

SAVING THE PLANET MATTERS MORE NOW THAN EVER

BY REBECCA JONES | 19 MAR, 2020

We are in uncharted waters. As I write, in-fact, I am in self isolation having come into contact with someone that was on a plane with a passenger that tested positive for Covid-19. In other words, I am an 'F2', a less than pleasant categorisation.

In such trying times it is easy to dismiss anything we might consider 'not important'. Considering the levels of stress that the climate crisis was reportedly causing before this current one, saving the planet is likely top of that list.

I have found myself caring a lot less about my plastic consumption, for example, over the past week, while mustering the energy to look at anything other than rolling BBC headlines has been difficult.

This, however, is the wrong attitude. As is often the case, my thinking was radically transformed by an excellent article in the Guardian entitled: ['Tip of the iceberg': is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19?](#), which underlines why saving the planet is more important now than ever.

Pandemics and saving the planet

The fascinating piece, written by John Vidal, explains how the destruction of natural habitats, the degradation of land and the trade of wild animals is a leading cause for the transmission and spread of new animal-borne diseases like Covid-19 around the world.

Amid the panic I – like many others I'm sure – had forgotten that Covid-19 is believed to have originated in a live fish market (aka. a wet market) in Wuhan, China. The market sold many wild animals, the origin and viral status of which are often unknown.

Tracing the roots of other major disease outbreaks like Ebola in Africa (believed to have been transmitted by an ape), Vidal makes a convincing argument for how human interference with the natural world is unleashing disease.

This has an effect even in developed economies like the US, where Lyme disease is spread throughout suburbs where the fragmentation of forests raises the risk of humans contracting the Lyme pathogen.

Corona wake-up call

The outbreak of Covid-19 is prompting governments all over the world to sit up and smell the coffee. The Chinese government, for example, has shutdown markets selling wild animals and last month outlawed the trading and eating of wild animals. A major win for a cause the WWF has been fighting for decades.

In the US and UK, conservative capitalist governments are now also being forced to implement radical social policies to protect citizens that have been systematically impoverished by an economic model that aggressively exploits people and planet.

Combined with falling levels of air pollution across the world, these are potentially positive outcomes of this global crisis. It has also underlined the power we have to fight a threat potentially far greater than Covid-19: climate change.

As we know, we have around ten years to curb carbon emissions by more than 50% in order to keep the planet below 2 degrees of warming. If we don't achieve this we will change the natural world in a way we can only begin to predict – and [those predictions](#) aren't good.

A new money vision

If one wild animal can unleash Ebola or Covid-19, what destruction will melting ice-caps frozen for millennia let loose? As we burn and plunder ancient rainforest, do we have any idea what we might trigger (beside the increase in toxic Co2 in our atmosphere, of course)? Saving the planet has never, ever been more important.

Now, more than ever, we need to think about how we can change the global economic system to avert climate disaster. As governments bazooka trillions of freshly printed money into economies – throwing out all the old fiscal rules – we have an unprecedented moment to re-imagine and reshape life on this planet.

Nature has, perhaps, given us a unique opportunity to alter our existential course. Let's take it.

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