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Blognotice 11.09.2020: Retrospective on a Facebook post concerning COVID-19 written in April 2020

[11. September 2020](#)

I decided to publish here in [paysages](#), the original of a Facebook post written and published during the [COVID-19](#) lockdown in Germany on the fifth of April 2020 on Facebook.

Why open this previously private Facebook post to a wider audience?

Seen what happened since this springtime, how this pandemic diseases affected the whole world, this text written in April 2020 could also be seen as a contemporary history document. Since April 2020 many things happened concerning the spread of COVID-19, – but in my opinion – and after having read again my own text – two important things have to be noted. The management of the COVID-19 Crisis by the Trump administration in the United State was (and is still) a complete disaster. The other point, and this seems to get much lower international media attention than the chaotic management of the COVID-19 by Trump administration, China used the attention gap provided by the worldwide COVID-19 crisis to enforce the “[Hong Kong national security law](#)”.

The original text of the April Facebook text is written in italic. I have also added a screenshot of the original Facebook post.

Dear Facebookfriends

You might wonder why I share so much “COVID-19” articles, posts etc. I am very interested in the way this virus spreads around the world. And that has some biographical reasons. More than 20 years ago I was young Post-Doc, I founded a family, had just bought a house, and really didn't know how to earn money in the future. The German science system was perhaps not as competitive in the beginning of 2000 as it is today, – currently 1-5% of the post-docs have the chance to get a professorship or senior lecture/readership – in the beginning of the 2000 this ratio was about 10-15%, but I really didn't know what to do to “feed the hungry mouths” of my children. I thought about many alternatives, – building special railway models (some word about it can be find here in my blog (in German) <https://cneffpaysages.blog/2018/07/08/erinnerungen-an-die-marklinmoderne/>), importing vines from Portugal and France, emigrating to Quebec (or other fireprone regions) where they needed “forest fires



specialists” and so many ideas more. In this time I had the feeling that the only way to earn my money with research was to apply to the INSERM. During this period the INSERM searched “Geographers” who were able to model impact scenarios of viral disease all around the world, with special focus on France. Perhaps you remember that the SARS epidemic appears to have started in Guangdong Province in China, in November 2002. Modelling fire and vegetation dynamics, or the progression of invasive plants, – is more or less the same as modelling the impact of virus outbreak in a given geographical region. In reality I didn’t apply, because I was lucky in applying for researcher/seniorscientist post at the former University of Karlsruhe, now called KIT. My job here was to do applied ecological research in francophone Africa, – and I really started my Tunisian years from Karlsruhebut then things changed. Now I am doing more academic management and teaching than scientific research in my current job. But I still do some research.

But I am still interested in the “geographical pattern of biological invasion” – and in some way this virus outbreak (Outbreak was a movie of the 1995 with Dustin Hoffmann, perhaps some of you remember it) is also a kind of “biological invasion” even if viruses are considered to be organisms at the edge of life.

So now perhaps you might understand why I share so many things (press articles, scientific papers & reviews) about the COVID 19.

For finishing my personal view on the current situation; – we lost precious time because most of our governments, the western democracies didn’t understand very well (and most of their medical experts) what was really happening in Wuhan. They more or less woke up when they observed the desperate situation in Italy; – with one notable exception the Trump administration was not able to learn anything from the dramatic situation in Italy. They needed the total breakdown of New York City to understand that the US will also be dramatically concerned by COVID 19. I don’t trust any affirmation of the Chinese administration, but I think we should have a look to South Korea and Taiwan to see how a free society can face the virus outbreak. We will all face some hard time, were COVID 19 will show us all the weaknesses of our health care systems. Hope that when this COVID19 crisis will be overcome our societies will be able to learn how to make the health care systems more “stress resilient” and also reduce their economic dependency from the China.

(original text = <https://www.facebook.com/christophe.neff/posts/2819708018150558>)

Epilogue:

As I wrote it in my last post in [paysages \(in French\)](#), I had the chance to participate in virtual conference concerning the geography of COVID-19 and during the preparation of my own presentation[1] I discovered a very interesting paper „Ecological and epidemiological models are both useful for SARS-CoV-2[2]“ which also treats the similarities (and differences) of ecological and epidemiological models, – which in some way reveals to what I wrote in the Facebook text and what I did more the 25 years ago modelling vegetation dynamics and wildfire dynamics in Mediterranean ecosystems. Furthermore in preparation of these conference and my own I also read a very interesting book concerning the consequence of COVID-19 lockdown in France “En

immersion : enquête sur une société confinée” written by Jérôme Forquet et al[3]. I don’t know if this book will be translated into English, but for all reading French, this books provides a very comprehensive approach of the French society during the COVID -19 lockdown in springtime 2020, – combining sociological, geographical and geo-medical analysis.

Sources:

Araújo, M.B., Mestre, F. & Naimi, B. Ecological and epidemiological models are both useful for SARS-CoV-2. Nat Ecol Evol (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-1246-y>

Fourquet, J., Gariazzo, M., Jaboulay, G., Kraus, F., Wolber, S. (2020): En immersion : enquête sur une société confinée. Paris, Éditions du Seuil.

Christophe Neff, Port Leucate 11.09.2020

[1] Neff, C.(2020): „Persönliche Überlegung zur COVID 19 – Situation,,. In: COVID-19 als Zäsur? Virtual Oralpresentation at : [Geographische Perspektiven auf Räume, Gesellschaften und Technologien in der Pandemie. 6.7 – 8.7.2020.. Online Symposium. Research Group Transient Spaces & Societies. Geographisches Institut der Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck](#). See also on the Webpages of the „Arbeitskreis Medizinische Geographie und Geographische Gesundheitsforschung in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Geographie (DGfG)“. ([Download of the extended Abstract \(in German\) here](#)).

[2] Araújo, M.B., Mestre, F. & Naimi, B. Ecological and epidemiological models are both useful for SARS-CoV-2. Nat Ecol Evol (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-020-1246-y>

[3] Fourquet, J., Gariazzo, M., Jaboulay, G., Kraus, F., Wolber, S. (2020): En immersion : enquête sur une société confinée. Paris, Éditions du Seuil.

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