



PHYSIO PUNK

VOL 1

THE LUNGS OF THE WORLD

Theresa Sophia Becker

OPENPHYSIO | JOURNAL

THE LUNGS OF THE WORLD

Theresa Sophia Becker, Bachelor program in physiotherapy, Institute for Health and Care Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

‘The Lungs of the World’ begins by questioning the values and actions that led to a world in which deforestation, carbon emissions, greed, the misuse of and the pursuit of profit that have worsened air pollution even more than Leaving these behind, the story describes a global shift in values towards collaboration and genuine care for human, plant and animal life alike. ‘The Lungs of the World’ reminds us that environmental problems will affect the health and wellbeing of healthcare professionals and patients alike, and so require us to work together beyond these boundaries. In this story, understanding and celebrating the intertwined relationships between all people, anatomy, physiology, today’s social and environmental problems, seems to release a new energy, creativity and novel opportunities. It feels as though thinking and acting at much larger scales than the individual body enables dealing with well-known problems in entirely new ways and doing so with a strong sense of purpose and meaning.



I'm tired. It's early in the morning. I walk out of my room and down to the breakfast table where my colleagues are sitting and eating. As usual, fruit and vegetables are on the menu. There are so many different, good fruits. Sweet, sour, bitter, all of them refreshing and I really look forward to eating my fruits. I sit down with the others and the morning meeting is underway. Our boss goes through today's plan. We are 10,000 people divided into two groups of about 5,000

people each today and which, in turn, are divided into smaller groups. The two main groups are animals and plants, and I am placed in the plant group. Our job is to plant and protect the diverse plant life in the Amazon rainforest.

This project began in the year 2090. Now that the year is 2120, the project has its 30th anniversary. During these 30 years, a lot has happened in the rainforest. It all started with the whole

world gathering and having to take action. The world was a gloomy place, where there was no clean and fresh air left to breathe.

Let me take you back to the year 2085. The year the rainforest was gone, the year in which the last square kilometers of untouched forest had been destroyed or completely deforested. Thanks to world politics and greedy people fighting to have the most power and wealth. But what does power and money really mean when the earth we all live on is dying? Right, absolutely nothing. Fortunately, there was a group of people who realised this and took action. They built secret plantations where animals and plant life from the rainforest could live protected, and thus not be killed or illegally sold by humans. Many of the people who

started the project were researchers who studied how to preserve different plant species and animals, so that they could hopefully one day help to rebuild the rainforest's diverse and lush plant and animal life. You could almost say that the scientists were the Noah's ark of that time. But instead of building a huge ship, they built an enormous plantation.

When the end of the world was not far away, these scientists managed to gather the people of the world to a huge voluntary service, to save the planet. The plan that was made and is still followed to this day is to replant and rebuild the forest. This of course takes its time, and the plan is to replant one area at a time. In the selected area, the plants and animals must be left alone for at least 10 years before you see the first results of a lush landscape. From area number 1, you then take plant seeds and animals that will build up area number 2. This area will then be left in peace for 10 years. This has given good results, and now this project has already been going on for 30 years, and you can really see the results and changes in our global condition now.

On the way into the rainforest, I hear the birds chirping in the three foreclosed areas that are now growing. Last week we collected seeds and plants from the three areas that we will now plant in area no. 4. After an hour's walk into the rainforest, I hear the first sounds of water. The further we walk, the louder the sound, and the more humid the air. Today, the task is to plant

“ NO IDEA IS CONSIDERED STUPID, AND THIS MAKES US ALL FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT BEING CREATIVE. ... THE FACT THAT THE PHYSIOTHERAPY PROFESSION AND MANY OTHERS ARE EVOLVING CREATES NEW JOBS, SUCH THAT NEW PEOPLE CAN HAVE A PLACE TO BE CREATIVE AND PERHAPS CHANGE THE WORLD A LITTLE.

seeds and plants that belong around the riverbank. I'm looking forward to it and am ready to start planting.

Phew, now I'm tired, tired and hungry. Seven hours of planting went by quickly. We are on our way back to camp to eat and relax for the rest of the evening. Despite the long working day, I feel really good. The thought that I have done something useful for the whole world today, even though it was nothing big, feels good. I love that my job as a physiotherapist is to help change the health of many people. Many years ago, it was most common for physiotherapists to look at an individual's problems. This is still common in today but is called "traditional physiotherapy". I, and many of my colleagues, have chosen another direction in physiotherapy, namely "public health". Public health is concerned with larger, societal health problems. One of the health problems is, among other things, that many people struggle with breathing due to polluted air and we have seen an increase in various lung diseases.

As we breathe dirty air into our lungs, it leads to health problems that affect people all over the world, and even the animals. My job as a physiotherapist is to try to make the air cleaner again. This in turn leads to fewer people struggling with their lungs and living a healthier life, where they can be both active and out in nature. If we really think about it, we actually use our lungs for everything. As soon as we come into the world, it is critical that our lungs function properly. The lungs allow us to

breathe in oxygen, which we need for many processes in the body, at the same time as they remove waste products such as carbon dioxide from the body. When we are back at the camp, we sit down at the dinner table. Everyone is hungry after the long working day. The rest of the day I spend relaxing, talking to friends and calling home to family before finally falling asleep as soon as my head touches my pillow.

The alarm goes off, the birds are chirping, and I am ready for a new and meaningful day. Many of my bosses are researchers and think it is important to research new methods and technologies that can improve the world in a sustainable way. Today we will have a workshop to find new ideas on how we can rebuild the rainforest faster and more efficiently. We discuss in groups, draw and write. No idea is considered stupid, and this makes us all feel confident about being creative. If you think about it, it is precisely creativity that got us humans from so-called cave dwellers to where we are today. Creativity has created a lot of negative things in the world, such as pollution, but it has also created hope that we can find a way out of pollution and littering that creates new ideas and new jobs.

The fact that the physiotherapy profession and many others are evolving creates new jobs, such that new people can have a place to be creative and perhaps change the world a little. My workplace is new. Not many physiotherapists have worked in nature to improve human health. A couple of

generations before me, physiotherapists only sat and talked to individuals about how important it was to be out in nature, at the same time as therapists themselves were inside for seven hours and stared at the same four white walls. The physiotherapist should be a role model and an inspiration for the fact that being out in nature and taking care of it, may make you feel a little better, so my job means a lot to me. I hope that by being outside and caring about the climate, I can pass this on to other people and other generations who will take care of our wonderful planet.

My workplace has even more advantages, as, in addition to being outdoors, active, and doing something meaningful, it is also social. It is good to be able to be with such positive and hopeful people every day, even if the sun does not shine every day, the people around me always shine. They give me energy, and I would even say its some kind of therapy for me, even though I am the physiotherapist who really should provide the therapy. Being out, doing something that feels right for me, being able to be social with those around me, and in addition, calling this my job, helps me a lot mentally.

When the world leaders finally realised that we had to do something about the rainforest, there were lots of different ideas from different groups and organizations on how we could save it. It was recognized that it was necessary to work in close partnership with indigenous people who had the rainforest as their home, since they

know most about the plants and animals that live in the rainforest and have taken care of them for a long time. Now they have worked closely with researchers from many different countries for many years to restore and build up the rainforest in a fast and sustainable way, so that the next generations can live in peace in the rainforest again.

“
**MY GOAL AS A
 PHYSIOTHERAPIST, AND
 THE GOAL ALL OTHER
 PHYSIOTHERAPISTS
 BEFORE ME HAVE HAD
 WILL ALWAYS BE THE
 SAME. TO IMPROVE AND
 PROMOTE THE HEALTH OF
 PEOPLE. TO DO THIS,
 ONE HAS TO THINK BIG...**

The physiotherapy profession has developed enormously for several generations now. From just seeing an individual's ailments to focusing on public health. The whole world has helped to collaborate and create new jobs that improve our environment and creative thinking. A collaboration like this clearly shows that everything in the world is connected, and when you affect something like the rainforest, we affect a hundred different things such as animals, plants, indigenous people and, not least, health.

My goal as a physiotherapist, and the goal all other physiotherapists before me have had will always be the same. To improve and promote the health of people. To do this one has to think big, and that's why I and many others started with the lungs of the world.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Becker, T.S. (2021). The lungs of the world. In: Maric, F., Nikolaisen, L.J., & Bårdsen, Å. (Eds.). Physiopunk Vol 1. OpenPhysio Journal. <https://doi.org/10.14426/opj/202111pp05>