

Towards a green infrastructure-socialism? Ecological implications of the Corona crisis

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Contents

Corona and the ecological crisis – four remarks:

- Origins
- Causes and spread
- Vulnerability
- Environmental impacts

Political responses – three directions:

- Conventional growth strategy
- Ecological modernisation
- Green infrastructure-socialism

Corona and the ecological crisis – *Origins*

The ***origins*** of the Corona crisis like the causes of other epidemics and pandemics cannot be understood without taking ecological destruction into account.

- HIV, Ebola, Zika virus, Sars-CoV-2: majority of virus stems from **wild animals**
- Problem
 - **Destruction of wildlife habitats** (through deforestation):
higher probability of contact between humans and wild animals
 - **Consumption habits** and treatment of animals
 - „wet markets“ (living or just slaughtered animals)
 - industrial meat production
- **Zoonosis**: transmission of microbes from animals to humans where they mutate into potentially mortal pathogenic organisms

(Shah 2019)

Corona and the ecological crisis – *Causes and spread*

The ***causes*** of the Corona crisis and the reasons for its ***spread*** can be found in a globalized capitalism that is also a root cause of the ecological crisis.

- ***Capitalist globalisation*** (globalised agriculture, transnationally integrated production, tourism)
 - providing „food from nowhere“ (McMichael 2009)
 - destroying ecosystems
 - causing transport streams with high socio-ecological costs
 - facilitating the spread of diseases
- Corona as a „neoliberal disease“ facilitated by the „relational geographies“ of (Wallace et al. 2020)

Corona and the ecological crisis – *Vulnerability*

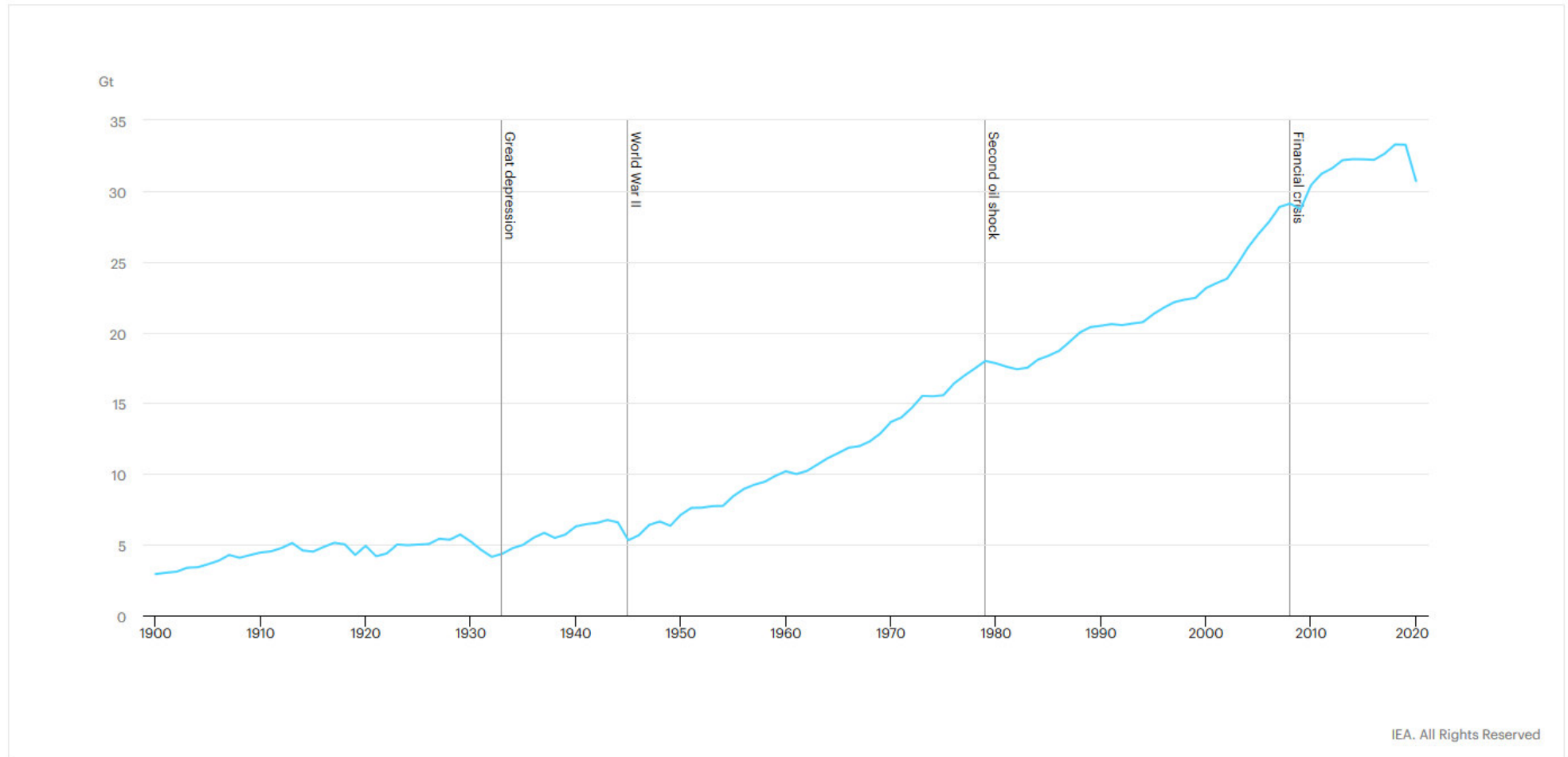
Environmental pollution increases the ***vulnerability*** to Covid-19.

- Growth of ***particulate matter concentration*** correlates with a growing Covid-19 lethality.
- „People live longer and more healthfully in a de-fossilised society.“

(Leopoldina)

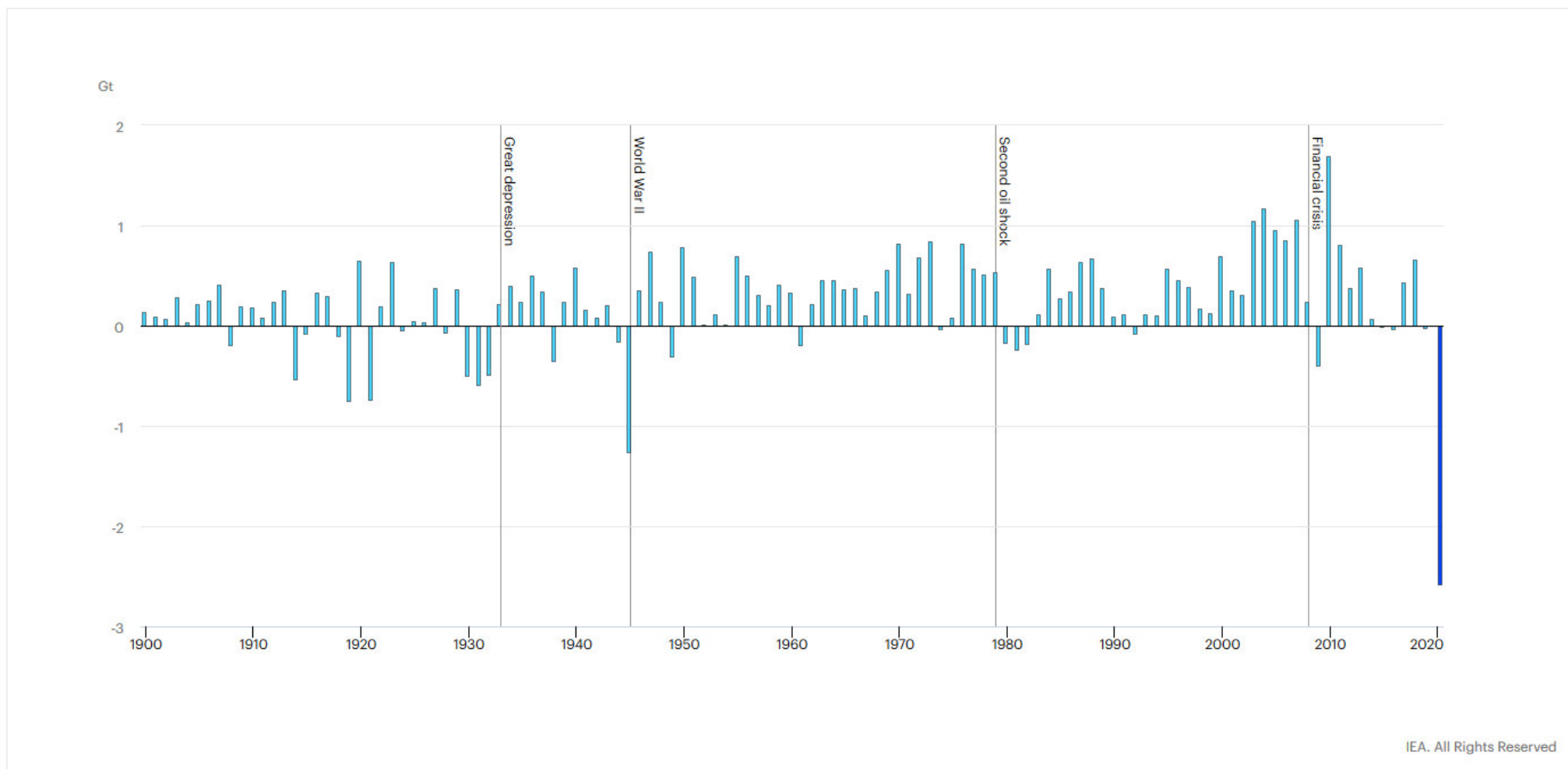
Corona and the ecological crisis – *Impacts*

Global energy-related CO2 emissions, 1900-2020



Source: IEA (2020): *Global Energy Review 2020. The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on global energy demand and CO2 emissions*, Paris: IEA, <https://www.iea.org>

Annual change in global energy-related CO2 emissions, 1900-2020



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Source: IEA (2020): *Global Energy Review 2020. The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on global energy demand and CO2 emissions*, Paris: IEA, <https://www.iea.org>

Political responses – *Conventional growth strategy*

- **Idea:** growth first, environment second
- **Evidence:**
 - struggle for a car scrappage scheme in Germany
 - Letter of the representatives of the European car industry to the President of the EC: „No production, development, testing or homologation work occurs for the time being. This upsets the plans we had made to prepare ourselves for complying with existing and future EU laws and regulations within the applicable deadlines set in these regulations. We believe therefore that some adjustment would need to be made to the timing of these laws.”

Political responses – *Ecological modernisation*

- **Idea:** combining economic recovery with a greening of the economy
- **Evidence:**
 - Pressure in favour of greening sectors like mobility: “GHG emissions from transport have increased every year since 2014. Estimates put them at 29 % above 1990 levels in 2018. Achieving climate neutrality will need a 90 % reduction in transport emissions by 2050.” (EEA 2019)
 - Discussions about a new target for the reduction of CO2 emissions in the EU (55 instead of 40 percent by 2030 compared to 1990)
 - European Green Deal (already before Corona)

Political responses – *Green infrastructure-socialism*

- **Idea:** re-thinking the economy from the logic of care and infrastructure provision for basic human needs and rights
→ feminist debate, links-netz.de and Foundational Economy Collective 2018
- **Entry point:** crisis experience
 - „Systemic relevance“ of workers in
 - hospitals
 - supermarkets
 - agriculture and food production
 - industries producing for the health sector
 - Everyday solidarity
 - Necessity and possibility of a strong role of politics in the economy
→ „renaissance of the primacy of politics“ (Arbeitsgruppe Alternative Wirtschaftspolitik 2020)

- **Orientations**

- decommodification
- democratisation (→ *radical* instead of *liberal* democracy)
- use value orientation

- **Alliances and challenges**

- red-green alliances
- international solidarity

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