

Sustainable Lifestyle Revolution: Agrohoods, Ecowellness and Biophilia Trends

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ABSTRACT: The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 is an external shock to all world societies with lasting impact. With millions of infected already and no foreseeable end as well as an estimated 10-50% of those previously infected with COVID-19 to face a longer-term or long-term health impact and/or chronic debilitation, the broad-based and long-term impact COVID Long Haulers has the potential to change our world and modern society lastingly. Generation COVID-19 already now exhibits three trends towards de-urbanization to live in Agrohoods, attention to Ecowellness and Biophilia design preference. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, de-urbanization trends evolved with a massive flow of people having moved from large metropolitan areas to more rural spaces to socially distance and enjoy nature while being productive online. New community development in harmony with nature are forming in so-called Agri- or Agrohoods, which are neighborhoods that are directly attuned to the surrounding and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage. Creative Ecowellness options and sustainable lifestyle innovations take into account health and well-being, considering the given natural constraints set by ecological limits. The environment is also represented by biophilic architecture design trends booming, which resemble or use the natural environment. For instance, the fashion world has picked up the trend in the form of sustainable fabrics. The United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP-26) discussed sustainable fashion trend solutions as a broad-based integration of sustainability in everyone's lifestyle that aids in the transition to a greener economy. Plant- and fungus-based clothing booms in the design world as a carbon-negative and organic alternative to fast fashion. Given the widespread impetus of COVID-19 and the long-term impact of Coronavirus Long Haulers, the proposed trends are likely to become general sustainable changes heralding a pro-environmental Renaissance.

KEYWORDS: Agrohood, Architecture, Biophilia Trends, Biophilic Design, Community, Coronavirus, COVID-19, De-urbanization, Design, Ecowellness, Environment, Generation COVID-19, Lifestyle, Pandemic, Social Justice, Sustainability, Trend Analysis

COVID-19

The novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 that first emerged in 2019 accounts for the most un-expected globally-widespread external shock to modern humankind. By now, almost 300 million recorded infections have caused over five million documented deaths in more than 220 countries and territories around the globe (Worldometer 2021). According to estimates, the actual number of infections is a multiple of around 4 up to 13 of the reported and recorded case numbers.

In light of the different infection variants, epidemiologists increasingly believe that all human beings will have some touchpoints with COVID at a certain point in their lives. From 10% upwards to more than 50% of those previously COVID infected develop long-term symptoms of the disease – potentially due to organ, nerve and tissue damage and/or an immune system reaction to virus debris in the body and/or overactivation of the body's unspecific immune system and/or an awakening of an autoimmune disease or other previous infections.

The large-scale dimension of COVID-19 infections around the world is underscored by an estimated 10-50% of those previously infected with COVID-19 facing some kind of longer-term or long-term health impact and/or chronic debilitation that is currently not well-understood by the medical profession. As the worldwide spread of the virus and the demographic likelihood to become a COVID Long Hauler peaks in the 30-50 years of age bracket, one can

predict a large-scale, long-term and global impetus of COVID long-haul induced changes. Given the large-scale and long-term impetus of the Coronavirus crisis, we can say that COVID-19 will be the most impactful external shock triggering lasting change in our lifetimes.

From the history of humankind and the knowledge about previous diseases, we can draw the inference that crises have always been turning points and ultimate spring feathers of lasting societal development. This paper argues that COVID-19 has the potential to change individual lifestyles profoundly. Overall, the COVID crisis has already now triggered and will likely exacerbate de-urbanization and Agrohood trends, an Ecowellness revolution as well as Biophilic Design advancements.

De-urbanization

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals wanted to socially distance and therefore deurbanization trends evolved. A massive flow of people moved from large metropolitan areas to more rural spaces to socially distance and enjoy nature while being productive online (Donovan 2020; Levin & Ballentine 2021). COVID-19 has triggered the strongest move toward deurbanization in the United States in modern times, which applies both to private sector industries and households (Glaeser & Cutler 2021). Given the contagion risk in crowded metropolitan areas and the technological challenges of air purification in city skyscrapers with closed ventilation and elevators, COVID-19 precipitated an outflux of corporate headquarters to the suburbs while granting employees the option to work remotely (Florida 2020; Lall & Wahba 2020; Marquardt 2021; Ori 2020; Precision Global Consulting 2021; Uber blog 2021; Wedekind 2021).

The longer COVID rages, the riskier international supply chains will be re-shored, and the more likely will corporate headquarters be moving away from metropolitan areas (Reuters 2020; Uphoff 2020). While cities are still seen as disadvantaged in controlling the spread of the disease, retail increasingly shifted online to lower fixed cost of real estate and mitigate health risks (Abe 2020; Gertz 2020; Lighthizer 2020; McDonald 2020; Shalal, Alper & Zengerle 2020; The Economist 2019a, b; Theodosopoulos 2020). Because of widespread lockdowns, social distancing and increased home office work in many industries, there is a more widespread acceptance for instant communication tools, social engagement, and entertainment platforms (Corlantean 2020). Art and culture events scaled down to more rural communities or are currently being re-curated for socially distanced performances, or even are staged in newly emerging virtual luxury worlds (OECD 2020; Thorpe 2021; Feinstein 2021). Gastronomy temporarily shifted toward ordering in and shared virtual eating experiences (Morgan Stanley 2020). The sharing economy started to offer workspace closer to nature.

The trend toward deurbanization is not only fueled by fears of infection in dense areas, but also by cutting on persistently rising living expenses in cities. Inflationary pressure appears to rise disproportionately in metropolitan areas as housing and other unavoidable costs increase (Puaschunder forthcoming a). The so-called “doughnut effect” captures that tendency of urban population moving from large metropolitan areas to the suburbs or even the countryside leaving those remaining in the city without the left populations’ purchasing power and salary streams (Ramani & Bloom 2021). Home ownership booms in less densely populated areas – like Arizona, Texas or Florida – reflect the peoples’ preference to escape cities (Friedman 2021a; Ostrowski 2021).

The Doughnut Effect is believed to be a lasting trend due to remote work conditions and social distancing preferences (Ramani & Bloom 2021). Deurbanization has already affected market equilibria. For example, the price of used cars rose over the course of the pandemic due to a higher demand in suburban areas and an uncertainty about how long people will stay away from large cities (Vaughn 2021).

Those who work enjoy home office flexibility that outsources workplace health risks, while office glass walls in interior designs are being placed for security protection in workplace premises (Walsh 2021). The downside of remote work, however, besides social aspects lies in problems of accountability and stagnation in promotions as there is less oversight of performance in a home office (Harrington & Emanuel 2021).

Agrohoods

In the suburbs or more rural areas, there is an ongoing trend to develop new communities in harmony with nature. So-called agri- or agrohoods are neighborhoods that are directly attuned to the surrounding and celebrate their natural and cultural heritage (Agritecture 2021; Garden Destinations 2021). With the re-shoring of global value chains, glocalization resembles the trend that communities want to become more self-sustaining and focus on the local repertoire of consumption (The Economist 2019a, b).

Moving to cheaper suburbs also allows a remote workforce to build wellness cocoons, in which individuals can pay attention to healthy living embedded harmoniously in nature. Long Haulers appear to have an appreciation for minimalistic stimulation at home and live in harmony with nature. With more efficient online retail options available, and people spending more time at home during lockdowns and moving to the suburbs, minimalism has become a home trend for Long Haulers. Exhausted long-term sufferers from COVID appear to try to make sense of an even more complex world and will likely eliminate unnecessary items that clog their primary location in a search for simplicity.

With international trade still being in a downturn and international value chains becoming riskier and more expensive, consumers attuned to their surroundings have developed an interest in shopping locally (Lighthizer 2021; Shalal et al. 2021; Gertz 2021). First attempts to eliminate points of contraction in stores include online delivery services, which may in the future be enhanced by drones. With people enjoying time off work in their Ecowellness hubs, low-paying service industry jobs with high human touchpoints, such as nursing, flight attendants, restaurant waiters, etc. will face massive staffing shortages. Labor supply shortages have and will continuously increase labor bargaining power and drive-up worker salaries but may also increase corporate social responsibility pressures to create a positive work-life balance in harmony with nature.

Ecowellness

With pre-existing prevalence, such as obesity and diabetes, but also the immune system influencing the COVID disease trajectory, preventive care and whole-rounded lifestyles have gained unprecedented societal attention and demand (Ecowellness Group 2020, 2021). Creative Ecowellness options and sustainable lifestyle innovations take into account health and well-being, considering the given natural constraints set by ecological limits (Ecowellness Group 2020, 2021). Attention to healthy nutrition is on the rise among Long Haulers. Especially those with gastrointestinal issues and inflammatory post-viral arthritis appreciate an anti-inflammatory diet with no glutamates, additives and preservatives infused in meals that apparently can cause problems for COVID Long Haulers (Ecowellness Group 2021).

In the eye of the rising concern over climate change and the interconnected environmental impact on COVID Long Haulers' well-being partially determined by external stressors, future cities may also see ecologic pricing reforms that take into account the trend toward healthy living and environmentalism (Ecowellness Group 2021; Puschunder 2018, 2019a, b, 2020b, forthcoming b). Active cityscape projects may feature forestation to absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere but also governmental incentives for corporations to induce behavioral changes in their workforce (Puschunder 2020a). Already now we find a trend

towards possessing personal cars (Vaughn 2021). Further behavioral changes will likely force transportation to become more hygienic and individualized. The cities of tomorrow will also have to address intergenerational conscientiousness in protecting elder and low immune system risk groups from contagious diseases (Puaschunder 2019a, b, 2020c).

Corporate settings, industry demands and economic growth will likely stem from attuning to this trend of Ecowellness and sustainable lifestyles in the future (Ecowellness Group 2020, 2021; Puaschunder 2020c). Resiliency of corporations will increasingly require firms to ensure they work toward developing a healthy workforce (Brunnermeier 2021; Gelter & Puaschunder 2021, Puaschunder & Gelter forthcoming). In order to avoid a COVID infection in the corporate sector to begin with, the German *Präventionsgesetz* or *Prevention Act* grants governmental funding to corporations for preventive self-care and team learning of healthy lifestyles (Ecowellness 2020; Gesetz zur Stärkung der Gesundheitsförderung und der Prävention 2019). As never before in the history of industrialization, employers now watch out for creating a healthy workplace environment with hygienic interaction, constantly tracking workforce safety and requiring health self- and group monitoring (Puaschunder, Gelter & Sharma 2020a, b).

The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the importance of prevention as a necessary prerequisite for health in general medicine. Self-conscious prevention and the general status of the immune system have proven to be decisive prerequisites for whether a COVID-19 infection turns out to have severe or only a mild disease trajectory (Ecowellness 2021; Gelter & Puaschunder 2021; Puaschunder & Gelter forthcoming). Even when an initial coronavirus infection is mild, among about 10-50% of those previously infected the body becomes symptomatic in the long term, with the immune system becoming unbalanced and/or overshooting (Hart 2021; Searing 2021). The diffuse symptoms of long COVID are not yet fully understood, as there may be a complex interplay with genetic predispositions and environmental circumstances. While the waves of symptoms faced and recovery of COVID-19 Long Haulers are still not clear, recent evidence suggests that external and synthetic influences can trigger an overshooting immune reaction that causes inflammation and harm to one's own body. Scholars have therefore suggested that Long-Haul patients and chronic disease sufferers will become aware of and hypersensitive to their surroundings, resulting in a preference for balance and harmony with the natural environment rising (Ecowellness 2021; Gelter & Puaschunder 2021; Puaschunder & Gelter forthcoming). This rising Generation COVID-19 long-haul will likely shift preferences towards a healthy lifestyle with awareness for environmental balance. Attention to protect the environment but also caution to avoid drug residues in the groundwater, will spring out from the wish to create a non-stressful surrounding without environmental stressors and/or inflammatory triggers.

Biophilia

The environment in everyday life is represented by biophilic architecture. Biophilia design is resembling the natural environment. Current biophilia trends are booming (Pearlman 2021). The fashion world has picked up the biophilia wave in the form of sustainable fabrics, which were praised during the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP-26) to discuss sustainability in the fashion world (Cernansky 2021; Chan 2021; Friedman 2021b; Harley 2021; Linchpin 2021; Nguyen 2021). Fungus clothing booms in the design world as a carbon-negative and organic alternative to fast fashion (Wolfrom 2020).

During the Coronavirus pandemic, in the private living space and in interior design, cleanliness and hygiene have become key factors. COVID-19 and the potential long-term negative impetus of a virus infection have not only changed our perception of closeness and close contact with others in dense urban areas, but it has also revolutionized interior design in offices with glass and plastic protection. Aerosol sprays and air purification systems are in high

demand. Hygienic antibacterial surfaces optimized for cleanability and technologically-enhanced kitchens became prominent as outdoor dining plummeted. Home cooking became prominent instead of getting ready to leave the house and spending considerable amounts of time commuting and facing the risk of infection outside (Dizik 2020).

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