
What are the parallels between Covid-19 and climate change?

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Several parallels can be found between Covid-19 and climate change—from denialism to minimizing the severity of both problems. For example, both Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil claimed that the virus would diminish in the heat of spring, and that it was little more than a minor flu. Conspiracy theories have also been applied to both issues. Trump said that climate change was an invention of the Chinese and of communist environmentalists; and that the coronavirus was manufactured in laboratories in Wuhan. In both cases, it is easier to deny the crisis than to admit it is related to an extractivist and mega-industrial way of life.

Xenophobia and **racism** are other parallels. In regards to climate change, many blame the poor because they pollute, or indigenous peoples who deforest; or they attribute crises to a problem of overpopulation. With the coronavirus, we have been saturated with scenes of markets with seemingly poor hygiene. Trump called the new coronavirus a “Chinese virus,” distracting us from the true causes of the pandemic—such as pressure on forests and the existence of industrial mega-farms. In both cases, it is always the other, the outsider, who is responsible for all ills.

Another comparison of the two situations has to do with the management of **information and counter-information**. In both cases, there is a concerted strategy to **conceal information or to misinform**.

It was already scientifically known over 50 years ago that fossil fuels caused global warming, but this was countered with other information from the energy industry. Nothing was done despite knowing the causes. And what is worse, there was intentional movement in the opposite direction, via the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. What these mechanisms have done is worsen the situation. It has been the same with the Covid-19 pandemic. A part of the scientific community and the United States Department of Security knew that new strains of the coronavirus would arrive with brutal force. But nothing was done then either.

The responses to climate change proposed by States and the corporate and financial sectors are disconnected from reality. Drastic measures to reduce extraction and consumption of fossil fuels have been avoided. Similarly, Covid-19 has been blamed on a bat, a pangolin, or the virus itself—as if the virus itself were the problem to solve, rather than the root causes of its having turned virulent. In the case of Covid-19, disorganized and chaotic information is offered to keep investors calm and to subject people to anxiety and uncertainty. With climate change, they tell us we are all going to die tomorrow, in order to apply the “shock doctrine.”

Another similarity has to do with **differentiated impacts**. Climate change is more detrimental to populations of indigenous people, peasants, women and impoverished urban sectors. With Covid-19, the death rate among Afro-descendant, Latino or impoverished populations is much higher than that of white or wealthy populations. The same is true of the social and economic impact: popular and

working classes suffer discriminately from the health crisis and from climate change.

We can see that there will be more **drastic economic measures** after the pandemic. For example, what with the growing importance of farmland and food supplies, there will be more land grabbing and water grabbing. In macroeconomic terms, extraction will intensify even more, supposedly in order to alleviate the crisis. There will probably be increased financialization of nature.

This crisis is expected to hit capitalism hard. Financial collapse can be expected to follow on from other collapses. Until now, capitalism has been able to remain afloat, not only with the support of public money, the working class and women—and at the expense of nature—but also thanks to inventions of risky financial products, which have already led to internal crises such as the mortgage bubbles. There are also carbon credits, which are climate-based business deals. It should come as no surprise that financial products related to health and the risk of the virus spread have already been launched. The commodification and financialization of future pandemics is on the way, as has plainly already happened with climate disasters.

It would also not be surprising if international proposals in light of Covid-19 grouped together poverty “reduction” with “conservation” of forests without people and the “decarbonization” of the economy—through the market and banking, numbers and new digital technologies that will supposedly “lead” the way.

Finally, there are **command and control measures**, such as those already being used to surveil areas subject to the carbon market and ecosystem services. Now, to control Covid-19, mechanisms to control society are implemented through digital surveillance systems and draconian laws.

For governments, intellectuals or dominant currents in academia, Covid-19 is a separate crisis, and therefore must be resolved separately from the climate crisis, the crisis of falling oil prices, and other issues. That’s why their supposed solutions have always deepened the crisis, or created new ones. But organizations and peoples in movement already realize that the climate crisis and Covid-19 are part of the same historical crisis.

Today we see how the places most vulnerable to climate disasters are also attacked by Covid-19, extractive projects or the establishment of agribusiness or polluting industries. In the face of resistance, the territories are militarized and community leaders are criminalized. People are subjected to multiple exposures. There are multiple threats that impoverished and marginalized populations are exposed to. Several grassroots organizations are proposing solutions to this situation: food and energy sovereignty, working in mingas [collective/community work], solidarity, and community organization. It is about reuniting with the territories and territorializing struggles.

The peoples’ proposals are participatory and from the ground up—to defend territories against both extractivism and climate change, and to take actions of collective care in the face of the pandemic. Many initiatives are arising that are different from, and opposed to those of centralist states. And perhaps for that reason, they are more effective than any left-wing, right-wing, progressive or neoliberal government.

[Acción Ecológica Opina](#). ECOFASCISMO. Abril 2020.

[Black people four times more likely to die from Covid-19, ONS finds](#). The Guardian. 07/05/2020.

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