

Summary

The 140th *NZ* issue is centred around a single theme, perhaps the most urgent one in the past two years: the COVID-19 pandemic and its influence both on the life of every individual and on society as a whole. We publish it under the title “THE INTERNET UNDER THE PANDEMIC”.

For many during the pandemic, the internet became the only way to maintain social connections, to socialise and to spend time with their friends and family. People began to use the internet in new ways and to change their habitual practices. Methods collectively known as digitalisation acquired an additional momentum and meaning. Even the pandemic itself needed to be collectively understood as a global phenomenon. The internet proved to be both a tool and a platform on which to discuss current developments.

The idea of this issue stems from the conference “*Internet Beyond 2020*”, organised by the Internet and Society Enthusiasts Club in the spring of 2021. It brought together anthropologists, sociologists and media researchers in an attempt to understand the internet and its post-2020 relationship to the world and society. The issue comprises three sections, organised around the three main themes of the conference.

The first section, “PANDEMIC/INTERNET + PLACE”, includes articles on the global and the local in the times of the pandemic, as well as on how people build their relationships with various spaces in these circumstances. In “*The Ruin and Infrastructure: How the Internet Transforms in the Pande-*

mic”, Polina Kolozaridi, the guest editor of the issue, compares the internet to a city, rethinking familiar opposites: the global internet and the local urban environment, the online and offline worlds. The city and technology may not be a new subject, but some of its pandemic-related aspects are still waiting to be examined in depth. A complex political story is developing in the sphere of urban surveillance and control. In a conversation with Dmitry Muravyov and Leonid Yuldashev, Dmitry Serebrennikov tells of his research into the use of CCTV to spy on city dwellers. He identifies a number of questions: where cameras are positioned, who operates them, and how risk and security are measured. The first section ends with Dmitry Muravyov’s review of “*COVID-19 from the Margins. Pandemic Invisibilities, Policies and Resistance in the Datafied Society*”, a collection of pieces by international contributors that aim to transform our understanding of the global and local nature of the recent events.

The next section, “PANDEMIC/INTERNET + EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE”, focuses on the production of pandemic-related knowledge and on the role the internet plays in this knowledge. The opening piece is an interview with the British scholar Annette Markham about autoethnography in the pandemic era. A group of researchers gathered by Markham have begun to study their own experience, describing it in different ways and sharing their observations with each other. The conversation criticises the division of study into academic and non-academic, offering an opportunity

to examine independently the processes driving everyday life online and offline. Difficulties associated with the studying of digitalisation are the subject of another conversation, with Konstantin Fursov and Valentina Polyakova, researchers at the Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge, who talk about the significance of so-called digital skills. The emergence of new types of practices compels those who study the statistics of digital life to reconsider the pre-pandemic perceptions of the internet. The theme of knowledge and learning is continued in an article by Anna Shchetvina and Andrea Marsili, which analyses Russian and Italian memes, putting the main emphasis on their common characteristics. A comprehensive article by Aleksandra Arkhipova talks about online wars between proponents and opponents of vaccination, making it clear that vaxxers and anti-vaxxers are imaginary communities, since both these groups often include individuals with very different agendas. The sides are engaged in a “cold civil war” of sorts, and Arkhipova’s piece helps the reader to understand its mechanisms.

The final section, “PANDEMIC/INTERNET+ INSTITUTIONS”, opens with a conversation about education. The transition to distance learning at the start of the lockdown provoked a strong, mainly negative, reaction, but the process began much earlier than 2020. The conference “Internet Beyond 2020” featured a round table discussion between practitioners and researchers of digital education from the Higher School of Economics, who talked about the formation of ideas and practices underpinning online learning, and sociologists, who shared the initial results of studies concerned with the process

that turned distance learning into the norm and with its consequences. Darya Radchenko in “*Spiritual Communitality on Instagram: Constructing Sociality during the COVID-19 Pandemic*” offers a brief survey of how religious practices changed in the pandemic. The article is based on a series of interviews conducted with both regular and occasional churchgoers. Radchenko relates these different types of spiritual participation to people’s online behaviours, paying special attention to the question why religious communities formed a “new communitality” during the lockdown. The section concludes with a translation of “*The Birth of Sensory Power: How a Pandemic Made It Visible?*” by Engin Isin and Evelyn Ruppert, an invitation to rethink once again most of the themes touched upon in this issue. Changes occurring during the pandemic are not limited to moving from offline to online; they also mean changes in power, in what can be observed by whom and how, and what can be learned in the process. The authors consider these questions from a Foucauldian perspective.

Our NEW BOOKS section remains outside the scope of the issue. It features a number of detailed reviews: a piece by Boris Sokolov on “*If Only I Stay Alive*”, a collection of WWII diaries edited by Pavel Polyanyan; NZ editor-in-chief Kirill Kobrin’s response to “*Red Metropolis*” by Owen Hatherley; Denis Shalaginov’s article about “*Correspondences*” by the British anthropologist Tim Ingold; and Konstantin Sonin’s review of “*Russian Universities: How the System Works*” by Yaroslav Kuzminov and Maria Yudkevich. Among the shorter pieces are Oleg Lariov’s review of Olga Pinchuk’s “*Failures and Breakdowns: An Ethnographic Study of Factory Labour*”.

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