

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 13

Country: **NORWAY**

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Part 1: Norway went into lock down March 12th 2020, and by May 22th 235 people have died from CV-19. The CV-19 virus started to spread from tourists coming home from Austria, northern Italy, and also facilities for elderly people in Spain.¹ When CV-19 hit Norway, the country had 4 storage for 4 weeks of medical masks, this was not communicated to the public to secure negotiations and price when entering the market to buy medical masks.²

Norway is the northern periphery of Europe, with a long boarder to Sweden, and shorter boarder to Finland and Russia, and has a long costal line and waste sea area³. Norway is 385,203 km², with a population of 5.368 million, and 82% lives in urban settlements⁴. In the 1950 Norway had 97 clinique's for tuberculosis⁵, and their competence was later transformed into clinics for lung diseases. Today most of the lung clinics have been in short of founding and merged with general hospital. Norway had a solid medical preparedness through its military that was deconstructed in 2000.⁶ Location, size, settlement, pattern of traveling, societal preparedness for crisis, is all of importance for understanding usage of .face masks during CV-19 epidemic in Norway.

In Norway it is rear to see people wearing face masks in public. In Norway the public health institute (FIH), together with the Directorate for Health, and the minister of health has been key agents, presenting information and guidelines on daily press briefings.⁷ Information

¹ The first quarter of 2020 Norway had 10.4 million passengers at departure and landing

<https://www.ssb.no/en/transport-og-reiseliv/statistikker/flytrafikk/kvartal>

² <https://www.nrk.no/norge/hadde-bare-fire-ukers-beholdning-av-munnbind-1.15009442>

³ <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/climate-and-environment/biodiversity/innsiktsartikler-naturmangfold/hav-og-kyst/id2076396/>,

https://www.kartverket.no/globalassets/kart/grenser/norges_maritime_grenser_havomrader_2015.pdf

⁴ For size of cities and munisipalities see <https://www.ssb.no/en/befteft/>

⁵ <https://tekniskmuseum.no/historier/bak-glassveggen/31-sanatorium/historier/bak-glassveggen/512-tuberkulosehjem>

⁶ <https://www.nrk.no/dokumentar/beredskapen-som-forsvant-1.14963372>

⁷ Information from the government: (English) <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/koronavirus-covid-19/id2692388/>, (Other languages): <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/koronavirus-covid-19/flere-sprak--other-languages/id2697234/>,

Timeline: <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/Koronasituasjonen/tidslinje->

on use of face masks was distributed February 3th at the homepage of FHI. They state that face masks may have some effect, but due to limited knowledge on the CV-19, face masks give a false safety. General recommendations was to wash hands thoroughly several times each day, to not touch face with hands that are not recently washed, and to avoid contact with people that are sick. Information on use of masks are detailed, covers how the masks need to be designed and used to attain effect, and which masks one need to be protected. NFI explains the difference between face masks made for medical practise, and home made face masks, and NFI are considering home made masks to reduce the spread of CV-19 from persons without symptoms. NFI do not recommend a general use of masks, due to few infected people and few people with a-symptomatic carriers of CV-19. If the situation changes, useage of medical and home made face masks might be recommended.⁸

Part 2: I do not use face mask. In the early stage of the CV-19 epidemic in Norway, my understanding was that available masks should be reserved for people in the health and caring sector. Due to people starting to store drugs and health equipment, drugstores became risk zones for spread of CV-19. I do not use public transportation, and I only go to stores occasionally and I do not enter if the store is crowded. All around there is not disinfection at the entrance of stores. As Norway are now opening the society again, and we now have a supply of masks, I would like to have a face mask when I go to the stores. The initial focus on social distancing, washing hands, staying at home when sick is still key guidelines. Though when opening up society, I think that the discussion on facial masks need to be reconsidered for public spaces, transportation and stores.

Part 3: At my work place, and at universities and colleges in general, my impression is that the implementation of social distancing, home office, on-line teaching and supervision, strategies for cleaning rooms if people meet and so forth is well organised and thorough. In shops the practise vary, as we tend to come too close to each other. For those at the last year of

[koronaviruset/id2692402/](https://www.koronaviruset/id2692402/). Norwegian Directorate of Health: (English): <https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/english/corona> (Norwegian) main page: <https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/>; Norwegian Public Health Institute: (English) <https://www.fhi.no/en/>, (Norwegian) <https://www.fhi.no/sv/smittsomme-sykdommer/corona/>; Norwegian public health information sight: <https://helsenorge.no/koronavirus> .
⁸ <https://nhi.no/for-helsepersonell/fra-vitenskapen/beskytter-munnbind-mot-coronavirus/>; <https://www.fhi.no/nettpub/coronavirus/fakta/renhold-og-hygiene/>

high school (a main group-party period for people in Norway) the practises has varied, and as society opens up again, the travels across the boarder to Sweden represents risks⁹.

Part 4: In present society where public health information is primarily distributed on-line, we need to understand how on-line dissemination of knowledge on the CV-19 work. The CV-19 is a new virus where new insights are formulated day by day. Established evidence based knowledge need to adapt to the new information quickly. News media create solidity by including links to what is already published, and need to continuously evaluate the risks of distributing old information in new contexts. Face masks has been a complex topic due to access, usage, the variety of masks, including whether or not home made masks is helpful or counter productive. We need a new discussion on face masks that is directed to the current situation of opening society, and a sober discussion on the different types of masks so that people know how and when to use what at present time, and to be prepared if a second wave of the CV-19 epidemic arrives.

⁹ In 2018 Norwegians spent 23,7 billion NKR in Swedish retail industry
<https://e24.no/naeringsliv/i/P9gXJX/saa-mye-brukte-vi-paa-harryhandel-i-fjor-fatter-ikke-at-norske-politikere-lar-dette-skje>