

## POPULAR SUMMARY

The basic aim of the project *Epidemics and Communities in Critical Theories, Artistic Practices and Speculative Fabulations of the Last Decades* is to take up the current problem of the (re)presentations of human and more-than-human communities emerging since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the face of local and global epidemiological threats as well as the changes these communities undergo in the aftermath of deadly outbreaks. Epidemics of infectious illnesses have become a significant factor that influences contemporary and future social and individual lives, thus exerting an impact on academic and public discourses (including social media) as well as artistic practices: not only novels and feature films, but also genres and media from the realm of performative arts, television shows and other television formats, (para)documentary and mockdocumentary conventions and computer games. The aim of the project is not only to describe and analyze how these genres and media popularize scientific discoveries and represent social phenomena, but also to demonstrate the active, performative influence of artistic practices on reality which they co-create, shaping social imaginary and actual behaviours.

At the core of the project lies the understanding of epidemic as syndemic, a concept introduced by the American medical anthropologist Merrill Singer by the end of the 1990s. From this point of view an epidemic is not a purely natural or medical-statistical phenomenon, but rather a dynamic, historically changing complex of biological factors, tightly connected and interacting with scientific and cultural representations of infectious illnesses, their definition, the way their spread, their mortality rate, preventive measures etc. Together with geopolitical factors they exert decisive influence on communal forms of life and social practices not only today, but also in the future.

The present project focuses on this model of mutual relationships between biological, social and cultural factors, in the time span between the HIV/AIDS crisis in the early 1980s and the current COVID-19 pandemic. This period has so far been understudied and in the few existing accounts this topic has been taken up in the context of modern history and the colonial past of North America and the Great Britain. In the present project, however, the focus is shifted to the modern history of Europe, particularly Central and Eastern regions with emphasis on Poland. Not only this guarantees the innovative character of the proposed research. By focusing on the last decades as the main era of study, the present project concentrates on the network and viral characteristics of communicable illness transmission, a problem that has become particularly salient due to the changeability of viruses and their ability to interact with non-communicable diseases which previously have not been registered to such an extent as today. The preliminary research results published in the wake of three planned workshops as well as final publication summarizing the entire project should update the typical popular (re)presentations of pandemic, by taking into account its latest forms in the era of social media and digital technologies. Thus the project is firmly situated within the current debate on the relationship between humanities with other sciences and academic disciplines, by investigating the influence of artistic practices on social reality.