



"The lockdown was extremely painful – but absolutely necessary." An illusion of self-efficacy? Data supports just one of these statements. Given the same context, the "second big wave" is rather unlikely.

This BrainCandy tries to edit complexity into a concise format. So I'll get to my key knowledge quickly and refer to good sources for anyone interested in more depth.

Even though there are corona deniers, there is a great deal of fear among the European populations. Not caution, but fear. Why: because the media and many politicians love nothing more than Covid-19 at the moment. It is the click and attention turbo par excellence, especially during the silly season. We're reading headlines about "once again more new infections!" What else is supposed to happen with a contagious disease? We're hearing about 2,000 infected people at Tönies (a German meat producer) – and implicitly assume lots of deaths – but none were reported. At the end of July, the Robert Koch Institute really goes to town with "we are very worried". And this is with the many false positives through mass testing, which with low probability of cases must exceed the real cases¹. On 10 August, the Bavarian Head of State says: "The virus is getting more dangerous!" WHAT? The political magazine Focus: "We can relieve the shortness of breath but the fear of death remains." Also Focus: "The first dog in America has died of Covid – what dog owners need to know now." Of course, nothing. An estimated 3000 dogs die in Germany every day. Our archaic reptilian brain does not understand that the context of the numbers has changed significantly. No wonder, absolute numbers are constantly being thrown around as horror figures, without showing how relatively small they really are. Instead of a pandemic, we could now talk about a "casedemic"²¹. As the cases are increasing due to the many tests, but the deaths are not.

Luxembourg has become a risk area as a result, because they test the most!

The anxious are putting pressure on politicians to continue to throw themselves resolutely at every source of the virus. Mr Lauterbach (Health expert of the ruling SPD), the telegenic gloom-monger fronting talk shows², is undeterred in his belief despite the reality being always much better than his pessimistic predictions. An international survey shows that people in Germany overestimate the number of infected people by a factor of 46 and the number of dead by a factor of 300³. No further comment required.

What do objective data analyses say? And as a market researcher and number cruncher, I am now stunned. There are well-founded analyses, with exciting findings that are not widely disseminated. Politics is stuck in the illusion of self-efficacy, not just in Germany. "The peak was prevented, the numbers are massively down, so we did everything right." The frightened public claps. If only it were that simple. A pandemic is a complex situation. Following unprofessional preparation, politicians had to act quickly to contain the predicted huge wave of infection. Now the nature of complexity is that we cannot figure it out logically. Unlike complicated things like a computer board. The best way to deal with complexity is to do controlled experiments to find out what actually works. However, people in panic expect the right solution from politics and science. Preferably all over Europe. That's like wishing for the jackpot in the lottery.



In March I had expected that politics understands the experimental nature of what it does – and was being proactive. And therefore inevitably accepts that 'mistakes' were made. I'm not reading anything about that though. Politicians and their experts claim to have done everything right.

This illusion of self-efficacy worries me. When it comes to the start of school after the summer holidays, there will probably be different approaches – and a great deal of fear again. Unfortunately, my feeling is that once again there is no proper scientific experimentation and control being done here²⁰. Do masks at school help when the kids then behave like children after school? Apart from masks, what tests can be used to contain the certain infection among children and stop it in time? To simply close entire schools with just a few cases is a show of incompetence. For school principals and authorities. Sweden has incidentally never closed its schools.

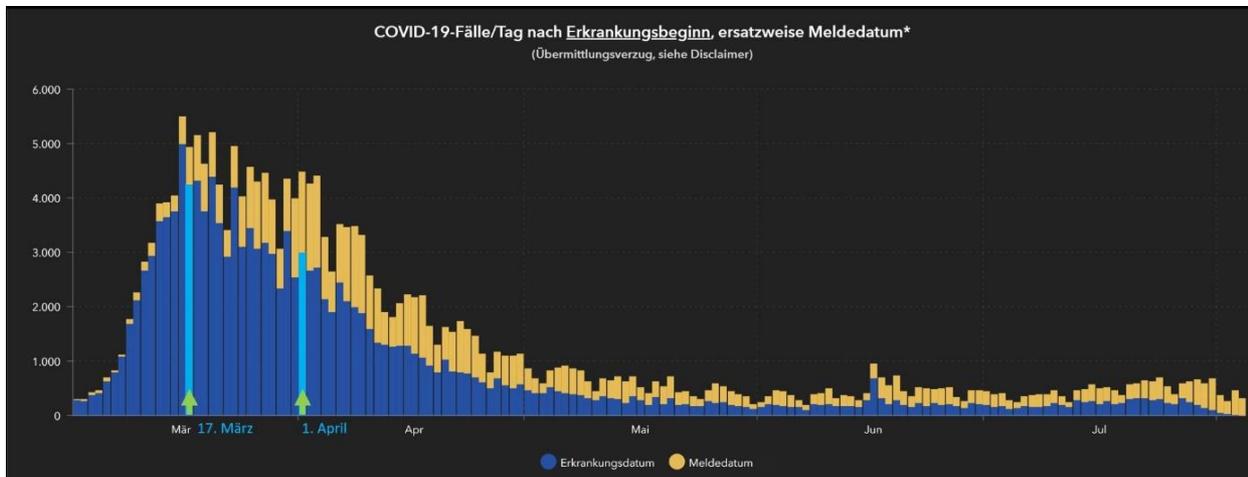
Thankfully, many independent scientists and number crunching junkies (see the list of worthwhile sources at the end) are taking on the knowledge vacuum so far and analysing public data sets for patterns. They are less concerned with forecasts than with understanding. With my background checks, I am sufficiently certain that I have filtered out the many analysts with crude opinions and found reliable sources, including a Nobel Prize winner²² whose forecast model is spot on and reflects the reality.

But let's get one thing straight first: I consider SARS CoV-2 to be a dangerous virus that I have respect for but am not afraid of. I just see it as no longer being as extremely dangerous in reality as it is in the public perception.

Let's get to the lockdown. Maybe you're like me. My feeling was that the lockdown just about got us off the hook but with huge collateral damage. A bitter pill against exponential development. 50,000 tumour operations were postponed in Germany alone. What a drama.

Only, just before the lockdown, there wasn't any exponential development in Europe. We could not know this yet as the data comes in with a delay. The pleasingly slower development was partly due to the less contagious virus itself. It is uncanny to what extent many forecasting models were wrong, especially from Imperial College London, where even for the relaxing of regulations they were off by a factor of 10^4 . What was important was the advance cancellation of super-spreader events (sports, concerts, trade fairs, etc.), the social distancing and some hygiene. And at least one important, mostly unexpected influence, which I will get to later. I have to make it a bit exciting.

If you look at the infection course curves for almost all European countries, you can see without any complicated calculations that the lockdown may have achieved virtually nothing in addition to social distancing. Surprised? So was I. The infection curves develop similarly in countries in the same climate zone. In Europe a rapid start, which could be interpreted as exponential at first, soon followed by the peak. Differences in the data can often be explained by local organisational shortcomings⁵. In addition to the influences of megacities, the share of single households, test capacities. What they all have in common is that the curve was already flattening out when the lockdowns came into effect and sank before the lockdowns could take effect. Lockdown was still plausible when the decision was made – so no reproach, it takes time for the data to be available. The virus also takes a break in Germany at the weekend. Since, according to current knowledge, an incubation period of up to two weeks is normal, any significant effect of a lockdown must therefore occur two weeks later at the latest. However, the number of new cases had already been declining in almost all countries before this, and there is no evidence of this decline speeding up. This does not require any complicated statistical models.



This is the German curve. The blue lines show date of becoming sick. You can see that the peak is already reached at the start of the lockdown (17 March) and that the decline is already in full swing when the effect starts to set in roughly 14 days later – despite increased testing in the meantime. More tests, more cases. Masks are compulsory from 27 April – also without any noticeable additional effect. (RKI graph, markings by me.)

Anyone still threatening with large-scale lockdowns ('second wave') has not understood the data. Or is deliberately using fear. In the same way that the media deliberately incorrectly talks about "patients" when referring to asymptomatic virus carriers.

The previous year's death rate also affects the Covid mortality^{6,7}. Countries that had excess mortality compared to the long-term average in 2019, i.e. where more people died than usual, have a lower mortality rate under Covid and vice versa. Sweden had a below average mortality rate by about 3,000 cases in 2019 to the start of 2020 and slight excess mortality during corona. The Swedish government has apologised for the initial lack of protection for the elderly. Mistakes in complexity are unavoidable, and it is exemplary to recognise and name them.

Another clue: there are many people who did not have a lockdown. They served us in supermarkets, took care of us and were of vital importance elsewhere. Data analyses show no noticeable accumulation of corona cases compared to the population worldwide. But that would be another necessary proof of the effectiveness of a lockdown. Better for our everyday heroes though.

Why didn't corona hit us so hard when the lockdown with its restrictions on movement brought little to nothing in addition to social distancing? Now we enter into very interesting observations that are plausible but currently not proven¹⁸. Even though initial studies are underway, e.g. in Sweden. Germany's most public virologist Drosten had already speculated about this in April, but had not given it much weight. The corona curves are strikingly similar to those of typical viral diseases. In 1992, a certain Edgar Hope-Simpson⁸ drew attention to the typical influenza progression curves, the patterns of which differ significantly according to climatic regions. If Covid also shows the same curves, it is very likely that not only the climate plays a role, but how our body in general can deal with viruses and with THE virus. With this we are entering another complex field: immunology⁹. So far, we're only testing for specific antibodies to prove if someone has had Covid. And it establishes a low level of contamination of well below 10% and that the antibodies are probably not detectable for very long. However, our immune system is



extremely complex, it uses T cells to render invaders harmless, among other things. If specific T cells have successfully fought an intruder, the information remains active for a long time as a reminder and can be quickly activated if necessary. (Massively simplified.)

Many people have encountered other corona viruses before and their specific T cells seem to be more at ease with SARS CoV-2. This is one explanation for the many asymptomatic courses of the disease: the healthy immune system, which has already adapted to corona, wins. The plausible hypothesis by some data analysts and immunologists is that we already had some herd immunisation before corona. The estimates are between 10 and 20 percent. At the moment though, there is probably no standardised test that can be used to test for the specific T cell defence profile. A pre-print study from Sweden^{10,11} shows the first evidence for this exciting hypothesis. If this explanation for the courses of corona proves true, a real second WAVE becomes very unlikely¹⁹. Don't forget, the numbers for the first wave are based on relatively few tests. With today's test figures, the first wave would have been dramatically higher. As long as we continue to identify local infection nests in time (corona app / tests / local health authorities / tests at borders) and organise super spreader events better, the herd immunity already achieved could help us protect against exponential courses.

Just briefly with regard to Sweden. The special path Sweden took was long cited as proof that the lockdown was necessary. Meanwhile silence reigns. In Sweden there was no lockdown, face masks are not compulsory or recommended and there is just relaxed social distancing^{12,13}. The mortality rate has been below the long-term average for weeks now. Without any noticeable increases in the number of people infected. The Swedes do test far less though. I think the Swedish declaration on herd immunity is still premature at the moment, but we can hope that it proves to be a game changer. Fingers crossed. Att hålla tum-marna.

What about the German bone of contention, masks? I'm all for masks. But I cannot find a single study that proves the relevant effect of simple face masks in real life^{14,15,16,17}. However, a lack of proof is of course no proof of ineffectiveness. I am following immunologists who swear by masks and at others who laugh at them¹⁹. When you hear about a new completed real live study, please do enlighten me. The previous pseudo-correlation of low figures in Asia with the distribution of masks is just being dispelled as the figures in Japan are rising rapidly despite masks. Masks could make the course of the disease milder because of lower virus absorption. There are many theories but no data.

The ineffectiveness of the lockdowns is apparently being repeated in South America. Brazil is the bad-boy there and does not want a lockdown. Peru, on the other hand, had strict military controlled lockdowns with high penalties. The development of death rates is very similar though and follows the typical influenza curve for the southern hemisphere, much flatter than Europe but longer²³. If the USA springs to mind now: the USA is a huge country with different climate zones. The states in comparable zones seem to develop similarly, despite different local policies. But that has yet to be confirmed. There are many states that are not currently seeing a second wave, especially in the North, including New York. If you are interested in details about the political failure in the USA, I recommend the entertaining interview with one of the currently most sought-after scientists in the USA, Professor Ashishi Jha²⁴ and also with Bill Gates²⁵, who is close to vaccine development and does not expect broad protection through vaccines in wealthy countries until the end of 2021.

Why are politicians not much more open about current developments? I don't want to speculate for long. But many politicians in power have profited massively from corona and left the competition trailing behind. The German chancellor has been resurrected. Many a political leader is on an incredible high. If they had to tell the many industries on the brink of collapse, the small businesses and sole traders, that the lockdown had only



brought pain, but unfortunately no real benefit, what then? This way they can continue to present themselves as doers and caringly treat the wounds with fresh euro notes, but mostly for corporations. With the taxpayer's money of course. Politicians don't have skin in the game like other civil servants, in stark contrast to tourism employees and musicians. And I suspect there are legal concerns too. What would happen if there were lawsuits for damages against politicians, and also against the scientific institutes whose forecasts turned out to be drastically too high? It's much better to use the self-efficacy bias. Politicians and their scientists in solidarity.

And one last point. It has now been established that a weak immune system in particular explains the severe courses of disease in people under 80 years of age. Especially metabolic syndrome, diabetes, etc. When will politics finally tackle this sensitive issue? Why do we have to bankrupt entire industries because we don't dare address this issue? What we put in the mouth behind the mask is probably more important than the mask in front of it. Good nutrition has a huge influence on inflammatory processes in the body and therefore on a resistant immune system. Boris Johnson joked about his corpulence before corona, now he has actually set up an action team, and wants to ban advertising and have the calorific information printed in restaurants, among other things. More voices are finally being raised in obese America. The Greens are starting, albeit currently populist, with a call for advertising bans on burgers. But the problem is actually the vast number of ultra processed foods on our menu. Super tasty, cheap, convenient, with low nutrient density and much too high calorie intake. Now would be the time for the different nutritional philosophies to pull together, at least temporarily. No matter where you yourself stand on the spectrum from vegan to carnivore. As long as you eat more wholesome, less processed food, you will have done a great deal for your immune system after just a few days.

How do you get people to eat less pseudo-food and more real food? Good question – the best way is to try out many different methods and monitor them carefully.

A little tip to finish: closed rooms lead to increased concentrations of the virus and therefore allow corona to spread. Winter is not far away with its cold temperatures. Why aren't there any tests using air purifiers with HEPA filters and UV light²⁶? Especially in schools? Open-plan offices? Theatres? This works reliably in planes. I bought good air purifiers for our studio months ago. And a few days ago I finally came across an article that even tested a do-it-yourself method. It works amazingly well. I hope air purifier manufacturers have an exceptional boom.

Stay healthy and look after your immune system. I remain optimistic.

P.S. If you think that Corona discussions should be left to the doctors, then I recommend this article: <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/08/11/richard-smith-the-faults-and-dangers-of-an-iatocracy/>



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Buchempfehlungen

Von Ralph Ohnemus:

Markenerleben. Die Strategie im Hyperwettbewerb und Informationstsunami > [hier bestellen](#)

Markenstaunen. Gewinnen im Informationstsunami > [hier bestellen](#)



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