

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 5

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The use of face masks is encouraged by the authorities and in some instances it is considered obligatory. If one enters the pharmacy or a post office, as they are small, it would be done on one after another basis (only one customer at the time). It would be expected that the customer would wear her/his own mask, and it would be necessary to clean hands by a sanitizer provided by the shop. At some places like hospitals one can get a mask, but this is rare, as the masks are scarce. Moreover, the people using public transportation, both drivers and the passengers, are expected to wear the masks.

I am wearing the mask if I enter any close public space (shop, supermarket, my workplace), and I would consider this a part of appropriate manners to the situation, expecting others to wear mask too. However, I have only 3 (!) surgical masks and I re-use them sparingly. In recent period, it is possible to buy masks again but they are rather expensive. As an alternative, I have cotton masks, which many people use, however I cannot breathe easily with them so prefer to reuse one of my 3 surgical masks than the cotton masks, which I can wash and iron after the use. Subsequently, I know that my masks are not clean, or not even protecting me (they are in my pocket or in my car all the time), but prefer them as the handy and comfortable solution. As soon as I exit the close place, I remove the mask and try to keep distance to other people.

In the shops, most of the people would wear masks, however some people would not. Still, everybody is respecting the social distancing rules and try to keep away of each other. The people working in the shops would use the masks too, however this could be tedious, as breathing with the mask on is not an easy task, in particular for the longer period. Some people therefore pull the mask a bit down to free the nose. Although one can breathe easily, this would mean that one breaths the air from the outer surface of the mask which is to be place where eventual germs are collected.

It is to be noted that coming again to my favorable shops, where I see familiar faces of the employees all the times of lock down, although they spend all time in the shop with many different customers, obviously they did not get sick. This was for me a major reassuring fact that the danger is not so high as it could be seen from the media. Most people in the cars do not wear masks, in particular if they are alone in the car. However, some people being alone in the car drive with the mask. This type of behavior I would judge not only not necessary, but even dangerous, as it can impair the driver abilities.