

EDITORIAL

PLOS Sustainability and Transformation,
empowering immediate actions for a
sustainable future

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Over the past 2 years, we have lived through a perfect storm of extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Climate scientists at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies reported 2020 as the warmest year on record [1]; the Gulf Stream has slowed down dramatically [2]; the Last Ice Area has melted away faster than previously estimated [3]; and coral reefs continue their constant and global decline [4].

For societies around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in great suffering, economic hardships, and a less livable planet. Its impacts have extended far beyond human health, and its repercussions are still reverberating across the world, leading to millions of job losses, school closures, and the devastation of entire business sectors [5].

Another insidious challenge we are facing, perhaps more acutely now than ever, is that of misinformation, disinformation, and pseudoscience, which have led to the proliferation of unproven therapies for the novel coronavirus [6], and allowed climate-polluting businesses to avoid taking mitigating actions [7].

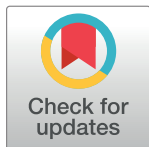
However, if there ever was a silver lining to be found, the COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated that humanity is capable of transforming ourselves to overcome an existential crisis. Indeed, as countries begin to emerge from the pandemic, many are investing in new economic models of green recovery, sustainable solutions, and carbon neutrality [8].

The effects of the pandemic and climate change have also led to a rebalance in focus between efficiency and resilience across the public, private, and people sectors in society. There is a greater awareness of the importance of solving for long-term sustainability in business, governance, and the environment.

Our ability to do so in inclusive and equitable ways will depend on the appropriate actions we take and decisions we make as a global society—decisions to be informed by the best available science, and in consideration of the complex social, economic, political, and environmental issues underpinning the challenges we face.

At *PLOS Sustainability and Transformation*, our overarching mission is to publish the evidence base that influences and supports these decisions. We will empower decision makers to take immediate actions for a sustainable future that is based on catalytic research from a diversity of researchers and policy experts across disciplines, sectors, and geographies.

There is much to be done in addressing the current and emerging challenges. The fodder for our global body of knowledge ultimately are the outputs and insights from our researchers and thought leaders. We will work alongside researchers to shape Open Science practices that facilitate trust, transparency, and discoverability of research that has a lasting impact on the sustainability of our environment, economy, and the societies around the world who depend on it.



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