

Covid-19 and environment: citizens in search of proximity with nature

Galonnier, Victor

DOI 169059797

PUBLICATION DATE

12/1/2020

ABSTRACT

The measures taken by governments to limit the spread of Covid-19, particularly containment, have restricted the opportunities to access nature and have put at the heart of the debate the role of the link to nature for mental and physical well-being. Beyond this, the pandemic and containment have led to changes in the relationship with its surroundings and its way of life. Memorandum 9 : overview of the studies and projects registered on WPRN

The measures taken by governments to limit the spread of Covid-19, particularly containment, have restricted the opportunities to access nature. These restrictions have affected individuals and put at the heart of the debate the role of the link to nature for mental and physical well-being. Beyond this, the pandemic and containment have led to changes in the relationship with its surroundings and its way of life. According to the WPRN database, several searches offer interesting avenues for reflection on the need to transform the relationship between individuals and their environment in a more ecological way.

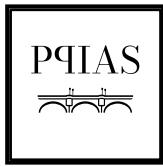
Several searches in the WPRN database offer interesting avenues for reflection on the need to transform the relationship between individuals and their environment in a more ecological way.

Confinement has led part of the population to become aware of the benefits of the proximity with nature and has led to a willingness to leave the city, raising fears about the risk of negative environmental impacts.

The need for access and proximity to nature

Free access to nature called into question by health measures

During the first confinement in France and in several countries, the possibilities to access nature (beaches, mountains, etc.). These restrictions caused a feeling of lack among people because there is an increase in the expression of the need to connect with nature. According to a survey of 1000 respondents representative of the population, 67% of French people feel that they intend to enjoy this nature during the summer. Major protests and petitions for 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 decline in outdoor activities. The study found a sharp decline in outdoor activities. Moreover, half of the respondents believe that the pandemic will change their lifestyle. The study cited is 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 measurement 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 population. The more remote and wilderness trails were, the more people used nature provides a refuge from the stress created by the crisis. They also hypothesized that allowing social distancing, played an important role in the fight against the pandemic, summarized in this [study](#).

The proven beneficial role of contact with nature on mental health

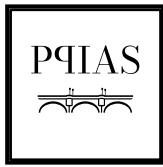
As the previously mentioned [American study](#) reminds us, important ecosystem services interaction with the natural world leads to reduced stress and improved well-being, alleviating the psychological and physiological effects of crises. These benefits are supported by numerous studies and are summarized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

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. Green corridors instead of roads in the heart of cities. Urban parks could have been established on hiking and walking trails. Access to peri-urban natural spaces should be facilitated by infrastructure in the heart of cities and the safeguarding of existing green infrastructure during a pandemic or major crisis.

The evolution of individual aspirations and lifestyle

New representations of the ideal lifestyle

Before the pandemic (in 2019) an IFOP [study](#) noted that 81% of French people have a garden, anchored and echoes the dream of the single-family house with a garden. But urbanization has been a trigger to make this wish a reality. During the first confinement, on INSEE [data](#), mainly in the countryside close to nature. This renewed enthusiasm for nature in cities. An OpinionWay [survey](#) in October reported that a quarter of Ile-de-France residents have a garden.



notes that the number of people looking to buy a home with a garden increase. 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 between the city and nature. A search for proximity and a link with the local is noted. A [study](#) based on the Villes de France illustrates this evolution. The study, with a rigorous methodology, is based on a survey of 10,000 British people who want everything to return to the way it was before the pandemic. The relationship to food has changed and 38% believe that they cook more from raw products for the first time during the containment.

We can thus note a search for proximity in the food supply and a willingness to perceive one's environment also appears to be more contemplative: 27% of respondents more often (a figure that can also be explained by the increase in wildlife in urban areas). On this theme, a [study](#) carried out by researchers affiliated with the CNRS and the Sorbonne University will be followed closely. The study seeks to analyze the relationships of human activities and how confinement has led to better attention to other animals.

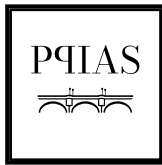
A temptation of urban exodus that is not without risk for

The expressed desire for a stronger connection with nature suggests a significant awareness is a source of hope in the context of the major environmental problem.

However, as mentioned above, the pandemic has also been able to give concrete evidence that access to nature of life is becoming more and more accessible for part of the urban population. Urban exodus, thus encouraged and facilitated, should be carefully assessed. A [study](#) shows that urban sprawl leads to a lifestyle that increases greenhouse gas emissions, promotes loss of biodiversity. In addition, the study analyses 271 Israeli cities using population density as a factor in the spread of Covid-19. The study found that population density is a factor in the spread of Covid-19. The study found no epidemic. It shows that it is primarily the quality of the public health policies and the level of spread of the virus.

Nature as a vector of resilience

Ultimately, these different analyses demonstrate the important role of contact with 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 urban resilience. It emphasizes that access to nature in the immediate environment of citizens must be guaranteed. For urban dwellers could limit the temptation for part of the population to leave the city, thus generating major negative externalities for the environment. Resilience is a concept that has been defined over several decades. Several ongoing studies of the WPRN database propose to reflect on the



the climate challenge. A [study](#) from the University of Amsterdam seeks to understand and rapidly change their behavior to fight the pandemic and are not able to do so. The study seeks to find the ideal combination of public policies and changes in individual behavior.

Bibliography

Beaunieux, X. (2020). Confinement : les maisons sont plus recherchées. <https://edito.seloger.com/actualites/france/confinement-maisons-plus-recherchee>

Beaunieux, X. (2020). Immobilier : 1 Francilien sur 4 veut acheter en zone rurale. <https://edito.seloger.com/actualites/villes/immobilier-1-francilien-4-veut-acheter>

Rurales, F. (n.d.). Familles Rurales publie son rapport « les territoires ruraux 2020 ». February 14, 2022, from <https://www.famillesrurales.org/etude-FamillesRurales>

Holland, W. H., Powell, R. B., Thomsen, J. M., & Monz, C. A. (2018). A 5-Year Study of Outcomes Associated With Participation in Wildland Recreational Activities. *Journal of Environmental & Planning*, 50(2), 197–225. <https://doi.org/10.18666/JOREL-2018-V10-I3-8382>

INSEE. (2020). Population présente sur le territoire avant et après le confinement. https://www.insee.fr/fr/information/4493611?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=le_developpement_rural

Samuelsson, K., Barthel, S., Colding, J., Macassa, G., & Giusti, M. (2020). Living in nature amidst the coronavirus pandemic. In *OSF Preprints*. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/zt9qy>

Usbek&Rica. (2020). « Le confinement pourrait nous rapprocher de la nature ». <https://www.usbek&rica.com/fr/actualites/le-confinement-pourrait-nous-rapprocher-de-la-nature>