

# Pandemics and the Environment

What Have we Learned?

*Jeremy Caddick*

# It was predicted...

‘Anthony and colleagues have estimated that there are at least 3,204 CoVs [coronaviruses] currently circulating in bats (Anthony et al., 2017). Whatever the accuracy of that prediction, it remains obvious that the risk for new viruses to emerge from bats is probably very high. By being one of the regions of the world where population growth is the strongest, where sanitary conditions remain poor and where the deforestation rate is the highest, SEA [Southeast Asia] meets every condition to become the place of emergence or re-emergence of infectious diseases.’

Afelt A, Frutos R and Devaux C (2018) ‘Bats, Coronaviruses, and Deforestation: Toward the Emergence of Novel Infectious Diseases?’ *Frontiers in Microbiology* 9:702.

# Our “promiscuous treatment of nature” leads to pandemics

- Deforestation
- Hunting
- Habitat destruction
- Meat consumption
- Etc.

# Climate change increases the likelihood of pandemics

- Warming world
  - bugs
  - permafrost

# It's the planet, stupid!



‘...covid-19 is a fast-moving crisis within a slow-moving one that it in some way resembles. Like the pandemic, climate change is impervious to populist denials, global in disruption it causes and will be far more costly to deal with in the future if it is neglected now.’

*The Economist* 24 December 2020

# This pandemic

- focus on what really matters
  - relationships
  - community
  - civil society
- nature
  - our awareness of nature
  - our need for nature
- fragility of things that once we took for granted

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When not if

another crisis comes



# We've been here before...

- The 2008 Financial Crash didn't look like an environmental crisis, but it was, because
- the economic system we have constructed depends on perpetual growth,
- which is not possible on a finite planet.

# What we need to learn...

- Change *is* possible
- There *is* a different way
- We need to do it *together*