

# PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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Hi,

With new warnings of a COVID-19 epidemic in the USA along with severe disruptions all over the world, it does seem that, at least here in Canada, the lead story has now become climate change, fossil fuel exploration and Indigenous rights. It's certainly about time that these issues began to dominate our headlines and consciousness for they are at the heart of Canadian sustainability. While Canada nearly tops the polluter per capita list and has been found guilty of cultural genocide against our Indigenous peoples we need such discussion and contemplation. But, most of all, we need action...and hopefully it's finally beginning, especially with the withdrawal of the giant Teck Resources oil sands mine proposal in Alberta and the mandated temporary halt to the contested gas pipeline in British Columbia. Are we at a tipping point in Canada? I'm hoping. Thanks Teck!

Preserving life on Earth was also brought home to me while visiting the French National Natural History Museum last week. There I had the amazing opportunity to see more beautiful orchids than I had ever seen before. At an exhibition titled "1001 Orchids" I entered into a glasshouse world of extreme natural beauty and beautifully scented air. Taking a deep breath was amazing. Boasting more than 30,000 species, this group of flowering plants amazes while reminding that there is just so much in nature to preserve, and that it's so important to ensure the survival of this diversity. With 'biodiversity' being a fundamental ecological principle and thereby important to our survival, experiencing all these orchids was a sensory, reassuring and motivating experience (see End Shots).

In today's **Planetary Health Weekly** (#9 of 2020) you'll read about the good and the

bad of preserving our life sustaining globe, so unique it is in the entire known universe.

Take a look at:

- Inside the Diamond Princess viral hotbed,
- The world's most choked cities,
- Record warmth in Europe,
- Social prescribing from a patient's perspective,
- The Canadian leading WHO's coronavirus investigation and more on COVID-19,
- Grizzly bear death rates climbing,
- A handheld 3D bioprinter for treating burns,
- New positive biodiversity findings from the U.K.,
- Energy emissions stabilizing,
- Global road safety,
- The link between ozone and Arctic warming,
- Yukon's Indigenous death inquest finally concludes,
- Pope Francis on nuclear weapons,
- Thomas Piketty on "What's wrong with inequality",
- Amnesty International's Kumi Naidoo on youth movements and climate change,
- Priscilla Chan's ambitious fight against all disease,
- Mumps sweeping the U.K. and flu elsewhere,
- D.R. Congo's Ebola still an international public concern,
- A new book by Matt Warner "Poverty & Freedom",
- Where British universities can't compete, and a bit more.

I hope you'll take a look.

Best, david

David Zakus, Editor and Publisher



Credit: David Zakus

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

PARIS, FRANCE

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**What Went Wrong On The Diamond  
Princess? Why Cruise Ships Are A**

## Hotbed For Viral Outbreaks



Credit: The Associated Press/Jae C. Hong

"What's been done is the individuals on that ship have been sacrificed for the greater good" said Dr. Michael Gardam, an infectious disease specialist and chief of staff at Humber River Hospital in Toronto. "Whenever we quarantine people, it's never good for the person or quarantine — it's good for the rest of us." According to another expert, Dr. Michael Mina, an epidemiologist and assistant professor at Harvard's School of Public Health: "It would be extremely difficult to end up containing it on a cruise ship...It was really a bad idea from the start."

While it remains to be seen if a study of the outbreak will be published with more specific details of how the coronavirus spread, one thing we may be able to learn about it as a result of this mass quarantine is how sick it makes people. "The only good thing to come out of this ship is this is the only time thus far that we have a natural experiment where we're getting a sense of what the spectrum of disease is," said Dr. Gardam. "Then we can start to tentatively apply some of those numbers to what's going on in the world and start to be a little bit more accurate in what we're talking about." [Read More at CBC](#)

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## The World's Most Traffic Choked Cities



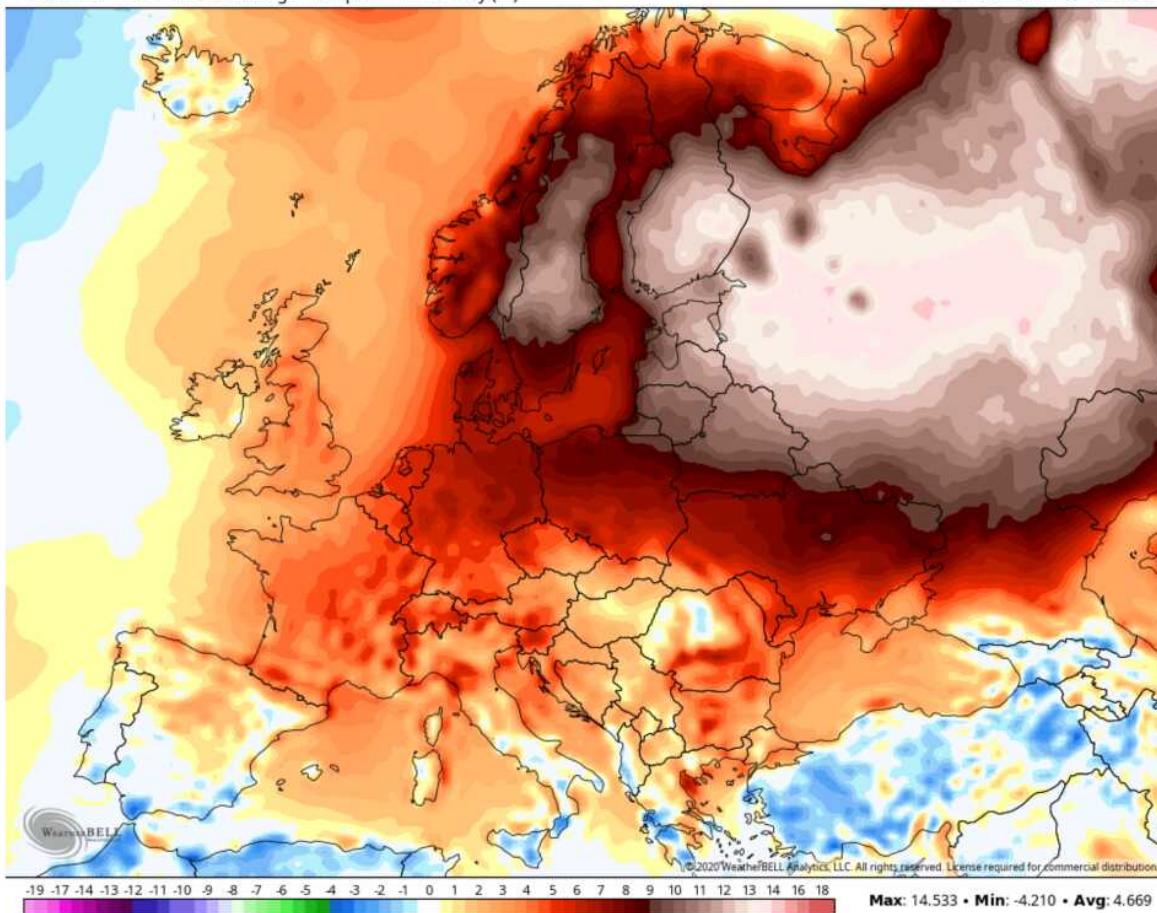
Credit: SATISH BATE/HINDUSTAN TIMES/GETTY IMAGES

Over the course of 2019, on average, [congestion](#) increased urban drive times by 71%. During evening rush hours, anyone driving what should have been a 30-minute trip spent more than an hour and five minutes behind the wheel.

TomTom offers real-time traffic data, an “event reporter” that logs things like road closures, historical data dating to 2008, analyses of which routes drivers prefer over others, and more. On the off chance that confirming your city is horribly congested isn’t bad enough, the report also tracks traffic from one year to the next—and the numbers aren’t encouraging. From 2018 to 2019, traffic worsened in a majority of the 436 ranked cities; few saw improvements. [Read More at Wired.](#)

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## ‘The Warmth Is Really Unheard Of’: Europe Just Posted Its Warmest January On Record



Europe's temperature difference from average in 2020. (WeatherBell)

Credit: WeatherBell

Europe just concluded its warmest January on record, coming on the heels of a toasty December and making the 2019-2020 winter season a contender for the warmest Europe has observed. Although the calendar has flipped to a new decade, there has been no slowing in the growing list of locations experiencing record temperatures amid a quickly warming climate.

The European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service announced Tuesday morning that January 2020 was Europe's warmest January on record, edging out previous record holder January 2007 by 0.36 degrees. The month was a staggering 5.6 degrees above the 1981 to 2010 baseline of "average" January temperatures across the European continent as a whole, with much of northeastern Europe surpassing benchmark values by nearly 11 degrees. It was also Earth's warmest January on record, essentially tying with January 2016. Technically, January 2020 was a hair — 0.054 degrees — warmer. [Read More at The New York Times](#)

**See Also at [The Economist](#): Emissions From Energy Production Have Stabilized, For Now**

# Social Prescribing: A Patient's Perspective



Credit: Ian Espinosa/Unsplash

"Things were at rock bottom, I felt isolated and I just didn't know who to turn to for

help" said Laura, a survivor of anxiety and depression. "I needed to ask for help and I approached my GP who recommended social prescribing".

See this 1.5 minute video on social prescribing, the new practice of physicians referring patients to a social help facilitator; and learn how it's being implemented in the U.K. and is of great help to those whom the medical system is unable to help. [Watch at Earth Citizens Health](#)

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## Who's The Canadian Leading WHO's Coronavirus Investigation In China?



[Credit: JHU Center for Systems Science and Engineering \(CSSE\)](#)

"A lot of people are asking, 'Where is the outbreak going? Is it getting better? Is it getting worse?'" asked WHO Director General Dr. Ghebreyesus at a recent media briefing. An advanced team of WHO experts has arrived in China, led by Canadian Dr. Bruce Aylward, to lay the groundwork for the larger international team.

From 2014 to 2016, Aylward helped develop [WHO's Health Emergencies Programme](#) and directed more than 2,000 people in WHO's on-the-ground response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Aylward also led WHO's response to the Zika virus outbreak in Latin America and Caribbean nations in 2016, declaring a global public health emergency and investigating the link between the virus and microcephaly. [Read more at CBC](#)

## See For More About COVID-19:

[At Healthy Debate: Responding to the Coronavirus - Building Capacity through Virtual Care](#)

[At the Conversation: Outbreaks Like Coronavirus Start in and Spread from the Edges of Cities](#)

[At Ozy: Chinese from Virus Epicentre Face Racism - In Their Own Country](#)

[At the Economist: Diseases Like COVID-19 are Deadlier in Non-democracies](#)

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## Grizzly Bear Death Rates Are Climbing



Credit: Avalon/Universal Images Group, via Getty images

Some 25 trains a day, each a chain of 90 to 120 cars, make the journey over the Rocky Mountains in northern Montana at speeds up to 25 miles per hour. They have long been a threat to grizzly bears, and last year was the worst with eight of the bears — a federally protected species — run over by trains. On one day in June, a mother and her two cubs were killed by trains in two separate incidents.

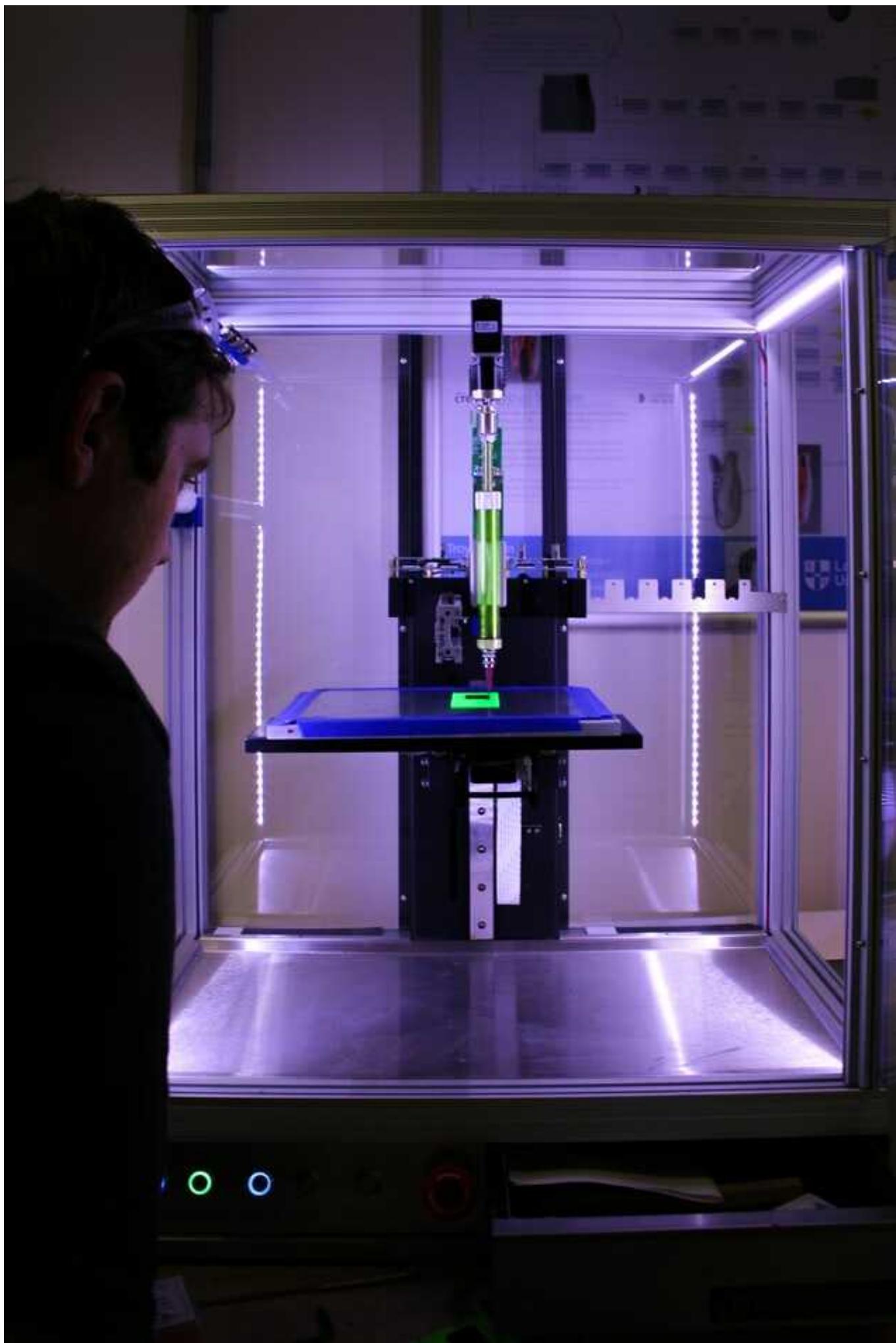
The death rate of grizzlies in this region has been rising, attributed not only to trains, but to poaching, cars and the removal of troublesome bears. In 2018, a record number — 51 — were killed in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, millions of

acres in and around Glacier Park. And last year, 51 bears were killed. In 2017, just 29 bears were killed or euthanized. [Read More at The New York Times.](#)

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## GOOD NEWS

# New Handheld 3D Bioprinter For Treating Serious Burns



Printing new skin cells on a [burn injury](#) may eventually become the new treatment to treat burns, shared a team of researchers from Canada. They have successfully tested the newly developed 'handheld 3D printer'. "Most significantly, our results showed that the MSC-treated wounds healed extremely well, with a reduction in inflammation, scarring and contraction compared with both the untreated wounds and those treated with a collagen scaffold," said co-author Dr Marc Jeschke, medical director of the Ross Tilley Burn Centre at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. [Read More at India Times](#)

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## MORE GOOD NEWS

### Meet The Species That Are Defying The Plunge In Biodiversity



Credit: [Olpo/Shutterstock](#)

In 2019, there were [44 million fewer breeding birds](#) in the UK than there were in the 1970s. There are thought to be [fewer than one million hedgehogs](#), compared to [35 million in the 1950s](#). Two-thirds of British butterflies have also been on [a downward trend since the 1970s](#), adding to a grim picture for biodiversity in the UK.

"Biodiversity" simply means the variety of life on earth. Simply put, rich and diverse ecosystems are essential to the way we live. Take the way our food is grown.

Agriculture depends on [hundreds of different species to pollinate crops](#) and [help with pest control](#). A diverse range of animals, fungi and microbes decompose organic matter and enrich the soil with different micronutrients, making the food we grow more nutritious.

This recent study [estimated species distribution](#) from observations of species collected by volunteers. These estimates covered more than 5,000 UK species of invertebrates, mosses and lichens extending back to 1970. They found a number of groups, including spiders and freshwater molluscs, whose distributions have declined, which means they're absent from places they could be found 50 years ago. But overall, the average distribution across the 5,000 species increased by about 11%, with some species expanding into new areas. [Read More at The Conversation.](#)

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## OPINION

# Another Summit On Global Road Safety? Key Questions To Ask Ministers



Credit: [Robert Bye on Unsplash](#)

The [3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety](#) was held in Stockholm, Sweden, on Feb 19–20, 2020, as the Decade of Action 2011–20 for global road safety comes to an end. Such summits are important for global road safety in many ways. First, they can bring political attention to road traffic injuries. Second, they can provide a stimulus for countries to assess their own situations and take action. Finally, they

present an opportunity for the global community to track progress of road safety efforts over time. Yet is this what global road safety needs at this juncture? Is global road safety succumbing to big declarations without action? It is time for some healthy introspection.” [Read More at The Lancet](#).

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## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

# The Unexpected Link Between The Ozone Hole And Arctic Warming



Credit: Photo by [Roxanne Desgagnés](#) on [Unsplash](#)

My colleagues and I were interested in understanding how ozone-depleting substances might have influenced late-20th century warming from 1995 to 2005. We specifically chose this time period in order to capture the rapid rise in ozone-depleting substances in the atmosphere over this time. Since the early 2000s, atmospheric concentrations have been declining.

One way that climate scientists approach problems like this one is to use computer models of the Earth to understand what the effects of different phenomena, such as volcanic eruptions, and greenhouse gases, such as methane, might have on air temperatures, ocean circulation patterns, rainfall and so on. To explore the contribution of ozone-depleting substances to late-20th century warming, we ran a climate model over the period from 1955 to 2005. [Read More at The Conversation](#)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

# Yukon Inquest Jury Concludes Cynthia Blackjack's Death Was Accidental



Credit: Facebook

Cynthia Blackjack died while being medevaced to Whitehorse from Carmacks on November 7, 2013. Yukon's director of community nursing defended the way workers at the Carmacks health centre handled Cynthia Blackjack's case, on the last day of inquest testimony. A six-person jury, now more than six years later, on January 31, 2020 and after concluding her death was accidental, delivered its unanimous decision with eight recommendations late Friday afternoon. Earlier in the day, the jury asked whether a finding of negligence was allowed as a verdict. Coroner Peter Chisholm said inquest juries may not find legal or criminal responsibility.

This follows nearly two weeks of inquest testimony, from Blackjack's friends and family, as well as health officials who treated Blackjack in the days and hours before her death on a medevac flight to Whitehorse. [Read More at CBC](#)

**See Also at CBC: [Yukon Inquest Into 2013 Death to Probe Issues of Health Care to First Nations](#)**

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## Quote Of The Week

**"One of the deepest longings of the human heart is for security, peace and stability. The possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not the answer to this desire; indeed they seem always to thwart it. Our world is marked by a perverse dichotomy that tries to defend and ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust, one that ends up poisoning relationships between peoples and obstructing any form of dialogue.**

**Peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total annihilation. They can be achieved only on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family of today and tomorrow."**

**Pope Francis speaking in Nagasaki, Japan,  
November 24, 2019**

See Also: [The Pope and Catholic Radicals Come Together Against Nuclear Weapons](#)

Click for Full Text of Pope Francis' Message in Nagasaki

## Upcoming Events

- March 4th - 6th: [Climate Leadership Conference](#) (Detroit, Michigan, USA)
- March 6th - 7th: [International Women's Day: Research and](#)

[Revolt Conference](#) (Guelph, Ontario)

- March 21st - 24th: [Oxfam Summit And Day Of Action](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- March 25: [Health In A Changing Climate - Department of Family and Community Medicine, UToronto](#) (Toronto, Canada)
- March 31 - April 2: [World Public Health Nutrition Congress 2020](#) (Brisbane, Australia)
- April 6th -7th, 2020: [17th World Congress on Paediatrics and Neonatology](#) (Tokyo, Japan)
- April 18th -20th, 2020: [CUGH Conference 2020: Global Health in a Time of Worldwide Political Change](#) (Washington, D.C., USA)
- April 24th - 26th, 2020: [PEGASUS IV: Migration - Climate Change - Sustainable Development](#) (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada)
- April 28th - 29th: [Global Health Impact Expo + Exchange](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- April 28th - 30th: [CPHA's Public Health 2020](#) (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada)
- May 2nd - 4th: [RESULTS CANADA National Conference: From Action to Impact - Working Together to End Extreme Poverty](#) (Ottawa, Canada)
- May 21st - 23rd: [Indigenous Health Conference: Building Our Future](#) (Niagara Falls, Canada)

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## FYI#1 SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA

# What's Wrong With Inequality?



Credit: The Economist

Listen to a 25 minute podcast with Thomas Piketty, famous French economist and author of "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" and most recently "Capital and Ideology".

The idea that inequality is rising is being used to explain everything from tribalism to low voter turnout. But how much is known about the gap between the haves and the have-nots, is it growing and why does it matter? Thomas Piketty, dubbed "[the modern Marx](#)" for his theories on how wealth concentrates, talks to Anne McElvoy and Henry Curr, *The Economist's* economics editor, about his new book, "Capital and Ideology". They debate how unfair societies can learn from their mistakes and whether inequality is ever in the public interest. Also: why Piketty would like to pay more tax on his bestsellers and what life with three daughters has taught him about equality in the home.

To Listen, see at The Economist

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FYI #2

# Podcast Interview With Amnesty International Secretary General Kumi Naidoo



Credit: [Christian Lue on Unsplash](#)

Kumi Naidoo is Secretary General of Amnesty International. He's a longtime activist and civil society leader who joined the anti-apartheid movement as a teenager and for many years led Greenpeace.

In September, ahead of the UN Climate Summit, Amnesty International conferred its highest honour, the Ambassador of Conscience Award, to Greta Thunberg and the Friday's for the Future Movement. In this conversation we hear Kumi Naidoo's

perspective as a longtime activist on this burgeoning transnational youth climate movement. That is the focus of much of our conversation in this episode.

[Read more at Undispatch](#)

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### FYI #3

## Priscilla Chan Charts An Ambitious, Unglamorous Course To Fight Disease (Her Husband Is Involved Too)



Credit: JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Dr. Priscilla Chan was just over a year out of her pediatric residency when, in 2016, she took the stage beside her spouse, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, and pledged to affirmatively answer the question projected on the big screen behind them: "Can we cure all diseases in our children's lifetime?"

It was the sort of absurdly ambitious question that would be easy to dismiss from a Silicon Valley technologist — the billionaire instantly recognizable in his gray T-shirt and jeans. But Chan, who grew up in the Boston suburbs, knew something about science. She had studied biology and worked in a neuroscience lab. She knew that the human body was more complicated than the most dizzyingly technical challenges her husband had overcome.

Three and a half years later, Chan, who turns 35 this month, insists that the goal she and Zuckerberg have set for themselves — to “cure, prevent, or manage all diseases” by the year 2100 — is a realistic one.

[Read more at Stat News](#)

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## FYI #4

# **Students Told To Get Vaccinated As Mumps Outbreak Sweeps U.K. Schools and Universities**



Credit: Ben Wicks on Unsplash

There were 5,042 recorded cases of mumps in England in 2019 – four times the number in 2018 and the highest level in a decade, according to data from Public Health England (PHE). Just as measles cases have jumped dramatically in recent years, the rise in the incidence of mumps is directly linked to the fall-off in Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination rates.

The scare was first sparked in the early 1990s following the publication of a paper in the *Lancet* which falsely claimed there was a link between the MMR jab and autism. It has created a generation of unprotected young people known as the “Wakefield cohort”, named after the disgraced former doctor Andrew Wakefield who sparked the scare. Many are now at college and university where close quarters living and socializing creates the ideal environment for viruses to spread – more than half of mumps cases between 2012 and 2018 were among 15 to 24 year olds.

**See Also:**

[The Big Number: The Flu Has Hit At Least 22 Million \(And Possibly 30 Million\) People In The U.S. So Far This Season](#)

[DR Congo Ebola Outbreak Still An International Public Health Concern](#)

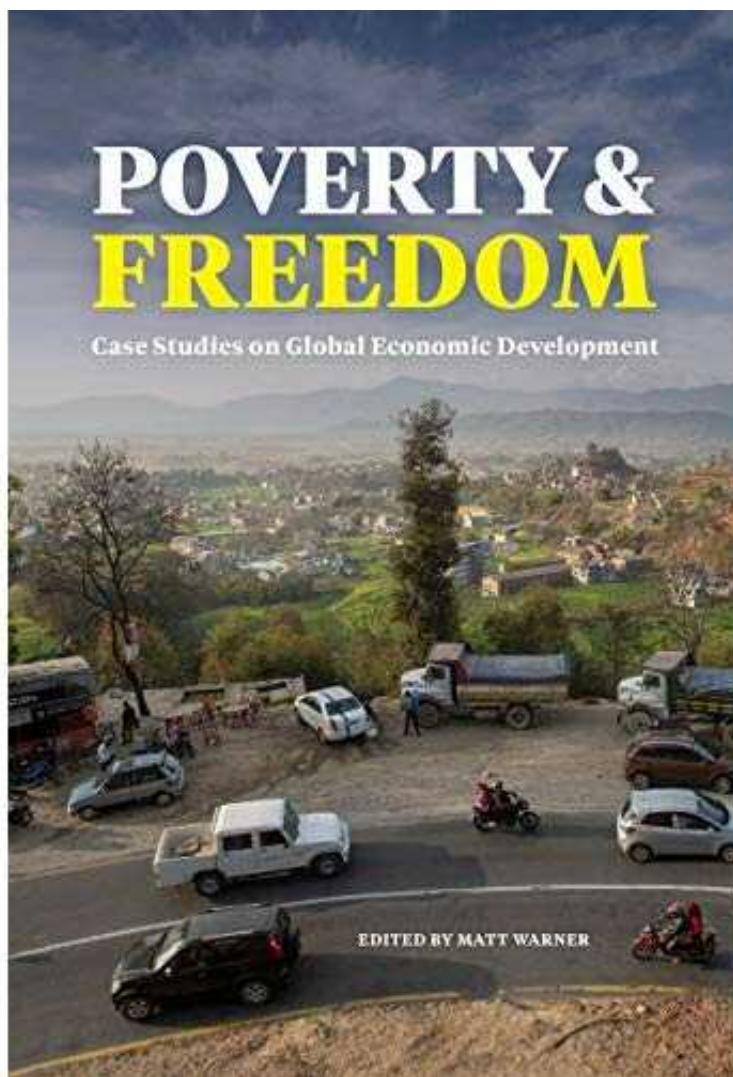
Read more at Telegraph

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## FYI #5: WINTER READING: NEW BOOK

# Poverty & Freedom - Case Studies on Global Economic Development

## Edited by Matt Warner



Credit: Atlas Network

"In every country there are barriers—unfair laws, corrupt practices, unworkable bureaucracies—that disproportionately harm low-income people," explains Warner. "Outsiders have a lot of ideas about how to fix those problems, but the more effective approach is to support local visionaries who better understand what needs to change,

how to change it, and how to communicate the benefits of those changes to local stakeholders."

Governments and well-meaning philanthropists continue to spend billions of dollars on foreign-led interventions that prop up the traditional model of international development. But real solutions to poverty are worked out by people with a vision of change that is rooted in a local understanding of sustainable growth. The freedom to grow and develop is enhanced by the crucial knowledge and leadership that only local people can provide—and this is the model that can create a lasting exodus from poverty. The thirteen case studies in *Poverty & Freedom* showcase the inspiring work of local think tanks that are committed to expanding freedom for vulnerable populations by fighting government abuse, making legal markets more inclusive, and removing other barriers to opportunity all over the world.

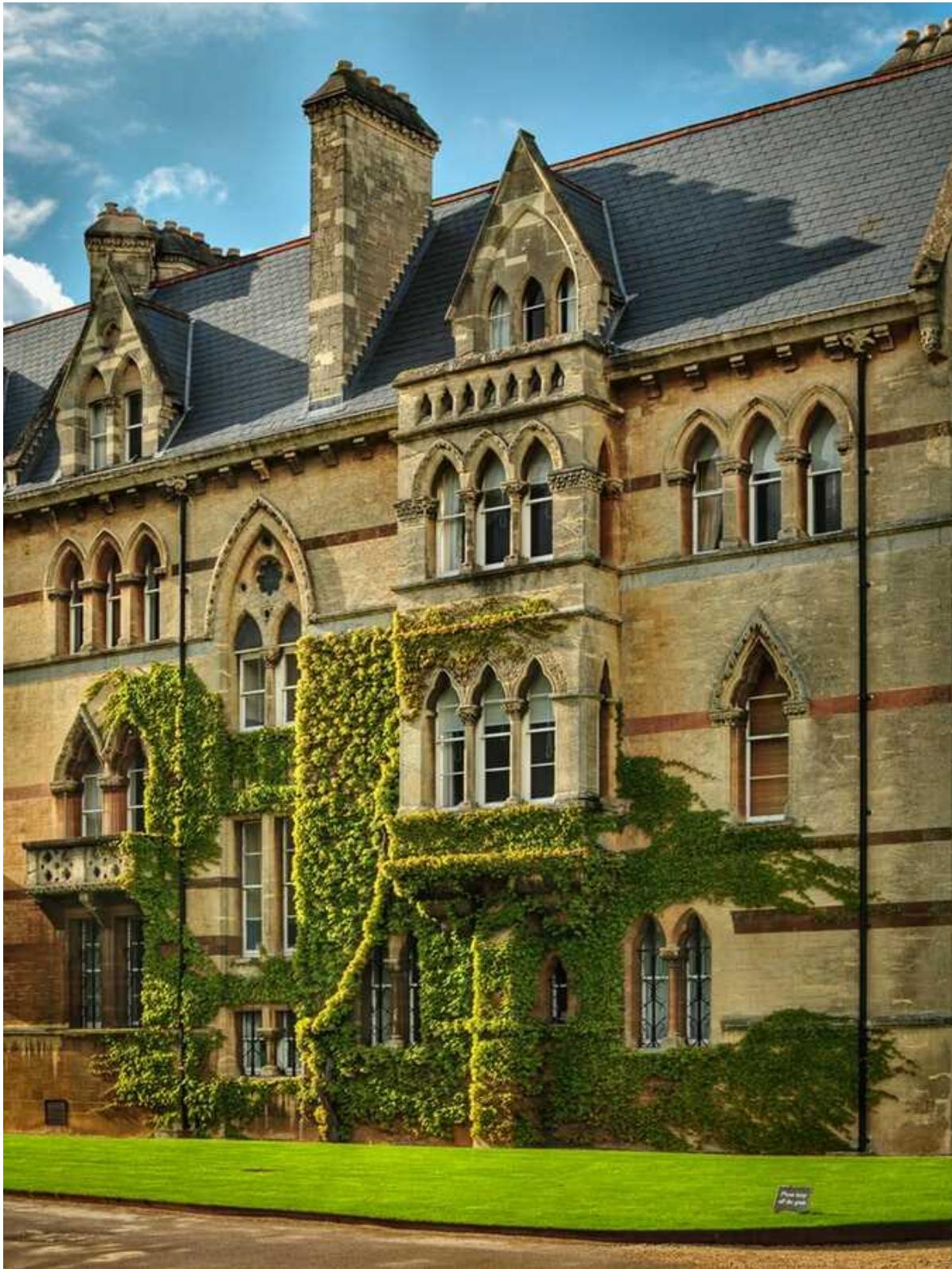
Drawing on a diversity of thought leadership from academics and practitioners in the international aid community, *Poverty & Freedom* invites consensus on a new philanthropic approach to economic development, one that turns attention away from the traditional foreign aid model and instead emphasizes voluntary support for local change organizations focused on expanding economic opportunity for low-income populations.

[Read more on Atlas Network](#)

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## FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

**I've Studied In Four Different Countries. Here's Where British Universities Simply Can't Compete**



Credit: Photo by [Viktor Forgacs on Unsplash](#)

At 9am on a Monday you wouldn't expect to find a seat in the library at Aarhus University, in Denmark. Yet the towering yellow brick building would be deathly silent. To release a cough inside the large first floor study room would result in dagger glares from Danish students who were ferociously working away.

I found the enthusiastic, almost authoritarian work ethic I witnessed in Denmark —

from compulsory attendance, to highly critical grading — completely alien. At 9am on a Monday at the University of Lancaster, where I completed my undergraduate degree, the campus would be empty: everyone was still sleeping.

[Read more at The Telegraph](#)

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## END SHOTS

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**"THOUSAND AND ONE ORCHIDS"**

**JARDIN DES PLANTES GREENHOUSES**

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

**PARIS, FEBRUAY 19, 2020**















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Credits: David Zukus



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