

# Lockdown as a Way to Establish New Cultural Traditions in the Context of the Festive and the Routine Based on the *Izoizolyacia* Facebook Community

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## ABSTRACT

The article addresses the reasons and motives for people to engage into active social communication on the Internet in the conditions of a pandemic, by the example of the high-rated *Izoizolyacia* community on the Facebook social network, in particular. The phenomenon of cultural tradition is analysed through the prism of the binary opposition of "the festive - the routine", which allows uncovering the underlying reasons for the establishment of new traditions and rituals. The author suggests considering creative communication in the *Izoizolyacia* community in the aspect of "the festive". In the process of creating a new virtual reality, due to active communication with a work of art, a new concept of routine is being developed, which is focused on digital virtual reality. The changeable digital space results in the disruption of traditions.

**Keywords:** *festivity, routine, cultural tradition, synergy, social communication*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The current stage of cultural development is characterized by the unavoidable transformation of the sphere of social communication. Its key features are conditioned by the increasing influence of digital technologies on communication, which is why people tend to communicate face to face less. Amid the pandemic announced by the World Health Organization in 2020, all countries have faced lockdown, with people forcibly volunteering to self-isolate. Such a "groundhog day", devoid of the practice of group communication, has become a new reality of the modern culture. Therefore, the establishment of new cultural traditions in the context of new festivity and routine is a highly topical issue. Any cultural tradition is aimed at stabilizing culture, and the festive tradition is inextricably woven into the structure of social life. According to Markarian, "Cultural tradition is group experience formulated in socially organized stereotypes, which is accumulated and reproduced in various social communities through space-time transmission". [1] Cultural traditions are focused on stable properties of the environment, while certain elements of a tradition perform selective functions, as does natural selection. There also exist "prototraditions", which researchers describe as the ability of higher animals to transform individual experience into gregarious experience through imitation. Taking into account this definition, let us turn to the reality of self-isolation and the disruption of

habitual communicative practices, which are currently being relegated to the sidelines by Internet communication.

Strengthening the atomicity of society by means of the introduction of distancing and protective measures (that change the principles of traditional communication between people), leads to the conditions in which the processes of society self-organization are disrupted, as new traditions to survive in new conditions are shaped. Transferring social communication into the Internet space allows transforming the spontaneous self-organization process of the socio-cultural system into the digital one, regulated through the manipulation of public opinion. Public opinion is typically shaped by the media and creates an unstable emotive field that contributes to the deconstruction of rational thinking. This type of deconstruction stimulates individualization and the creation of the atomic structure of society, where digital technologies have the primary role in the communication space. It is exactly digital technology that is currently dictating its technological rhythm to the traditional for culture dialectical system of "the festive - the routine", providing new "festive" digital space. We consider it important to highlight that in the conditions of the disruption of the habitual cycle of weekdays and weekends as a result of the lockdown, people tend to be disoriented in the socio-cultural space.

In this respect, it is reasonable to mention the Groundhog Day film, in which the main character finds himself trapped in a time loop experiencing the

previous day's events repeated. He sees a way to escape the loop in suicide but reaches "festivity" only in harmonious communication with society and in love as a commitment. Meanwhile, this is what provides the value basis of culture as a system.

Traditionally, in all world religions, there are special days when major cultural events consolidating society take place. Such days are devoted to communicating with God, fostering spiritual values and venerating relics. The events are typically held in the conditions of communion and in a sacred space. The calendar of holy days for any culture is associated with fixed time cycles. Any interruption to this festive-routine cycle, whether voluntary or involuntary, results in serious consequences for the population, including psychological instability, disorientation and nervous breakdowns. The loss of "festivity" entails the disturbance of the daily life rhythm, which determines the cycles of intense and minimized social contacts.

For these reasons, it is now even more topical than ever to analyze the essential aspects of "the festive" and "the routine" in the new communicative reality amid the pandemic.

## II. FESTIVITY IN *IZOIZOLYACIA*

In contemporary culture, the search for new virtual forms of festivity, which eliminate the need for a person to leave their home, has intensified. Not analysing the whole variety of the forms of virtual festivity available, we shall immediately focus on the application of the idea of festivity in the *Izoizolyacia* community on the Facebook<sup>1</sup> social network. The growing public activity in the community and the audience's interest in it testify to the success of the experiment on virtual "festivity". The community has attracted close attention due its growth in the number of followers. The community was started on March 30, 2020, and just in a day had 2,000 followers. In a week this number increased by a factor of 10, up to 204,096 followers. About 3,000 posts were published in the community on a daily basis. In a month, the number of the followers reached 572,784 people (by the date of May 1, 2020).

According to community moderators, it started as a form of entertainment for a circle of friends: "We just wanted to brighten up the humdrum of everyday life in a lockdown and have a good laugh". In fact, they actually manifest the idea of "searching festivity" in the digital form. Interestingly, this new festivity does not lose hold on reality but fulfils its central function - the transformation of everyday life. Though this transformation is playful, it maintains the dialectical mechanism of "the festive - the routine", the essence of which is in the recovery of the cycle of getting an idea

in a sacred dialogue and its further implementation. By sacred dialogue in *Izoizolyacia* they mean the dialogue between the spectator and the work of art.

The main topic of the publications in the community is the reproduction of worldwide famous masterpieces of fine art by creative means at hand. The creators of the community note, "At the very beginning, none of those having come up with the idea of a flash mob could imagine such an outcome. Almost 600,000 followers from over 100 countries around the world, about 35,000 publications, millions of likes! And warm words to support each other in tough times".<sup>2</sup> The moderators of the community outlined the criteria for publications, which are also of interest from the perspective of their functional potential for the repetition of "the festive - the routine" cycle. Let us analyze some of them:

Firstly, the subjects to creative reproduction are only the world masterpieces of painting, with the exceptions of thematic days in the community. The very fact of a dialogue with a work of art is already associated with potential "festivity", as any unquestioned masterpiece is aimed at the dialogue between its artist and the spectator on the topic of universal values - this is what reflects the original "sacredness" of this dialogue. The potential for a dialogue between the spectator and the artist within the work of art promotes the idea of the "festive" search for new meanings and eternal truths.

Secondly, the painting published in the community should be reproduced exclusively by creative means at hand that are at one's disposal in apartments or country houses. Thus, one's living space is accentuated; it undergoes transformation and becomes the element of the composition. An essential part of each festive event is preparation and the transformation of one's living space; in fact, it takes place when creating a reproduction to be published in the community due to the specified publication criteria. In addition, common things with new symbolic and functional meaning (e.g. toilet paper stocks looking as a wig or sea waves) become indicators of a new virtual space.

Analyzing the publication history of the community, we can highlight some characteristic features and tendencies:

- Family reproductions with most of the family involved enjoy great popularity. It is also beneficial for the family itself, as they get closer while preparing the reproduction of the painting;
- Numerous participants remark that before making a decision on the painting to reproduce, they look through and study different works of

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/izoizolyacia/?fref=nf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/izoizolyacia/?fref=nf>

art, sometimes even the artists' biography, thus getting acquainted with the cultural heritage, in which a person experiences the continuity of generations;

- Creative interpretation of a work of art without copying it directly is especially welcomed in the community, provided that the key concept or idea of the painting is conveyed. Such works evidence the dialogue between the artist and the spectator within a particular work of art;
- The majority of the reproductions and interpretations presented are intimate or group portraits or scenes. People find common features with the characters of paintings but retain their individuality in the harmony of the general (typical) and special (individual) in the categories of the "eternal";
- The comments to the publications with reproductions are full of enthusiasm: they contain exclamation marks, words of encouragement and animated pictures. Despite neutral digital expression, the emotional component of communication is present in the community: it manifests itself through short texts to accompany reproductions and the number of comments written to the most impressive works. The administration of the community tries to control negative comments, which maintains a friendly atmosphere, thereby creating a social unity, and provides a sense of participation;
- Finally and most importantly, due to relatives and friends, even people who have never been active in social networks (grandparents, children) actively join the flash mob. The playful atmosphere of home improvisation unites whole families with the idea of reproductions and interpretations, creating a festive mood.

At some point of time, this activity allowed mobilizing all creative forces and resources of a family in order to make their own interpretation of a masterpiece (sometimes even more than one). Waiting for the work to be assessed by other members of the community creates a special festive mood. Moreover, the atmosphere in the community encourages others to share the experience of reproducing as well as the emotional experience of awaiting the appreciation of one's collective creative activity. It is the response of the audience that culminates the entire creative process, as it implies a dialogue with a certain social whole. It gives strength and energy for life - the essential basis of "festivity".

A photograph uploaded on the Internet becomes a digital symbol of the reality transformation. It connects the sensual experience of the holiday rush and the virtual experience of a holiday. When a photograph, a representation of the authors' personal experience, is published, the synergy effect is achieved due to the social communication between the project participants. This allows considering the potential for social synergy in the community as the transcendence effect or the state of "festivity". Therefore, the "festivity" that community followers are much attracted by is ensured by the introduction of everyday practice, namely the creative process of new "masterpiece" production, as well as the dialogue between the author and the spectator as the manifestation of synergy. It is no coincidence that community members not only publish photographs - their reproductions - but also videos, where they demonstrate the process of their creation, which is as interesting for participants as recognition by the world community. "Thank you for your masterpieces! You are incredible! Now we have more work to do and less free time, but we do not regret having started the project. Your sparkling sense of humour and vivid imagination never fail to amaze - and not only us here, but the whole world. *Izoizolyacia* has become the topic on the world's largest mass media, including the BBC and the New York Times."<sup>3</sup>

The introduction of "corporality", intense activity of the transformation of one's daily life cycle in lockdown, aimed at producing deep positive emotions and living the experience are the central elements of the binary opposition of "the festive - the routine". An exhilarating emotional experience is ensured by the participants' engagement in the creative process that requires the transformation of the external environment. Meanwhile, the Internet provides a space for group communication, in which the author receives feedback from the spectators tuned in to the same wave-length. Such group assessment of the work shapes the "transcendent field of festivity", which attracts people to the community.

### **III. DIALECTICS OF THE FESTIVE – THE ROUTINE**

The discussion of the essence of "festivity" is impossible without analyzing the methodological concepts that allow outlining the principles of dialectical relation of "the festive - the routine" within the communication aspect of culture. Social communication interactions are the research subject for the present article and the area to apply the dichotomy of "the festive - the routine" as a methodological basis [2].

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/izoizolyacia/?fref=nf>  
(Access date: May 5, 2020)

The article presents the essence of "festivity" as an idea that requires ideal material implementation, if to consider culture as "an ideal-cultivating side of people's life" [3]. This approach to the definition of culture is based on the philosophical works of G.W.F. Hegel and his followers, e.g. V.V. Solovyov, and is applied in the works of our contemporaries D.V. Pivovarov and V.I. Zhukovsky. The core of "the routine", however, can be analyzed from the perspective of the experience of practical implementation of an idea or an ideal imaginary model of the process in the rhythm of everyday life. Thus, "the routine" is revealed in the person's dialogue with the external world. The result of the dialogue is a representative sign, which reflects the essence of the interaction and constitutes the semiotic field of culture. The essential aspect of "the routine" within this methodology is discussed based on the theoretical concepts of A. Schutz, interpreted by L.G. Ionin, who emphasized A. Schutz's concept of the "fundamental anxiety". He also specified that the "fundamental anxiety ... is conditioned by the active nature of everyday life" [4].

In other words, "festivity" coordinates the goals, values and ideas of the process, while "the routine" is directly related to process implementation according to the principles of the dialectical development of ideas (Hegel). In case if a person loses a goal or breaks the cycle of "the festive - the routine", the general anthropological principle in a person is negatively affected, downgrading them to the level of animals, with immediate memory only. A personality is naturally formed due to the introduction of social memory to the external environment, which is further revealed through the anthropological principle of the spiritual-moral-material harmony in a person. As St. Luke the Surgeon (Voino-Yasenetsky) remarked, "The spirit keeps all the wealth of memory completely intact" [5]. Therefore, the very phenomenon of the festivity is always associated with joy, whereas the routine - with resistance, tension and repeated rituals. This is the first aspect that reveals the specific features of the dichotomy of "the festive - the routine".

Another essential aspect of this dichotomy is the synergy of festivity and the individualism of the routine. In order to clarify this, we should note that "festivity" as a phenomenon of spiritual culture cannot fully manifest itself without transcendence. As S.S. Horuji stated, "In all spiritual practices, transcendence is considered to be a way to measure energy, being and activity, transforming all human energy into different being" [6]. In relation to "festivity", transcendence is a condition providing the understanding of the value of a holiday.

Finally, the third aspect of the dichotomy of "the festive - the routine", which is relevant for the discussion of the subject in the article, is overcoming

the fear of the unknown as a basis to establishing a festive ritual. The festive ritual implies experiencing the transition between life and death, internal and external; the transition is aestheticized by means of the artistic language of culture. Following V.I. Zhukovsky, "The aesthetic perception of the essence, true or illusory, allays the fear of the unknown and, therefore, dangerous reality, and strengthens the existence of the experiencing person in the world of people and things." [7]

Thus, festivity is a social and collective (synergistic) phenomenon. It stimulates the establishment of new traditions that consolidate society and ensure its security and stability. Routine as individual experience depends on the aims and motives of festive communication.

The "festivity" of an event is determined by the collective experience of a certain idea as one's personal revelation. This experience forms the basis for the establishment of a common cultural space. If there is no transcendental synergy or revelation, a holiday becomes a form of frivolous and pointless leisure; social unity is replaced by the atomic structure of society.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The establishment of new cultural traditions takes place in the conditions of the transformation of "festivity" experience in the virtual environment, which we consider a technology for altering traditions and rituals. By means of the publication and demonstration of people's creative work, the media space captures a person in social memory, providing "immortality" to them through signs of encouragement or discouragement. This "transition to immortality" is undoubtedly a festive communication having a hold of the routine. Thus, the routine of everyday life acquires new goals and the means for their achievement in the digital conditions, which will ensure "life" in the new immortal reality. Therefore, everyday rituals and traditions are increasingly influenced by digital communication.

The technology of creating reproductions enables the interaction with a work of art that communicates the potential of the artist's transcendental revelation on canvas or in any other artistic material. Such creative thinking constitutes the essential element of "festivity", since it is associated with freedom and the dialogue with an idea. Creative activity intensifies the categories of the eternal, harmonious and inviolable (i.e. extending beyond the everyday experience). This is confirmed by the desire of the community participants to capture "synergy" between the work of art and its reproduction.

The phenomenon of *Izoizolyacia* analysed in the categories of the "festive" and the "routine", supports the obvious fact that without the transformation of

everyday experience, no illusory picture from the Internet, webinar or video lecture, etc., can create a festive mood. The distinctive feature of the *Izoizolyacia* project is that its creators, presenting the project as a form of a leisure activity, intuitively found a form of festivity that extends beyond virtual and penetrates into the real everyday life. The routine is given a sense of purpose due to a new goal - entering the media space with the presentation of one's own vision of a work of art.

The online projects of such a kind, producing the virtual feeling of a holiday can replace real festivity due to the aestheticization of the process, a special festive chronotope, cognitive and heuristic activity, the introduction to social memory through the acquaintance with works of art, and the transformation of everyday life. However, the recreated festivity is localized within a family only, and therefore cannot become the basis for the establishment of the consolidating cultural traditions. As far as new rituals and traditions of everyday life are concerned, they tend to change under the influence of the digital media goals and flash mobs that supplant the mechanism of "festive" communication.

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