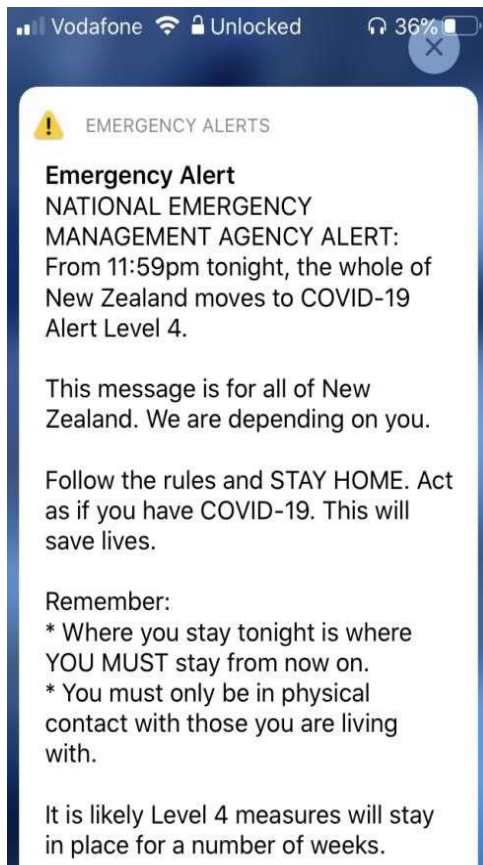




Bernd has been member of IFGR since its foundation in 2015. He is at the forefront of global thinking in the area of response options to climate change. With a background in geography as well as architecture and urban design, his research began on coastal design to protect cities against the effects of Climate Change. His approach is so unique and innovative it was awarded the 2014 Global Award for Sustainable Architecture given under patronage of the UNESCO in Paris. Bernd has more than 30 years of global experience as an architect and designer all over the world. In New Zealand, where he is currently based, he advises the government on the regeneration of Christchurch, the country's second largest city destroyed by earthquakes in 2011.

This was the alert message sent via the national emergency system on 25 March:



The stats as per 13 April 2020:

- ✓ 1,064 confirmed infected (world 1,322,031).
Population of NZ is c. 4.8m people.
- ✓ 546 recovered (world 437,855)
- ✓ 5 dead (world 116,039)

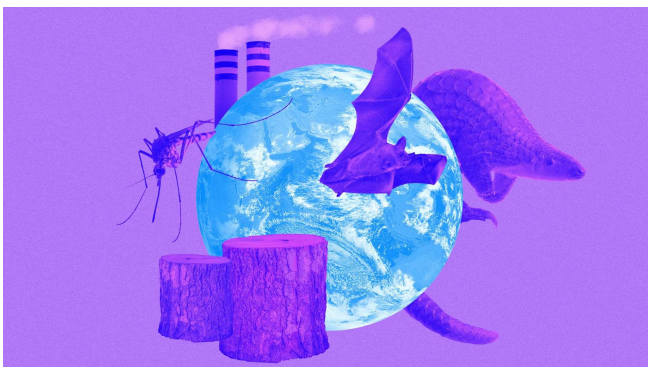
New Zealand is on its 18th day of Covid-19 Alert Level 4. This means the country's complete lockdown of all but the essential services. Land transport is widely restricted. Public transport largely suspended. Where ever possible, people work from home or are idle.

Domestic air travel only for essential work force. International air travel shut down. Essential services are law enforcement, utilities and medical services, beyond that the main supermarkets are offering plastic food. Shopping of more than two items of a product is forbidden. There are no bakeries or speciality shops allowed to open. Restaurants, bars and pubs are closed. Civilian life is restricted to the house or apartment. Short walks are permitted only for people living in one household. Social distancing is strictly

enforced. No outdoor sports in the public. New Zealand plays submarine. Despite Auckland's beautiful sunny Indian summer, the beaches are deserted and the sea is devoid of boats, cruise ships or freighters. The roads forlorn. Even the parvenus' helicopters are grounded. The sky once again is filled with birdsong.

About statistics

I have learned about and worked with statistics enough to know how to cheat with numbers though. In my view, it's not good enough to provide daily the soaring numbers of deaths without their context, as practiced during this pandemic. To illustrate this, I refer to Germany's numbers accessible to me. The first recorded Covid-19 related death was on 28 January. That means since then, during a period of 70 days, 1,712 Germans died according to the Covid-19 stats. Normally, every day c. 2550 Germans die anyway (c. 900 of which in rest homes). In the relevant period therefore 178,500 Germans passed away without the pandemic, which only is responsible for less than one percent of the deaths. Getting the numbers out of isolation obviously changes the assessment of the severity of this pandemic. In Italy, where there are many more deaths than in Germany, the [National Health Institute](#) found that the average age of the positively-tested people dead is c. 81 years; 10% of them were over 90 years old; 90% were more than 70 years old. Most of them had suffered from multiple chronic diseases, which might be related to the air quality, which in the River Po valley is the poorest in Europe. The other, mostly unanswered, question is: do infected people die from their chronic diseases or from the infection itself (and how would a proper assessment change the statistics)?



Why, when the soaring numbers only look impressive without context, are we confronted with them on a daily basis? Why is the angst, these numbers obviously trigger, better than calming people down? Why are the statistics so eagerly employed to rectify the extraordinary political measures being taken?

“Why are the statistics so eagerly employed to rectify the extraordinary political measures being taken?”

I understand that, at the outset of Covid-19, politicians - urged to act - needed to refer to these numbers, but there were the medical experts as well, who could have moderated the judgement professionally. I don't like conspiracy theories. Usually, the normal circumstances suffice to explain what happens without conspiracies.

Comparing the behaviour of European political leaders with ours in New Zealand, the difference of the latter's rhetoric based on reason rather than emotion strikes me. Our Prime Minister, during her daily life [streamed media conferences](#) explains and reasons the measures her government puts in place completely devoid of martial references - and it's election year here as well. The current European polls see the electorates' favour with those who act as 'tough guys', seemingly mistaking them as 'real leaders'. **Could this be the last battle of the old school masculinity?**

About disruption

Disruption has been the buzzword of recent years. Folks believe in the 'law of attraction', meaning that something many people have in mind and talk about will eventually fall into place: *et voilà* - now we face it. Not what the American business gurus meant, a significant innovation reinforcing an otherwise persisting trend, but a fundamental disruption of peoples' social, cultural and economic normality. We can't change the experience, but - as creative human beings - we can influence how we will evolve from the crisis' impact.

This reminds me of our children, who always got high fever when sick. My wife and I spent nights changing their cold leg compresses keeping the temperature under 40°C without medicaments suppressing the fever. One morning then they were recovering and suddenly they made significant leaps forward: they could walk, speak, ride bicycles etc. Obviously, their bodies' immune systems' fight triggered an abrupt development push. **Today we call this resilience, which is so much more than just a mechanical 'bounce back'.**

"We can't change the experience, but - as creative human beings - we can influence how we will evolve from the crisis"

Today I am wondering, how our societies will leap forward after this feverish disruption? Just bouncing back shouldn't be really an option. Mainstream politicians and many pragmatic folks might prefer this. However, they should consider that the pre-corona world was already malfunctioning severely.

Scientists already discuss the reason, why animal viruses invade human organisms, concluding that the ever-tightening encroachment of human activities on animal life may be one cause. Or that people's traditional food sources are depleted (or sold to the Global North), forcing them to eat wild animals. Or that some perverted traditions suggest that eating certain wild animals will retain male's virility. More adventurous explanations for the multiple pandemics the world has been facing, the SARS and swine flu outbreaks, are reckoning they're the result of the negative impact of humanity's materialist civilisation on the natural environment, which certainly will be one reason for the earth's climate to change unfavourably.

I'm also concerned about how certain it will be that democratic societies become democratic again. Catastrophes are the executives' finest hour. People with a robust sense for law and order dominate the discourse. Democratic checks and balances are temporarily defunct. Are there enough assertive politicians, who will wind all this back into balance or will the state of emergency quietly become the '*new normal*'? Considerate politicians might need the people's support keeping democracy afloat.

Whatever the case will be, everyone should use these days in seclusion contemplating how all of us can contribute to both a momentous improvement of our way of life and to a leap forward that is adequate to humans' intellectual and creative capacities.