

Is COVID 19 a 'Capitalocene' Challenge?

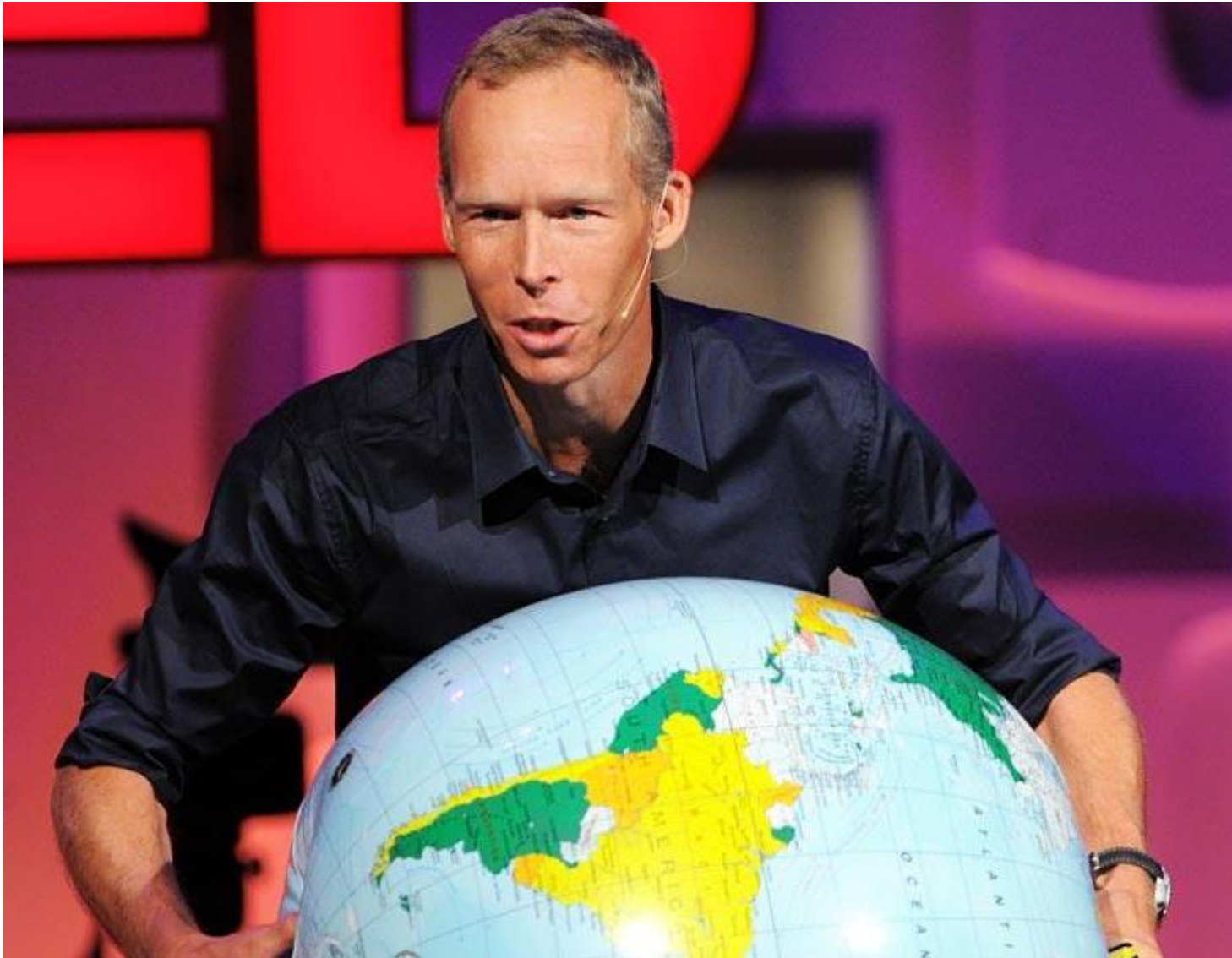
Some Reflections from Indian (Cities)

State of the art: Corona research

- <https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/corona-research>
- technical and medical aspects (business as usual or the ‘new normal’?)
- “The coronavirus isn’t just a public-health crisis. It’s an ecological one” (Brown, 2020).



'Capitalocene'?



The 9 planetary boundaries

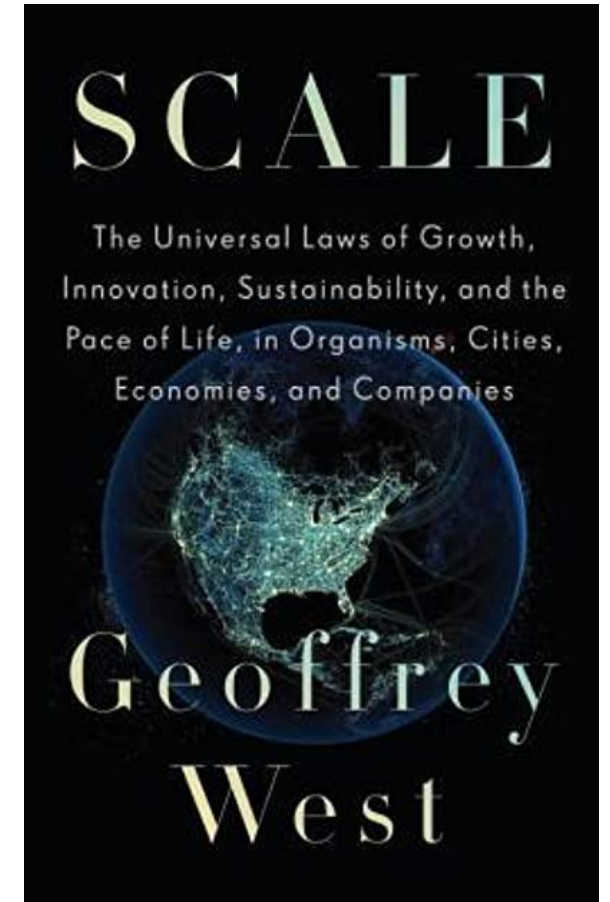
To keep Earth hospitable, we need to live within 9 specific limits. Here's how we're doing in 2015.

	BOUNDARY	WHERE WE ARE TODAY
1. Climate change	Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide at no more than 350 ppm	Carbon dioxide levels are at 400 ppm and climbing
2. Lost biodiversity as species become extinct	Maintain 90% of biodiversity	Biodiversity has dropped to 84% in parts of the world such as Africa
3. The addition of phosphorus, nitrogen (and other elements) to the world's crops and ecosystems	Worldwide use per year of about 11 teragrams (Tg) of phosphorus and 62 Tg of nitrogen	Up to about 22 Tg per year of phosphorus and 150 Tg of nitrogen
4. Deforestation and other land use changes	Maintain 75% of the planet's original forests	Down to 62%
5. Emission of aerosols (microscopic particles) into the atmosphere that affect climate and living organisms	Global boundary unknown, but regional effects (such as on the South Asian Monsoon) occur when Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) is more than 0.25	Up to 0.30 AOD over South Asia, but probably well inside (or below) the boundary over most of the globe
6. Stratospheric ozone depletion	Less than 5% below pre-industrial level of about 290 Dobson Units (DU)	Still safely inside the boundary except over Antarctica during spring, when levels drop to 200 DU
7. Ocean acidification	When the oceans become acidic enough that the minerals sea creatures need to make shells, such as aragonite, begin to dissolve	Still within the boundary, which won't be crossed if we can stay within the climate boundary of 350ppm of CO2 in the atmosphere
8. Freshwater use	Can use up to 4000km ³ of freshwater a year	We use around 2600 km ³ of freshwater per year
9. Dumping of organic pollutants, radioactive materials, nanomaterials, micro-plastics, and other novel or man-made substances into the world's environment	Unknown	Unknown



“Capitalocene is a kind of critical provocation to this sensibility of the Anthropocene, which is: **We have met the enemy and he is us**” (Moore 2017).

Anthropogenesis = urbanogenesis?

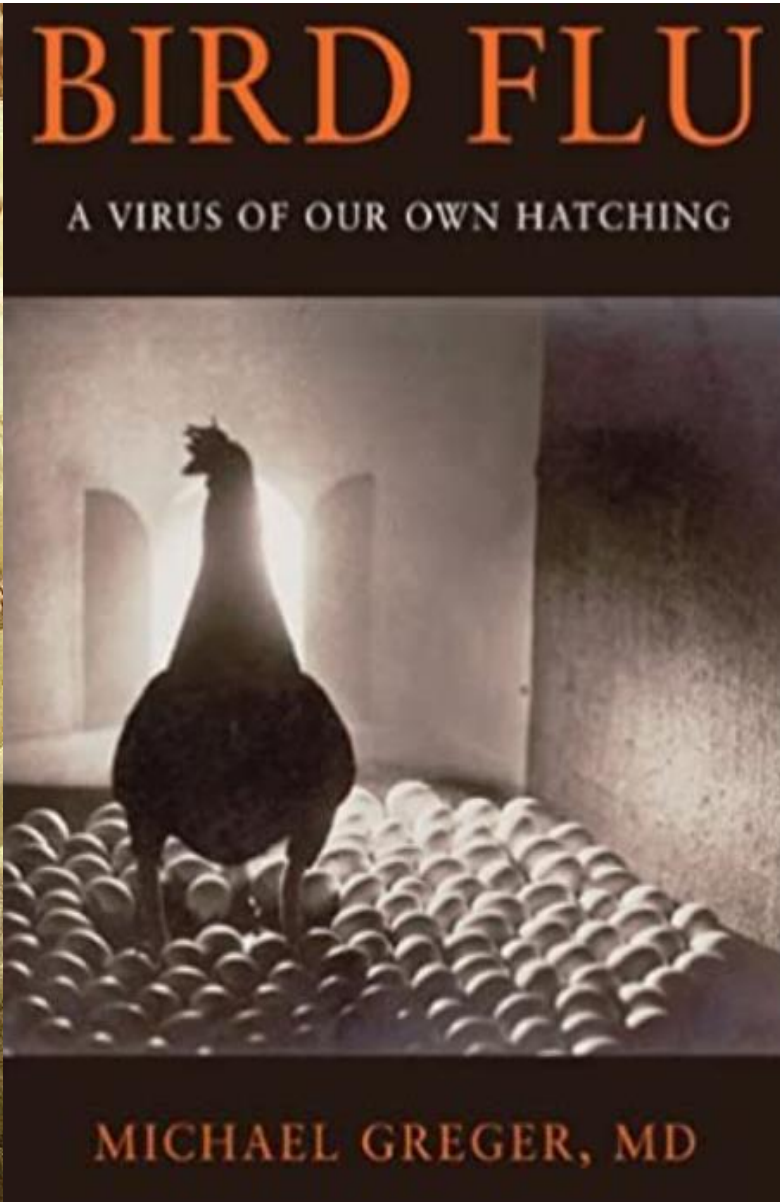


- Zoonosis
- Van Dooren (2020): “the real source of the crisis is human, not animal”
- the ‘dysfunctional relationship’ (Dooren, 2020) or ‘discursive separation’ (Peterson, 2020)

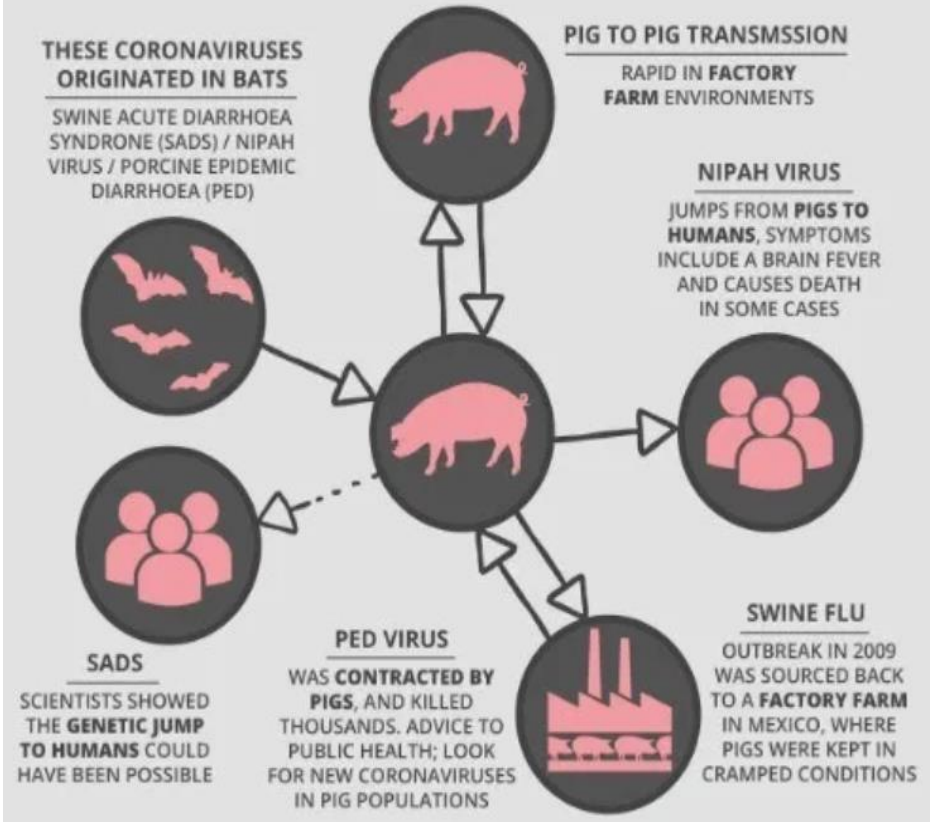


The hand of human intervention in mutual symbiosis and harmony with nature © Olaf Hajek



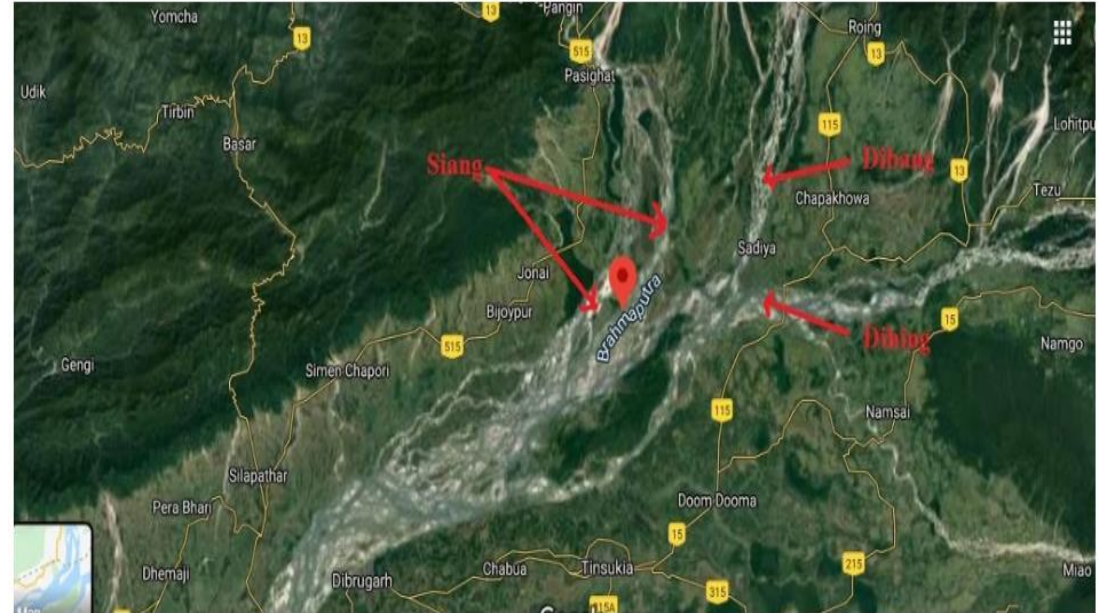


LINKS BETWEEN FACTORY FARMING & PANDEMICS/EPIDEMICS



The Indian Context

- dramatic rise in meat consumption; from eudemonic to hedonic notion of wellbeing
- cultural (and hence dietary) transformation
- 8–10 % annual growth (1900-2010) in the Indian poultry sector with an annual turnover of US\$7,500 million
- South Asian wet markets
- illegal trading
- transboundary transmission



'Urbanocene' and the Indian cities

- 'urbanization without growth' (Davis, 2004)
- 'urbanization without infrastructures' (Allen, 2009)
- 'irregular urbanization': ghettos, shantytowns, favelas, slums (Mendieta, 2019)
- consumption cities and consumerist cities
- the paradox of the great divide: consumerism and deprivation



COVID and urban informality

- “As we in the global North brace ourselves for the coronavirus pandemic we are being told to wash our hands (for 20 seconds!) and self-isolate if sick. But what if you cannot do either of those things? One billion people live in slums or informal settlements where water for basic needs is in short supply – let alone 20 seconds worth – and where space is constrained and rooms are often shared. Yet discussion about vulnerability in these contexts has been startlingly absent” (Wilkinson, 2020).
- “Densely packed urban environments where humans live alongside bats, rodents, birds, pets and domestic animals are especially fertile grounds for the spread of new disease. Here, viruses – or indeed other pathogens – can easily jump from species to species and evolve to be infectious to multiple hosts” (Fèvre & Tacoli, 2020).
- “...how community organisation networks can be supported to scale up their efforts” (Mitlin, 2020)

India's migrant workers: Deadlock during lockdown





<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#search/andinijan%40gmail.com/FMfcgxwHMZNWmVqjmqFHvpzkzvtKICP?projector=1>

Mumbai's ticking bomb



OUTSIDE their homes during the lockdown at Dharavi on April 3.

Kolkata, Sundarbans and Cyclone *Amphan* (May 20, 2020)



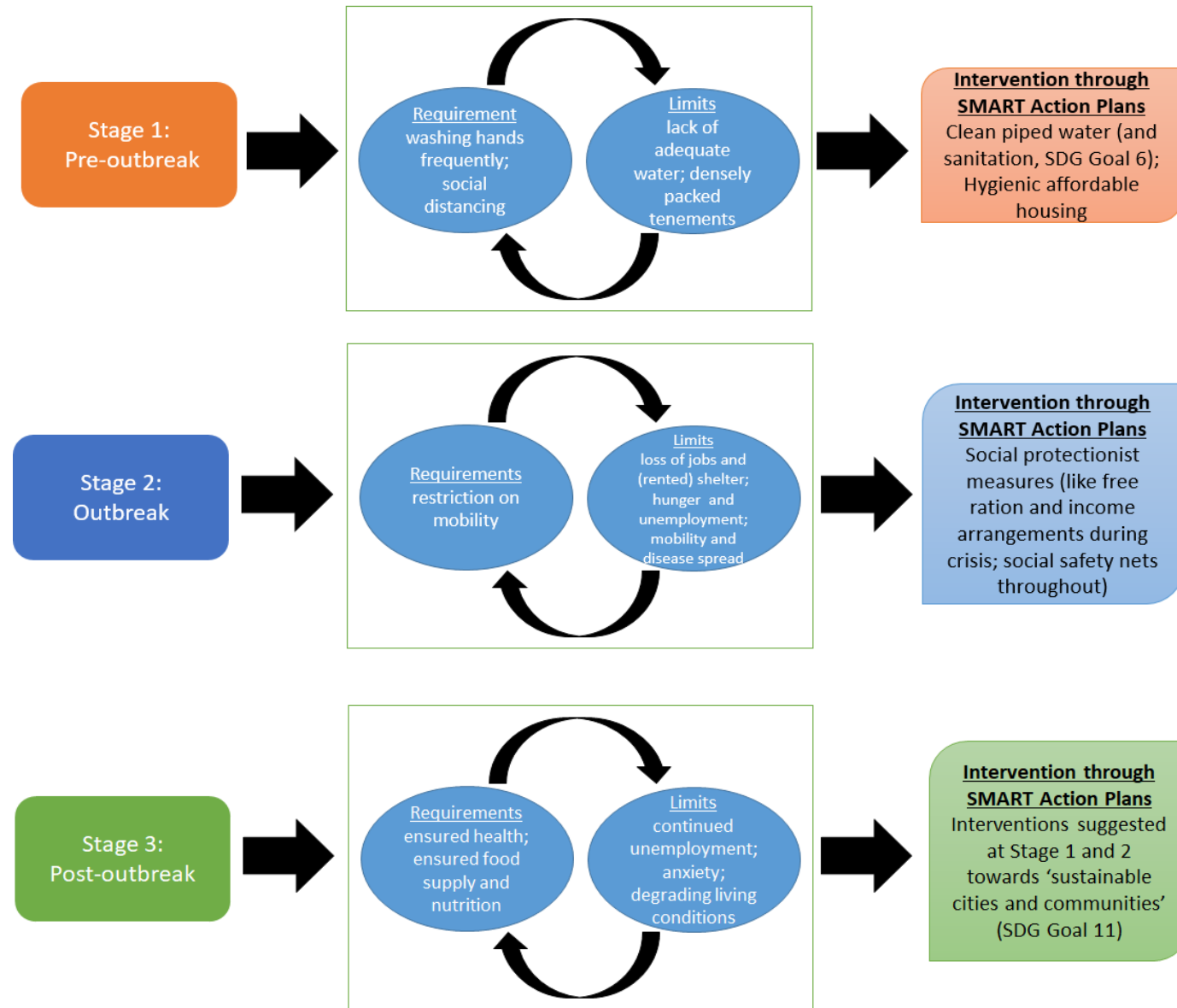


Illustration 1: COVID-19 challenges and suggested interventions in informal settlements

Rays of hope

- Everyday heroes of the pandemic; the 'corona warriors'
 - mask makers
 - donation drivers
 - pet feeders
 - fake news controllers



Youth animated!



‘wicked problem’; yet, common root; hence,
common solution

- Beyond virus-vaccine war; from virus ecology to integral ecology
- Microbial webs bridging the spaces between human beings and other species for all of our history
- Multispecies interspecificities
- Biodiversity; biological interconnections
- Solidarity
- Blurring and breaking boundaries

- Today's youth are facing "immense challenges: challenges that have never existed in human history. You have to decide whether the species is going to survive. That has never arisen before."
- The pandemic has only exposed the suicidal tendencies of capitalism.
- "It can be dealt with right now...but not under the current socio-economic regime".



Arundhati