
SECURITISATION OF COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC SPACE DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract. Securitisation is an intersubjective process of construing new categories or subcategories of security by identifying existential threats, the alleviation of which requires extraordinary measures and social acceptance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both during the near-total lockdown, as well as in the period where restrictions were loosened, the messages presented in public space, calling for specific behaviours, displayed certain signs of this process – the limitation of citizens’ rights without the introduction of a state of emergency, as provided for by law, was carried out on the grounds of an extraordinary threat (threat of infection, illness or even death) the eradication of which requires extraordinary measures (depriving citizens of the possibility of moving, working, learning, taking advantage of entertainment or pursuing their passions, as well as imposing an order to wear masks and maintaining social distance) to be applied, which – on the one hand – were introduced under the pain of punishment, while on the other, they were supposed to be met with general acceptance as rational and just. The following paper presents the results of a study of communications appearing in the public space in the period from March to August 2020 in Poland, which were to support the process of securitisation of the pandemic threat.

Keywords: securitisation; pandemic; COVID-19; public space; health security; language; discourse

JEL Classifications: H56, H84, 112, 118,

Additional disciplines: political sciences

1. Introduction

The collapse of the bipolar world coincided with the expansion of security category. Terrorism, organised crime, hunger and environmental degradation were named the new global threats, while security studies found space for the perspective claiming that collective security is – in a sense – a sum of subjectively construed human securities, which has not only a military or political dimension, but also an economic, social and ecological one. (Buzan, 1983) The combination of the Cold War optimism and the lack of a permanent military threat thus created a space for taking non-military problems that posed a threat to security into consideration. (Vogler, 2013:19)

Security is one of the keywords of modern communication. It is sometimes used instrumentally in the attempts to allocate state resources, since it increases the seriousness of the institutions that refer to this concept, while invoking the term usually results in excellent outcomes. (Buzan, 1991:370) It is used to justify various kinds of reforms, restrictions or expenditures, at least since the decision was made that one cannot spare money on security. It is also sometimes used as an explanation for hiding certain facts or information from the public – starting with the faces of soldiers carrying out special operations to the details of multi-purpose aircraft purchase contracts. The inclusion of a given topic under the general security umbrella almost always seems to guarantee its elevation.

Security is a meta-operator with great impact, and as such, it offers great power – it can help with solving problems which are theoretically far removed from the issue of security (as in the case of securitisation of the

AIDS threat and the need to combat the spread of HIV in Africa, Elbe, 2006, McInnes, & Rushton, 2011), as well as exhibit its destructive power (securitisation of migration issues, Huysmans, 2006:57). Thus, it becomes an instrumental value (Booth, 2005:22), an intersubjective phenomenon, admittedly a secondary one (Booth, 1997:106), but of great (and still growing) importance (Chehabeddine, Tvaronavičienė, 2020)

2. Theoretical background. Securitisation, desecuritisation and their critics.

Moving beyond the military dimension in security analysis, which is characteristic for constructivism, which has been developed since the 1980s, begs the assumption that security is a social construct (Fierke, 2007:56), brought to life as a result of various factors and circumstances, and thus interpreted and understood in a variety of ways. The fact that something is either secure (or a threat) is not determined by objective factors. The example of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States and its allies, who determined that the possibility of Saddam Hussein having nuclear weapons was more dangerous than the real nuclear potential of countries such as Russian Federation, China, North Korea, France, India, Pakistan and Israel, illustrates this issue quite well. It is clear that the reasons for considering Hussein as a threat stem from historical (first Gulf War), political (Iraqi regime), as well as cultural (McDonald, 2002:289) factors, instead of a comparison of nuclear capabilities and ambitions of these countries. Security is thus construed in global politics and closely linked to widely accepted social standards and norms, which should not be taken for granted.

Stemming from constructivism, the Copenhagen School (B. Buzan, O. Waever and others) went even further in their assessment of the importance of the context and concept of creating security issues. Taking advantage of a climate conducive to broadening the definition of security, it has turned issues such as environmental change, poverty and human rights into key points for the debate about security from the standpoint of an individual and social groups. Among these broadened categories, there was also a place for health security – a subcategory of social security, as well as pandemics, which constitute specific and existential threats.

The theory of securitisation developed by the Copenhagen School is based on three key elements – existential threat, extraordinary measures needed to combat said threat and the acceptance of the “public” (usually tantamount to society or part thereof). In order for threats to be considered security issues, they must meet a certain set of criteria “which distinguish them from the normal course of purely political issues.” (Hough, 2014:23) The existential threat needs to be treated as the subject of exceptional policies implemented outside the standard democratic process. (Oels, 2012:185) The process of creating a security threat takes place through “acts of speech” which highlight the danger associated with the issue, raise its political profile and justify the need for exceptional measures. (Vogler, 2013:19) In the first phase (identification), the issue is identified as a threat, in the subsequent phase (mobilisation) a request for emergency action is made. (Roe, 2008) This act involves two key players: the elite, who handle the securitisation and who are responsible for presenting the issue at hand through the lens of securitised conditions, and the general public, which justifies securitisation of the threat and the need for exceptional measures. (Oels, 2012:191)

“Identifying an issue as a security issue makes it such,” Ole Waever claimed (2004). Interestingly enough, he simultaneously believed that securitisation is a failure – it means that the problem could not be solved by means of standard policies and it required an intersubjective construct of an existential threat, requiring emergency measures, threatening the annihilation of the state or society, as well as its sovereignty and identity. In other words, it requires transferring the phenomenon or issue from the area of ordinary politics to the area of the most pressing existential threats. (Buzan & Waever, 2003) What is more, securitisation comes with a threat of de-democratisation, de-politicisation, conflict and the growing security dilemma. (Floyd, 2015) Waever believed that it was only the desecuritisation occurring when the extraordinary measures cease to apply and the return of the securitised issue to the field of normal policy, which can be perceived as a positive phenomenon. Securitisation is the opposite of a politicisation that involves including the broadest possible range of issues in the public debate. In this context, politicisation is therefore a positive phenomenon, while securitisation, which excludes certain issues from the public debate, is perceived as a negative one.

Securitisation theory has had many critics, as well as numerous modifications. However, this paper does not

concern itself with presenting their full extent. It is worthwhile, however, to bring up the Just Securitisation Theory (JST) – a modification of the classic version, taking into account the most severe criticisms, providing tools to mitigate its key issues, due to the usefulness of this approach for studying the securitisation of the recent pandemic. Its creator – Rita Floyd (2007, 2010, 2015, 2019) – believes that the existential threat may not be tantamount to every single issue brought up by the securitising entity, and that only objective threats can be considered existential (based on the studies of the sincerity of potential aggressors). (Floyd, 2015) Here, Floyd refers to the conclusion of another critic of Buzan and his colleagues, Thierry Balzacq (2005), who noted that while it is difficult to identify objective threats to security, objective existential threats can be listed rather easily and successfully. Secondly, according to Floyd (2015), it does not matter whether the recipients of the act of speech (the securitisation movement) accept it or not (which was crucial for the Copenhagen School) because in this case, action is key – in other words, the security practice and the implementation of specific policies, rather than accepting their descriptions. (Floyd 2010) This can be illustrated by the following equation:

$$\text{ST: SECURITISATION} = \text{SECURITISATION MOVEMENT} + \text{AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE} \quad (1)$$

where the securitisation movement can be understood as a justification for an existential threat

$$\text{JST: SECURITISATION} = \text{SECURITISATION MOVEMENT} + \text{SECURITY PRACTICE}. \quad (2)$$

According to Floyd, securitisation does not take place “when the audience accepts the justification of an existential threat, but when instead there is a change of a significant behaviour exhibited by a significant entity, which is justified by said entity using a reference to the declared threat. (...) securitisation becomes effective due to the fact that it had occurred, without the need to break the applicable rules or introducing emergency measures” (it was enough that the existential threat was justified and there was any action referring to its presence). (Floyd, 2015) Thirdly, according to Floyd, it is not necessary to use extraordinary measures to deal with securitised issues. The “standard emergency measures” provided for in the constitutions of liberal democracies are enough, including the introduction of new legislation in accordance with existing procedures, the introduction of new powers to manage a crisis situation within the framework of the existing legal order, approved by the relevant courts, as well as the use of the existing security apparatus and existing state of emergency legislation to resolve issues, which were not addressed previously.

Floyd did not deny the concept of securitisation as such – she considered it a useful process for drawing attention to important issues that actually require extraordinary measures. However, she focused on the integrity and honesty of the intentions of the actors bringing about securitisation and on the assessment of the actual threat. For example, she argued that Islamic terrorism was overly securitised, compared to its actual power and level of threat. However, when the grounds for action were just, at that point the act of speech was not enough, since the situation required effective action in order to desecuritize the issue as quickly as possible and restore it to the ground of “normal” policy.

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For years, the relationship of health and security has been perceived rather unilaterally, which could be seen in statements concluding that armed conflicts cause health problems and death of people, and that waves of refugees and soldiers sent to remote corners of the world can spread disease. The founding of the WHO in 1948 caused health issues to be viewed in terms of human rights, instead of security. This also brought about the belief that vaccines and antibiotics will be used to effectively tackle global epidemics. However, in 2000 CIA published its annual report on the condition of state security and its threats, where it noted that infectious diseases, AIDS in particular, can be an issue for the United States. This stance was shared by the UN Security Council. Resolution 1308 on the possible impact of HIV/AIDS on the stability of social governance and the functioning of peace-keeping missions warns that an unmanaged pandemic of this disease could pose a threat to stability and security.

After the end of the Cold War, health returned to the security agenda, partly owing to the lobbying of famous people. They included, among many others, R. Holbrooke, who is believed to be one of the main authors of HIV and AIDS securitisation, and who perceived this threat located mainly in Africa and ineffectively tackled by humanitarian aid as a source of potential social consequences, which could shake the stability of entire countries. G.H. Brundtland (1999), the former head of the WHO, advocated for the concept of global health security, indicating that with globalisation, the whole of humanity lives in a common sea of microorganisms, and therefore there will be no places left untouched by disease. This is particularly important given that according to WHO data, in the 21st century each year will bring at least one new infectious disease, some of which – such as HIV, SARS, MERS, H5N1 and more recently COVID-19 have or are able to have a global impact. Epidemics and pandemics not only threaten the health and lives of people who are exposed to viruses, both in poor and rich parts of the world, but they also disrupt social life and threaten the stability of states. What is more, the pandemics on the largest scale can contribute to economic downturns, which is something that can be seen in the case of the coronavirus pandemic. (McInnes, Rushton, 2011)

Health security as a concept was first described by the United Nations in 1994, in the document considered fundamental to the concept of human security. (United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report, 1994) Since then, the term has been used to describe health problems that have a significant impact on human security. (cf: Scharoun et al., 2002, Aldis, 2008, Chiu et al., 2009) Other related terms emerged, referring to public health security, global health security, international health security and global public health security. (Fukuda-Parr, 2003)

Despite the widespread use of the term, its definition and scope were hardly elaborated. The domains of health and security overlap only under certain circumstances. The term is usually used to describe situations where the health risks faced by an individual are strong enough to have an impact on the security of others and result in cross-border effects. The most frequently identified threats include: (1) new, hardly-known diseases with pandemic potential; (2) already known and future communicable diseases; (3) deliberate use of chemical and biological materials to destroy human health or life; (4) violence, conflict and humanitarian crises; (5) environmental change and natural disasters; (6) accidents involving chemicals and radioactive threats; (7) food insecurity, poverty. (Chiu et al., 2009) The thematic areas of health security usually include: (1) protection against threats; (2) responding to new global circumstances and the resulting challenges; (3) involving new actors in preventing and combating health threats, including the military; (4) linking health issues to foreign policy and international relations. (Aldis, 2008:371-72) Each of them offers a considerable potential for securitisation.

It goes without saying that HIV/AIDS remains the most securitised health security issue. In subject literature, HIV is presented as a threat to security at a variety of levels, including human security (Fourie & Schonteich, 2001); national security (Ostergard, 2002); regional security (Gebretensae, 2004); international security (Singer, 2002); and global security. (Prins, 2004) It was also linked to food security (de Waal & Whiteside, 2003; Tireuov et al., 2018), as well as reproductive health security. (Pallikadavath & Stones 2003) Some scholars

point out that owing to the actions taken as a result of this process and their social acceptance, this issue is currently going through the stage of desecuritisation, returning to the state of normal policy.

Pandemics, infectious diseases and bioterrorism are indisputably recognised as a direct threat to national and global security worldwide. (Chan et al. 2008:498; Besenyő & Kármán 2020; Chehabeddine & Tvaronavičienė 2020).

In the 1990s, the awareness of the threat of infectious disease outbreaks and their potential impact on the health of citizens, as well as the economic and political stability of countries encouraged Western governments to develop responses to such threats, perceiving them in terms of national security (Davies 2008:298) rather than in medical terms, which were known earlier. As a result “health-related challenges now constitute a part of national security strategies, regularly appear on the agendas of meetings of leading economic powers, they affect bilateral and regional political relations between developed and developing countries and influence UN reform strategies. In spite of the fact that health has long been a concern of foreign policy, such importance is historically unprecedented.” (Fidler & Drager 2006:687) The past pandemics, including SARS, especially in the Asian countries, which were affected the most, were only a herald of the issues that the world had to face in the first quarter of 2020 – already at that point, the issue of the virus was reported in terms of battles and wars.

3. Research objective and methodology

This paper is intended to showcase the securitisation measures in the fight against the pandemic, implemented through messages posted in public space. For the purposes of this publication, the author collected more than 300 examples of such messages, published both in physical public spaces, as well as disseminated via the Internet on the territory of the Republic of Poland. They were prepared and distributed from March 15 to July 30, in other words both during the lockdown and during the easing of restrictions. They were written by representatives of local and central public administration, administrators of parts of public and common spaces, managers of venues, such as shopping malls, sports halls, airports, schools, museums, and theatres. The content of these messages was examined using the methodology of critical discourse analysis in terms of the presence of references to security/threat, the extraordinary nature of the measures, as well as the radical character of the new solutions. A hypothesis was made during the preparation of the research process: The messages posted in public space in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic constituted a part of the securitisation process of the pandemic.

3.1 Lockdown: legal basis, course and consequences.

In connection to the spread of the novel coronavirus, in March 2020 flights were suspended and borders were closed, while work in manufacturing plants, education and care for children in kindergartens, as well as schools and universities were stopped, the organisation of mass events (starting with family gatherings, through weddings, conferences, to concerts) was prohibited. Offices, cinemas, theatres, restaurants, cafés, hairdressing and beauty salons, swimming pools, playgrounds, gyms, beaches and parks, and even forests or shops, whose range of products was not considered necessary for survival were all closed, and freedom of movement was restricted. Most of the medical services other than those related to coronavirus treatment have been suspended, while passport and document-related services were suspended, along with football games, and the Olympic Games have been moved to the following year. The dates of several elections in Europe alone were postponed. In addition, exceptional safety and sanitation procedures were implemented, including introducing mandatory covering of face and mouth, mandatory hand disinfection prior to selected activities, as well as maintaining a social distance. Failure to comply with these new regulations was punishable with fines, again issued according to an emergency procedure, without the possibility to follow the standard appeals procedure. The so-called lockdown lasted from 6 weeks to more than 2 months, depending on the country, before the restrictions started being lifted one by one. Said restrictions were introduced by individual governments, based on the recommendations of international institutions, often without using the institution of the state of emergency, based on sanitary and epidemiological regulations (in the case of Poland), which in normal conditions should be unacceptable. However, we have to keep in mind that according to the theory of securitisation, by turning a given problem an issue of security, we change its functioning from “normal” to “extraordinary” and allow for non-standard, unconventional, exceptional actions and solutions.

Analysing the above, one could bring forth a hypothesis that the governments have virtually succeeded in closing their respective countries, and that the majority of the societies have accepted and complied with the restrictions imposed by them because of a successful securitisation process. National governments, supported by the authority and power of international organisations and medical experts (as well as the attitude of celebrities showing in social media how they wash their hands thoroughly and wear masks when they leave home) have convinced the public with an effective act of speech that conforming with these rules will ensure people’s safety and protect them against the risk of infection. Photos of people dying of COVID-19 in the countries with the highest incidence rate (Italy, Spain, the US, South American countries) have successfully convinced the rest. **If it were not for the successful act of securitisation of the pandemic (a threat posed by the novel virus), acceptance of the restrictions resulting in an economic crisis, economic downturn, rising unemployment and inevitable changes in lifestyles would not have been so widespread and would not have required so few interventions by the uniformed services.** Not only were temporary restrictions on human rights and civil liberties – such as limiting the freedom of movement, leaving the country, working or using the services of a cosmetologist – accepted by the general public, people also had no qualms about mind-boggling expenditure on both the direct fight against the pandemic (purchasing ventilators, masks, increasing expenditures on healthcare) and on mitigating its effects (the so-called anti-crisis shields supporting the economy). Moreover, following the lifting of the vast majority of the restrictions implemented in spring 2020, due to the ongoing potential threat posed by the coronavirus, albeit smaller than in spring, some of the new rules, in particular those concerning functioning in public spaces, are now kept in force indefinitely, which already shows the signs of riskification of the virus.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Information from the start of the pandemic (15.03-30.04.2020)

The messages, which were published in the period of introduction of successive restrictions were mainly characterised by references to the security category, which was now under threat, thus explaining the reasons for the obligation to wear masks, limit of the number of people in closed spaces, as well as closure of entertainment venues. The collected material includes 118 messages from this period. The word BEZPIECZEŃSTWO (SAFETY) was used 60 times, PROSIMY (WE ASK) – 48 times, TROSKA (CARE) – 26 times, ZDROWIE (HEALTH) – 22, KORONAWIRUS (CORONAVIRUS) – 22, EPIDEMIA/EPIDEMICZNY (EPIDEMIC) – 22, ODLEGŁOŚĆ (DISTANCE) – 18, ZAGROŻENIE (THREAT) – 12, SYTUACJA (SITUATION) – 10, OGRANICZENIA (RESTRICTIONS) – 10, ŻYCIE (LIFE) – 10. Table 1 presents selected messages, representative for the entire group.

Table 1. A list of sample messages from the first period of the pandemic
 (repeated messages or information differing from the presented information to a minimal extent were omitted)

Place	Information
market halls, local shops	Dear Customers, For safety reasons, * a limited number of people may now remain in the hall at the same time. Please follow the instructions of the staff. Please maintain a safe social distance from other people of at least 1,5 metre. (1) Dear Customers, For the sake of your safety, in connection with the epidemic situation , we would like to inform you that the maximum number of people who may remain in the store at the same time is limited to 3. When queuing at the checkout or in front of the store, please maintain a safe distance from others. Let us take care of our health together. (2) Only 3 people (customers) are allowed in the store. We encourage you to pay by card. Please disinfect your hands and wear disposable gloves before entering the store. From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., only persons over 65 years of age are allowed to shop. (3) Due to the ongoing situation, we urge you to exercise common sense and do your shopping quickly, instead of telling us your life story. (4) Please disinfect your hands after entering. (5) To ensure our common safety, please pay only by card. (6) For the sake of your health and safety, and with regard to the laws and regulations in force, we kindly ask you to follow the following rules. (7)

* Emphasis added by the author, unless noted otherwise.

bakeries	<p>Dear Customers, The Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the establishment of certain restrictions, orders and prohibitions in connection with the occurrence of a state of epidemic has been introduced in order to protect our lives and health using the means that are accessible to all of us. Therefore we kindly ask for your solidarity and making sure that we all follow the new rules in order to ensure maximum safety. (8)</p> <p>We recommend payment by card. Currently the safest way to pay. (9)</p> <p>For the sake of the safety of our customers and staff, we introduced the necessary preventive measures: the maximum number of customers shopping at any time was limited to 5. We recommend that you maintain a safe distance in the store. We count on your understanding, and we are sorry for the inconvenience. (10)</p> <p>Therefore, we kindly ask you to follow these rules while shopping (...). With mutual kindness and understanding, it will be easier for us to cope with such difficult times. (11)</p> <p>For obvious reasons, please enter the store one by one! Persons travelling abroad within the last three months, persons living outside Poznań, medical staff and infected persons are kindly asked to refrain from shopping. Please wear masks and disposable gloves. Please don't talk to the staff. (12)</p> <p>DEAR CUSTOMERS! FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY, THE GOODS WERE PACKAGED. PLEASE DON'T TEAR THE PACKAGING. (13)</p>
supermarkets and discount stores	<p>For the sake of our common health and safety, we have introduced temporary restriction concerning the maximum number of customers. The maximum number of people in the store is limited to 105. The maximum number of people per checkout line is 3. (14)</p> <p>From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., only persons over 65 years of age are allowed to shop. (15)</p> <p>For the sake of our medical staff, doctors and medical workers will be served out of order at priority checkout lines. (16)</p> <p>Due to the reasons of hygiene and safety, please do not put children in shopping carts. (17)</p> <p>Dear Customers, due to changes concerning the restrictions on large group of people, the store may now accommodate up to 15 customers at the same time. This is for the sake of your and our health. Please take a shopping cart before entering the store due to the lack of baskets in the sales hall. (18)</p> <p>Shopping prudently can protect our health. Let's maintain a safe distance between each other. (19)</p> <p>In accordance with current regulations in force, please maintain a safe distance from the other person and wear disposable gloves before entering the store. We reserve the right to limit the number of customers in the store. Please keep the hours reserved for seniors' shopping in mind. (20)</p>
pharmacies	<p>Dear Patients, Please maintain a safe distance while waiting in line. (21)</p> <p>Dear Patients, As a preventive measure, we would like to inform you that a maximum of 2 patients can remain in the pharmacy at the same time. (22)</p> <p>Dear Patient, please pay by card. (23)</p> <p>From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., only persons over 65 years of age are allowed to shop. (24)</p>
beauty salon	<p>Due to the threat posed by the epidemic, the salon is closed until further notice. (25)</p>
dentist	<p>FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR HEALTH, THE DENTIST'S OFFICE IS CLOSED UNTIL 31 MARCH. PLEASE LEAVE A TEXT MESSAGE – WE WILL CONTACT YOU IF POSSIBLE. PLEASE STAY HOME! (phone number) (26)</p>
doctors's office	<p>Due to the current epidemiological situation, in order to ensure safety of our patients, doctor's visits are now exclusively remote. (27)</p>
florist	<p>Due to the epidemiological situation and for the sake of the health of you and our staff, please keep a safe distance. We also encourage you to place orders by phone and take advantage of our delivery services to deliver your purchase to your home (courier is available from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.). (28)</p>
Roman Catholic Church	<p>All the faithful are exempt from participation from Sunday Mass – by not participating, they do not commit a grave sin. WE URGE YOU TO STAY HOME! Masses on Sundays and weekdays will be celebrated according to the standard schedule and broadcast through our website. (31)</p> <p>A maximum of 50 people can attend all Masses, including the clergy, the altar service and the participants. The participation of the faithful in the Masses has been limited to the people who asked to celebrate the Mass in a specific intention. Funerals may be attended only by the close family of the deceased. All services are cancelled. All formation meetings of parish groups are cancelled. (32)</p> <p>The sign of peace during Mass may be given only by nodding our heads, Holy Communion can be received on hand. (33)</p> <p>The parish office is closed. In important matters, please contact with the duty priest. (34)</p> <p>We encourage family prayer, in particular spiritual communication in the prayer of the rosary (for the end of the epidemic and for the sick, as well as for the medical and sanitary services). (35)</p>
gas station	<p>We would like to inform you that our pumps are cleaned and disinfected on an ongoing basis. However, if you would like your pump to be disinfected before you refuel, please inform our staff before using it. Disposable gloves are available from our cashiers. Have a nice day. (36)</p> <p>Please maintain a safe distance from the cashier and other customers. (37)</p> <p>Keep a safe distance from each other for the sake of our health. (38)</p> <p>The staff of our station is dedicated to making sure that you can buy fuel every day. (39)</p>

information in staircases in blocks of flats, posted by building administration	<p>Due to the threat of coronavirus,[‡] the Board of the “LOKATOR” Housing Association would like to ask you to limit direct contacts with housing estate administration to the necessary minimum. (...) All matters should be reported by phone. (40)</p> <p>Due to the threat of coronavirus, the “LOKATOR” Housing Association would like to inform you that the planned third date of technical inspection of the gas installation has been cancelled. You will be informed about the next date in writing. (41)</p> <p>Dear Residents, in view of the growing epidemiological threat and in order to ensure your safety, from now on until further notice, all correspondence (...) will be delivered directly to your mailboxes. (42)</p> <p>Bearing in mind the welfare of the residents served by the “Lokum” Housing Association and the decision of the Polish government made in connection with the coronavirus epidemic, we inform that the community meetings planned after 11.03.2020 have been cancelled. We would also like to ask you to limit personal visits to our offices to a minimum. (43)</p> <p>Attention! In order to ensure your safety and health, only one person should be using the lift at a time. Thank you! (44)</p>
water supply	<p>We would like to inform you that due to the state of coronavirus epidemic and out of concern for the safety of our customers and employees, water meter readings at our customers, who are not yet covered by the remote readout system will be suspended until further notice. (...) For the same reasons we suspend installation works on private properties. We are sorry for all inconvenience caused. (45)</p>
playgrounds	<p>ATTENTION! THE PLAYGROUND IS CLOSED! WE ARE SORRY. PUNISHABLE BY FINE OF 500 PLN. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE CLOSURE OF THE PLAYGROUND CAN BE PUNISHED WITH A FINE OF 500 PLN. (46)</p> <p>ATTENTION! Due to a grave situation connected with the coronavirus epidemic, the playground will remain closed until further notice, in order to ensure your safety. (47)</p> <p>Attention! In view of the new safety rules, the place is closed due to COVID-19 quarantine. (48)</p>
LOT Polish Airlines	<p>Following the decision of the Polish Government to extend the suspension of air services on account of the spread of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, flights scheduled on ... were cancelled. The safety and comfort of our passengers come first, which is why we have prepared a new ticket exchange procedure... (49)</p> <p>Lotdodomu – the onboard service is limited for the safety of passengers and crews. The safety of our passengers and crews comes first, which is why we follow the guidelines published by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate. After each flight the planes are disinfected, we have also introduced additional safety measures on board. (50)</p>
zoological garden	<p>Due to the risk of coronavirus, only the park area of the zoological garden is open to the public. The exhibition pavilions are closed. Due to the risk of coronavirus, the zoological garden will remain closed until further notice! (several days later) (51)</p>
beach	<p>Attention! The beach is closed. COVID-19. (52)</p>
primary school	<p>In order to limit the spread of coronavirus, the government decided to close all schools and educational institutions until 25 March. Thursday and Friday will be a transitional period – the school will take care of children, whose parents are unable to care for at home. Staying at home is paramount at the moment. (53)</p> <p>Due to coronavirus safety measures, all official matters handled by the secretariat should be dealt with by phone or e-mail. (54)</p>

Source: own study, collected materials

Both the messages presented in the table, collected from various places in the public space, as well as those omitted due to their similarity to the presented ones, constitute elements of the pandemic securitisation processes. These include:

Identifying and naming an existential threat. In this case, it is a pandemic, epidemic, coronavirus, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, epidemic situation (sometimes referred to as epidemiological), the situation at hand, as well as government decision, restrictions introduced. The messages are more or less precise in naming the health emergency, which occurred all over the world in early 2020. Some information contain factual errors (there is no such thing as an epidemiological state, only an epidemic state), as well as simplifications (due to the coronavirus), but they almost always refer to the threat. In some cases, the authors also refer to decisions of the government, the authorities, the sanitary and epidemiological service as a justification for introducing extraordinary rules and restrictions. (for example 1, 7, 17, 19, 25, 27, 40, 41, 42, 45, 51)

Indication for the need for (and applying) emergency measures. The list of restrictions changes over time, depending on which restrictions have been introduced at the given time. These included: *barring the use of*

[‡] Emphasis by the authors of the information.

services (for example closed beauty salons, schools, kindergartens, entertainment venues, bans on going to the playgrounds and forests), *restrictions concerning the use of existing possibilities* (fewer customers in the store, hours dedicated to seniors, limiting cash payments), *new rules concerning the use of services* (the need to maintain social distance, disinfecting hands, using gloves when shopping, as well as wearing masks indoors). (for example 1, 3, 13, 53)

Calls for the acceptance of the general public (the addressees of the proposed restrictions) This objective is primarily served by the widespread emphasis on the fact that the restrictions are introduced for the sake of “your” safety (as in, the people affected by the restrictions), the safety of “both you and us” (which means customers, patients, users, passengers, as well as employees and staff members), sometimes it is referred to as common safety, while in other cases it is referred to in general terms, without specifying the addressee. In addition to safety, the restrictions also protect health and life, while limiting the spread of the virus. In individual cases, the authors refer to the responsibility of the recipients of the message. (4, 8, 11) They also tend to ask and recommend or appeal the readers to conform with the restrictions, rather than order it and threaten penalties, although this also happens. (46)

Can the securitisation of the pandemic be considered to be just in this case? We need to take a closer look at three key elements of the JST that distinguish it from the classic version, namely the honesty of the securitising actor’s intentions, actual action that occurs as a consequence of the act of speech and possibility to counteract the threat without using extraordinary measures.

It is difficult to suspect that the authors of these information, who were also hit by the emergency solutions introduced, would propose them without having the health of their customers and service users in mind. Even if their personal opinion concerning the strategy of fighting with the pandemic was different from that of political decision-makers (lockdown vs. the Swedish model) it was necessary to implement their top-down decisions. It can be assumed, however, that in the first days and weeks of the lockdown, when the knowledge of the mortality and infection rate of the virus was low, the fear of disease and perhaps death from a new mysterious epidemic from China was high. The communication of the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS, 2020) of May 2020 indicated that for 59% of respondents the pandemic they experienced was something exceptional, different from other infectious diseases, something to be feared (62%) and eradicated with all available methods. 60% of the respondents believed the restrictions to be justified. The lack of knowledge about the development of the pandemic and its impact on Poland justified the extraordinary actions and made their implementation objectively justified at the time, even if some of them were deemed inappropriate in hindsight. Today, the debate in this area should not concern the intent of the securitisation actors themselves, but about the truthfulness of the premises on which they have relied and the conclusions they have drawn from them. However, it is difficult to indicate in a foreseeable time whether the coronavirus was or is indeed an objective existential threat, as Floyd requires us to do, and thus to establish whether the use of emergency measures was the right solution.

This also leads us to the verification of the third factor – the possibility of equally effective action without extraordinary measures. The strategies implemented in the vast majority of countries around the world were dominated by lockdown – an unprecedented restriction of activity in nearly all fields. However, the example of Sweden, which made the decision to go with recommendations, instead of restrictions, which were not as disruptive as in the case of other countries, and which did not introduce any extraordinary measures, shows that they might have not been necessary.

As far as the second factor is concerned – the action resulting from the securitisation – we may safely assume that this condition has been satisfied. The restrictions were mostly complied with (respondents to the survey cited above indicated that they were observed by more than 75% of their friends), and all the cases of breaking the restrictions were prosecuted and punished.

The securitisation of the pandemic in its initial stage was successful, partly owing to the securitisation messages present in the public space. We dealt with effectively painting the coronavirus pandemic as an existential threat that required extraordinary prevention and control measures that were mostly accepted by society. At

the current stage of research, as a result of the ongoing development of the epidemic, it is impossible to assess whether it was just or not.

4.2. Information from the period of easing the restrictions (01.05-31.07.2020)

With the end of April and the beginning of May, the easing of restrictions began. Shopping malls, beauty and hairdressing salons, gyms and fitness clubs, airlines, kindergartens and schools, as well as wedding halls were allowed to return to business. The easing was connected with some restrictions still in force (masks, social distancing, disinfection, etc.) and took place at a time when the number of cases was not decreasing. Hence, the communication concerning the new rules of functioning in the public space was to assure the general public of the creation of safe conditions for purchasing goods and services for customers, to make the public comply with the restrictions which remained in force, and in a broader perspective, to make the general public ready to accept long-term (and even irrevocable) changes in accessibility and behaviour in the public space caused by the risk of coronavirus infection, which should be considered not only in terms of securitisation, but also riskification. 169 messages were analysed in this part of the study. The word BEZPIECZEŃSTWO (SAFETY) was used 181 times, which means that there were messages with more than one occurrence (for example 58, 59). The word ZDROWIE (HEALTH) was used 41 times, TROSKA (CARE) – 38, ZASADY (RULES) – 33, DEZYNFEKCJA (DISINFECTATION) – 31, ZACHOWANIE (BEHAVIOUR) – 24, DBAĆ (CARE) – 18, OSTROŻNOŚĆ (CAUTION) – 13, KORONAWIRUS (CORONAVIRUS) – 12, PROCEDURE (PROCEDURES) – 8, EPIDEMIA (EPIDEMIC) – 6, Table 2 presents selected messages, representative for the entire group

Table 2. A list of sample messages from the period easing the restrictions
 (repeated messages or information differing from the presented information to a minimal extent were omitted)

Place	Information
Katowice Airport	Safe holidays – new procedures at the airport. (55) Keep in mind that travel is now subject to the new sanitary rules. The health of our passengers remains our top priority! You can read more about the new security rules in the link... (56)
LOT Polish Airlines	Book future travels with a LOT of safely! To meet the needs of our passengers, we have prepared a special flexible offer... At the same time, we would like to inform you that in order to ensure the safety of our passengers and due to the unstable situation on the international aviation markets, as well as numerous restrictions related to the movement during the coronavirus pandemic, international flights scheduled until 30 June were cancelled. (57) #BezpiecznyLOT. On 1.06, we are going to relaunch domestic flights. In order to ensure the safety of our passengers and crews, on the basis of guidelines issued by the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and international aviation organisations, we have introduced the new rules concerning safe preparation for your flight: we recommend online check-in, remember to take your protective mask, please arrive at the airport with a suitable spare time, you may take 1 piece of hand luggage on board the plane. All passengers can take advantage of free e-press. (58) We have introduced a number of rules ensuring #BezpiecznyLOT [#safeFLIGHT - a play on the name of the airline - translator's note] for the sake of our passengers' safety and comfort during the entire journey – on and off the plane, as well as at the airport and before departure. Learn how to fly safely, efficiently and comfortably! (59)
	#BezpiecznyLOT – body temperature measurements at the entrance to terminals, isolation of incoming and outgoing passengers, maintaining safe distance at gates and during boarding, obligation to cover your mouth and nose, access to disinfectants and paid dispensers with protective masks, restrictions concerning available infrastructure (shops, business lounges). (60)
WizzAir	Many things have changed in the world over the past few months, but Wizz Air's promise remains unchanged. We will continue to connect people with their loved ones at the lowest prices and in the safest possible way. (61) Our enhanced safety and sanitation measures. (62) We have increased the limit for non-cash payments to 25 euro, which will allow you to eat and shop on board without any fear. (63)
travel agency	Travelling is back! Starting on 2 July, you can book international flights to safe EU countries. (64)
hotel	Our hotel allows you to safely relax with a view of the Karkonosze Mountains. #BezpiecznyWypoczynekwKarkonoszach [#SafeRelaxationinKarkonosze] (65)
museum	Out of concern for the public safety of the residents and guests visiting our region, taking into account the threat posed by the coronavirus, it is with regret that we have to inform you that we had to make a difficult but responsible decision to cancel this year's Grunwald Days and the staging of the battle. (...) However, the safety and health of Poles , tourists and participants of the battle from Poland and the world is of the paramount importance for us. (66) We are not yet going back to normal, because the threat is still real – that is why we kindly ask you to be careful for our common good. (67)

shopping malls	<p>#bezpiecznezakupy (#safeshopping) Let us take care of each other. We'll win together. Cover your mouth and nose. Keep a safe distance. Use contactless payments. Wash your hands often. Disinfect. Sneeze and cough in your elbow. Download the ProteGO Safe application. (68)</p> <p>We are ready for safe shopping. The comfort and safety of our Visitors and Employees is of utmost importance to us. See how to enjoy your shopping safely and what safeguards and precautions we have taken to ensure your health and safety. (69)</p> <p>Be RESPONSIBLE. Keep a distance of at least 2 metres. 2 meters of responsibility. (70)</p> <p>For our safety, we recommend using contactless payments by card, Apple Pay or BLIK. Please observe the safety measures in connection with the spread of coronavirus. (71)</p> <p>Safe shopping in the shopping mall: wash your hands, wear gloves, wear a mask. (72)</p> <p>Today, you will be able to shop again in your favourite stores, which is why you should catch up on the safety rules in force: keep a safe distance from other people (at least 2 metres), cover your nose and mouth, wear gloves, wash and disinfect your hands, avoid crowds, do not eat in the walking areas, leave an empty parking spot between your car and the next one. (73)</p> <p>It's nice to see you. Shop safely. Remember that by following sanitary recommendations, you protect your own health and take care of others. (74)</p> <p>Safe shopping – now 30-70 percent off. Let's be responsible and keep safety rules in mind. We wish you a successful and safe shopping experience. (75)</p> <p>Be responsible, remember about your own safety and the safety of others, follow the recommendations. (76)</p> <p>In order to ensure your safety, the common spaces will be constantly monitored for people with clear symptoms of illness. Persons with clear symptoms of illness, such as persistent cough, malaise and shortness of breath will not be let in. We kindly ask you to be careful and stay safe. (77)</p> <p>We make every effort to make your visit a pleasant and, above all, safe experience. (78)</p> <p>We are open. Your safe place. We take care of the safety of your shopping. (79)</p> <p>#BezpieczeństwoCentrum (#SafetyintheMall). Get ready for safe shopping. Let's take care of each other's health and safety together. Let's be responsible and keep safety rules in mind. (80)</p> <p>Safe shopping: take care of yourself and your loved ones every day. (81)</p> <p>#RazemBezpieczni (#SafeTogether). Arkadia is open again. Keep the safety of yourselves and others in mind. (82)</p> <p>If you want to visit us, keep the safety rules in mind to protect yourself and others: maintain a safe distance and cover your mouth and nose. (83)</p> <p>Remember to follow the instructions posted in our venue if you come shopping. Please also follow the instructions of the mall's staff and observe the restrictions in individual stores. (84)</p> <p>In order to ensure safe shopping, special sanitary rules will apply on the premises of the shopping mall, and the ongoing disinfection procedures will continue to be applied throughout the venue. While maintaining safe distance, keep in mind that we are all in this together. (85)</p> <p>In order to ensure your comfort and safety, we have introduced a number of measures that will help you protect your health, while ensuring a great shopping atmosphere. However, we need your help. Let's remember safety rules and take care of each other. (86)</p>
	<p>We are ready to welcome you back to our store. Of course, with safety rules in mind! (87)</p> <p>In order to ensure our common safety, we have introduced more stringent hygiene measures . By following sanitary recommendations, you can protect your health and take care of others. (88)</p> <p>STER. Close and safe. We constantly monitor the number of people in the shopping mall. We provide our customers with a disinfectant. The safety of shoppers is constantly monitored by our security staff. We disinfect shopping carts, railings and other elements of the passage on a regular basis. (89)</p> <p>Read about the new safety rules and get ready for shopping! (90)</p> <p>We are open for you again! Check our opening hours and safety recommendations – and feel free to come! (just stay 2 metres from each other). (91)</p> <p>For the sake of health and safety of our customers and staff in the shopping mall, we have introduced all necessary safety measures. (92)</p> <p>We strongly encourage you to keep your own and others' safety in mind during our meetings. (93)</p>

stores	<p>Starting today, the so-called hours for seniors are no longer applicable. We would like to remind you that since the beginning of the coronavirus epidemic, you can do your shopping with us quickly and safely. (94)</p> <p>Order food products online and pick them up at the store. Safe and without waiting in lines. (95)</p> <p>Safety rules in the perfume store: take care of our common safety - wear your mask and gloves. You may use the disinfectant waiting for you at the entrance. You are important to us – let’s make sure that we keep a safe distance of 2 metres from each other. You can make secure contactless payments. Your safety is our top priority! (96)</p> <p>We missed you! Our stores are open again. Come for some safe shopping. For safety reasons, we are suspending the Textile Recycling Programme until further notice. (97)</p> <p>We’ve made some changes in our store in order to take care of your safety. Help us to be safe together. Disinfect your hands. (98)</p> <p>For your safety , you may enter the sales room with a basket only. If there are no baskets available, please wait for another customer to finish their shopping. (99)</p> <p>We make every effort and maintain the highest standards of hygiene and safety so that shopping with us is safe. (100)</p> <p>In order to ensure the safety of customers and employees, due to the ongoing epidemic threat, the 14-day exchange and refund programme is temporarily suspended. (101)</p> <p>Due to the very rapid spread of coronavirus , please follow a few rules: keep a safe distance and pay by card if possible. We have taken all the necessary precautions, we also ask you to observe the rules. (102)</p> <p>In every store, we take care of your safety and implement protective measures. We also ask you to keep a safe distance, wear a mask or cover your mouth and nose with an article of clothing. (103)</p> <p>For the sake of safety and health , the store has been implementing a number of preventive measures – before starting shopping, customers are asked to disinfect their hands and put on disposable gloves, the maximum number of customers shopping at the same time is limited. There are screens installed at cash registers, shopping baskets and carts are disinfected on a regular basis. (104)</p>
gas station	Take care of your safety and the safety of others – disinfectant and masks are available at our stations. (105)
accounting office	For safety reasons , documents delivered in paper form will be quarantined for approximately 4 days. (106)
hairdressing and beauty salon	<p>We would like to remind you that booking is only available by phone! Booking by entering the salon in person is not possible. The front door is closed. For safety reasons, only people who have previously booked an appointment by phone and have had a short epidemiological survey with us will be allowed to enter. We kindly ask for your understanding. Let’s take care of each other! (107)</p> <p>We want to provide you with services at the highest level in this new, difficult reality. We are going to make every effort to make you feel safe and comfortable here. We assure you that all safety procedures will be strictly observed in our salon. (108)</p> <p>In our salon you can feel safe – we take care of hygiene, use contactless payments, our bookings are spaced and the number of our customers is reduced. (109)</p> <p>We only work using the best and safest equipment. (...) We use tools and products that ensure maximum hygiene – including disposable products – which increases your safety. (110)</p>
florist	26 May is Mother’s Day. If you think your safety is paramount, just stay home and we’ll deliver the gift to your Mum, following all WHO rules. Safe delivery across all of Poland. Quick and secure payment. (111)
restaurant	We take care of the safety of our guests and our entire staff! The number of guests in the restaurant is limited. We removed tablecloths, flowers, candlesticks and spices from the tables. Tables are disinfected after each completed booking. We ensured a safe distance between the tables. There are disinfectants at the entrance, in the toilets and at the bar. We disinfect contact surfaces and payment terminals several times a day. Our team is equipped with protective masks and gloves. You are safe with us... We’ll be waiting for you! (112)
water park	In Tychy Water Park, safety is a top priority. Let’s take care of our safety together . Important information: Due to the sanitary regulations in force and the guidelines of the Minister of Health, the facility can be used by a limited number of people. (113)
amusement park	We try to think about everything, but the safety of our guests and their entertainment is our top priority , which is why for many weeks we have been implementing innovative procedures to face the new reality. Modern disinfecting drones, an application for ordering food in the park to avoid lines, ticket machines and mask dispensers, as well as continuous professional disinfection are just some of our ideas. You matter to us. (114)
sports centre	Safe day camps in Bazantowo Sport are already on sale! Check the offer and our safety policy at... Sports day camps Safe summer in Bazantowo Sport. (115)

zoological gardens	<p>Safe tour rules in the zoological garden: you may enter and exit the garden through the main gate only. You are obliged to wear a protective mask. It is necessary to keep a safe distance from other visitors as well as from the staff. Direct contact with animals is prohibited. Pavilions, playgrounds, gazebos and some toilets are temporarily closed. Hand disinfection is required before entering the garden and toilets. You may not touch infrastructure elements such as fences, railings, display windows. It is recommended to avoid paying with cash for tickets at the ticket office. (116)</p> <p>To ensure safety during the epidemic, especially for children, the children’s garden will remain closed to the public in the near future. (117)</p> <p>Poznań zoological garden reopens for visitors! (...) In order to ensure the safety of our guests, employees and animals and to comply with all applicable restrictions, it was necessary to introduce a number of restrictions into our regulations. We hope that in spite of the changes, you will still want to support us and our animals by visiting us. (...) Admissions will not be limited, but all the guests have to wear masks and disposable gloves. In front of the entrance to the zoo and in the toilets, you will find disinfectant dispensers. Tickets will only be available online or at cashless ticket machines. For the sake of the safety of our guests and animals, the following facilities will be inaccessible to our visitors: children’s garden, pavilions, tiger and bear hut, elephant house. (118)</p>
concert organisers	Concerts are open, but we play safe. (119)

Source: own study, collected materials

The messages published in the second analysed period were of a different nature than during the lockdown at the beginning of the epidemic. They are far less likely to mention threats. Coronavirus or epidemics are rare to show up in those. The key focus point concerns new rules, new safety principles that enable everybody to take care of their health and life (the latter appears much less frequently in order not to suggest that going shopping or visiting a swimming pool may be associated with the risk of death). What is important is that the new form of functioning in a public space is not presented as something extraordinary, exceptional, but simply a set of rules that are easy to follow (and which mostly have to be observed by the store, instead of the customer), which are the only thing standing between the reader of the message and “safe, carefree, comfortable, pleasant, successful” shopping or other activities, or – to put it in a different way – a return to normal life. The presented messages do not mention any deadlines, because there are no prospects indicating when we are going to be able to forgo social distancing or covering mouths and noses indoors. Therefore, going back to the key elements of the theory of securitisation, it can be pointed out that the messages analysed in this part do not mention any existential threat, because there is no need to do so – it was described earlier and is still in the memory of the recipients of the messages. It is also difficult to talk about extraordinary measures – there are additional requirements or restrictions, but they are not particularly burdensome, and have been in force for some time, which made them normalised. Of course, they are going to remain in the social sphere for a long time (maybe even forever, like the changes in passenger aviation after the attacks of 11 September), but they are not as severe as the earlier closure of schools, hairdressers and the ban on going to the forests. The only key aspect of securitisation, which can be seen in the messages are their references to social acceptance of the new rules (67, 77, 80, 85, 86, 93, 101, 103, 105). This does not mean that we saw a desecuritisation. What we can see in the second phase of the epidemic (lifting restrictions and creating a “new normal”) is the transition to the process of riskification – there is a probability of a possibility of infection; however, it is more of a risk, rather than a serious threat, otherwise we would not be allowed to leave our homes only wearing a mask, which is why we have to implement plans that increase our resistance to risk and better manage the community through some non-standard (but not extraordinary) precautions and algorithms. If there is no return to increased

5. Conclusions

Pandemics – the most securitised area of health – are experiencing a second youth. After HIV/AIDS has returned to the category of normal policy, gaining due interest from the public and decision-makers, the new infectious threat has taken its place and is subject to similar securitisation processes as earlier acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. The securitisation and riskification processes identified in this paper, demonstrated on the basis of the analysis of communications in public spaces in different periods from March to July 2020, should be continued. The possible return of the restrictions may result in resecuritisation processes, although its success (taking into account social acceptance and other factors) may leave a lot to be desired. Hans Kluge, Director of WHO for Europe, said that the Old Continent will defeat the coronavirus when it learns to live with it, while applying

the necessary restrictions, in a way suggesting that COVID-19 will stay with us for longer, becoming a tamed or controlled risk. This is a more likely scenario, the success of which will need to be supported by riskification processes, as has been the case for almost 20 years with the restrictions in passenger aviation.

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