# Serial Horrors of Loneliness: The Impossibility of Communitization in «The Walking Dead»

## *Bakardadearen izua telesail eginda: sozializatzeko ezintasuna «The Walking Dead»-en*

## Horror en serie de la soledad: la imposibilidad de la socialización en «The Walking Dead»

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**ABSTRACT:** For a long time, zombie movies have lead a shadow existence. Nowadays,, zombies have surprisingly become *in vogue*: today, they are a constant telemedial companion, reaching all relevant target groups. «The Walking Dead», offers a promising object of investigation. The main question is why has this series with its dark lonely world become one of the most successful telemedial narratives of our times?

The paper wants to show from a sociological-philosophical perspective how we can understand modernity as an age of growing loneliness as it generates uncertain social relationships and living conditions, provoking a longing for a simpler lifestyle without the antagonisms of modernity. But this desire for an anti-modern change, which leads to 'post'-modernity, and the hope to overcome modernity's loneliness, does not only negate all modern achievements —prosperity, democracy and freedom—, but also those modern means of mass communication like television, which made the loneliness of modernity bearable through mediated forms of communitization.

KEYWORDS: serie, The Walking dead, anti-modernity, communitization.

**RESUMEN:** *Uno de los valores de la serie a la que se refiere el texto es que se sale de la modernidad, a través de la forma de vida que propone y del consumo en continuo y de la omnuipresencia de los medios.*

*Es la soledad en nuestras modernas sociedades la que da lugar a nuevas formas de producción, y de rutinas diarias. Desde esta perspectiva, el placer de ver «The Walking Dead» no procede del horror que presentan sino de una nueva forma de «communitization». La serie muestra la anti-modernidad, en la que el sentimiento de alienación es infinito, a la vez que se produce un sentimiento de sentirse perdido en ese mundo de soledad.*

*PALABRAS CLAVE: serie, The Walking dead, anti-modernidad, communitization.*

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## Introduction

For a long time, zombie movies have lead a shadow existence: They were loved exclusively by hard-boiled admirers of the horror slasher subgenre and highly specialized fans of specific undead cult movies. But nowadays, at the latest since the triumphal success of the AMC series «The Walking Dead» (since 2010), zombies have surprisingly become *in vogue*: today, they are a constant telemedial companion, reaching all relevant target groups. Some episodes attracted an audience of 17 million in the US alone, even overhauling «Game of Thrones». The premiere of the prequal series «Fear the Walking Dead» set new historical records of TV entertainment. Especially the youth and young adults are remarkably attracted by seeing Rick and his fellow sufferers fighting against snappy corpses, bad living conditions, and mad wannabe dictators. What explains this notable broad interest in the shown anarchistic postapocalyptic world?

In the course of my doctoral project, I am investigating questions of loneliness and communitization in contemporary serial television programs by examining their typical dramaturgies, narratives, enactments, motifs, characters, and sounds.

In this context, «The Walking Dead», obviously offers a promising object of investigation. Could you imagine anything lonelier than waking up in an abandoned and devastated hospital, surrounded by heaps of corpses, burnt houses and absolute silence, not knowing the whereabouts of your family? The series invents innovative expressions for the intensive feeling of loneliness in its apocalyptic world. Later in my presentation, I will be saying something about these specific images and enactment that create a strong feeling of isolation.

But actually, what interests me more is the following irony: why has this series with its dark lonely world become one of the most successful telemedial narratives of our times? In a dynamically growing market of diverse TV series and genres, it is not absolutely necessary that people feel attracted to such a bloody, brutal and desolate fiction.

In this paper, I want to argue that the main excitement of this dystopic TV series is that it addresses a collective longing to *escape from high modernity* with its abstract forms of labor and value creation, continuous material consumption, and our everyday life penetrating mass media. To flee our complex living conditions —at least mentally and temporarily— means to return to a pre-modern era, with its promise of a more collaborative life. It can also mean to look ahead to a —literally— *post*-modern world, which negates modernity as a whole. Cynically, it is the loneliness of life in our own modern society – generated through increasing individualization, anonymity of the megacities, and growing isolation through comfortable living conditions – which generates a longing for new kinds of communality, as collective forms of production, habitation, and daily routines.

From this perspective, the pleasure of watching «The Walking Dead» does not arise from the spectacular fight and horror scenes, but from a promise of new form of communitization, which becomes the more attractive the more our life becomes more modern and thus more confusing, uncertain, and lonely. Naturally, the anti–modernity as shown in «The Walking Dead» is least likely eligible to generate sustainable and long-lasting communities – on the contrary: the modern feeling of alienation even grows worse in this world, as all opportunities for new forms of community one by one get unsuitable, but simultaneously, all our modern «ersatz» communities – like television, cinema, and cult cultures – are no longer available, generating an even worse feeling of being lost in a completely godless world.

In the following, I want to show from a sociological–philosophical perspective how we can understand modernity as an age of growing loneliness as it generates uncertain social relationships and living conditions, provoking a longing for a simpler lifestyle without the antagonisms of modernity. But this desire for an anti–modern change, which leads to 'post'–modernity, and the hope to overcome modernity's loneliness, does not only negate all modern achievements —prosperity, democracy and freedom—, but also those modern means of mass communication like television, which made the loneliness of modernity bearable through mediated forms of communitization. Against the background of classical and contemporary theories of modernity as a lonely, precarious, and unsafe age, I want to give examples how «The Walking Dead» denies any chances for its characters to return to meaningful communities, as their post–modern nihilism does not only lack modern comfort, but also any sustainable kind of closeness, purpose, and companionship. For this, I am using methods of film analysis with a focus on the serial narrative structure and the series' mode of telling a process of constant desocialization, giving less attention to the specific pictures and cinematic aesthetic of the series which requires its own investigation. At the end, I only want to provide an outlook how we can understand modern mass media like television as important means of substitutional communitization under lonely modern living conditions, providing us a sense of social belonging in an era of growing isolation. While these means are missing in the fictional world of «The Walking Dead», the series itself invisibly connects us in front of the screen to members of a modern society, providing us a sense of belonging to a broader community in the age of loneliness.

## 1. Modernity as the Age of Loneliness

If we want to understand how «The Walking Dead» generates an anti–modern world, we need to bring clarity into the term «modernity». There are diverse theories of modernity, but Nietzsche's concept of «God's Death» can be understood as not only one of the earliest and most reliable models – it also includes a complex idea of loneliness which can be helpful to get a better sense for life in modernity. In premodern times, as Nietzsche argues, Christian morality appeared as a highly

effective instrument to organize a society even without any constitutional or legal framework: Sacred texts and preaching determined what is 'good' and 'evil', what is socially desirable or unacceptable. For premodern times with its not very complex societal order, morality provided humans a reliable community with God. However, in the age of scientific progress, the industrial revolution, and increasing urbanization, it had no fitting answers for the modern developments anymore, when scientific, technological and economic progress questioned long-standing traditions. God as a universal 'public authority' became, so to say, 'obsolete'. People now were threatened to get thrown back on their very own, to an existence without God, devoid of community through church and worship. As Nietzsche wrote in his notes for «The Will to Power»:

> «What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism. … This future speaks even now in a hundred signs … For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe…» (Nietzsche NF-1887, 11[411])

What Nietzsche describes is the *nihilism of Christian moral values* which directly leads to modernity as the age of loneliness: The independence from «God's grace» promised freedom. But for Nietzsche, this new freedom inevitably leads to an overwhelming collective loneliness, as man loses God as an omnipresent partner he always can address. Man became the «Übermensch» or «super-man» as the post-moral subject, which trades its spiritual community with God in a free, though isolated life: «We are living the era of the atom, the atomized chaos» (Nietzsche 1874, SE-4).

In the 20th century, new technologies, the capitalist exchange economy, and modern mass media replaced all left traditional communities, making people susceptible to ideologies and delusions, giving them orientation under the new conditions of modernity.

However, in today's context and for my current studies, it seems crucial how Nietzsche describes modernity as the age of loneliness: We could define modernity as the epoch that tends to be increasing social isolation and alienation in a previously unknown form and extent.

Since the end of the 19th century, this specific modern feeling of disorientation and social isolation becomes a larger question of philosophy, sociology, and psychology – always under different names: Marx speaks about «Entfremdung» or «alienation», with Freud you could understand modernity as the age of increasing social «neuroses» and psychopathologies, and Durkheim is worried about a coming «anomy» of society. Not by accident, loneliness studies as an own field of research

was established only after the 2nd World War, when high modernity was breaking fresh grounds. As Mácha writes, nobody should try to idealize the rough premodern «patriarchal society» of the medieval times and feudalism, but nonetheless it gave

> «every single individual its criteria and values, support and [moral] safety. Civilization brought mankind the light of sciences and a higher living standard. But it also robbed its natural certainties». (Mácha 1968, 292)

Until the mid-20th century, Niethammer explains, these «'bolsters of tradition' have still been big enough in the post-war society to direct every day life back into conventional paths. […] Only the continuing mobilization and medialization of daily life during the immense modernization leaps in the 1960s critically crossed the threshold of a rapid 'total write-off' of [premodern] traditions» (Niethammer 2000, 420).

As secularization —the most evident phenomenon of modernization (Winandy 2014 / Pollack 2003)— all in all continues, man is exposed to the earthly banality of our material banality, loses his spiritual home and cannot speculate on any permanent communitization both on earth and in the lost concept of an 'afterlife' (Blumenberg 1974, 16). Even if we can observe some rests of spiritual life in the Western hemisphere, for Niethammer, they are just post-religious privatized leftovers «to essentially differ from [premodern] religious traditions as they construct their 'God' *ad hoc*» and are no longer able to compensate the worldly and spiritual communities which got lost with the dawn of modernity (Niethammer 2000, 434).

## 2. Living in an Uncertain Late Modern World

Riesman (1950) und Oberndörfer ([1958]1961) have been one of the first to identify these processes. Oberdörfer, for example, observed for the occidental culture at the example of the United States some typical modern phenomena, which lead to a progressive dissolution of traditional communities: an increasing horizontal spatial mobility and vertical social mobility, leading to a more flexible and inconsistent social structure and the loss of family stability, the specific estranged nature of postindustrial work, and the growing proportion of leisure time in our total lifetime which wants to be filled by attractive activities and goods. All these developments would directly lead to short-lived, shallow and thus meaningless illusory communities which do not provide any protection against the nihilism of modernity, but rather generate an omnipresent loneliness, which we can observe in the soulless sky scraper metropolises and their faceless suburbs.

It is easy to say why the modern man and woman accepts these developments: the modern lifestyle provides clean running water, sanitary, virtually unlimited food, and health care; in general, work in modern times gets increasingly less hard than

in an agrarian society, providing a higher standard of life; and constitutional rights, the appreciation of individual self-expression, and role flexibility provide a sense of freedom under secure conditions. For this life, modern societies have sacrificed their traditional communities which have no place today anymore. At the same time, the modern ideologies of capitalist neoliberalism and communism, which offered some hold and orientation in the 20th century, have not longer provided any answers since 1990, as the Eastern state-capitalist socialism collapsed and the Western pseudo-social capitalism «theology» tumbles from one crisis to the other (Hobsbawm 1993, 563). While old certainties disappear, we perceive an enormous acceleration and thereby transformation of our «material, social, and intellectual world», as Rosa (2013, 16) describes – but these societal changes «do not develop, do not lead into a specific direction», they just 'happen', and steal modern man the idea of an purposeful course of history, the idea of the world as a meaningful place (Rosa 2013, 57)

That is the context in which Fukuyama (1992) provocatively talks about the «end of history» and the beginning of the «posthistoire» as a «sad end time» (Niethammer 2000), which just consists of the painfully maintenance of a halfway-satisfying status quo, dominated by an «inhumane boredom without any fight, greatness, ambition, and transcendence» (Niethammer 2000, 508). It is mainly this disorientation and isolation of modernity which becomes the target of fundamentalists and radical right-wing politics, deluding themselves that modernity could be reversed, and we could return to a premodern, less complex and thus less lonely epoch. It is not just a cynicism of history that these worst enemies of our modern life ironically use the means of modernity and its specific destructive potential. Indeed, the opposite is the case: as modernity can be understood as the age of boredom and standstill, it is only superficially a contradiction that theories of modernity also look at our age as the *epoch of risks*, the age of sprouting manifold dangers. Beck (2007) talks about a «Weltrisikogesellschaft« or global risk society, in which the achievements of modernity —like personal freedom and evolutions in technology— more and more turn *against* modernity, as individualism turns into the dissolution of the public and social relations, and scientific innovations create threats like the atomic bomb. Our comfortable modern life rests on the acceptance of uncontrollable risks, which do not just express themselves through occasional catastrophes like wars, plane crashes and environmental disasters, but especially through the noticeable and pervasive incertitude and ambiguity of all our social interactions and relations, just constituting a fragile temporary order (Bonß 1995, 24). Beck says:

> «That is what is frightening us: it is the intuition that our anthropological security in the modernity consists of quicksand. It is the temptation and the horror of anti-modernity; the panic angst, that our web of material dependence and moral obligations could rip, and that the vulnerable functional system of the global risk society could collapse.» (Beck 2007, 409)

Living in the «second modernity», as Fukuyama calls our times, means to live under constant suspicion that the complex requirements for our affluent society would not be lasting forever, that modernity hangs on the silken thread.

As all these phenomena —the acceleration, the risk, the all-embracing loneliness of our times— are rather intensifying than coming to an end, it would be a misinterpretation to talk about our present as «postmodernity». Habermas referred to this term as just too «phony» to be true (1980, 444). Barney (2004, 16) prefers to bring up the term of «hyper modernity», and Jameson sees evidence that modernity needs and already seems to encounter its own frontier and uses the concept of «late modernism» in his work. Whichever term we want to use: modernity is the age we need to deal with.

Exactly that is the notion of modernity —an uncertain time of loneliness— which underlies the series «The Walking Dead»: In this fictious TV world, modernity has ( for unknown reasons) come to an end, suddenly vanished, and leaves mankind without prior warning to a (literally) *post*-modern age: When Rick wakes up from coma in a hospital, our protagonist has to recognize that the familiar modern normality has turned into a antimodern nihilism which only left useless relics of the gone modern times: clocks have stopped, phones do not give a dial tone, cars are lying on their top, elevators are out of order, and gas stations and shops are plundered. Some weeks ago, these places have been the «Non-Places» (2008[1995]) from Marc Augé's «super modernity» – «space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity» (63), «overburdening or emptying of individuality» (70), creating «entirely new experiences» of melancholic «solitude» (75), where individuals are indifferent, accidentally cross and then again choose their separated ways. It is these places which take center stage in photography since the 1960s, like in the iconographic deserted pictures of Stephen Shore or William Eggleston, representing a «noticeable no-longer-there, an absence», which not surprisingly became the typical American view as they are insignias of high modernity (Filser 2015, 119). While in modernity these views stood for the lived disorientation and emptiness of modern man, they now become depreciated wastelands of a gone civilization, which of course needs to be conquered on the back of a horse.

## 3. Impossible Communities in the Post-Modernity of «The Walking Dead»

Following the narrative, this dead modernity fell victim to an obscure zombie apocalypse, which appears as incarnation of anti-modernity: will-less and only following the primitive pleasure principle, sneaking around as masses

of faceless loners, without any chance to communicate, for Schumacher they are a «provocation for the (self-)controlled civilized bourgeois subject» (2015, 35), crunching anybody who anachronistically sticks with modern ideas of social justice, individual freedom, and democracy. Especially the last premodern remains of morality, which became irrelevant in Nietzsche's modern times, are completely meanings, even ridiculous in that environment of omnipresent danger. The «walking dead» become modernity's worst and last enemy, did the dirty work for the fundamentalist opponents of western life-style and put the industrialized world back to a premodern godless age, with shadows of high modernity lying on it as reminder of the former world's unexpected fragility.

Therefore, the attractive horror of loneliness generated by «The Walking Dead» has many faces: Firstly, there is, of course, the fascination of the necessary lonely fight against the undead creatures and to get through their dark world. While comedies present amusing stories of unlikely communitization, and tragedies essentially consists of narratives towards a catastrophic isolation of the tragic hero, horror is mainly characterized by entirely lost characters, oscillating between diverse dreadful experiences of loneliness, as fear, sickness, dead, grief. In the world of the zombies, everybody is left to his or her own in his struggle for survival.

However, much more relevant seems to me the second loneliness generated by this world, namely the loneliness of the survivors in relation to their fellow human beings, generated by the dysfunctionality of all societal experiments which have been established as attempts to help each other in the fight for survival, but one by one turn out to be ineffective or even contraindicated. Time and again there is a glimmer of hope shining through the darkness of this world, that the given situation of a neutralized high modernity establishes a chance to return to more a more collective form of cohabitation that was not possible under modern conditions, that the inevitable circumstance could lead to a surprising opportunity to overcome the misconceptions and excesses of modernity. Earlier complex media technologies that provided extensive virtual 'compensational' communities through television, mobile media, and cinema, which have been partly replacing the modern loneliness through virtual 'ersatz' communities, are not available anymore after the expiration of the modern technological infrastructure.

With end of modernity, loneliness does not end, as you could hastily conclude from Nietzsche's thoughts and contemporary social-philosophical discourses, quite on the contrary: as mental secularization has already been executed and modern behavioral rules are rehearsed for two or three generational cohorts, our post-modern characters can not just return to a pre-modern moral world order. The modern set of experiences and knowledge cannot be reset as easily as its material equivalents, the landscape, architecture, and machines which are neutralized through the physical force of the undead. Consequently, the protagonists have to accept

contrary to expectations, that they have been transferred to an age of even greater loneliness than the one they suffered in modernity, as this post-modernity provides no 'makeshift communities' anymore, neither with 'god', nor with any modern substitutes, like cinema and television.

That suspicion just increases the pressure to form new kinds of collaboration which could lead through the postmodern reality. In its eight and a half seasons, the series plays through nine different models of society, changing their shape as the postmodern conditions become more and more threatening. After some initial episodes of constant flight from one emergency shelter to the next, the second season is dominated by the survivors' first temporary settledness on the farm of Hershel Greene and his daughter Maggie, providing emergency aid and hospitality in the frames of the limited possibilities. This rural retreat, appearing like a transitional world between pre- and high modernity, initially seems to provide a suitable livelihood with its chance to practice agrarian culture. But as it offers no technical means against the brutal nihilism and lacks modern medicaments and medical equipment, it turns out to be a trap which can easily be overrun by the zombie masses.

Only in season 3, after a long energy-sapping and nerve-wracking nomadic existence, when the groups start to establish more resistant 'emergency communities', a quiet hope for an ordered new beginning starts to develop. You could even call it a sprouting optimism when the survivors begin to understand the occurring execution of modernity as a chance to return to a more humane life style. Rick reverses the modern logic of a prison into a location of provisional security which even allows to grow crops and keep livestock. In this new community seemingly 'close to nature', motivation reaches a peak. But the protectionism, the lack of cooperation and trade with the outside world, does not only generate growing hallucinations, you could say to psychopathological imagined illusory community; the barricaded group almost perishes after another epidemic – an influence which would be no big challenge under modern conditions. But above all, it is becoming increasingly difficult to protect their 'island of wealth' against growing migration flows and even a military imperialistic invasion:

This risk arises through the self-declared «Governour» who essentially tries to continue a Western-style pseudo-liberal society – with all its necessary shady sides: with an unreasonable amount of effort, electricity is produced to make ice cubes, just to maintain an appearance of normality. In the absence of known entertainment media, there must be costly orchestrated questionable exhibition fights to uphold public peace. And, of course, it is also part of occidental modernity to imperialistically conquer and occupy foreign territory with means of your military-industrial complex, so even the attempted hostile takeover of Rick's resource rich jail appears only logical within a capitalist conceptual world.

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Before the protagonists settles down in a self-sustaining luxury suburb of Alexandria, a part of the group (completely exhausted, longing for an escape from their lonely lifestyle, and thus dangerously trustful) follows some signs to an ominous place called «Terminus», promising «Sanctuary for all —Community for all»— but it emerges as a living hell where cannibalism is waiting, most fleshly, one-sided, so to say 'self-serving' form of communitization expressing the highest form of loneliness as the one we get to know in «Hannibal» and his longing for unity with a counterpart, whatever it costs. Meanwhile, Herschel's other daughter Beth gets captured in a hospital which is organized as a patriarchal corrupt police state where the needs of the single subject do not have any relevance anymore.

And of course, even (or especially) in the apparently democratic and liberal Alexandria, where deluxe mansions and solar collectors bode modern comfortable living conditions in non-modern times, the anti-modernity knocks on the door earlier than hoped for: for one thing from the outside in form of «the usual suspects», and secondly from the inside in the form of those residents who cannot accept the situation that modernity has stopped and perish in this spirit of eternal loneliness.

At the same time, two other premodern remedy communities are evolving: one is the preindustrial small town on the Hilltop, calling itself colonial; the other is the Kingdom, playfully ruled by the former zookeeper Ezekiel and his tiger at the top of this arranged feudal hierarchy. By their intentional recourse to these actually outdated types of cohabitation and societal organization, Alexandria, the Hilltop and the Kingdom produce, at least for some time, a pleasant feeling of being part of a functional community, even if everybody needs to be aware that this is just a calming but fake show which will sooner or later collapse under the weight of its own paradoxes – reenacting illusory communities in times of highest loneliness.

Under these circumstances, the following narrative developments are almost compulsory: All three groups dream about a trade-based new affluence but are suppressed by a fascist system. Dictator Negan acts brutally, but methodically by granting relatively secure and a comfortable living standard in exchange for unconditional loyalty. This prosperity is, of course, mainly made possible through exploitation of the other (technically and organizationally) inferior three peaceful economies, which in turn are threatened to fall apart under terror and lack of food. It is not coincidental that this configuration evokes associations with history and real-life politics: of course this is a problematic monocausal simplification, but the rise of fascism in the 20th century also must be seen against the background of fundamental and overstraining modernization, provoking a disorientation of an alienated society which is not able to handle the rapid transition of its relationships – and thus making it vulnerable for easy solutions provided by ideologies and their charismatic seducers. Needless to say, these questions acquired new dimensions in

the highly complex hyper modern world of the 21ˢᵗ century where radical political concepts once again become acceptable and popular.

Naturally, Negan's nationalism goes down, and the newest season indicates that the new long-awaited peaceful network of the victorious groups will not last very long either. Even though Rick repeatedly imagines a vision of new trustful community, the fundamental contradictions of this world stay unmanageable, producing an insurmountable feeling of isolation. On their desperate search for their new communities, it becomes increasingly harder to distinguish our heroes from the aimless, drained, and lonely zombies – Rick and his fellows become the real «Walking Dead».

## 4. **Communitization through television**

While typical zombie genre movies must try to establish a feeling for life in post–modernity in the course of only one evening in the cinema, the serial and long-term nature of «The Walking Dead» offers an access to the whole nihilism of loneliness in this foreign world. After eight and a half seasons, there is nothing to indicate that any attempt for communitization could be crowned with success: all the 'makeshift' communities are one by one found inappropriate for a good life, just helping to survive in this total godless world, only for an indefinite time, followed by structural loneliness.

At the same time, in front of the screens, discovering this collective dystopic imagination as an anti–modernity, we see our *own* reality in a different light: Yes, modernity is the age of growing isolation, alienation, disorientation, but this loneliness only gets bearable *through* television, by its provided feeling of being a part of an otherwise invisible, abstract, and cold society.

German media sociologist Hickethier, for example, described television as the main place for social negotiations on which individual forms of behavior can be found appropriate in a complex civic structure. through its serial formats, television enables every single member of society to navigate in the public reality by adjusting, or 'modelling' behavioral patterns. For this purpose, serial television establishes familiar fictional characters, and presents their «different behaviors and opinions, which are juxtaposed in different contexts […], and which need to prove their appropriateness» (Hickethier 1994, 67). In turn, the spectator chooses those seemingly appropriate telemedial suggestions for behaviors and opinions, which he or she estimates as adaptable to his or her own real life. That makes, following Hickethier, television «a part of societal processes of modernization, television as the place where those behavioral modeling necessary for modernization can be provided and circulated» (Hickethier 1994, 70). As there are not any other comparably

powerful systems for social mediation today, television as the still most influential mass media generates «competent individuals [who] are necessary for the continued existence of a complex society.» (Hickethier 2008, 47). Referred to «The Walking Dead», the series provides us with a sense of which specific individual behavior can be valued as helpful or unhelpful to exist under challenging conditions, which types of societal order work out or       fail, and we intuitively translate this knowledge from the allegoric 'post-modern' background of the zombie apocalypse to our own complex modern reality, giving us the opportunity to (re-)organize our own social existence, and thus to push modernization forward.

Engell does focus on the operationalization of causation through seriality in TV. On the one hand, television founds a sense of familiarity and intimacy through redundantly telling and showing almost the same in every episode, only with minimal variations (Engell 2011, 126). On the other hand, the specific serial character of television —by presenting every single variation as the direct consequence of a previous state and operation— allows to verify individual acting in a social context as a chain of causal effects. By producing a connection between past and future, television appears as a modern «strategy of temporalization, which is produced by complex [societal] systems to handle their growing complexity» (Engell 2011, 118). While life in a highly confusing social reality, with its almost endless number of players and influential factors, now and then appears to be subject to the principle of chance and chaos, serial organized television visualizes life in society as organized through effects and causes (Engell 2012, 249). Broadly speaking, serial television like «The Walking Dead» demonstrates the single member of a society how its own freedom affects social cohabitation, protecting the nature of suggestibility of social reality and formability of societal cohabitation: in the TV series, each single action of the characters leads to direct consequences for its surroundings and its companions, assuring that our own behavior under real conditions is also suitable to cause impact and change on our environment, the people and their institutions.

With this in mind, TV and its contemporary variations give us a common horizon of meaning, a collective understanding of our world and its causal relationships, and how we should and should not act under modernized circumstances. Television works as a superior apparatus of communication in our highly complex late modern societies, becoming a machine of communitization itself. That's why the loneliness of the «Walking Dead» becomes so penetrating: Because all of us, as modern subjects, have long been accustomed to feel a connection to our fellow people and their life through technical means of mass media, especially through television, which is no longer available in the world after modernity. Even if we are just sitting on our sofa and binge watching our favorite series like«The Walking Dead», this only allows to get an idea of how our late modern society works and how we can become a meaningful part of the complex,

volatile and confusing modern life. By providing us with recommendations on how to behave under modern conditions and a feeling of being an important member of society, what only makes a proceeding modernization possible. Even if we need to understand modernity as an age of growing isolation, nevertheless, television allows us to live under modern conditions a shared live, invisibly connected through the ties of serial television.

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