

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES

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Centro de Estudos Sociais
Universidade de Coimbra



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ROUTINES

Madalena Alarcão, Luciana Sotero

How do I get organised when I cannot go through the usual routines? Although it made itself announced, COVID-19 took us by surprise, be it because we did not believe it would reach these parts of the world, so distant from its original focus, be it because we had not fully understood its contagious potential, or because we could not imagine how much it was to change our routines.

In almost two months of lockdown, one of the biggest complaints and difficulties of those who adopted remote working and remote studying was the loss of pre-lockdown routines and the challenges of organising space and time in an environment where work, leisure and family life are almost seamless.

Should we create new routines or should we rather wait for the crisis to pass before we return to the usual routines and regain control over the disorganisation brought about by COVID-19?

Creating new routines is necessary and facilitates organisation! We often view routine as something uninteresting, something that imprisons us, that limits our creativity and becomes tiresome because of the constant repetition it entails. We dream of the freedom we associate with breaking the routine, but fail to value its organising power.

By organising our space and our time, routines save us the energy – quite a lot of energy indeed – required by decision-making and all the indecision and the explaining that accompany it. It is obvious that daily life cannot be a mere succession of routines. Their added value is, on the one hand, the energy, time and

availability they leave us with for cognitively and/or emotionally demanding, challenging, hopefully rewarding activities, and, on the other hand, the limits they place and the differentiation they establish between the different activities and/or roles we perform.

Confined to one single space – for many a very exiguous one –, where you study/work, eat, rest and cohabit 24 hours a day, the “Self” feels suffocated, overpowered by the duty to attend to the new demands and deprived of the “breathing” sensation made possible by the changing of surroundings and interactions. Not everyone will feel this way, but there are many who complain exactly about this.

It is thus necessary to create new routines, not only to keep our various activities and roles separate, albeit in the same space, but also to create times for each of them and for the “Self”. Even if time now seems to be dominated by remote work or remote study, as well as by intense family interactions, it is very important to create routines of leisure, of physical activity, of pause.

One of the most important aspects in managing routines is our ability to transform them when we feel they do not meet our needs. Despite all the constraints that may arise, we should not and cannot waive the power to determine our own lives.

Whatever the crisis, we must view it as an opportunity for change. The past never returns the same, and therefore waiting for the crisis to pass in order to return to the same old routines is completely disorganising.