Greening the COVID-19 Response, Recovery and Redesign

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The links between **nature** and COVID-19

COVID-19 is one of many zoonotic diseases

- Viruses 🦠
- Bacteria 🦠
- Protozoans 🦠
- Multicellular organisms 🦠
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Zoonotic disease is not a new phenomenon

- The Plague (fleas)
- Rabies (dogs)
- SARS (palm civets → bats)
- Bird flu (ducks, chickens)
- Swine flu (pigs)
- Lyme disease (ticks)
- Malaria (mosquitos)
- Dengue fever (mosquitos)
- Ebola (various animals)
- Toxoplasmosis (cats)
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- Human beings are less and less a part of nature
- Human exposure to zoonoses was previously constant and localized
  - Constant → adaptation
  - Localized → limitation
- Over time people became urbanized and more globally connected
  → less constant exposure
  → globalized → rapid transmission
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• “Infodemic” accompanies the COVID-19 pandemic
• Problematic because response requires sorting likely from unlikely
• Likely:
  • Bats involved in transmission
  • Transmission to human beings at a wet market in Wuhan
  • Transmission involved the harvest of wild species
• Possible:
  • Pangolins involved in transmission
• Unlikely:
  • Labs or rogue labs involved in transmission
• Arguable
  • Habitat destruction is to blame
Triple R Planning Framework: Rationale

• Many countries have adopted policies and allocated resources to manage the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19

• There is an opportunity to ensure that policies and resources not only address COVID-19’s impacts...

• ...but lead to a more sustainable and resilient future

• However, the goals and outlooks of these policies and resources allocation must be coherent and forward-looking
Triple R Planning Framework: The Current Status

• Currently many of the plans to manage COVID-19 appear **piecemeal** and **short-sighted**

• For example, often countries are allocating some funds to promote green industries while providing even more resources to fossil fuel and brown industries

• Further, often there are not strong links between narrow interventions that address COVID-19 and structural changes to key systems and policymaking institutions

• We argue that a sustainable and resilient future requires need for a coherent and forward-looking planning framework
Cross-national Evidence of Incoherence

Source: https://www.energypolicytracker.org/, 2020
Incoherence: The Case of the United States CARES Act

- Changes to tax restrictions/rebates
- Main Street Lending Program for small and medium businesses
- COVID-19-related changes to use of public lands
- COVID-19-related regulatory rollbacks
- Tax relief for renewable energy projects

Triple R Planning Framework: Key Building Blocks

1. **Respond** - adopt targeted interventions to address direct pandemic health and livelihood impacts as well as possible underlying causes (including environmental causes)

2. **Recover** - reform broader policies and redirect fiscal stimulus to allocate resources to sustainable and resilient policies and investments

3. **Redesign** - transform energy, transport, and urban and socioeconomic systems as well as policymaking institutions to break unsustainable lock-ins
IGES Triple R Planning Framework

RESPONSE
Targeted interventions to address direct impacts

RECOVERY
Sustainable policies and stimulus with an environmental focus

JUST TRANSITION
Transformation of socioeconomic systems and institutions

REDESIGN

Sustainable & Resilient World

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Short-term ➔ Medium-term ➔ Long-term
Motivation for the **Triple-R Framework**

**Lock-ins**

Sources: Unruh, 2002; Brown, et al, 2007

**Multilevel transitions**

Sources: Geels, 2010
The Case of **Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)**

- Concerns “systemic change, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and applying a lifecycle thinking approach, taking into account all phases of resource use in order to do more and better with less” (UN One Planet Network)
- Closely aligned with principles of Green Productivity, resource efficiency & Circular Economy
- Encompasses all aspects of Response, Recovery, & Redesign
SCP Framework
Response: Waste Management & Pollution Control

- COVID-19 has led to a significant increase in the production and disposal of healthcare waste (gloves, masks, etc.)
- Waste management systems have been burdened by increased demand and disposal of single-use products across multiple sectors
- On the other hand, lockdowns associated with the pandemic have also led to reductions in certain types of waste and pollution

Source: Reuters
New Delhi: Before and After COVID-19

Source: Reuters
Recovery: Investing in “Building Back Better”

• Ensure economic stimulus packages flow to circular economy and low-carbon sectors and industries while moving away from “brown” alternatives

• Some countries have used stimulus funding to carry forward shovel-ready projects focused on pollution abatement and waste management

• Fiscal stimulus can have positive knock on effects for employment

Source: ILO, 2018
Recovery: Investing in “Building Back Better”

- Recently approved, *Greater Cairo Air Pollution Management and Climate Change Project* aims to improve air quality and address greenhouse gas emissions in the greater Cairo area
  - Six year, 200 Million USD World Bank Project
  - Focus on reducing vehicle emissions, improving the management of solid waste, and strengthening the air and climate decision-making system
  - Aligned with Egypt’s efforts to reduce both air pollution and climate pollutant emissions in line with the country’s *Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030*.

Source: https://moderndiplomacy.eu/
Redesign: **Shift towards Sustainability & Resilience**

- Involves building more circular, inclusive and resilient consumption and production systems
- Global examples from industrializing and industrialized countries and regions

Source: Ramboll, 2020
Redesign: **Shift towards Sustainability & Resilience**

- Pakistan: “Clean-Green Cities Index” has been initiated in 20 cities to trigger a shift towards improved waste management and sanitation.

- EU: “Next Generation EU” and Circular Economy Action Plan outlines areas for reducing dependency on foreign materials by preventing waste, boosting recycling and increasing the use of secondary raw materials.

*Source: Ellen Macarthur Foundation*
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- Redesign needs to include how to reduce “spillover”
- A new take on buffer zones
- Treatment of animals is also relevant
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- We must make a robust case for conserving nature in response to pandemics
- That means clearly establishing the facts and avoiding claims that could discredit us in future
- We live in an age of disinformation as well as information
- Effort is required to distinguish one from the other, and swiftly
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- Trade in wild species is an obvious risk area
- But zoonotic pandemics will not help to motivate for increased control of threatened species because they are not well represented
- Legislation may stimulate the informal market if it is not carefully applied
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• Habitat degradation needs to be more carefully explained if zoonotic pandemics are to be used as a motivation for conservation.

• Habitat *fragmentation* does, however, increase the porosity of the natural landscape

• There are countless other reasons to preserve our natural heritage and its diversity of ecosystems and species
  • “Baskets” of ecosystem services
  • Biodiversity itself has enabled thousands of technological innovations, even though science has barely scratched the surface
Looking ahead

• Prevention is more productive than cure
• Monitoring of potential spillover points can save trillions
• IGES Triple R planning framework can help strengthen coherence and consistency of COVID actions
• The Triple R framework underlines the importance of using resources for both policy and systemic changes
• The Triple R framework can be applied to areas that call for both changing policies as well as broader systems
• The Triple R framework can be flexibly applied to other policy areas where multiple barriers frustrate large scale change
• Need for addressing skills gaps, finance, trade and other barriers
• Regulations in wildlife trade