

Environment and COVID-19

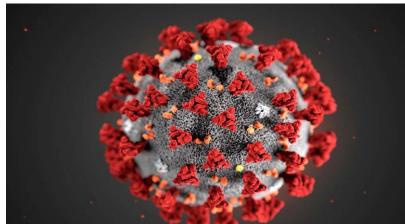
Faculty of Law, Ulv Hanssen Seminar II, 2021

Introduction:

People around the world have been facing the COVID-19 pandemic for over 1 year. Lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic have brought about several effects on the environment. It is time for us to rethink the relationship with nature. So, with this poster we would like to show the environmental lessons that COVID-19 could teach humanity and it is our honor to share what we have learned in the seminar with you.

1. Wildlife Habitats

Humans are decimating wildlife, and the pandemic is a sign!





Wildlife habitats are vital to human survival and agricultural production. But these natural places face increasing pressure from human activity. Habitat destruction like deforestation and agricultural development on wildland are increasingly forcing disease-carrying wild animals closer to humans, allowing new strains of infectious diseases to thrive.



Brazil's resettlement of farmers has driven Amazon deforestation.

"When you're building human homes right up on forest edges, you're destroying wildlife habitats and squeezing animal habitats into smaller areas," leading to a more likely transmission of disease to humans, accrrding to Tierra Smiley Evans, an epidemiologist at the One Health Institute at the University of California.

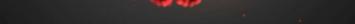
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Therefore, humans are creating the conditions that





In recent years, bats have been related to several viral outbreaks, from SARS to COVID-19.

More than two-thirds of emerging infectious diseases in humans have origins in animals, and scientists say the virus that causes COVID-19 probably originated in a horseshoe bat. Bats are less likely to transmit viruses to humans when they are in wild nabitats, but land conversation has increased their exposure to humans and upped the chances of virus transmission.

Amazon rainforest: deforestation at highest rate in more than a decade.

Monthly evolution of global CO₂ emissions, 2020 relative to 2019 Global Energy Review: CO₂ Emissions in 2020



allow animal viruses to cross over into human populations.

Let's start protecting wildlife habitats to stop the next pandemic!

2. Global Warming

Impact of COVID-19 on Global Warming

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2020 are estimated to have fallen by 7% due to empty roads, empty skies, and sluggish economic activity, the largest drop in annual emissions on record. However, this dip will only result in a **0.01**°C reduction in global warming by 2050. (+ it will have little effect on ground temperature and precipitation in 2020-2024)

Green Recovery (Green New Deal)

Green recovery is becoming increasingly important to ensure that changes such as CO2 reduction by COVID-19 are not temporary. Green recovery is one of the post-COVID-19 policies that aims at revival of the global economy that has been stagnant due to the outbreak of COVID-19, while at the same time addressing environmental issues such as the decarbonization of society. It is sometimes referred to as the "Green New Deal" in reference to the New Deal policies that planned the recovery from the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Case study of the green recovery policy in Portugal

The Portuguese government has shortened the approval process for small-scale electricity projects for self-consumption in order to help citizens and businesses that are having difficulty paying their electricity bills due to COVID-19. The approval was granted in a shorter time than usual, allowing solar panel owners to use electricity at a lower cost during the pandemic.



According to UNEP's Emissions Gap Report, a green recovery from the pandemic, if carried out, could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 25% in 2030, bringing it closer to the Paris Agreement goal of limiting temperature rise to less than 2°C.

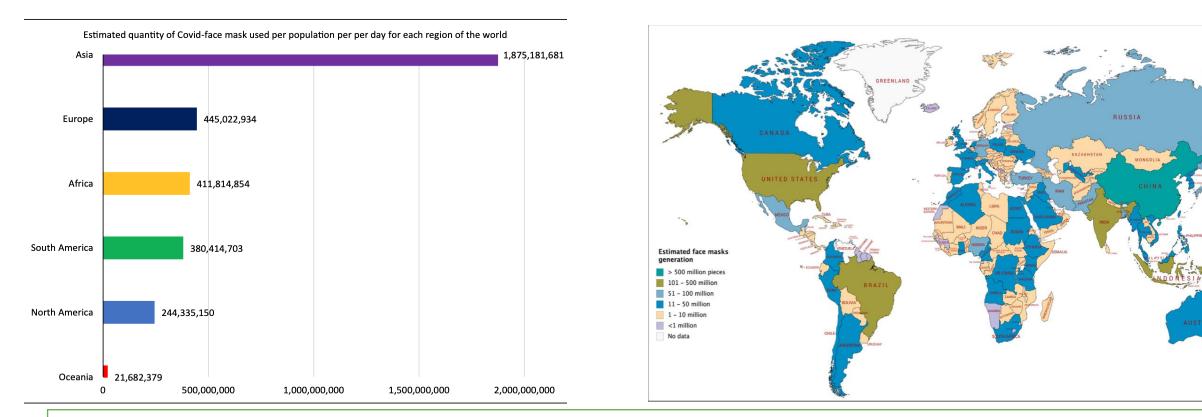


On the other hand, green recovery is not a well known term in Japan. According to a survey conducted by WWF Japan, the percentage of Japanese who know the term "green recovery" is less than 20%, and of those, only 4% even understand the meaning of the term.

Spread green recovery to protect our future!!

3. Plastic Waste

During the pandemic, the WHO (World Health Organization) implemented a policy called "Avoid the 3 Cs". This means that we spend much of our time at home and indoors activities are increased. Also, we are encouraged to wear masks and plastic gloves when we go out. Therefore the usage of online shopping, delivery, and biomedical supplements, such as face masks and gloves has increased. For instance, according to Tanjena Rumea and S.M. Didar-UI Islam, China has increased the daily production of medical masks to 14.8 million since February 2020



According to the research from Nsikak U. Benson et al, Asia is projected to generate the highest quantity of discarded facemasks per day.

Let's raise awareness of the risk of plastic waste. Let's reduce plastic waste to save the environment.



Plastic waste impacts the environment negatively. According to Okunola A Alabi et al, plastic waste can lead to environmental pollution on land, water and the air. According to the researchers, plastic waste can lead to the release of toxic chemicals into the soil which then seeps into the ground water or surrounding aquatic systems. It then pollutes the ecosystem. Moreover, when land fill plastic breaks down, carbon dioxide and methane are released into the air and leads to air pollution.



Plastic waste does not only lead to environmental pollution but also to animal death and negative health impacts on humans. According research estimates, more than 400,000 marine animals die from plastic waste every year. Humans are also exposed to the risk of plastic waste. When humans consume animals such as fish, which are exposed to micro plastics, then much of these microplastics are transferred to the human body. Therefore plastic waste is dangerous for the environment, animals, and public health.

Conclusion

Environmental lessons that can be drawn from the COVID-19

Habitat destruction enables the spread of diseases like COVID-19. Preserving habitats for wildlife is a human health issue.
A green recovery from the pandemic is important in order to realize a sustainable society. However, since it is still not well known in Japan, it is necessary to raise awareness and make many people understand the importance of a green recovery.
We should be aware of the effects of the plastic waste and take action to reduce the plastic waste during and after the pandemic