

[paysages](#)

paysages et livres – Landschaften und Bücher – Landscapes and Books

Menü

- [Home](#)
- [Impressum](#)
- [Datenschutzerklärung](#)
- [Droits d'auteur & Copyright :](#)
- [A propos](#)



Pyrotragedies – a critical retrospective on the wildfire situation in Europe during July 2018

[7. August 2018](#)

July 2018 was the month in which Europe was heavily affected by wildfire events. There where [forest fires in Sweden](#), in Greece and even in Germany there was one major forest fire event in July 2018. A Scots Pine Forest near Fichtenwalde was heavily affected by a fire[1], thus remembering German authorities that Germany can also be concerned by forest fires, – and recalling the terrible souvenirs of the [Forest fires of the Lüneburger Heide in summer 1975](#). But it was Greece which was so heavily hit by several fire events, –[the 2018 Attica wildfires](#) – the city of Mati had to face a real “pyrotragedy” to use the words of Paulo Fernandes a portugese wild fire researcher[2]. Mati has been more or less completely erased by the wildfires, a landscape of ruins and desolation and a very high dead toll – about 88 people were killed by the fires in Mati[3]. For me the pictures of the landscape of ruins of Mati called up the souvenirs of the terrible fire event of Pedrógão Grande[4] in Portugal last year.

Working on forest fires since the beginning of my academic career in 1992, I have been one of those scientists, who are continuously warning that climate change will also increase forest fire risks[5],[6]. But I also warn, since the beginning 1990's, when I was mapping wild fire risks in the “Garrigues de Nîmes”[7] under the guidance of Louis Trabaud[8], [Peter Frankenberg](#) and Rainer Joha Bender[9] that californisation & rural abandonment & bushencroachment are making the coming generation of forest fires so dangerous.

[Californisation](#)[10] is the “terminus technicus” used in francophone geography, spatial planning and forestry for urban sprawl,

housing, urban – forest interface, urban wild – interface etc. But I think the difference between the different English terms is that californisation also designs the intermix of housing and extremely high inflammable forest (or bushformations like Garrigues, Maquis, Matoral, Chaparal etc.) and high fuel loading[11].

However what term you use, I prefer californisation, because I think it describes the landscape scenery we can see in many Mediterranean regions of the world perfectly. People want to live like “Californians” constructing their house into a “green scenery” of forests & parks, like in [Santa Barbara](#) in California. In fire prone ecosystems, and all Mediterranean ecosystems are fire prone ecosystems, housing in such scenery is just like living on “powder – keg”. A forest fire occurring in this environment is a deadly trap for people, – and this exactly happened in Mati[12]. And what happened in Mati can happen in the suburbs of Lisbon, in the suburbs of Barcelona, Nîmes, Montpellier, Marseille, in La Marsa near Tunis ,- or in California or in Australia (even in the Mediterranean part of Chile and in the Cap region in South Africa). Working since the beginning of the 1990 in western European Mediterranean basin, I know so many locations in this area, where catastrophes like these which devastated Mati in Greece could also happen.

The combination of the consequences of climate change with the cocktail of californisation & rural abandonment will provide us more deadly fires in the Mediterranean regions of Europe (and perhaps also in Central Europe, Scandinavia etc.) – and I think society should react and force the governments to adapt their spatial planning to this enforced risk to see deadly forest fires spread up in that environment, to avoid situations that can lead to such fatal forest fires scenarios as the [1949 Landes Forest Fire](#) which was the most deadly single fire which ever happened in Europe[13]. Concerning the 2018 Attica wildfires, this was a run of different fires, according to informations I could get about the fire.

What happened in Greece in the Attica region in July 2018, what happened in Pedrógão Grande in June 2017, but also in [October 2017 in Portugal](#), these are (or were) real “pyrotragedies” and I hope that the fire season, which is going on until the End of October (in European Mediterranean regions) will not provide us other “pyrotragedies” in the Mediterranean (or elsewhere).

But the real question is if the governments in Greece or in Portugal will learn something from these “pyrotragedies”? The 1949 Landes Forest Fire with its high dead toll of 82 people killed by the fire, – provide a real shock in France – and after this shock France has made an enormous effort of systematic planning and construction of system of “Defending Forest against Wildfire” – “Défense de la forêt contre les incendies (DFCI)[14]” – which is now considered being one of the most effective “Anti Forest Fire Defence System” of the world. Perhaps someone should write down the history of the establishment of the French anti forest fire defense system, – as I know this has never been done – because this was not only success story, but the French responsible were able to learn from their different “failures”[15]– and that is very important.

In this context also associations, like the “Forêt Méditerranéenne”, have a very important role, – just remembering all the conferences dedicated to “fire prevention & wild fire management” and also all the articles dealing with forest fire published in the revue “Forêt Méditerranéenne”[16]. Articles published in this revue are read by the people working in the forests, – the technicians, the forest engineer in direct contact, at the “frontline” with the “wildfires”. But even this relatively effective system of forest fire management, which has been established in France, is now challenged by “climate change” as recently Thomas Curt and Thibaut Frejaville showed in a study about “Wildfire Policy in Mediterranean France”[17].

My personal opinion is that science and research cannot alone provide the solution, at least perhaps applied geography and spatial planning, because it is a societal problem – how do we deal with californisation (urban sprawl, forest & urban interface, whatever you call it) in a highly inflammable environment – environment which also has a notable charge of fuel loading. How can we manage this highly inflammable environment including climate change processes. It seems to be very difficult to find consistent solutions for that mix of problems. I personally, after working more or less since the beginning 1990s with forest fire risks, I have not “the solution”- but at least we should be honest to people living in this environment, to tell them, that they are living on a “powder – keg”. If there are no evacuation plans (and evacuation has to be trained), if fire brigades are not well trained and have a good equipment living & housing in such a fire prone environment can become very rapidly a deadly trap if a fire outbreak is not under control very very fast. Very very fast means to control the fire 30 minutes after outbreak, – after that threshold of 30 minutes it’s a very hard task to avoid the fire to run out of control and evolve into a large deadly fire event.

Concerning climate change, – I guess, that what I described here for Mediterranean regions, – we will have to face such scenarios also in Central Europe – because the californisation of landscape is also existing in Central Europe, – the intermix of vegetation with housing – and if climate change scenarios provided by climatologists are correct we will also be confronted with an higher risk of fire eclosion in Central Europe.

And what about climate change and fire risks in old world Mediterranean basin? I think it is very difficult to prove that climate change is responsible for the current fire situation in summer 2018 – or for the 2017 fires in Portugal or the Maghreb^[18] – but after all the paper I have read for my profession and also my own research work^[19], I am convinced that climate change will make future wild fires more dangerous for people in the Mediterranean regions all over the world in the coming years.

Christophe Neff, Grünstadt 07.08.2018

P.S.: This blogpost is a revised and augmented version of a facebook post called "[some words about the current forest fire situation in Greece](#)" which I posted on Facebook on 25.07.2018.

^[1] See also „[Waldbrand in Fichtenwalde. Das Inferno nebenan](#)“ on Spiegelonline.

^[2] Original citation « No dia de 23 de julho o mundo foi surpreendido por mais uma pirotrografia, desta vez nos arredos de Atenas » , Paulo Fernandes, published in the « Jornal de Notícias » on Monday the 30 of July 2018.

^[3] See also „[Grèce : un ministre démissionne après les incendies meurtriers](#) » in Le Monde.fr

^[4] See „[Incendie de Pedrógão Grande](#)“ in wiki.fr, or „ [Incêndio florestal de Pedrógão Grande em 2017](#)“ in wiki.pt.

^[5] In the blogpost „[Feux de forêts et lectures de paysages méditerranéens: \(Écologie et biogéographie des forêts du bassin méditerranéen ; The Nature of Mediterranean Europe – an Ecological History ; Le feu dans la nature – mythes et réalité\)](#) », published in juin2009, I remembered that i was one the first scientists, warning that climate change could lead to an increase in Forest Fire risks in Central Europe.

^[6] In the blogpost “ [The Fatal Forest Fire – remembering the “1949 Mega fire” in the „Forêt des Landes” \(South West France\)](#)”, published in July2009, I wrote concerning the “[1949 Landes forest fire](#)”, that this fire event could be seen as a “historical model for expected forest fires due to global warming in non-mediterranean European forests”

^[7] The results of the fire risk mapping were published as a little book in 1995 in German “Waldbrandrisiken in den Garrigues de Nîmes (Südfrankreich) : eine geographische Analyse” (ISBN 3-923750-50-1).

^[8] Louis Trabaud was of the pioniers of Mediterranean Fire Ecology. He passed away in april 2017, – July Pausas has written a necrology on this personal blog – “[Homage to Louis Trabaud](#)”.

^[9] Concerning Reiner Joha Bender see also “[Blognotice 08.09.2014: Quatre jours de vacances à Leucate, de très petites vacances](#) »

^[10] See also „[Blognotice 15.08.2015: Incendies de forêt à Schramberg en Forêt-Noire et processus de californisation du paysage](#) »

^[11] See also „[Californisation](#)“ in Wiki.fr

^[12] See also the video published by SPON, showing the devastated Mati after the fire event. The video was taken by an UAV.

^[13] See also „[The Fatal Forest Fire – remembering the “1949 Mega fire” in the „Forêt des Landes” \(South West France\)](#)”

^[14] See also „[Défense de la forêt contre les incendies](#) » on wiki.fr, even if this article is very poor.

^[15] For example see the special number of the revue forestière française dedicated to the fire year 1975 “RFF – SPECIAL – Les

incendies de forêts – 1975 (<http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/handle/2042/20010>) or in 1990 the special number "RFF – SPECIAL – Espaces forestiers... – 1990 (<http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/handle/2042/19854>) of the same revue, entirely dedicated to forest fire management.

[16] Just to name two examples – in 1990 the French Mediterranean Forests were heavily affected by forest fires, especially the "Massif de Maures" had hard price to pay in this "wildfire season". Thus the "Forêt Méditerranéenne" dedicated special numbers of their revue "Incendies & Pin d'Alep T. XIII, n°3, 1992 (Forest fire and Aleppo Pine) and "Feux et forêts – Les feux de forêt et la sécheresse en 1990 T. XIII, n°1, 1992 (Fire and Forest – the forest fires and the drought of 1990) to this crucial fire year. Not only to understand what really happened on the terrain during the fire events – but also to improve "prevention", "forest management" and "Fire defense".

[17] See „Curt, T. & Frejaville, T: Wildfire Policy in Mediterranean France: How Far is it Efficient and Sustainable?" in "Risk Analysis "July 2017 DOI: 10.1111/risa.12855"

[18] See also: [Blognotice 14.08.2017: Sècheresse, canicule et feux de forêts – au Maghreb aussi !](#)

[19] Together with some colleagues we analyzed forest fire risks and climate change scenarios and the consequences for Tunisian ecosystems, see : Neff, C., Aloui, A., El Hamrouni, A., Souissi, A., Grossmann, A. (2007): Ecosystèmes. S. 33–43. In: République Tunisienne, Ministère de l'agriculture et des ressources hydrauliques, GTZ (Coopération technique allemande) (Hrsg.): Stratégie nationale d'adaptation de l'agriculture tunisienne et des écosystèmes aux changements climatiques, Cahier 7, Rapport des groupes d'experts. (Download in KITopen, [DOI: 10.5445/IR/1000014858](#)).

Teilen mit:

☐ Auf X teilen (Wird in neuem Fenster geöffnet) ☐ Auf Facebook teilen (Wird in neuem Fenster geöffnet) Facebook

Wird geladen ...

Veröffentlicht in [Actualité](#), [Changements Globaux - Global Change](#), [En anglais/ in English](#), [Feux de forêts-Forest fires](#), [Forêt](#), [Géographie](#), [Grünstadter Depeschen](#), [landscape](#), [Paysages](#), [Paysages méditerranéens](#)



Veröffentlicht von cneffpaysages

[Zeige alle Beiträge von cneffpaysages](#)

[< Previous](#)[Erinnerungen an die „märklinModerne“](#)

[Next >Début Août 2018 : 39,1 à Leucate, intempéries en Tunisie, et l'« Incêndio de Monchique \(Incendie de Monchique\) »](#)

Hinterlasse einen Kommentar

Paysages le blog de Christophe Neff. Paysages der Blog von Christophe Neff. Paysages the Blog published by Christophe Neff

Aktuelle Beiträge

[Blognotice 11.07.2026 : feux de forêts et canicule dans le Midi français](#)

[Blognotiz 29.06.2026: Canicule – Hitze](#)

Paysages – dix-septième année d’existence sur la toile donc déjà sept ans sur wordpress.com (billet trilingues français, allemand, anglais)

Blognotiz 20.06.2026: Über das Tagebuchschreiben

Blognotice 11.06.2026 : Wissembourg, livres et pensées

Archiv

Juli 2026

Juni 2026

Mai 2026

April 2026

März 2026

Februar 2026

Januar 2026

Dezember 2025

November 2025

Oktober 2025

September 2025

August 2025

Juli 2025

Juni 2025

Mai 2025

April 2025

März 2025

Februar 2025

Januar 2025

Dezember 2024

November 2024

Oktober 2024

September 2024

August 2024

Juli 2024

Juni 2024

April 2024

März 2024

Februar 2024

Januar 2024

Dezember 2023

November 2023

Oktober 2023

September 2023

August 2023

Juli 2023

Juni 2023

Mai 2023

April 2023

März 2023

Februar 2023

Januar 2023

Dezember 2022

November 2022

Oktober 2022

August 2022

Juli 2022

Juni 2022

Mai 2022

April 2022

März 2022

Februar 2022

Januar 2022

Dezember 2021

November 2021

Oktober 2021

September 2021

August 2021

Juli 2021

Juni 2021

Mai 2021

April 2021

Februar 2021

Januar 2021

Dezember 2020

November 2020

Oktober 2020

September 2020

Juli 2020

Mai 2020

April 2020

März 2020

Februar 2020

Januar 2020

November 2019

Oktober 2019

September 2019

August 2019

Juni 2019

April 2019

März 2019

Januar 2019

Dezember 2018

November 2018

Oktober 2018

August 2018

Juli 2018

Juni 2018

März 2018

Februar 2018

Januar 2018

Dezember 2017

November 2017

Oktober 2017

September 2017

August 2017

Juli 2017

Juni 2017

Mai 2017

April 2017

März 2017

Januar 2017

Dezember 2016

Oktober 2016

September 2016

August 2016

Juli 2016

Juni 2016

April 2016

März 2016

Februar 2016

Januar 2016

November 2015

Oktober 2015

September 2015

August 2015

Juli 2015

Juni 2015

Mai 2015

April 2015

März 2015

Februar 2015

Januar 2015

Dezember 2014

November 2014

Oktober 2014

September 2014

August 2014

Juli 2014

Juni 2014

Mai 2014

April 2014

Januar 2014

Dezember 2013

November 2013

Oktober 2013

September 2013

August 2013

Juli 2013

Juni 2013

Mai 2013

April 2013

März 2013

Februar 2013

Januar 2013

Dezember 2012

November 2012

Oktober 2012

September 2012

August 2012

Juli 2012

Juni 2012

Mai 2012

April 2012

März 2012

Februar 2012

Januar 2012

Dezember 2011

November 2011

Oktober 2011

September 2011

August 2011

Juli 2011

Juni 2011

Mai 2011

April 2011

März 2011

Februar 2011

Januar 2011

Dezember 2010

November 2010

Oktober 2010

September 2010

August 2010

Juli 2010

Juni 2010

Mai 2010

April 2010

März 2010

Februar 2010

Januar 2010

Dezember 2009

November 2009

Oktober 2009

September 2009

August 2009

Juli 2009

Juni 2009

Mai 2009

August 2018

M D M D F S S

1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30 31

« Jul Okt »

Kategorien

- Açores – Azores
- Actualité
- Afrique francophone – francophone Africa
- Afrique/Africa
- Algérie
- Allgemein
- Alsace
- Aubord (Gard)
- Bergvorstadt Sulgen
- Billet trilingue
- Blogostatistiques
- Bundestagswahlen 2009
- Bundestagswahlen 2013
- Cahiers de maladie (Cancer de la prostate)
- Canada
- Cap-Vert / Cabo verde
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Changements Globaux – Global Change
- Chibokgirls/ lycéennes de Chibok
- Cinéma
- Clotilde Reiss

[Corbières maritimes](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Dépêches de Leucate](#)

[Dépêches du grand bouleau](#)

[En allemand / auf Deutsch](#)

[En anglais/ in English](#)

[En français](#)

[Feux de forêts-Forest fires](#)

[Fohrenbühl](#)

[Forêt](#)

[Forêt-Noire-Schwarzwald-Black Forest](#)

[François Mitterrand](#)

[Gastronomie](#)

[Géographie](#)

[geographisch-literarische Skizzen](#)

[Grünstadt](#)

[Grünstadter Depeschen](#)

[Hussigny](#)

[Irak](#)

[Iran](#)

[Israël](#)

[Italie](#)

[landscape](#)

[Landschaft](#)

[Leiningerland](#)

[Leucate](#)

[Livres-Bücher-Books](#)

[Lusophonie – Monde lusophone](#)

Mali

Mandelblüte – Amandiers en fleurs – almond blossom

Mannheim

Musique

Nobel Prize in Literature

Non classé

Oberschwaben

P.S. (Parti socialiste (France))

Pays de Gex

Pays de neige – Schneeland – snow country

Paysages

Paysages méditerranéens

poèmes/Gedichte

Port Leucate

Raumschaft Schramberg

relations franco-allemandes / deutsch-französische Bez

Religion

Russie/Russland/Russia

Saulgau (Bad Saulgau)

Schramberg

Schramberger Fasnet

Science

SPD

Suisse-Schweiz

Télévision

Trains & chemin de fer

Trains miniatures & Modellbahnen

Tunisie

[Ukraine](#)

[Unterhaardt](#)

[USA – États-Unis](#)

[Vacances – Ferien -Holydays](#)

[Volcans & paysages volcaniques](#)

[Voyages](#)

[Weblogs](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

Aktuelle Beiträge

[Blognotice 11.07.2026 : feux de forêts et canicule dans le Midi français](#) 11. Juli 2026

[Blognotiz 29.06.2026: Canicule – Hitze](#) 29. Juni 2026

[Paysages – dix-septième année d’existence sur la toile donc déjà sept ans sur wordpress.com \(billet trilingues français, allemand, anglais\)](#) 23. Juni 2026

[Blognotiz 20.06.2026: Über das Tagebuchschreiben](#) 20. Juni 2026

[Blognotice 11.06.2026 : Wissembourg, livres et pensées](#) 11. Juni 2026

[Website bereitgestellt von WordPress.com](#).