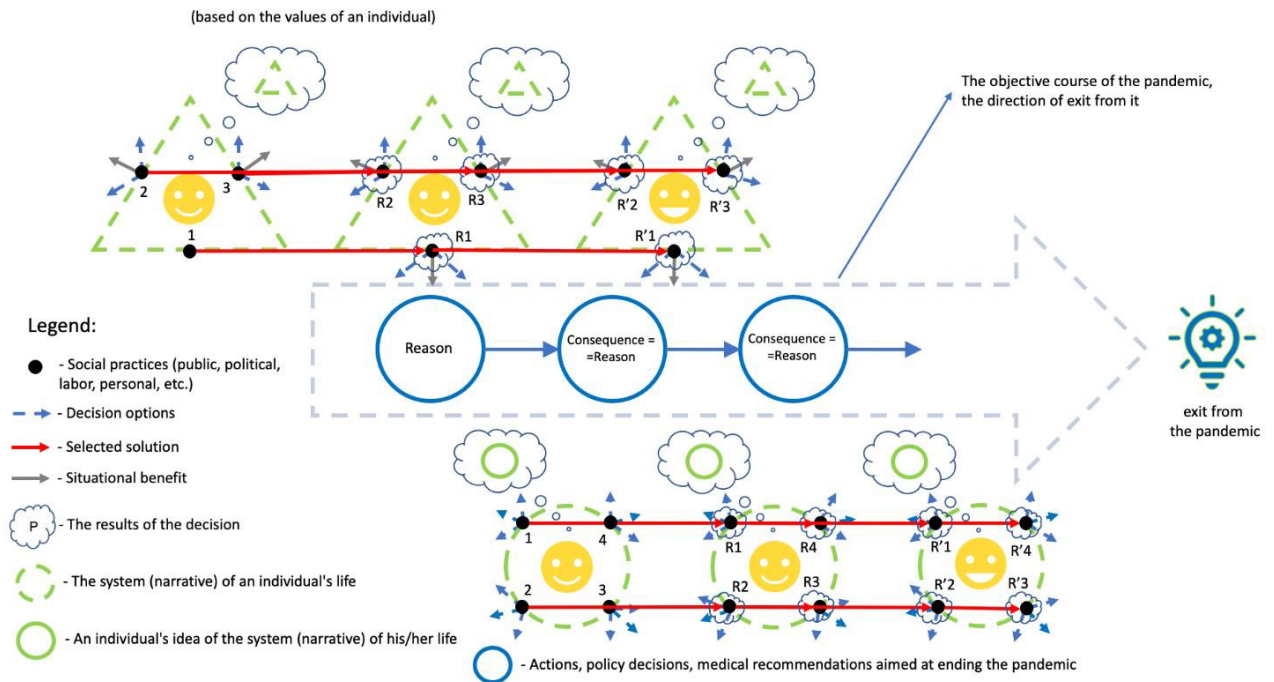
Figure 2. The model of stable social practices during a pandemic

The model of stable social practices during a pandemic is largely similar to the model of individual stable social practices. Both in the first and in the second offered models the preliminary plan before realization of this or that vital choice appears; this idea mainly determines the configuration of meaning, in which certain individual life circumstances will be framed. The difference between the schemes is that in the model of stable social practices during a pandemic there is a certain common vector of direction of general social practices of all subjects of the social process, namely the focus on overcoming a dangerous pandemic situation. In other words, it is this common vector that represents the integrated meaning of all social practices of all social actors to one degree or another. Coordinated actions of each social subject, including each ordinary person, his/her life choices in every, even, at first glance, insignificant everyday situation, which fall under such a vector, help to accelerate the exit from the pandemic situation for all; together, such individual life choices have a powerful overall cumulative effect. However, it should be noted that the general direction of coordinated actions is set not by an individual, but by state and supranational authorities. They are responsible for establishing a clear system of quarantine measures, for the introduction of stabilized and logically verified norms and sanctions for their violation or observance. If we delegate this role to the average person, we will get general chaos from individual points of view and positions. Such a separate individual position will not get the authority and credit of the absolute majority

of other individuals, and therefore it cannot be a sufficient "anchor of stability" to balance the turbulent social situation.
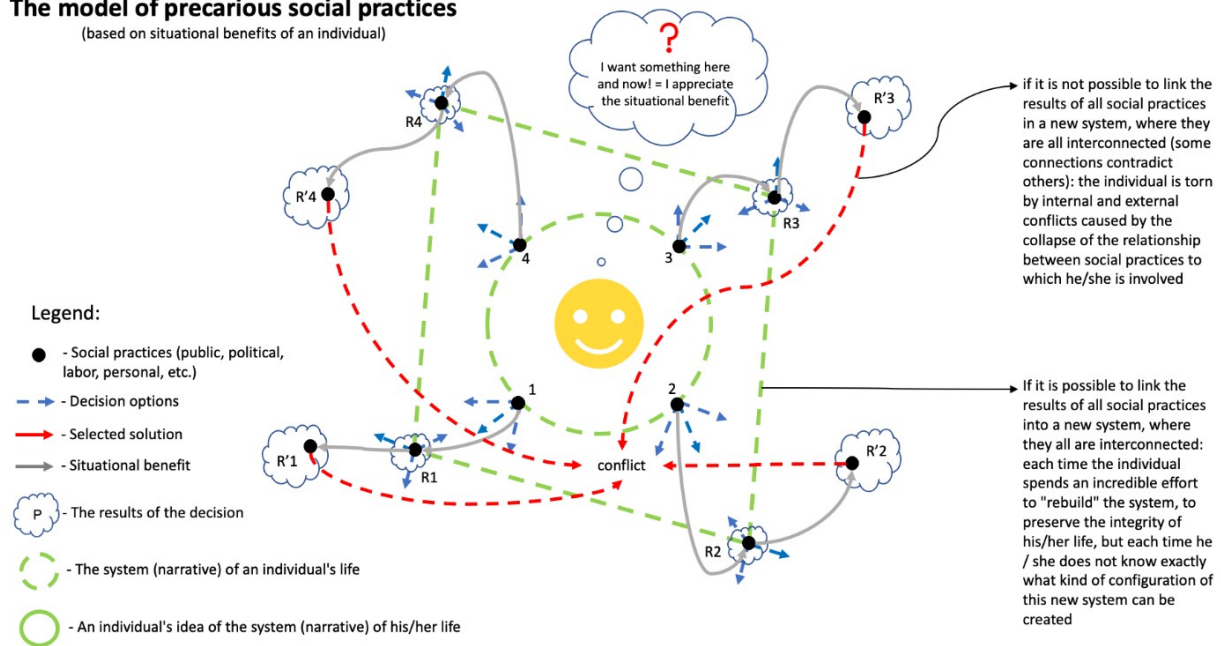

Figure 3. The model of precarious social practices

This model is characterized by the absence of individual previous strategies of the individual about his/her further actions in the distant future. No previous meaningful construction of meanings determines his/her actions in the long run, and therefore in each current moment of time, he/she is guided by the situational benefits of the moment in each individual social practice that he/she implements. Therefore, these life choices in each individual situation can brutally contradict each other, enter into hostile antagonism; or, even if they do not contradict each other, each time a person has to "invent" new meaningful life constructions, which would unite under common auspices all the chaotic results of life acquired by him/her. It is obvious that such constructions, on the one hand, are necessary for a person: they perform an important function of orientation in the social environment and serve as an interpretation of his/her social actions; however, it is unlikely that their choice under such a model can be called conscious, they are a necessity rather than an act of creativity. Also, they cannot fully interpret a person's actions and contribute to the predictability of his/her actions in the distant future; when life circumstances and benefits change at the moment, the current meaning of life choices of a person's life choices will change also. In the first case, when life choices in different social practices contradict each other, we can talk about the danger of neurotization of a person, his/her propensity for deep internal conflicts. In the second case, we

can talk about the depletion of human resources: a huge amount of them is spent on the chaotic current orientation in the social environment (as in the animal world, but not for physical but for existential survival), rather than systematic balanced development that requires stabilized and balanced efforts for qualitative personality changes.

The model of precarious social practices during the pandemic
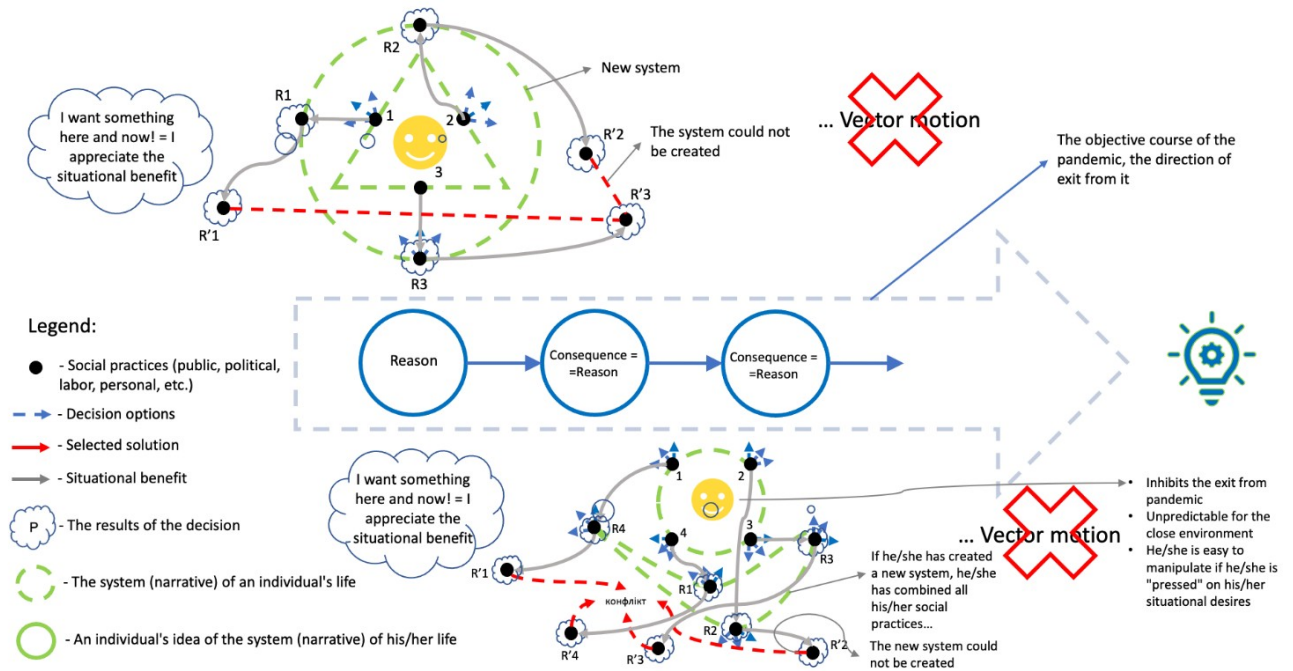(based on situational benefits of an individual)

Figure 4. The model of precarious social practices during a pandemic includes the previously proposed model 2 and model 3. On the one hand, at the national and supranational levels of government, there is a holistic and balanced strategy for exit from the pandemic, appropriate rules, and sanctions for their implementation or failure. However, at the individual level, there is a disintegration of social practices of the individual: his/her social actions do not fall under the national and supranational vector--the vector of the pandemic--because they are guided solely by the benefits of the situational moment. Moreover, they themselves are differently oriented, and therefore "break" the whole outline of the life narrative of the individual. But in the case of this model this consequence is important not only for the personal happiness and full realization, but also plays a significant role in society in general: fragmentation, non-integration of individual social actors calls into question the effectiveness of state and supranational strategy to overcome the pandemic, undermines authority higher authorities and the general strategies developed by them. In other words, the individual, refusing to obey the general strategies of exit from the pandemic, introduces another cumulative effect–the general disobedience and chaos in the implementation of the proposed plan.

Even more deplorable is the situation in which the state government moves to the rails of precariousness and does not introduce a single balanced system of exit from the pandemic. In such conditions, the disorientation of each individual, his/her appeal to the understanding of his/her benefits in the specific life choices during the pandemic period becomes a clear anti-strategy.

Conclusion

Thus, we observe the following phenomenon: on the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problems with precarious practices in modern society, questioned the reliability of their use. In a situation of social turbulence and anomie, people who are accustomed to choosing life strategies of long duration, with a clear and definite set of meanings and values that do not depend on external circumstances, are in a more advantageous position. People who are accustomed to choosing situational benefits in each situation have felt that in a pandemic, this strategy is in crisis. Thus, we observe the tendency that those who, according to their social attitudes and in accordance with their social practices, were precarious before the pandemic, became even more precarious and plunged into a whirlpool of chaos. Those who tried to build their lives on more or less systematic principles remained the "anchor of stability" during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a real test for the individual in terms of his/her ability to inner freedom--the ability to choose, realize and see meanings, constant values in circumstances that, at first glance, do not provide meaning and certain ways of interpretation, and the ability to set for them. The freedom to choose one's own unique attitude to what is happening, to what can happen, to what will not happen, choosing a certain permanent value as the "guarantor" of stability, guided by one's own will to embody it, is unique, but necessary for everyone. It is the art of living in the turbulent vortex of today's events, which everyone must learn through both global and individual crises.

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be another historic time to answer the eternal human question, "Who am I?" People who have chosen the inner resource for a personal answer to this question and focus on prolonged meanings, values, received a crystallized sense of inner freedom in externally limited circumstances. People who, in terms of their own identity, were guided by external attributes and orientations for fleeting situational benefits (precarious strategies), experienced deep personal crises during the pandemic and perceived it as a significant challenge and obstacle to the full realization of their personal potential.

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