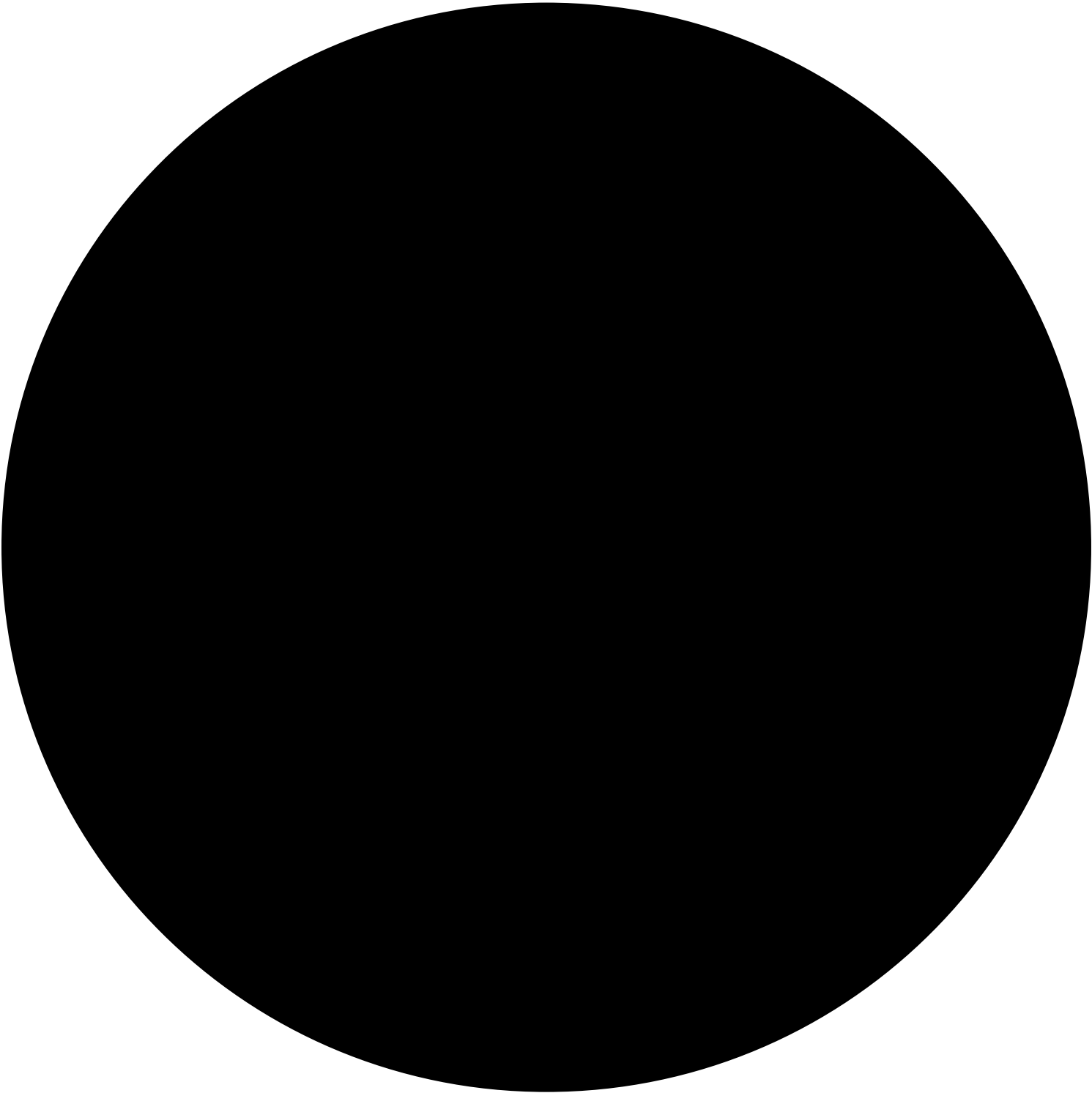


AIR POLLUTION KILLS MUCH MORE THAN THE CORONAVIRUS

Posted on 03/03/2020 by Naider



Definition of a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO): “Global spread of a disease”.

The recent global spread of the **coronavirus (Covid-19)** has led to the declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern – the highest level of alarm. However, the director general of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom, explained a few days ago that declaring the pandemic due to the coronavirus “[may indicate that we can no longer contain the virus, which is not true](#)”. Likewise, he denounced to the media that the increase in coronavirus cases – [114 cases in Spain and almost 89,000 worldwide, as of February 2, 2020](#) – has led some media and politicians to “press” **for the declaration of a pandemic , when the situation is not serious enough to make such a statement**. “We should not be too eager to declare a pandemic without a careful and clear analysis of the facts. The careless use of the word pandemic has no tangible benefit, but carries a significant risk in terms of **amplifying fear**,” said Tedros Adhanom.

Interestingly, China, the country with the highest number of people affected by the coronavirus – < a

https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/documentos/Actualizacion_34_COVID-19.pdf">more than 80,000 cases and 2,900 confirmed deaths as of February 2, 2020 – witness a curious phenomenon: **the coronavirus has reduced the country's pollution**. The limitation of productive activity, commercial vetoes, canceled flights, among other things, have encouraged the drop in pollutant emissions into the atmosphere ([see pollution map of China with before and after the coronavirus](#)). More specifically, satellite images released by NASA show **decreasing levels of nitrogen dioxide**, the noxious gas emitted by motor vehicles, power plants and industrial facilities. In addition, [coronavirus has plummeted by 25 % levels of CO₂ in the air](#), according to the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

In this regard, a piece of information goes unnoticed by the media, politicians and the general public: **air pollution kills much more than the coronavirus**. As the new coronavirus hogs the front pages of the mainstream media, this **silent killer kills nearly 7 million people a year**. In fact, a [recent report](#) on air quality in The world in 2019 shows that **90% of the world's population breathes unsafe air**. This report provides a ranking of the cities with the worst air and highlights the high pollution by particles in suspension of less than 2.5 microns (PM2.5) throughout the world during the year 2019. The high levels of air pollution They are linked, in particular, to **phenomena caused by climate change** – sandstorms, forest fires – and to the pollution generated by the **rapid urbanization of cities**.

Returning to the pressure from politicians and the media to declare a pandemic due to the coronavirus case, it is necessary, more than ever, that **the opinions and decisions we make are based on proven data or have a scientific basis**. Why aren't the same statements made regarding pollution – atmospheric, marine, soil – as they are made for the coronavirus? **Why doesn't pollution, and the millions of people it kills every year in the world, reach the population as much or get as much coverage in the media?** In the same way, although to a lesser extent scale that with the coronavirus, occurs with traffic accidents: [air pollution causes 10,000 deaths a year in Spain, many more than the 1,700 that occur due to traffic accidents](#). However, ads, campaigns, statements and other publications about the dangers of driving behind the wheel are much more numerous, and we are more familiar with them, than those related to air pollution.

Obviously, both the coronavirus, traffic accidents or any other event or event that puts people's lives at risk deserves your space, interest and concern. By this rule of three, contamination should be considered a very worrying problem that should occupy the front pages and beginnings of the news much more frequently than it does. **Perhaps the problem is that fighting pollution more than we currently do would mean going against our own companies, our own GDP and, surely, our own comfort and daily well-being.**

Julen González Redín

**PhD in Sustainable Development and Environment
NAIDER**

There are no comments yet.