

COVID-19 and Environment: Citizens in 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 for citizens 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 lockdowns have led to changes in the way of life. The population is questioning its relationship with its surroundings and its way of life. Memorandum 9 : overview of the study

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The measures taken by governments to limit the spread of Covid-19, particularly lockdowns, have restricted the opportunities for citizens 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 lockdowns have led to changes in the way of life. The population is questioning its relationship with its surroundings and its way of life.

lockdowns could thus bring us closer to nature. Are we heading towards major upleisure practices? Will the pandemic profoundly transform the relationship between perspective?

Several research works in the WPRN database offer interesting avenues for reflect

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

The need for access and proximity to natu

Free access to nature called into question by health i

During the first lockdown in France and in several countries, the possibilities of a
beaches, mountains, etc.). These restrictions caused a feeling of lack among pe
awareness because an increase in the expression of the need to connect with r
conducted on June 17 and 18 on 1000 respondents representative of the popul
nature during the lockdown and 67% that they intend to enjoy this nature duri
during the first lockdown to ask for the reopening of natural spaces, which show
States, a University of Pennsylvania [study](#) available on WPRN measured cha
pandemic. The 1,000 respondents consulted in 3 phases were regular practition
nature-related activities that primarily affected urban dwellers. Moreover, half o
their leisure experiences in the long term. The change most frequently mentioned i

Symmetrically, when access to nature was possible, it was strongly favored. In th
to nature was encouraged. A [study](#) of the city of Oslo surveyed on WPRN mea

Google location data. It shows that the use of nature has increased considerably compared to the average of the previous three years for the same period. People go to the forest six times a week, compared to once a week in 2019. The more remote and in the wilderness trails were, the more people went there, explained by the fact that nature provides a refuge from the stress created by the activities in the wilderness, allowing social distancing, played an important role in the activities were found in Sweden, as summarized in this [study](#).

The proven beneficial role of contact with nature on well-being

As the previously mentioned [American study](#) reminds us, important eco-systemic interaction with the natural world leads to reduced stress and improved well-being. This role in alleviating the psychological and physiological effects of crises. These findings are based on psychological studies and are summarized in detail in an American [study](#) and a WHO report.

Thus, the analyses all come to the same conclusion: public authorities must ensure that in the short term, everything must be done to avoid a new ban on access to natural spaces. Pedestrian corridors instead of roads in the heart of cities. Urban parks could have green lanes could be established on hiking and walking trails. Access to peri-urban nature. The creation of more green infrastructure in the heart of cities and the safeguarding of natural spaces, particularly in the event of a new pandemic or major crisis.

The evolution of individual aspirations and the role of nature

New representations of the ideal lifestyle

Before the pandemic (in 2019) an IFOP [study](#) noted that 81% of French people view is anchored in and echoes the dream of the single-family house with a garden. The pandemic may have been a trigger to make this wish a reality. During the first lockdown, INSEE [data](#), mainly going to the countryside close to nature. This renewed exodus outside the major cities. An OpinionWay [survey](#) in October reported that a quarter of French people want to buy a home in the countryside, similar to the similar period in 2019. The main reasons put forward are the search for peace and

More broadly, this desire seems to be part of a change in perceptions of the pandemic. A search for proximity and a link with the local environment is noted. The British government by YouGov illustrates this evolution. The study, with a sample representative of the British population. Only 9% of the British people want even to move to the countryside. Concerning food, 42% of respondents consider that their relationship to food has changed. 6% of British people also consumed local products for the first time.

We can thus note a search for proximity in the food supply and a willingness to spend more on local products. Of perceiving one's environment also appears to be more contemplative: 27% of respondents report the presence of wildlife more often (a figure that can also be explained by the increased time spent outdoors during lockdown). On this theme, a [study](#) carried out by researchers affiliated with the University of Oxford, the results are not yet known, will be followed closely. The study seeks to analyze the impact of lockdowns to assess whether lockdowns lead to stronger care for other animals.

A temptation of urban exodus that is not without risk

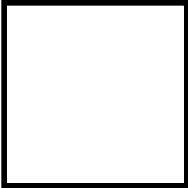
The expressed desire for a stronger connection with nature suggests a significant shift in values. This awareness is a source of hope in the context of the major environmental problems of our time.

However, as mentioned above, the pandemic has also been able to give concrete This way of life is becoming more and more accessible for part of the urban population of an urban exodus, thus encouraged and facilitated, should be carefully assessed. It reminds us that urban sprawl leads to a lifestyle that increases greenhouse gas emissions on farmland, forests and biodiversity. In addition, the study analyses 271 Israeli variables to assess whether population density is a factor in the spread of Covid-19 and the development of the epidemic. It shows that it is primarily the quality of life and by the citizens that determine 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 can be defined as the capacity to absorb an exogenous shock, is a crucial notion. It converges to emphasize that access to nature in the immediate environment and ecosystems more accessible to urban dwellers could limit the temptation for part of the urban lifestyle. Otherwise, urban sprawl risks generating major negative externalities. A notion for coping with climate change in the coming decades. Several ongoing studies offer lessons to be learned from the pandemic in order to respond to the climate challenge. We need to understand why societies and individuals have been able to profoundly and rapidly change their behaviour to do the same to fight climate change. A British [study](#) more generally seeks to understand changes in individual behaviour for a more sustainable society in the long term.

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