# The Translation and Localization of the 2020 Pandemic Response

## A Transatlantic Lexicon

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*Fig. 1: The billboard advertises the Friedrichstadt-Palast, a performance venue that closed during the first corona wave in spring 2020. The poster expresses a generalizable sentiment: social distancing rules and business closures made it possible to feel like the city you live in had gone missing. Photograph from Brunnenstraße, Wedding, Berlin, Germany, August 2020.*



As the vaccination campaign picks up speed within the higher-income countries, infection rates throughout Germany are lower than they have been in a year, and the long-awaited herd immunity may be approaching (if the more contagious Delta variant does not ravage the unvaccinated population). This latest prospect of an end to the pandemic is one flicker in the newsflux in which the need for

up-to-date information has required the development of a linguistically hybrid discourse of pandemic life. And the discourse itself bears traces of the moods and informational needs of a worried population. Moments keep recurring in new locations, like the end of June 2021, where German and American hopes and worries overlap as closely as the terminology used to describe the pandemic.

The following discussion of German- and English-language corona discourses attempts to trace these developments over the last year and a half. It is an attempt to capture the ways that two West Germanic languages responded differentially to the sudden changes that affected their corresponding societies (here especially the United States and Germany). For instance, the German cognate, *Herdenimmunität*, exemplifies the »glocalized« German pandemic discourse although the more Germanic term, *Gemeinschaftsschutz*, has just as much currency among virologists. Just as when an individual has been sick and fully recovers, it can be difficult to recall the anguish of illness (not knowing how long one's symptoms will last and how much worse one's symptoms will become), the first glimmers of hope of return to old freedoms are already eclipsing the entrenched, pandemic-induced despair.

## GERMANY, THE US, AND THE PANDEMIC
## A RETROSPECTIVE FROM WITHIN

Compared to Mongolia or Thailand, which implemented sharp movement and travel restrictions even when they had extremely few confirmed infections, the European Union and the United States had relatively late coronavirus responses, taking their first major anti-pandemic measures around March 2020 and somehow needing until late April to acknowledge the scientific consensus in China and Korea that mask-wearing curtails the spread of corona-type viruses. But by the middle of March both federations implemented new travel bans when the spread of COVID-19 took a sharp upturn.

While the travel bans were nearly simultaneous, politicians in the United States long resisted suspending domestic business as usual. When Germany closed many »non-essential« businesses, it repeated the spending measures it had implemented after the 2007 financial market crash by expanding its seasonal unemployment program (*Kurzarbeit*) to cover the newly un(der)employed. Besides lacking such a system, a lack of political will during the forty-fifth presidential administration meant that residents of the United States had to survive a gutted pandemic response program and a federal government that repeatedly disregarded pathologists' advice.

While the US government response still lagged, Americans could feel proud of Johns Hopkins University. Germany's main news sources were citing the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center website for information during the very

months in mid-2020 when the American government could not take its own research institutions seriously enough to implement life-saving measures. Nothing demonstrates the range of the United States' national competences and incompetences, like the fact that the country least capable of containing the outbreak in the world houses the university that was providing the most trusted metrics on the global pandemic.

Another point of contrast: Germany implemented federal-level restrictions on movement when they were still on the state-level in the United States. In mid-June, holding large gatherings was forbidden, as was meeting with more than ten people, and breaking the social distancing policies. In May, state-specific travel bans were implemented specifically by the governments of the coastal northern German states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein – popular domestic tourist destinations. In June, states are allowed to decide separately if and when they will reopen schools, restaurants, and stores.[1] Typically for the United States, whose »laboratory of democracy« approach to federalism means wide state-by-state variation in policy, the states with the most restrictive quarantine policies for incoming travelers were the ones that had already experienced the highest infection rates (New York and its neighbors) and the ones best positioned geographically to control borders (Hawaii and Alaska). In other words, in April, when infection rates were spiking, the German medical response was comparatively unified where it was federalized in the United States, to the ire of experts.[2]

Both regions have also had their corruption scandals. Summer 2021 headlines advertise the investigation into German Health Minister Jens Spahn's deals involving the sale and distribution of poor-quality masks whose distributor his husband worked for. Comparatively underreported in Spring 2020 in the United States was the executive decision to auction federally contracted medical supplies to states, so that the highest bid, rather than the highest need, would determine who would get them.[3] Running a nation like a business means treating public health resources like consumer products. Such an especially egregious case was swept under the rug during a presidential term in the United States where the main tactic was to publicize frivolous scandals to distract from complex, yet more dire scandals.

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**1** | Cf. Das sind die geltenden Regeln und Einschränkungen (steadily updated), online at www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/corona-massnahmen-1734724.

**2** | Ken Dilanian/Dan De Luce: Trump administration's lack of a unified coronavirus strategy will cost lives, say a dozen experts, online at www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-administration-s-lack-unified-coronavirus-strategy-will-cost-lives-n1175126.

**3** | Providers in bidding war with states, federal agencies on medical supplies, online at www.modernhealthcare.com/supply-chain/providers-bidding-war-states-federal-agencies-medical-supplies.

The pandemic was less politicized in Germany than in the US, probably because the former society did not have a populist movement operating on the scale of Trumpism in 2020. Nevertheless, to be a coronavirus denier (*Coronaleugner*) in Germany carries a tinge of the stigma of extremism of being a holocaust denier. That stigmatizing connotation involves more than an accident of language; both kinds of deniers overlook the deadliness of a well-documented source of mass death (coincidentally, often by suffocation),[4] and such denial runs against postwar Germany's ethos of social solidarity, which requires a notion of shared truth. The most common slur for a coronavirus denier, *Querdenker*, began as a positively connotated self-reference, signifying »someone who thinks against the grain,« or, as Google translates it, »lateral thinker«. Machine translation services have simply not kept pace well with the linguistic shifts around the pandemic. The tabloid paper *Bild Zeitung* ran an article whose headline (which translates »Is it legitimate not to be afraid of the Coronavirus?«) misleadingly implies that Peter Sloterdijk considers the coronavirus nothing to fear.[5] Afterwards, »Germany's smartest philosopher« (*Deutschlands klügster Philosoph*, as *Bild* designates him) responded in a *Spiegel* interview with Volker Weidermann that he is not a *Querdenker*, and that this term sounds so insulting because it implies someone has a board in front of their head (»ich sah bei dem Ausdruck immer ein Brett vor dem Kopf«).[6] Even without politicizing the pandemic measures, contempt for non-conformity has been a major part of the German pandemic discourse. Jürgen Link has observed, every crisis is defined by the »denormalization« that it imposes, but the discourse around this crisis emphasizes more than ever the longing for normalcy through the media's repetition of the longed-for notion of a »return to normal« (*Rückkehr in die Normalität*) or at least a »piece of normalcy« (*Stück Normalität*).[7]

The above gives a simple overview of these two best-friend nations' divergent responses to the pandemic. The linguistic differences in the approach to the virus seem to have less to do with differences in the two nations' anti-infection measures and their implementations. Instead, these differences involve the characteristic divergences in sound and etymology within the larger lives of the German and

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**4** | For the chilling point of between the ventilator and the gas chamber, I thank a conversation with Manuela Hauschild.

**5** | W. A. Tell: Deutschlands berühmtester Philosoph Peter Sloterdijk: Ist es legitim, vor Corona keine Angst zu haben? In: Bild online, October 16, 2020, online at www.bild.de/politik/kolumnen/kolumne/peter-sloterdijk-ist-es-legitim-vor-corona-keine-angst-zu-haben-73441584.bild.html.

**6** | Philosoph Peter Sloterdijk über Jogi Löw, die Pandemie und Querdenker (Büchershow Spitzentitel), November 26, 2020, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTt6H57WC2w.

**7** | Jürgen Link: Für welche Krise ist »Corona« der Name? »Neue Normalität« zwischen dem Traum vom hyperflexiblen Normalismus und massiv protonormalistischen Tendenzen. In: jenseits von corona: welche neue normalität? 79 (2020), No. 20, pp. 7–16, p. 9.

English languages. The place of the new public health vocabulary. The language for addressing the pandemic is all but a controlled vocabulary, standardized as it is, through top-down safety recommendations and laws. But such an omnipresent discourse inevitably shows the effects of the societal preferences and trends that become linguistic habits.

## Composita coronensia

Das *Online-Wortschatz-Informationssystem Deutsch* (OWID), a dictionary project of the Leibniz Center for the German Language, has kept a registry of new coinages related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A few of these neologisms involve witty wordplay like: »[E]ine gefährliche Variante des Hobby-Virologen, besser bekannt als *Wirrologe*« or »[d]ass die eigene Haut an ›*Maskne*‹ leidet, also einer Akne-ähnlichen Erscheinung«.[8] Both humorous neologisms call on the solidarity elicited by suffering together through the discomforting uncertainties (*Wirrung*) and skin conditions (*Akne*) resulting from the pandemic measures.

Crisis engenders anxiety and suffering, but also plenty of creative chaos, and the latter shows with particular clarity in the linguistic cleverness unleashed in 2020. German is known for its high tolerance of polysemy. OWID shows that neologisms associated with the coronavirus exhibit that familiar tendency: *Coronaturbo*, for instance, can refer either to the fast spread of the virus or to an economic upswing in certain regions or industries during the pandemic. *Coronawende* can refer to three unrelated phenomena: 1) a turn for the better in the pandemic, 2) a change in social norms or economic circumstances as a result of the pandemic, and 3) a shift in the political measures taken due to the pandemic. Unlike other composita registered in OWID, where the morpheme *corona-* modifies another root – like corona belly (*Coronabauch*), corona panic (*Coronapanik*), or corona denier (*Coronaleugner*) – *Coronawende* and *Coronaturbo* do not let us rely on one single relationship between *corona* and the next morpheme in the sentence. In both cases, corona infections can be either the subject or the object of the turn or speed up, either an uptick in corona cases or other societal changes as a result of the pandemic.

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**8** | Neuer Wortschatz rund um die Coronapandemie, online at www.owid.de/docs/ neo/listen/corona.jsp (emphasis with bold text in original).

*Fig. 2:* Maske *or* Schutz

*In a clothing store chain in a shopping center, the standard German term is sufficient.*
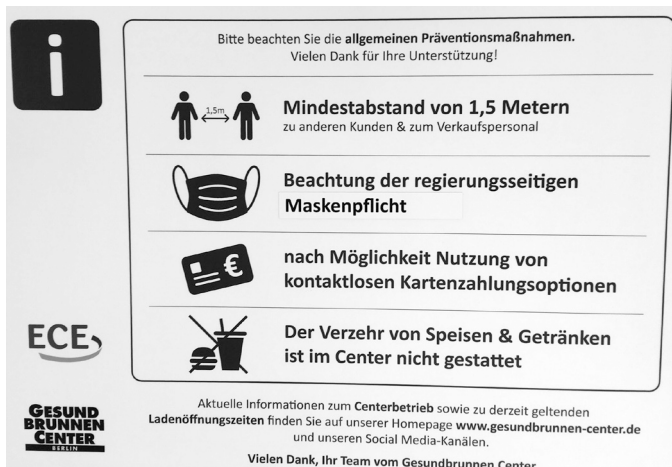


*At a co-working space just north of Mitte, where many are working digitally and thus in English, The terms for »mask« in German and English are represented side-by-side.*

*The same co-working space borrows the language of a government announcement requiring Germans to follow the AHA rules:* Abstand-Hygiene-Alltagsmaske. *The last part of the rule,* »everyday mask« *(*Alltagsmaske*) occurs primarily in the context of government announcements and is meant to normalize the wearing of masks. In fact, the government announcement of June 8, 2020 is titled* »The AHA Rules in the new everyday« (Die AHA-Regeln im neuen Alltag).[9]



*The term* »mask requirement« *(*Maskenpflicht*) is a government term that has been more thoroughly integrated – although this sign from a shopping center clearly had a different term before this photo was taken in August.*



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**9** | Video: Die »AHA-Regeln« im neuen Alltag, online at www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/die-aha-regeln-im-neuen-alltag-1758514.

*To board the ferry to Berlin's Lindwerder Island, you must wear a* Mund-Nasen-Be-deckung, *at six syllables the longest and most serious sounding name for a mask.*



*A profaned sign from the Berlin bar Golden Gate shows that resistance to masks can more closely resemble of adolescent rebellion rather than political conviction.*



The most familiar examples of ambiguity involve words that are themselves centuries old, like *Grund* (ground and reasons) or *aufheben* (cancel, elevate, and preserve). In a period of such rapid social change, rapid linguistic change means more indeterminacy between subjective and objective genitive relations (e.g., objective, as in the murder of Abraham Lincoln, vs. subjective, as in the murders of Charles Manson). Rarely does language tolerate such newly introduced am-

biguity for long: as the »murder« example shows where the default is objective and only the plural makes it clear that the root noun must be the murderer – since one can only be murdered once. The corona pandemic is thus a period of rare tolerance for ambiguity.[10]

## MUND-NASEN-SCHUTZ

Considering masks' historical functions gives insight into the resistance to the requirement to wear masks that was so well reported in German and American media in late 2020. In Germany, the laws requiring the population to wear masks (*Maskenpflicht*) constitutes an exception to Germany's ban on facial concealment (*Vermummungsverbot*) since the identifiability of one's face is part of the basis for being able to trust strangers in public not to behave criminally. The most notable precedent for *Maskenpflicht* is carnival, where the dukes and lords of centuries past used to require masks from all celebrants, supposedly so that the nobility could mingle undiscovered and enjoy an evening's reprieve from the social restrictions of their high station.

A mask is never just a functional tool for restricting the contact of the face with environmental contaminants. It always also adds a meaningful absence to the performance of self. Masks conceal individuating facial features and simultaneously emphasize the role that the mask imparts, whether with religious or medical seriousness or with theatrical gaiety. To wear a mask is to signal that participation in a social institution or event is more important than self-exposure through the face. Ursula Krechel and Michael Stolleis remark on this compromise in their discussion of *Gesichtsmaske* on *Coronas Wörter*, a series of video blogs about the impact of the pandemic on language, published online by the German Academy of Language and Poetry.[11]

What people wear to fend against COVID-19 infection was first referred to almost solely as »protection« (*Atemschutz, Mundschutz,* or *Mund-Nasen-Schutz*) or »covering« (*Bedeckung*) in German. The German terms are more specific and

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**10** | In a radio interview, linguist Annette Klosa-Kückelhaus notes that neologisms take time to achieve concrete meanings, and it is only at that point that lexicographers enter them into the dictionary. (Her examples include anglicisms like »lockdown« or »Wuhan shake« – meaning a foot-bump instead of a handshake). Dr. Annette Klosa-Kückelhaus intereviewed by Frauke Oppenberg: Von »Abstandsgebot« bis »Zoomfatigue« – Wie Krisenzeiten die Sprache verändern. In: »swr2 online, June 15, 2020, online at www.swr.de/swr2/leben-und-gesellschaft/von-abstandsgebot-bis-zoomfatigue-wie-krisenzeiten-die-sprache-veraendern-swr2-tandem-2020-06-16-100.html.

**11** | Coronas Wörter: Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, online at www.deutscheakademie.de/de/aktuell/2020-06-25/coronas-woerter.

unambiguous, though they all require more sounds than *mask* (*Maske*). On March 4, around the time that the German government had started recommending that citizens wear masks in public, it posted a video with the title: »Ist das Tragen eines Mund-Nasen-Schutzes in der Allgemeinbevölkerung zum Schutz vor akuten Atemwegsinfektionen sinnvoll?«[12] The antanaclastic repetition of *Schutz* in nominal and gerundive meanings suggests a positive answer – although the video ends with the outdated information that only sick or high-risk people should wear masks. For everyone else, a mask offers more risk than safety since it could give a *false* sense of comfort. (This recalls the American recommendation during the same period to *quit* buying masks so that medical professionals would not run out of supply.)

*Fig. 3 Photo 1 by https://coronabrowser.com/1406*
*Photo 2 by Manuela Hauschild, July 23, 2020*



A few months into the new year, however, a new Anglicism was available in the German virus-containment discourse. By the end of spring, the word *Maske* was omnipresent, especially in official discourses, which spoke of the »mask requirement« (*Maskenpflicht*). A late summer warning on the subway about the penalties for refusal to wear a mask coins the word »mask-disdainers« (*Masken-muffel*). Besides being shorter and more international, a *Maske* promises privacy, beauty, and enhanced (rather than muted) authenticity. »Mask,« after all, evokes empowering connotations from ancient tragedy to Renaissance Venice to premium skin care. It was inevitable that a new garment take on less bureaucratic language, but perhaps the fact that it began as a *Schutz* was necessary for a society to take it more seriously at the beginning. It was only a matter of time before the German discourse caught up with the fact that any »mouth covering«

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**12** | Erklärvideo der BZgA: Schützt ein Mundschutz vor Ansteckung? (March 5, 2020), online at www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/schuetzt-ein-mund schutz-vor-ansteckung--1728426.

will eventually take on social meaning and thus function performatively, that is, as a mask.

While the *AHA-Regel* continues to contain the word, »everyday mask« (*Alltagsmaske*), the word definitively refers to either surgical masks or FFP2 masks now. But according to OWIS, *Alltagsmaske* meant a »(handmade) replacement for a *Mund-Nasen-Schutz*, which usually does not meet the requirements of industrially manufactured products.«[13]

## ABSTAND HALTEN

The concreteness of *Abstand* is exemplary of the German language's deep surface – its tendency to say more than English by saying it with more familiar and thus more visceral morphemes. A conceptually precise translation of *Abstand* would be »margin;« the word *Abstand* carries a sense of an intentional and precisely quantified distance, which suits the context of maintaining a margin of separation from others in public during a pandemic. German author Michael Krüger thinks that the Anglicism »social distancing« did not catch on in German because it has too many syllables and because it is a poor description of the concept of keeping a physical distance from others.[14] The English term's misleading connotations have brought criticisms from the English-language thinkers too. Stanford psychologist Jamil Zaki points out that »physical distancing« is a better description of the official demand. Zaki also proposes that »distant socializing« would take the emphasis off of the privation of up-close social contact. Exactly that shift (from *sociale* to *physique*) became *de rigueur* a couple of months into 2020 in France.[15]

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**13** | Cf. Neuer Wortschatz rund um die Coronapandemie, online at www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp#alltagsmaske (my translation).

**14** | Coronas Wörter (accessed June 25, 2020), online at www.deutscheakademie.de/de/aktuell/2020-06-25/coronas-woerter.

**15** | Adrien Rivierre explains that the barbaric cognate, *distanciation sociale* appeared frequently in French at the beginning of the pandemic, but was ultimately rejected across all media channels in favor of *distanciation physique* because *sociale* evokes a collective action by one social class to elevate themselves above another (which is unfortunately relevant when some people can afford to stop working more easily than others). The shift was unanimous as a way to avoid sounding like the pandemic policy means to reintroduce »social distinctions« – which runs against a core value in post-Revolutionary French political rhetoric. Editorial Staff: Pourquoi l'expression »distanciation physique« a remplacé celle de »distanciation sociale«. In: May 28, 2020, online at www.nouvelobs.com/coronavirus-de-wuhan/20200528.OBS29430/pourquoi-l-expression-distanciation-physique-a-remplace-celle-de-distanciation-sociale.html.

*Fig. 4: Posted April 23, 2020*



Despite the perfect fit of the term *Abstand*, which sounds both familiar and precise in German, germanized forms of the Anglicism »social distancing« (*soziale Distanzierung*) sometimes rears its ugly head and syllable-laden tail. The word Distanzierung appears with a variety of embarrassed modifiers, including *soziale*, *öffentliche*, and *räumliche*. Sometimes both words of the English collocation are *eingedeutscht*, as in: »Maßnahmen zur räumlichen Trennung.«[16] The English term is not new in pathology discourse, and thus translating is the English term is a longstanding problem in German. Some EU documents as far back as 2009 had given up on trying to capture the concept of »social distancing« and just translate it with another concept entirely, the far more extreme Quarantäne.[17]

While the German COVID-containment discourse occasionally uses the anglicism »social distancing,« the prevalence of the translation, *Abstand halten*, resonates with the much more familiar »keep a distance« – allowing us to hear the non-plague-time motivations for keeping distance, such as social anxiety, playing

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**16** | On the other hand, the fact that *linguee.de* is still citing examples involving a »flu pandemic« shows how slowly they are updating their corpus. Linguee, online at www.linguee.de/englisch-deutsch/uebersetzung/social+distancing.html.

**17** | Beschluss der Kommission. *Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union,* February 2, 2020, online at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:053:0041:0073:DE:PDF.

it cool, or feelings of aversion. Besides that, *mit Abstand* can mean »by far,« which gives Evelin Brandt's marketing slogan for designer face masks a triple meaning: *Maske auf und mit Abstand schön.*[18]

The sentence plays on the augmentative use of *mit Abstand*: »be the most beautiful by far (*mit Abstand*),« but such a formulation would require the superlative adjective *am schönsten* in German as it would in English. Without the superlative, it means: »Wear a mask and be beautiful while social distancing.« Yet even the corona-related meaning mobilizes the mask as a veil that allows for the socially legible, even attractive forms of distance in romantic contexts – flirtation and discretion – rather than simply of obedience to public health protocols.

A more rhetorically pointed pun on *mit Abstand* is the summer 2020 motto of the open-air cinema on the Biesdorf Castle grounds: *Sie sind mit Abstand die besten Gäste.* Here *mit Abstand* presents two thoughts that can be read either separately or together: You are the best guests 1) *by far,* or 2) *by following the social distancing rules.* The first amplifies the positive judgment while the second introduces a condition. In the conditional reading, rule-abiding makes you especially appreciated – which amounts to a softened version of the rules announced elsewhere on their website: namely, that rule-breakers are not allowed in at all. That sort of pun on *mit Abstand* does not ring very light-hearted because they underscore the deadly seriousness with which the rules are enforced (not to mention the potential deadliness of infection by the virus).

## MIT CORONA

In the summer of 2020, the most common German phrase to designate the status of the conditions and measures taken to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus is »due to corona« (*wegen Corona*) with 11 million results in a Google search.[19] Far less popular is »against« (*gegen*) with 5 million, and »with« (*mit*) with four million.[20] Signage with the slogan, *Gemeinsam gegen Corona,* is posted in and around Berlin public transportation. In everyday speech, however, the phrase »with corona« encompasses a wider concept. The everyday use of »with« means »with [the threat of]« or »[under the conditions of coping] with.« It is an elliptical phrase akin to »à la [manière de]« used in English to mean »in the style of,« as in »The Spanish flu was a full-on pandemic à la corona.« or the use of »like« to introduce direct speech, as in, »I was like, ›are you seriously going to

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**18** | Cf. www.evelin-brandt.de/de-de/en_GB (updated steadily; accessed June 16, 2020).

**19** | Results based on searches conducted on July 5, 2020.

**20** | The trend holds (with less dramatic margins) one year later: »wegen corona« (6,640,000), »gegen corona« (4,950,000), and »mit corona« (2,980,000) Google search: www.google.com (accessed July 30, 2021).

Jaime's corona party?!‹« The phrase *mit Corona* occurs in spoken sentences like »hat der Laden auch jetzt mit Corona offen?«

Within the mainstream German public discourse, any stance that does not oppose the spread of COVID-19 is not taken seriously, and even those who call for reopening to prioritize the economy are simply in denial – not in support – of the risks involved. Even fringe groups tend not to call for risks that would accelerate »herd immunity.« Society is thus discursively united »against« corona, but we are all »with« corona, in the sense that we all live *with* the new conditions for which the virus' name has become a metonym. In Chancellor Merkel's words in her June 20 announcement about the Corona warning app for smartphones: »Solange kein Impfstoff gefunden ist, müssen wir lernen, mit dem Virus zu leben.«[21] In that sense, we are living (in German and English) »with corona« (*mit Corona*).

*Mit corona* has another sense in German. German news articles distinguish carefully between corona infection as cause of death and corona infection that accompanied another terminal condition, by using the prepositions *an* and *mit* respectively: »9249 Menschen sind an beziehungsweise mit einer Coronavirus-Infektion gestorben.«[22] The German media use the clause »dying with corona« (*sterben mit Corona*) especially when discussing a popular suspicion that corona death counts include an error factor. The rumor is that many, who are infected with corona, die »with corona« but »of« a different cause. Because many corona patients are older and some catch the virus in hospitals, the rumor emerged that corona was incidental to the deaths of these vulnerable patients. Fortunately, even populist news sources are promoting new autopsy research that refutes this suspicion. The newspaper *Bild* has shown a lukewarm sympathy with the corona protesters when it called the decision to ban corona protests a political mistake (without considering the infection risks involved).[23] But even *Bild* makes it clear that corona kills with their characteristic high-impact rhetoric: »86 Procent Die From Corona, Not With Corona« (*86 Prozent sterben wegen, nicht mit Corona*).[24] German television news channel NTV reinforces the point

**21** | Corona-Warn-App: Unterstützt uns im Kampf gegen Corona. June 15, 2020, online at www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/corona-warn-app.

**22** | Fast 71 Neuinfektionen pro 100.000 Einwohner: Hamm reißt kritische Marke deutlich. In: Focus online, September 23, 2020, online at https://m.focus.de/gesundheit/news/news-zur-pandemie-tausende-schweden-bekamen-falsches-testergebnislaender-verschaerfen-bussgelder-gegen-maskenverweigerer_id_12358783.html.

**23** | Editorial staff: Inakzeptabler Angriff auf eines unserer höchsten Grundrechte. In: Bild online, August 29, 2020, online at www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/demo-verbot-in-berlin-angriff-auf-eines-unserer-hoechsten-grundrechte-72580918.bild.html.

**24** | Editorial staff: Deutscher Pathologenverband veröffentlicht neue Zahlen: 86 Prozent sterben wegen, nicht mit Corona. In: Bild online, August 21, 2020, online at www.bild.de/bild-plus/ratgeber/2020/ratgeber/bundesverband-deutscher-patholo gen-86-prozent-sterben-wegen-nicht-mit-corona-72503306.

with its own punchy headline contrasting the two prepositions' senses: »People die ›of‹ corona – not ›with.‹« (*Menschen sterben ›an‹ Corona – nicht ›mit.‹*)[25] In the anti-conspiracy discourse, dying »with corona« – like living »with corona« measures – is a way of keeping its incapacitating and often deadly spread at an emotional distance.

## CORONA AND TRANSNATIONALISM

While the ease of global air travel is one of the factors that facilitated the rapid spread of the ongoing pandemic, international discourse has provided forms of moral and informational support in this crisis (not to mention German-American business collaboration like that between BioNTech and Pfizer, which already began in 2018, before the first stirrings of this pandemic).[26] Global information sharing often requires the overcoming of linguistic differences and of regional prejudices regarding whose research is legitimate. While politically globalization often amounts to a race to attract capital at the cost of, say, imposing adequate taxes to provide for one's community, the kind of internationalism that emerges in a global crisis can mimic the best of federalism. Like America's »laboratory of democracy,« different societies can learn from each other's' ideas, leadership, and self-discipline, and from naming and critiquing »the new normal.« Having near-equivalent terms for common concepts has facilitated this sharing. On the other hand, terminological differences can themselves be revealing of the successes of different discursive strategies in achieving the kind of »protonormalism« (social discipline) that often replaces the freedom of individualized »flexible normalism« so dear to members of liberally governed societies.[27] Comparing different societies' responses to the pandemic is a reminder that this pandemic – like climate change and economic globalization – exerts immensely differential effects on the world population who live »with« its consequences, more or less severe. As President of the University of Mainz Georg Krausch put it: »If now we ask the younger generation to show solidarity with the elderly who are particularly at risk, then we, the older generation, ought to remember this during the next discussions about climate change – and act accordingly.«[28] Ideally, decision-makers and knowl-

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**25** | ntv.de/jog: Pathologen räumen mit Mär auf. Menschen sterben »an« Corona – nicht »mit.« In: NTV Wissen, August 22, 2020, online at www.n-tv.de/wissen/Menschen-sterben-an-Corona-nicht-mit-article21988304.html.

**26** | BioNTech Corporate Site https://biontech.de/covid-19.

**27** | Terms derived from Jürgen Link: Versuch über den Normalismus: Wie Normalität produziert wird. Göttingen 2006.

**28** | Address by JGU President Georg Krausch concerning the COVID-19 pandemic (March 26, 2020), online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzYz0ewSctY (July 1, 2021).

edge-producers will extend some of the sense of urgency that the pandemic has taught us to feel about problems that affect communities beyond our own cultural, linguistic, generational, and media bubbles.