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# This Earth Day, let's get behind a Green Market Revolution

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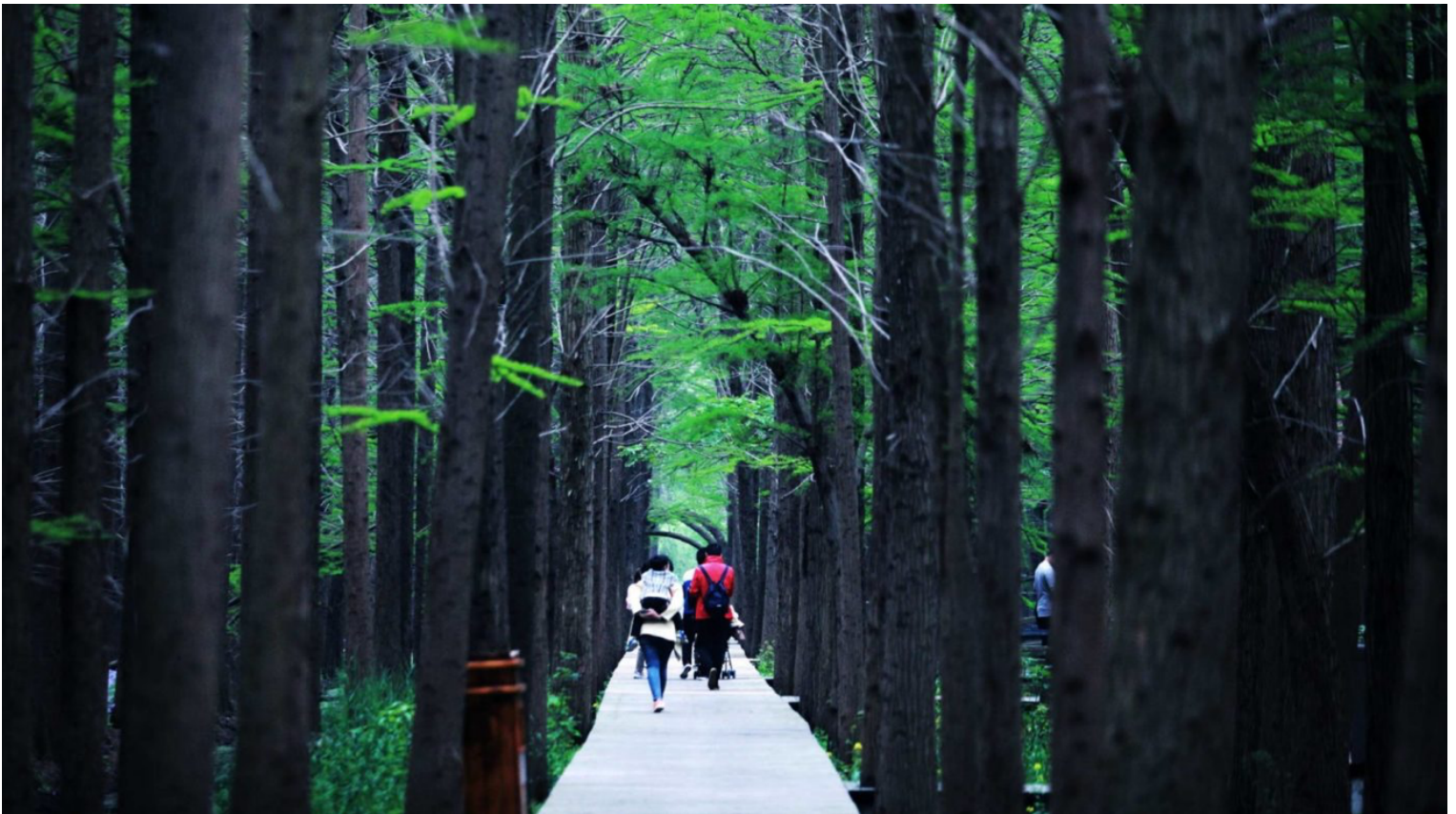


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We don't lack awareness of environmental problems, but we do lack sensible solutions



Conservation must be down to individuals and communities, not just the state



Look closely and you see modern environmentalism often has very little to do with the environment

Today marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Exactly 50 years ago, 20 million Americans, representing 10% of the entire population at the time, took to university campuses, city centres, and the streets in general to fight for the preservation of our environment from degradation and pollution.

But do not be fooled by this romantic image: what we need this Earth Day is not another mass protest à la Extinction Rebellion, even if Covid-19 allowed it. Whereas the original Earth Day in 1970 marked a historic moment of renewed environmental awareness, after decades of unprecedented economic growth (and pollution), here in 2020 environmental awareness is now higher than at any other point in industrial history.

Everyone knows about the reality of climate change, and the fact that we need to rapidly transition away from carbon-intensive lifestyles – this is no secret, and it is in the news-cycle nearly 24/7. But where we aren't lacking in awareness, we are most definitely lacking in sensible solutions that don't require dismantling capitalism or giving the state full control over the economy. That is why, this Earth Day, we don't need more awareness. We need real, tangible, practical action.

Sadly, the environmental debate has been hijacked by radical reactionaries stuck in their Malthusian echo chambers making vapid proclamations about 'system change' and overthrowing capitalism. Take Extinction Rebellion: its founder, Stuart Basden, freely admits that Extinction Rebellion "isn't about the climate". Instead, it is about dismantling the "cruelty and violence" of "600 years of colonialism", along with the associated sins of "patriarchy," "white supremacy," and "heteronormativity".

The same mission creep is evident in politics. Take the Green New Deal proposed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, which includes policies like universal housing, free healthcare, and federal jobs guarantees – another sure sign that contemporary environmentalism isn't actually about the environment. Sensible, evidence-based solutions, from nuclear energy to biotechnology, are dismissed out of hand because they don't conform to the narrow ideology of centralised state control and big government, not because they aren't 'green' enough (such options are often greener, in fact).


Often, unrealistic environmental demands and policies are smuggled into the debate by using apocalyptic visions of impending disaster. After all, if we risk all dying within 12 years, a Green New Deal might in fact be necessary. Yet, whilst it is true that climate change presents significant challenges, from rising sea levels to more extreme weather events, there is still room for significant eco-optimism.


Indeed, in many respects, the world has become much cleaner in recent years and decades, and will continue to do so in the future at a much accelerated rate. Even without the halt on pollution caused by the coronavirus, celebrated by some cynical environmentalists, CO2 emissions have already been declining in most Western countries for a few years. The United States hit its current ceiling in 2007 at 6.13 billion tons of CO2, and had fallen to 5.27 by 2017, despite an increase in population. Similarly, the EU hit its high point in 1979 with 4.34 billions tons and currently emits 3.54 billion. We are witnessing the Kuznets Curve in action, whereby after a certain point of prosperity, the richer an economy gets, the more its emissions decline.


Positive signs can be seen everywhere if you look closer. Today, we only need about a third of the resources for the same unit of economic output as we did a century ago. Water pollution – including in the Thames – has cleared up, the air has become cleaner, and Europe's forest area has grown by 0.3% a year in the last two decades. The amount of protected land area in the world has also increased dramatically – not only through the creation of national parks, but also through thousands of private philanthropists and land trusts.


Rather than government over-regulation, it is precisely these individuals that we need when it comes to tackling global warming and environmental degradation: entrepreneurs, innovators, and philanthropists – or *enviropreneurs*. Handing them more power, instead of unaccountable bureaucrats, is our best bet for solving future environmental challenges and problems.

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This may seem counterintuitive at first, particularly since it is the exact opposite of the prevailing environmental narrative. However, it is under-appreciated wisdom that people pay most attention to what is their own, and care less for what they perceive as distant and foreign, something Aristotle noted some two millennia ago. Roger Scruton's *oikophilia*, which emphasises the love of homeland, is a version of this. If someone owns land, or has a sense of belonging to it, he or she will be incentivized to take care of it and treat it sustainably. A bloated government bureaucracy is no substitute for personal responsibility or attachment.

Market environmentalism thus aligns the incentives for conservation, and confers responsibility to the individual and the community, rather than the government. Moreover, free market tools that unleash capital flows and tear down barriers to innovation, such as [Clean Tax Cuts and Clean Asset Bonds & Loans](#), are far superior to subsidy regimes and punitive regulations. As the new [American Climate Contract](#) outlines, it is only by setting capitalism free in a targeted manner, rather than restricting it, that we will stimulate the technology and innovation necessary to mitigate climate change.

Ultimately, this 50th Earth Day, what we need is an entrepreneurial, innovative, and pro-market approach to the environment, instead of the generic regulatory approach that dominates environmental activism nowadays. Indeed, on this Earth Day, we need a true [Green Market Revolution](#).

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