

## FOREWORD

Although eminent scientists from all over the world warned about the possibility of an outbreak of a pandemic for years, the global society was shocked by the speed the COVID-19 has spread worldwide. After the discovery of a novel coronavirus in late December 2019 in the Chinese metropolis Wuhan, a number of conspiracy theories began to emerge. One of the theories implied that the virus was developed in a nearby laboratory. However, the consensus of the scientific community was that it is a disease transmitted from animals to humans, and that due to the heavily networked world population, such modern diseases can quickly grow into pandemics. Despite many controversies about its origin and the position that SARS-CoV-2 probably was not created in a lab, the modern man definitely plays a leading role in this pandemic.

Although rational beings, humans are destroying nature with such intensity that they threaten the survival of about a million species, and at the same time their own future. The ecosystem / overall unity of living beings - biocenosis and the space in which they live and perform their functions / is devastated, which is a consequence of human activity and represents a direct threat to human well-being in all regions of the world. Cities and farms are expanding, leaving less and less room for wildlife. The human population is penetrating deeper and deeper into areas where wild animals live, trying to access resources. By doing so, we are increasingly exposed to pathogens that usually never leave these places - and the bodies of the animals in which they live. In fact, as we approach wild animals, we also approach unknown, unpredictable and dangerous viruses. Living in disharmony with nature by destroying ecosystems, the preconditions for the transition of the virus from animals to the human population have been created, and our responsibility is definitely reflected in that. In support of the fact that human intervention in areas rich in biospecies and wildlife habitats is associated with the expansion of infectious diseases is assessed by comprehensive studies. Many contagious diseases known to us - Ebola, HIV, swine, and bird flu - are zoonoses. And a new coronavirus joins that group.

According to the updated data from the World Health Organization, there were 24,299,923 confirmed coronavirus cases, with 827,730 confirmed deaths on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It is a fact that the coronavirus pandemic transformed our global society in the eight months, and it is indisputable that the short and long-term projections of epidemiologists on how the pandemic will develop in close and farther future are uncertain. What is certain is that COVID-19 brought drastic changes in our routines, which forced us to change our social habits and reconsider our relationships. New behavior patterns in business, education, cultural and sporting events, travel, and other areas of life and work of modern man could have a significant influence on our mental health even in the conditions of abolishing strict measures of isolation and staying at home. Namely, everyday life, which will probably still be

defined by the coronavirus, can develop a permanent feeling of fear, unease, high levels of stress and anxiety, with a lack of a sense of autonomy and control. This, of course, can have far-reaching consequences for individuals in this unprecedented crisis. After all, what remains as a by-product after a pandemic or any catastrophe of enormous proportions is the dominant feeling that the world is unpredictable, and that life is perceived as more vulnerable and fragile than ever.

Therefore, by compiling this special issue of the leading scientific journal of national importance "The Culture of Polis", we tried to give a symbolic scientific contribution as a solidary response in overcoming the problems of communities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Editors:

dr Željko Đ. Bjelajac, full professor  
dr Aleksandar M. Filipović, assistant professor