

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 6

Country: **CROATIA**

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To wear a face mask or not to wear a face mask? Nowadays, this question has been analogous to the famous line from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "To be or not to be, that is the question." This is bit allegorical, but certainly not far from the current circumstances where a deadly virus is spreading amongst us, and we are not quite sure what our best course of action is.

We in Croatia are not much different from the rest of the world in terms of policies regarding wearing a mask during this pandemic. Our authorities have gone through a roller coaster of opinions ranging from not to wear a mask, to wear a mask, to the current state of mind where they encourage to wear a mask but ultimately leave it to each individual to decide for themselves. As with most cases in which one is given complete freedom to decide, results are heterogeneous. There is approximately the same number of people who wear a mask as those who do not. There are however certain places (e.g., post offices) and modes of transportation (e.g., airplanes) where the use of mask is mandatory at all times, and people have no other choice but to comply.

For most of the time, I do not wear a face mask. I put it on when I go to the grocery store because at the early stage of the pandemic, I was warned by the lady working at the counter that I am putting her life "in danger by not wearing a mask." Obviously, I did not want to take chances with her life again, so I purchased one of those cloth masks. In my opinion, it has more psychological effects on people around me than it does providing protection or prevention. I take precautions with or without a mask by keeping regulated social distance.

I feel that in times like these, we should remember the common rules of behavior that should have been in place whether a pandemic is or is not around. Those are: wash hands thoroughly and regularly, and cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. These behaviors are much

more efficient than face masks. However, if one chooses to wear a mask, basic principles of how to use it properly should be known.

I see people running with face masks on, or driving cars by themselves wearing masks, and I cannot help but wonder what their reasoning is for that. But then again, they may be thinking the same seeing me not wearing a mask. As the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga once said: “These are strange times. Reason, which once combatted faith and seemed to have conquered it, now has to look to faith to save it from dissolution.”