



COVID-19 and Environment: City Search of Proximity with Nature

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ABSTRACT

The measures taken by governments to limit the spread of Covid-19, particularly lockdowns, have restricted the opportunities to explore the role of the link to nature for mental and physical well-being. Beyond this, the pandemic and lockdowns have led to a re-evaluation of the relationship with its surroundings and its way of life. Memorandum 9 : overview of the studies and projects registered on the

The measures taken by governments to limit the spread of Covid-19, particularly access nature. These restrictions have affected individuals and put at the heart physical well-being. Beyond this, the pandemic and lockdowns have led to change is questioning its relationship with its surroundings and its way of life. According bring us closer to nature. Are we heading towards major upheavals in terms of a pandemic profoundly transform the relationship between individuals and their environment?

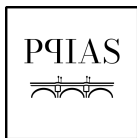
Several research works in the WPRN database offer interesting avenues for reflection.

Lockdowns have led part of the population to become aware of the benefits showing a willingness to leave the city, raising fears about the risk of negative e

The need for access and proximity to nature

Free access to nature called into question by health mea

During the first lockdown in France and in several countries, the possibilities (beaches, mountains, etc.). These restrictions caused a feeling of lack among participants because an increase in the expression of the need to connect with nature can be



and 18 on 1000 respondents representative of the population, 67% of French people intend to enjoy this nature during the summer. Major protests are about the reopening of natural spaces, which shows that the ban was difficult to implement. Available on WPRN measured changes in outdoor activity practices at the height of the pandemic. The study found a sharp decrease in outdoor activities for regular practitioners of outdoor activities. The study found a sharp decrease in outdoor activities for regular practitioners of outdoor activities. The study found a sharp decrease in outdoor activities for regular practitioners of outdoor activities. Moreover, half of the respondents believe that the pandemic will change the way we use natural areas. A more frequent use of local natural areas.

Symmetrically, when access to nature was possible, it was strongly favored. In nature was encouraged. A [study](#) of the city of Oslo surveyed on WPRN measured location data. It shows that the use of nature has increased considerably during the average of the previous three years for the same period. People going out in nature. The more remote and in the wilderness trails were, the more people went. The fact that nature provides a refuge from the stress created by the crisis. They went to the wilderness, allowing social distancing, played an important role in the fight against the pandemic in Sweden, as summarized in this [study](#).

The proven beneficial role of contact with nature on mental health

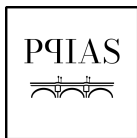
As the previously mentioned [American study](#) reminds us, important eco-system interaction with the natural world leads to reduced stress and improved well-being, alleviating the psychological and physiological effects of crises. These benefits are supported by many studies and are summarized in detail in an American [study](#) and a WHO Europe [study](#).

Thus, the analyses all come to the same conclusion: public authorities must ensure that, in the long term, everything must be done to avoid a new ban on access to natural areas. Urban parks could have been extended instead of roads in the heart of cities. Urban parks could have been extended instead of roads in the heart of cities. Urban parks could have been extended instead of roads in the heart of cities. Established on hiking and walking trails. Access to peri-urban natural spaces should be prioritized. Infrastructure in the heart of cities and the safeguarding of existing green infrastructure during the pandemic or major crisis.

The evolution of individual aspirations and i

New representations of the ideal lifestyle

Before the pandemic (in 2019) an IFOP [study](#) noted that 81% of French people are anchored in and echoes the dream of the single-family house with a garden. But the pandemic may have been a trigger to make this wish a reality. During the first lockdown, people were mainly going to the countryside close to nature. This renewed enthusiasm has led to a new wave of interest in nature. An OpinionWay [survey](#) in October reported that a quarter of Ile-de-France residents



notes that the number of people looking to buy a home with a garden increased. The main reasons put forward are the search for peace and nature.

More broadly, this desire seems to be part of a change in perceptions of the relationship with nature. A search for proximity and a link with the local environment is noted. A [study](#) by the French government by YouGov illustrates this evolution. The study, with a rigorous methodology, surveyed a representative population. Only 9% of the British people want everything to return to the way it was before the pandemic. 38% of respondents consider that their relationship to food has changed and 38% believe that British people also consumed local products for the first time during the lockdown.

We can thus note a search for proximity in the food supply and a willingness to reconnect with nature. Perceiving one's environment also appears to be more contemplative: 27% of respondents say they observe wildlife more often (a figure that can also be explained by the increase in wildlife sightings during the lockdown). On this theme, a [study](#) carried out by researchers affiliated with the CNRS and the University of Bordeaux, which is well known, will be followed closely. The study seeks to analyze the relationships of lockdowns lead to stronger care for other animals.

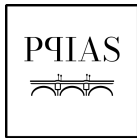
A temptation of urban exodus that is not without risk for

The expressed desire for a stronger connection with nature suggests a significant awareness of environmental issues. This awareness is a source of hope in the context of the major environmental problems of our time.

However, as mentioned above, the pandemic has also been able to give concrete form to a desire for a change of way of life. Urban exodus, thus encouraged and facilitated, should be carefully assessed. A [study](#) by the French government shows that urban sprawl leads to a lifestyle that increases greenhouse gas emissions, promotes biodiversity loss, and reduces air quality. In addition, the study analyses 271 Israeli cities using population density as a factor in the spread of Covid-19. The study found no significant correlation between population density and the spread of the virus. It shows that it is primarily the quality of the public health policies in place that determines the level of spread of the virus.

Nature as a vector of resilience

Ultimately, these different analyses demonstrate the important role of access to nature. It has been a trigger for this awareness. As a Swedish [study](#) reminds us, access to nature, defined as the capacity to absorb an exogenous shock, is a crucial notion for resilience. It emphasizes that access to nature in the immediate environment of citizens must be guaranteed. Access to nature for urban dwellers could limit the temptation for part of the population to leave the city. Urban sprawl risks generating major negative externalities for the environment. Resilience will be a challenge in the coming decades. Several ongoing studies of the WPRN database propose to respond to the climate challenge. A [study](#) from the University of Amsterdam shows that citizens are able to profoundly and rapidly change their behavior to fight the pandemic but



[study](#) more generally seeks to find the ideal combination of public policies and in the long term.

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