

Newsletter No. 5 – September 2020

September marks the start of the new term. For me personally, it's the first term in 7 years that I am not teaching due to my maternity leave. Being a mother is great and comes with very different joys and challenges than teaching. Having said that, I love my work at university and already miss my students.

My research, however, continues. I currently analyse how local communities respond to the Covid-19 crisis. I predominantly focus on labour-related issues, investigating how Covid-19 and the increased use of digital technology and remote work could make rural areas more attractive in the future. I hope to understand how the increased use of digital technologies at work might change the labour market in European countries. Considering that teleworking has become more prevalent in Europe during Covid-19 and that a large share of workers hope to continue remote work in the future, the attractiveness of living in the countryside is likely to increase, so my hypothesis.

Living in the countryside, having a holiday home away from the city, or just owning a small plot for farming have become increasingly popular during the Covid-19 pandemic. If this trend to revert to countryside life and for people to turn their back to the densely packed cities, which have become a hotspot for Corona (and thus a danger), continues, rural areas could experience a comeback. Especially if the Covid-19 crisis and with it, social distancing measures, continue, I believe that more people will consider moving to the countryside where incidence rates are lower and where life thus seems to be safer and more relaxed. Considering the mental distress the Covid-19 pandemic has caused among many people – in Germany, for example, physical problems are on the rise, a life in the countryside seems to be increasingly considered a valid option for a 'good life'. This is a completely new development, from which rural areas across Europe could greatly benefit.

My new research analyses how the perception of the countryside has changed during the pandemic, investigating if rural areas will become more attractive to new residents moving there from the cities and potentially help revive the countryside.

Is there anything else but Covid-19? Not much, but there is. Germany is celebrating 30 years of reunification! After the wall that was separating East and West Germany for over 28 years came down on November 9th, 1989, Germany was officially reunited on October 3rd, 1990. To celebrate the occasion, this year's EU-Japan Friendship Week at KGU focuses on Germany! Sadly, due to Covid-19, all events had to be cancelled to keep social distancing requirements. However, we have prepared a fun quiz on Germany that everyone can take! (*see attachment*). You can check the questions and

submit your answers online. The first 100 respondents will win nice goodies related to the EU (to be sent directly to your house).

Here's the link to the quiz on Germany:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1a1e2ZNL0wYpTffyesUHAdebh5lMi0sj8K-VKSRyDKOo/>

(Those at KGU can also submit their answers on paper at the Sanken desk, 3rd floor or the library).

Test your knowledge on Germany! You'll see it's not all about cars, sausages and beer!

If you would like to read a bit on regional development and the impact Covid-19 has had – and will have – I recommend the following reading materials by the OECD.

OECD (2020), Tackling Coronavirus (Covid-19): Contribution to a global effort. City Policy Responses, 23 July,

https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=126_126769-yen45847kf&title=Coronavirus-COVID-19-Cities-Policy-Responses

OECD (2020), Tackling Coronavirus (Covid-19): Coronavirus (COVID-19) From pandemic to recovery: Local employment and economic development, 27 April 2020

<http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/from-pandemic-to-recovery-local-employment-and-economic-development-879d2913/>

With the best wishes for a stimulating new academic term and a successful response to Covid-19,

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