

Earth Alert

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Abstract

Think back 50 years, when every household had its own vegetable garden and grew its own produce, when people mended their clothes and passed them down from the oldest to the youngest, when the milkman would come to your doorstep to refill your glass bottles, when people drove to work together, when waste was limited as anything discarded was repurposed. We are slowly becoming robotic beings with little purpose, but to work, make money, spend and reproduce. Demanding policies that will make going green, the cheaper, easier path, like using solar power to produce electricity from house-to-house is a cost-effective climate change solution.

Earth day, April 22nd 1970.

Home to 3.7 billion people. 200 million cars on the road. Oil consumption 45 million barrels a day.

Earth day, April 22nd 2020

Home to 8 billion people. 1.5 billion vehicles on the road. Oil consumption has more than doubled.

What started out as an article on the environment, it has taken another turn. While writing it, it has become apparent the vicious circle of development and human behavior.

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youngest, when the milkman would come to your doorstep to refill your glass bottles, when people drove to work together, when waste was limited as anything discarded was repurposed.

Just 50 years ago. What happened?

Bakeries, drycleaners, supermarkets, shopping malls, offer an easy access to our primary necessities. With a click, we can have provisions, delivered to our doorstep. We are slowly becoming robotic beings with little purpose, but to work, make money, spend and reproduce.

Barry Rosenthal, a photographer/artist said, “The most meaningful advance will be to rethink our method of consuming”.

While technological advancement brought prosperity and comfort to our lives, with it came a rise in greenhouse gasses, the formation of the ozone hole, the overheating of our planet, landfills of waste, plastic in our oceans, fast fashion, the list is endless. We are slowly destroying our planet.

The April issue for the National Geographic states on the front cover, “How we lost the planet”, a projection made for the next 50 years. A bleak future.

Currently a $\frac{1}{4}$ of all animals is threatened by extinction. An estimated 8.8 million tons of plastic waste enters the oceans each year. Since its invention in the 1800s, over eight billion tons of plastic have been produced globally, with more than 50 per cent of it being discarded or burned, threatening land and marine ecosystems, with 9 million tons added each year.

Our demand for more energy in a growing population, to power our cars, heat our homes, air-condition our workspace, has increased the burning of fossil fuels, with the resulting buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which brings about the rise in temperatures. The subsequent melting of the ice caps, the rise in sea-levels and flooding, also brings about deeper droughts, coral bleaching, increasing heat waves and blazing wildfires.

What can we do about it?

Nature is essential for human existence. If bio-diversity disappears so do people. Working towards a sustainable future that meets the needs of the present without depleting natural resources is our only way forward. In order to have healthy communities, we need clean air,

natural resources and a non-toxic environment. Life expectancy has increased so we require more resources such as energy, water and space.

And though we found renewable solutions such as wind and solar power, biofuels from organic waste, recycling of materials , the harness of nuclear fusion, an almost limitless source of carbon free energy, we still cut, and burn, and dig, and drill, and harvest and plow, and give little back. How about we grow? Grow in our humanity, grow out of insatiable consumer needs, grow this earth.

Trees hold a major part of the answer. Let us plant the future. Grow trees. Create parks. What we cut for farming, agriculture, mining and logging operations, which provide the world's wood and paper products, let us plant back. What we take, let us grow back. In the words of the 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, "Trees are a natural climate solution. They take carbon out of the air and lock it away. Nature can regenerate and we can help ecosystems bounce back".

We need to protect the land and our oceans. The Campaign for Nature calls on policy makers to invest in conservation. We need to protect our national parks and ecosystems. A partnership between local communities and the government can also establish a stronger waste infrastructure, without trash being thrown into the streets and our beaches. An avid hiker and snorkeler myself, I see countless trash under the seabed and on mountain trails. Educating early on our younger generation on waste, the merits of recycling and training them to understand how plastic can be processed into raw materials to create new products and packaging is another step forward. Demanding policies that will make going green, the cheaper, easier path, like using solar power to produce electricity from house-to-house is a cost-effective climate change solution. Obtaining electric cars with tax incentives and regulations will also motivate people.

"(Moving to) Mars is not an option", says Dr. Enric Sala.

References

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