

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 21

Country: **SPAIN**

Iñigo de Miguel Beriain

University of the Basque Country, Ikerbasque, Spain

E-mail: idemiguelb@yahoo.es

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Part 1: In Spain, the government instructions about the use of masks have experienced Copernican turn. On February 28, 2020, the Minister of Health declared in a television interview, "masks are not necessary in Spain to go on the streets"¹. The official information provided on 2 April did not mention them². On 20 April, the Ministry of Health published recommendations stating, "the use of masks in the community should be considered only as a complementary measure"³. Finally, on May 12, the government raised the possibility of forcing the population to use them.⁴

One of the main issues with the masks has been their availability. In February, the population began to hoard them, which led to a shortage of supplies. The health care givers have had to work in deplorable conditions due to the lack of adequate material.

The Spanish have followed the confinement instructions very strictly. The problem is that the return to normality has not been combined with uniform measures on the use of masks. Some regional governments already distribute them free of charge. Others do not. No one, however, forces citizens to wear them. It is likely that we will soon see further changes.

Part 2: I am in support of the mandatory use of masks in public spaces. I believe it is the only practicable and effective measure.

Part 3: At the beginning of the pandemic, the use of masks had political connotations: since the government advised against their use, their wearing was even considered a form of

¹ <https://www.infosalus.com/salud-investigacion/noticia-illa-pide-no-caer-alarmismo-asegura-mascarillas-espana-no-sirven-calle-20200229220428.html>

² https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/documentos/Infografias_Como_protegerme_02042020.pdf

³ https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/documentos/Recomendaciones_uso_mascarillas_ambito_comunitario.pdf

⁴ <https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020-05-12/sanidad-estudia-obligar-a-llevar-mascarilla-en-todo-espacio-publico.html>

political opinion. Today, the biggest problem we have is that there is a serious lack of knowledge about what kind of masks exist and what they are used for. In addition, in a country like Spain, where bars are very lively, masks make it almost impossible to drink or eat. This does not help their good use.