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Proposed question for Independent Inquiry: Why does climate change and global warming continue to be a universal issue, and how are photographers influenced by this?

I wish to explore issues surrounding climate change and global warming and research how photographers portray such an important issue. This is a very current topic to discuss in 2020 as we have witnessed so many disasters already this year, such as; Australian bush fires, and flooding. Climate change has been publicly known about for around '30 years' (Revkin, 2018), so why is climate change still so damaging and why hasn't society stopped it? There is a theory that climate change and global warming are not real, and I want to research the reasons as to why people believe this is so and if it has anything to do with fake photography. This research will link the three words **life**, **responsibility**, and **change**, which I will research and explore.

Life

The word life is a noun, and it means longevity, viable, insensate, it is the word used to convey the period between life and death (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Our planet would not survive without human life, or would it? People need each other and society to survive to keep the balance. Some of humankind take the planet Earth for granted, our planet will only survive if we work together. This theory could work, but our planet can fight back and might be a better place if nature and wildlife were allowed to bloom and grow naturally. There seems to be natural disasters happening around the world all the time.

Many organisations are trying to help raise money to support the prevention of global warming and to make people more aware of what is happening to our planet. One

organisation is LIFE Climate Action that responds to the challenges of climate change in Europe (European Commission, 2020). Two of their main objectives include 'contribute to the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy' and 'improve the development, implementation and enforcement of EU climate change policy and legislation'. I firmly believe that the second point is crucial because enforcement of this is a critical factor in improving climate change. Our lives are affected by climate change, even if we do not realise it. Three areas in our lives are affected by climate change, health, home and food (The Climate Reality Project, 2019). These areas are essential to everyone's day to day lives. Increasing air pollution affects peoples lungs and can cause asthma, floods caused by rising sea levels are destroying homes and farmland, and carbon emissions are changing the composition of fruits and vegetables (The Climate Reality Project, 2019). So the fact is, we are a part of climate change whether we like it or not.

The environment photographer, Diane Tuft, captures moments in time with her images, and this is especially important to show the effects of global warming. In 2015 and 2016, Tuft decided to photograph The Arctic Melt before it disappears (Tuft, 2020).



Figure 1-Tuft, 2016



Figure 2- Tuft, 2015

Tuft's images clearly show the stages of the melting ice and how big the scale of it is. I think images that state how the dramatic changes currently happening with climate change on the

planet is exceptionally significant. The fact that places on the planet should be documented and digitally recorded for when they no longer exist highlights the issues that these areas will never be the same again and sadly lost forever. For many, the arctic is not close to home, so most of the time, it is not even thought about twice as people get on with their busy lives. Numerous individuals have trouble with paying bills and looking after themselves and their families, so the environment is often the least of their worries.

‘Although environmentalists act in more pro-environmental ways, a lack of viable green options for transportation, housing, and food makes it difficult for many people to adopt completely sustainable lifestyles’- (Bain and Bongiorno, 2020).

For many being fully sustainable is not an option as their lifestyles cannot support it. Communities might think the ecological way is more expensive; unfortunately, many countries lack environmental resources, so people do not have an affordable, eco-friendly option. A community that struggles a lot is the young people of our planet because we want to know that we have a healthy, sustainable future. Our planet is now in the hands of the young people. Natural historian, David Attenborough stated that “We can look to the younger generation who are actually going to do it (climate change) because they will be able to see the consequences of what they do” (Gregory, 2020). Attenborough understands that he will not be around forever, and he has tried to make the planet a kinder and more sustainable place for future generations. Attenborough has also shared his experiences with wildlife through film and television, which again highlights the importance of visual media.

When exploring the word **Life**, many sub-genre words have emerged that I will explore further such as; Disaster, Natural, Enforcement, Significance, and Expensive. This keyword has also led to the examination of the sub-questions ‘Would our planet survive without us?’, ‘Do our

leaders need to express more importance in climate change?', 'Do we need more affordable eco-friendly options?', and 'Is the future of Earth in the hands of the young people?'.

Responsibility

The definition for responsibility, according to the online dictionary is 'the state or fact of being responsible, answerable, or accountable for something within one's power, control, or management' (Dictionary.com, 2020). Many societies feel guilt and responsibility for the effects they are having on the planet, and are trying to repair and help the environment and make up for the damage that is being caused.

One of the environmental impacts I feel strongly about is the loss of natural coral in our seas which is dying due to environmental degradation and human interaction. A project called Future Fossils works with sculpture, photography, photogrammetry, 3D printing and 3D animation. It examines how geologists and biologists are using 3D tools in the preservation of corals (Guerra, 2016).



Figure 3- Guerra, 2016

This image, taken for the project, is evidence that parts of our environment are dying because they are limited to natural resources and get stressed by human activity. So once again, we have to use modern technologies and come up with new ways to help, encourage and nurture our environment. Guerra's photography is somewhat positive because people are trying to restore life; it conveys that modern technology is not always harmful. This type of restoration combines with art and design techniques. It is an excellent opportunity for artists to learn about the environment and inspire them to collaborate with preserving nature in its natural habitat. The public can be educated from the publicising and documenting of these changes that artists make.

‘What has been labelled ‘the climate change denial industry’ has played a significant role in preventing or slowing action to address the human causes of catastrophic environment changes’-(Cook, 2020).

Denial is the top problem with climate change because people think they can ignore it, so they do not have to accept what is happening and take responsibility for it and their actions. Some individuals have the attitude that they need to see it to believe it, that they need to see proof of how climate change is increasing. You would think photos are a good source of evidence; however, there are many editing apps and software now which can make it difficult to believe a particular photo was taken and not manipulated with to persuade its audience. Gabrielle Wong-Parodi and Irina Feygina state that ‘ideological and psychological processes undermine and impede climate solutions’. This statement implies that beliefs are powerful, and people can be stubborn and refuse to be open-minded and accept real facts. Moreover, David Attenborough agrees that denial is a problem, ‘we have been putting things off for year after year’ (Shukman, 2020). This comment suggests that we are facing the same problems every year, and not enough action is being taken fast enough to combat the damage to our planet. David Attenborough is a well-known individual and is recognised in nearly every household. Attenborough has inspired generations and is a hero to many. There is also an issue with civilians not having their voice heard, however, ‘Hopenhagen will allow citizens to become active participants in the climate change dialogue and make their voices heard to world leaders’ (Newswire, 2009). ‘Hopenhagen is a campaign that aimed to raise awareness of the importance of the UN meeting in Denmark in December 2009’ (Sweeny, 2009). This move is essential because this world is all about power, and if you do not have any, then your voice will never be heard. So it is up to the world leaders to give the people a voice.

As well as the denial of climate change, there are thoughts that climate change is a marketing opportunity to make money. Anders Hansen and David Machin imply that Getty images are 'shaped to fit the culture of branding.' Suggesting that images used to present global warming issues are chosen deliberately to fit in with the right target audience and even manipulate with emotions.

The research of the word **Responsibility** has lead to these sub-genre words which I can develop further; Prevent, Preservation, Resources, Encourage, Restore, Denial and Technology. The sub-questions, 'Does power come with responsibility?', 'How can artwork save the environment?', 'Should we take responsibility for our actions?', and 'When will people realise we need to act now before it is too late?', are to be further explored concerning the proposed question.

Change

Change is an essential thing if we want global warming and climate change to improve. Even newspapers have realised that their images influence a vast amount of people and its where many get their information from. The Guardian online newspaper has realised the power their images have and discovered that 'images that show emotion and pictures of real situations make the story relevant to the individual' (Shields, 2019). This supports my question because people react to situations they relate to, and it is more likely for someone to relate to homes flooding than melting icecaps.



Figure 4- Sharma, 2016

Figure 4 is an image by Daksh Sharma, who won first place in the Air category of One-Shot's Climate Change photography awards (Sharma, 2016). The image clearly shows that air pollution is getting increasingly worse by damaging our breathing and affecting our health. Over the years, more and more pollution is let out into our atmosphere, and the air quality is worrying in highly populated places. Sharma's photo shows a child, rather than an adult, breathing through a cloth because children are little and defenceless, and the viewer will feel sorry for the child and want to help. Also, if parents are viewing the image, then they could imagine one of their children in that situation, and realise how horrible and dangerous it is. No parent would want their child to be unable to breathe; however, it is happening due to all the chemicals we are releasing into the air.

Different parts of the world are affected by different types of air pollution. 'In developing countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, a notable health impact arises from smoky environments caused by use of wood and other solid fuels for cooking; whereas power plants, industrial facilities, and vehicle emissions are the main causes of outdoor pollution in many

high-income countries.’ (The Lancet, 2016). So nearly anywhere you travel to in the world, there is some type of air pollution affecting your health.

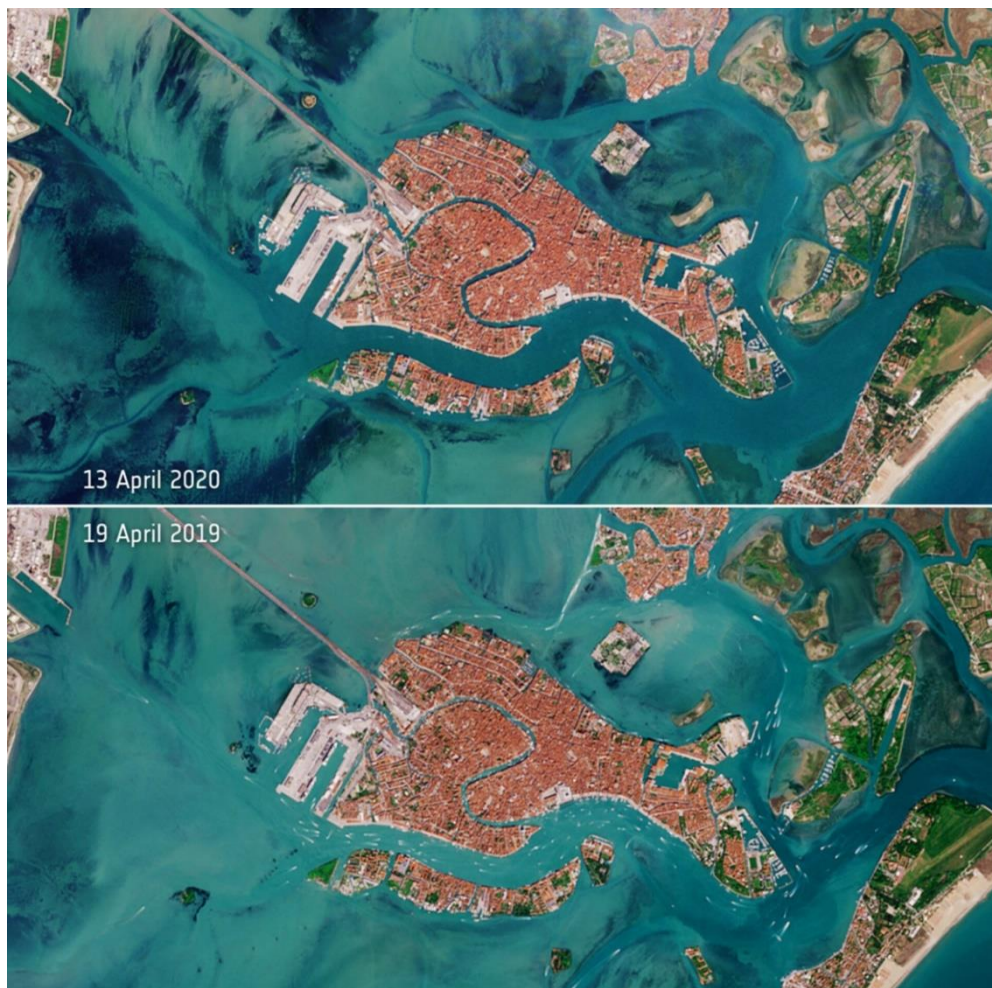


Figure 5-United Spaces in Europe, 2020

Currently, the world is in lockdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19, and with so many people staying at home, our planet has shown significant improvements. ‘These 100 days have changed the way we think about change’ (Watts, 2020). During the stay at home measures, many people have had the time and opportunity to reflect on their lives and what is important to them. Our environment has also had a change with fewer carbon emissions being released into the atmosphere, due to a significant fall in the number of flights. ‘The oil industry and airlines are floundering in this new world, and carbon emissions are falling fast’ (Henriques, 2020).

The image above was taken by the 'Copernicus Sentinel-2 mission' (United Space in Europe, 2020) which displays a difference in boat traffic between April 2019 and April 2020 in a Venetian lagoon. Due to the stay at home measures, there was less water traffic in the Venice canals, which meant there was less pollution in the water and air. However, lockdown measures are only temporary, which means the clear waters will not last for long because as soon as people can go outside again, there will be massive spikes in emissions. The satellite images support the fact that photography is a vital role during this pandemic because people are realising just how damaging carbon emissions are. The images also provide evidence that nature is benefiting without us. 'Across the world, the lockdowns may just be showing us how quickly the natural world around us can adapt and thrive in our absence when given space' (Child, 2020).

Moreover, Vincent-Henri Peuch, Director of the Copernic Atmosphere Monitoring Service, stated this comment to Euronews. "I don't think we can say that there is any long term significance in this decrease. However, in the short term I think these decreases are useful. The level of air pollution is affecting cardio-pulmonary health in general, so having less pollution at a time where this virus is around can only be a good thing," (Wilks and Ging, 2020). So there are clear benefits to our health as well as benefits for our environment.

A study of the word **Change** has lead to discussions of sub-genre words such as Essential, Influence, Power, Relate, and Health. These words will be looked into more thoroughly, relating to the proposed question. It also proposes the sub-questions of 'Should we take a step back and let nature take control?', 'Is it time for a significant change in our environments?', 'Should images be used to manipulate its audience?', and 'What are our priorities as a world population?'.

After exploring the three keywords, investigating these have led to sub-genre words to be researched for the proposed question. These include; Disaster, Natural, Enforcement, Significance, Expensive, Prevent, Preservation, Resources, Encourage, Restore, Denial, Technology, Essential, Influence, Power, Relate, and Health. The proposed research question is 'Why does climate change and global warming continue to be a universal issue, and how are photographers influenced by this??' and will be my starting point. Within this question, I will explore the many sub-questions achieved from this proposal. Such as questions 'Would our planet survive without us?', 'Do our leaders need to express more importance in climate change?', 'Do we need more affordable eco-friendly options?' , 'Is the future of Earth in the hands of the young people?'. 'Does power come with responsibility?', 'How can artwork save the environment?', 'Should we take responsibility for our actions?' , 'When will people realise we need to act now before it is too late?' , 'Should we take a step back and let nature take control?', 'Is it time for a significant change in our environments?', 'Should images be used to manipulate its audience?', and 'What are our priorities as a world population?'.

Proposed question for Independent Inquiry: Why does climate change and global warming continue to be a universal issue, and how are photographers influenced by this?

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