

2 – Regarding the issue of the escalating social crisis in the modern Western world, the devaluation of values, and crisis of meaning on the inter- and intra-subjective levels, the author, along with Berger and Luckmann, asks: „Is it not perhaps the case that all we are hearing is the latest iteration of an old complaint? Or is this lamentation an expression of distress a person repeatedly finds themselves in due to a change in the world order?“. This question is further elaborated upon: „What can we still rely on to give meaning to an individual's daily life when most of the intermediary civil-society organisations which Berger and Luckmann 'bet on' a quarter century ago have morphed into ideological, political and/or market-based entities?“

3 – Through a comparative analysis, essentially a case study of the Slovenian student movement and communes, the author concludes that the movement was partly institutionalised, partly reflected as utopian, and partly suppressed. Although the communes faded away, they have been revived in different forms, preserving the main objectives and good practices from their millennial-long history, which places them among the treasures of non-institutionalised knowledge.

4 – In response to the question of how to find meaning during the crisis of meaning, the author once again relies on Berger and Luckmann and their communities of convictions, stating: „Given the crisis that society is facing today, recognising them as a historical constant may convince us that it is possible to change for the better even the most unjust, aggressive, inhumane, and environmentally dangerous society“.

The COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine hesitancy: A cross-national comparative overview (with special regard to Slovenia and Croatia)³⁸

Maša Rebernik³⁹

The Jitsuvax project addresses vaccine hesitancy in Europe, notably in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our role in the project involved examining the pandemic and vaccination uptake from internationally comparative and sociological points of view. We also conducted case studies of Slovenia and Croatia. For the project, we additionally utilised the findings from IRSAs 2-year project entitled „Analysis of the Effectiveness of Management of the Epidemic in Slovenia – An Internationally Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach“.

We found that the pandemic affected European countries in different ways, with a clear division in the number of deaths and also in COVID-19 vaccine uptake between Eastern and Central European countries on one side and Western and Northern European countries on the other. The number of deaths was higher and vaccine uptake was generally lower, especially in terms of booster shots, in Eastern and Central European countries. We tried to find explanations for this. Previous research attributes the lower vaccine uptake in Eastern Europe to factors such as vaccine availability, exposure to misinformation, trust in institutions and scientists or even a post-communist legacy. Still, these factors alone cannot fully explain the differences in the international comparison, which explains why our analysis, that included a variety of publicly available empirical data, aimed to find additional explanations.

Our analysis showed that levels of trust in legal systems, political institutions, and attitudes to science and scientists in individual countries

³⁸ IRSAs was recently involved in the Horizon Europe project "Jiu-jitsu with misinformation in the age of COVID" (Jitsuvax) coordinated by the University of Bristol. The contributors to the project were Dr. Maruša Gorišek, Prof Dr Frane Adam, Dr Martina Plantak, Assoc Prof Dr Igor Bahovec, Prof Dr Jernej Letnar Černič and Maša Rebernik.

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are positively correlated with higher vaccine uptake. We also found that some countries with higher levels of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy appear to have lower levels of scientific literacy and more challenging attitudes regarding science and scientists, although we did not find the same clear geographical division as for vaccine uptake. We came to similar conclusions concerning the impact of people's satisfaction with the measures their governments took to manage the pandemic. These data offer only limited explanations and reveal some indirect connections that could influence vaccination rates; in other words, clear explanations were impossible.

As mentioned, the research included two case studies, of Slovenia and Croatia, where we explored the processes of vaccination, media and political responses to the pandemic, the specific political context of each country, vaccine uptake and factors potentially influencing vaccine hesitancy. Our analysis showed that it is difficult to generalise the reasons for COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. In addition, we hypothesised six groups with respect to their views on the COVID-19 vaccines that emerged in Slovenia during the pandemic. These groups are: the refusal group, vitalist group, sceptical group, alternative group, cooperative group and the persuaded group. Finally, we discussed the findings within an interpretative framework of anomic and post-factual syndrome.

The Pandemic and Counterurbanisation: A Comparison of Sweden and Slovenia⁴⁰

Maša Rebernik

The article explores the phenomenon of counterurbanisation during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden and Slovenia, with a focus on the ability to engage in telework. This concept was placed at the centre of the analysis, considering factors such as industrial structure, national workplace culture, and the 'shock' induced by lockdowns and social isolation measures implemented during the pandemic. An additional assumption was that this shock caused relative changes in weights between rural and urban amenities. Together, these factors were expected to contribute to open (migrations) and 'hidden' (unregistered rural living) counterurbanisation. For the analysis, we mostly used data from Eurostat, Statistics Sweden, and the Slovenian statistical office (SURS).

As regards the prevalence of teleworking during the pandemic, Sweden showed consistent levels throughout, with a minor decline towards the end. In contrast, while Slovenia initially experienced a surge, it gradually declined to almost pre-pandemic levels near the end.

Two key factors influencing teleworking were also examined: industrial structure and workplace culture. In terms of industrial structure, data pointed to some important differences: for example, manufacturing seems to play a larger role in Slovenia's economy compared to Sweden's. Since manufacturing-related jobs more likely require an in-person presence, this suggests lower teleworking potential in Slovenia.

Workplace culture also plays a role, with Sweden leaning toward a more modern and dynamic workplace culture, while Slovenia exhibits a more traditional organisational culture, with high levels of bureaucratisation, potentially hindering the ability to do telework.

⁴⁰ The article was written in collaboration between Prof Dr Hans Westlund, Dr Maruša Gorišek, Dr Darka Podmenik and Maša Rebernik.