

# BACK TO NORMAL? HOW TO TURN THE CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY



It is clear that the coronavirus pandemic represents a serious health crisis worldwide, and it is also true that the spread of the virus is having very important economic effects on a global scale. For this reason, considering these difficult times that we are living, learning to turn this health and economic crisis into an opportunity to be better as a society is a must.

Some may wonder if it is possible to make something out of a situation as the coronavirus pandemic and turn the crisis into opportunity. **To put it simply, the virus can be seen as a time for reflection in the hopes of building a better future once the pandemic is over.**

It is about taking a different approach to all the negative information and bettering ourselves, to start setting the goals to meet after the crisis, which will allow us to make positive changes for humanity.

While the general idea is that everyone makes a collective reflection while contributing ideas, at some level, the pandemic is having positive effects on many issues that the world has been facing for years. Thus, the coronavirus crisis can be seen as an opportunity to:

**Remember that humanity is a society in which we all belong.** As a collective society, we must care for and treat each other with affection for the benefit of all. If there is anything to learn from the pandemic is that, above our personal interests, we must first think about the common good to survive as a species and to help vulnerable people.

**Understand that when we stop, the planet heals.** The pandemic has been a great relief for the environment and for natural ecosystems. A few days ago, the Venice City Council confirmed that the lower influx of tourists and fewer boats sailing had reduced pollution. Citizens also claim that the Venice lagoon and canals have clearer waters, and report that small fish and seaweed have appeared.

In Spain, the cities of Madrid and Barcelona also reported a significant decrease in air pollution after the first week of the nationwide lockdown. Specifically, NO<sub>2</sub> barely reached 40% of the safe level set by the World Health Organization and the European Union.

While some may consider it a miracle, it is but a consequence of the state of emergency. Additionally, greenhouse emissions from commercial air travel have also been reduced during the coronavirus pandemic. It all points towards one question: Should a mass tourism model that seriously damages the environment continue?

**Defend the protection and reinforcement of economic, material and human resources allocated for public health.** As a society, public health systems are the main shield against a pandemic.

The great efforts that health workers all over the world are making to care for the sick have sparked a solidarity wave in badly affected countries, such as Italy and Spain. Every day, people wave, sing and cheer from balconies and windows to thank doctors, nurses, and assistants.

Some public administrations had forgotten the importance of having a strong and efficient public health system when enforcing cuts in times of economic crisis.

As a collective, health should be a priority in the design and execution of public policies, regardless of political parties or governments.

**Understand the importance of the private sector when facing a global crisis.** The solidarity of businessmen and entrepreneurs has been a much-welcomed relief amid the pandemic.

In many destinations hotels have turned their establishments into medical facilities to treat those infected with COVID-19, to ease the burden on the health system.

Many times, citizens have been too critical of hotel managers and entrepreneurs due to the downsides of mass tourism, but their help has proved to be invaluable.

**Understand that telecommuting can be integrated into a wide variety of economic and social sectors in which being present is not essential.** The state of emergency decreed by governments across the world has forced most companies to opt for telecommuting, also known as working from home. Instead of a temporary measure, couldn't it be an opportunity to change?

While it is true that most jobs entail socialization and leaving the house every day to be with our coworkers, the technological advances allow us to see in telecommuting a great way to balance work and family. And let's not forget that when we stop, the planet heals. That is why we should also see telecommuting as a strategy to promote sustainability in our cities, towns and local communities.

**Rethink the tourism model that we want for the future.** Despite the fact that most tourism-related initiatives define sustainability as a priority, the reality is that world tourism systems based on massive travel endanger the planet's environment.

The coronavirus crisis has proved that climate change is real and how our actions matter. Venice is a clear example of why mass tourism models are not sustainable, but also that there's still time to work on a better future once the crisis is over.

One option could be shorter trips to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or maybe traveling less as a way to protect the planet. **The biggest lesson for the world is that thinking of others ensures our survivability as a species, so this is also a concern for tourism.**

It may not always be easy to turn a crisis into an opportunity, especially when there are grey areas that keep us from identifying positive aspects in a large scale situation such as the coronavirus pandemic, but once this crisis is over, the challenge will be applying those hard-learned lessons and working towards a better world and a better future.

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