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The Path to a Sustainable Civilisation

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Existential Threat to Civilisation: Climate Change

It can be halted, probably, but time is running out



Existential Threat to Civilisation: Nuclear War



The hands of the
Doomsday Clock
can be pushed back
...a bit



Threat to Civilisation: Poverty & Social Inequity

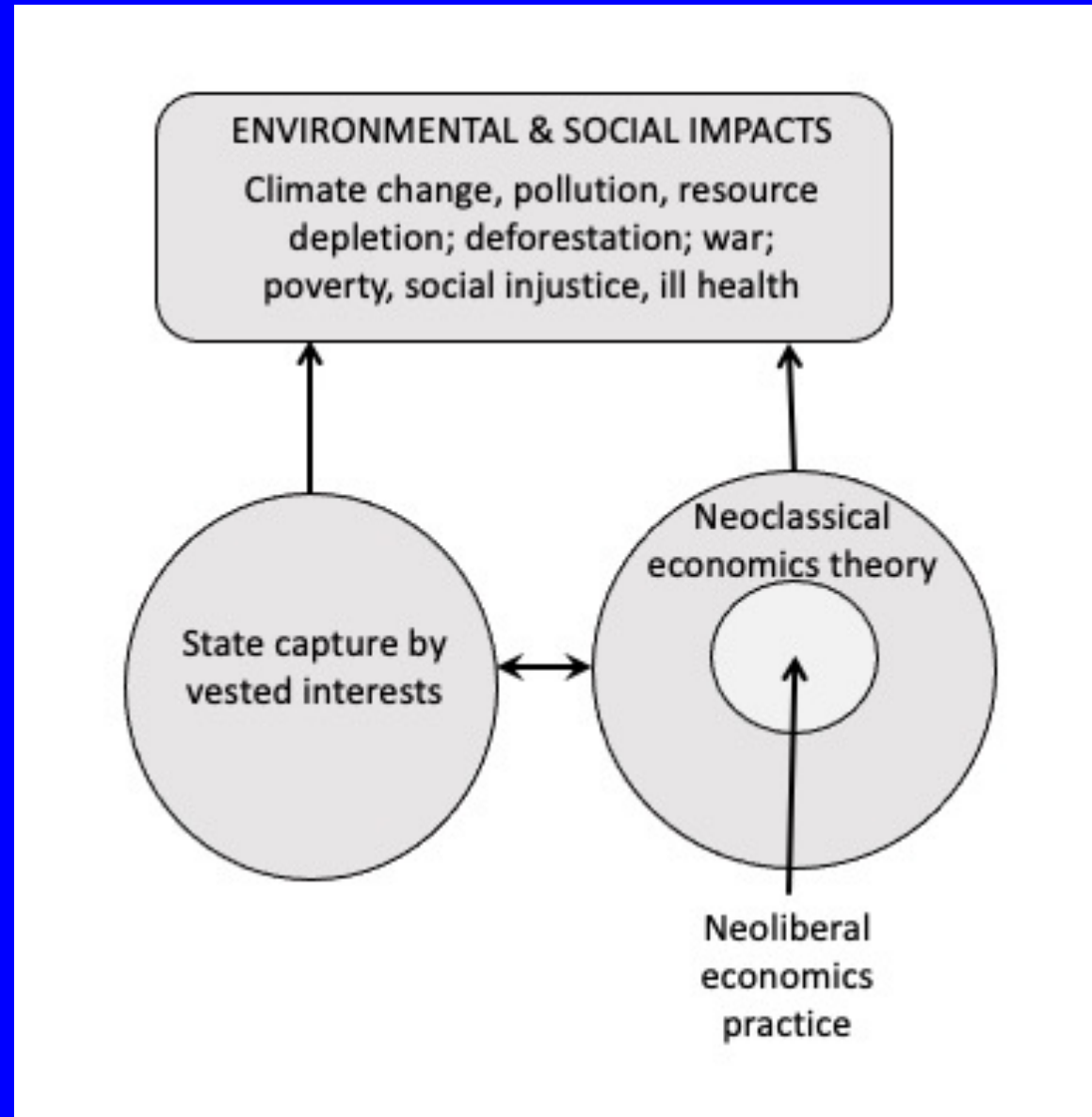
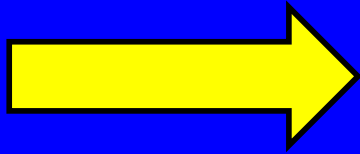


The increasing gap between rich and poor – in wealth, income and political power – causes poverty, injustice, crime, loss of trust in ‘democratic’ government, and desperate choices to accept autocratic rulers.

✧ We have the resources to shrink the gap, given the political will.

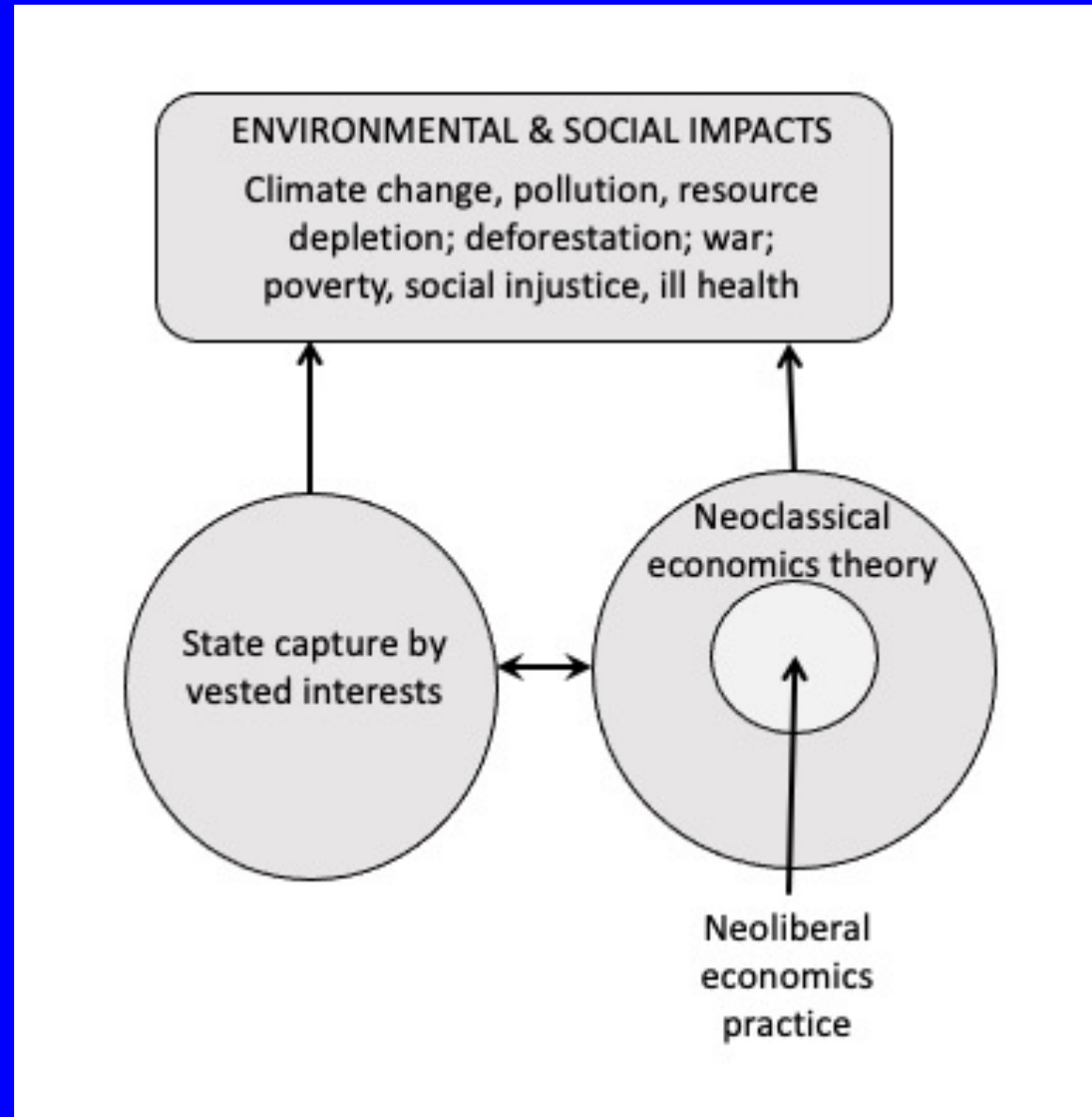
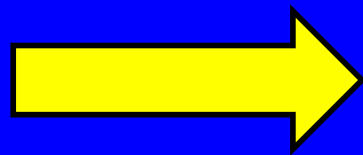
Community Campaigns address Specific Issues

Community
campaigns



We must also Weaken the Driving Forces

Driving forces



State Capture

According to Political Scientists & Political Economists

- ✦ Capture of the nation-state – government, opposition, public service, media, police, military – by powerful vested interests
- ✦ Captors include multinational fossil fuel, armaments, finance, property, pharmaceutical and gambling industries; the Vatican, and the economic system
- ✦ Captors may include foreign governments
- ✦ The capture of nation-states is anti-democratic



Example of Capture of the Australian State: Fossil Fuels



- * Retiring Ministers for Energy/Resources of both major political parties appointed to highly-paid jobs in fossil fuel industry
- * Both the Chief of Staff and a senior political adviser to previous Prime Minister appointed from Minerals Council of Australia
- * Huge donations to both major parties from fossil fuel industry
- * Campaigns by News Corp against climate science and renewable energy

Note: I do not question the motives of the people involved.

Example of Capture of the Australian State: 'Defence'



- ✦ Australian Strategic Policy Institute is funded by US & Australian governments and the weapons industry
- ✦ Former Defence Minister appointed president of a major contractor to Defence
- ✦ Before Australian government joined AUKUS and announced it would buy nuclear submarines, 5 'retired' US admirals were paid consultants to Defence
- ✦ Expansion of US bases and nuclear weapons-capable B-52s based in Australia

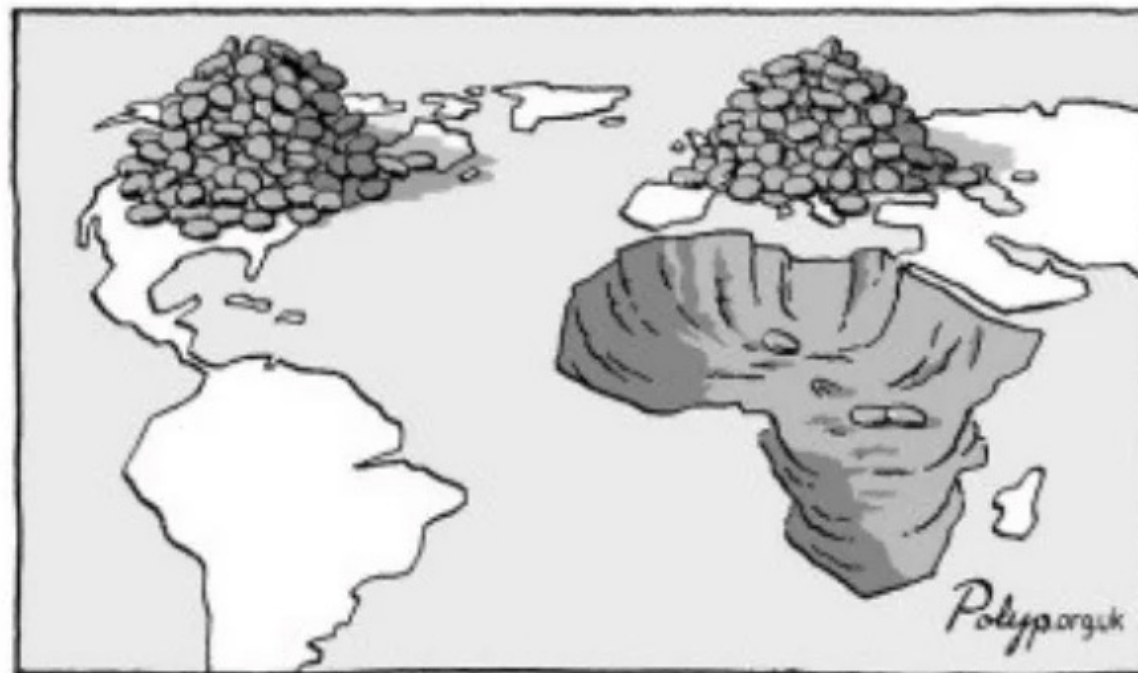
Conclusion: Australia's Foreign Affairs and Defence strategies captured by the US military-industrial complex

Neocolonialism is a Form of State Capture

Global South is captured by Global North by:

- ✦ Sovereign debt
- ✦ Trade that keeps them captive as a quarry or waste dump (Australia too?)
- ✦ Flow of wealth is from Global South to Global North
- ✦ Subversion, coups and invasion by North's military-industrial complex

NEOCOLONIALISM



'GOLD DIGGERS'

Dismantling the Methods of State Capture

- * Political donations & election expenditure
- * Revolving door jobs
- * Concentrated media ownership
- * Social media campaigns
- * Think tanks (e.g. IPA; ASPI)
- * Unpublicised meetings between politicians & lobbyists
- * Loans by foreign governments & international agencies → debt
- * Trade dependence
- * Military alliances (what benefit?)



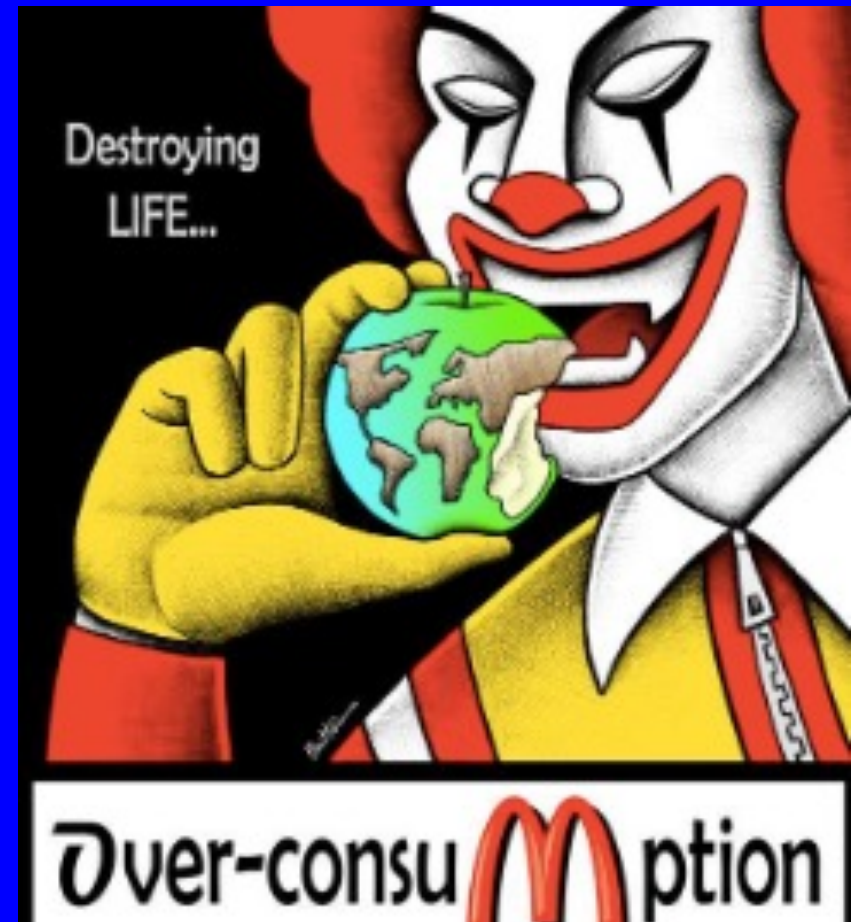
Dismantling state capture strengthens democracy

State Capture by Conventional Economics

Myth: “Endless growth in consumption of energy, materials and land, and in population, on a finite planet is possible and desirable.”

Refutation

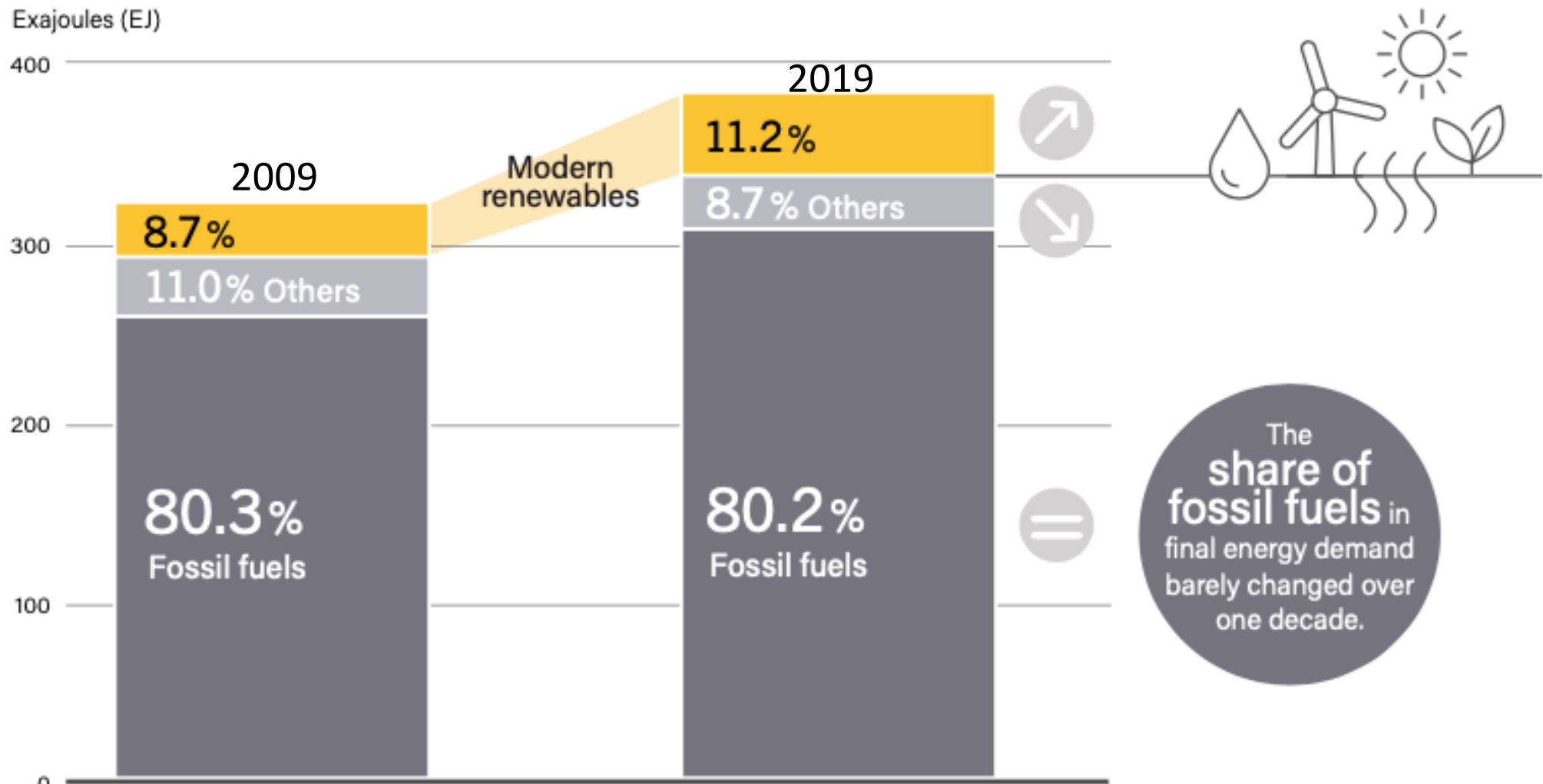
- * We humans are totally dependent on natural systems which we are destroying by growth in consumption
- * Beyond a certain level, additional consumption doesn't improve happiness or wellbeing
- * Growth in consumption delays the substitution of clean technologies for dirty technologies



Global Final Energy Consumption, 2009 & 2019

(All energy: Electricity, Transport & Heating by Combustion)

Source: REN21 (2021), Fig. 2



Renewable energy is chasing a retreating target

Neoliberalism, an Ideological Offshoot of Free-Market Capitalism, has captured the nation-state

Neoliberal Ideology: “Shrink the government and public service; leave major decisions & programs to the market”

Refutation

- ✦ The market is controlled by the 1% many of whom represent vested interests, including the big four consulting/accounting businesses
- ✦ The market failed during the GFC & the COVID pandemic
- ✦ Thanks to recalcitrant governments and industries, it's too late to rely on the market to solve climate change, although a carbon price would help
- ✦ Market measures to stop biodiversity loss or deforestation or over-use of freshwater are suspect, to say the least.

A Myth of Neoliberal Economic Ideology

“Wealth trickles down from the rich to the poor. Hence reduce taxes on rich individuals and large corporations”

Refuted by several studies

e.g. Survey of 18 OECD countries, 1965–2015, finds that

“tax cuts for the rich lead to higher income inequality in both the short- and medium-term. In contrast, such reforms do not have any significant effect on economic growth or unemployment.”

Hope D & Limberg J (2022). *Socio-Economic Review* 20:539–559.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt told a delegation:
“OK, you’ve convinced me. Now get out there and
make me do it!”.

Local Community Action and its Limitations

Building local alternatives is necessary and valuable, but not sufficient for changing the system *rapidly*



Benefits

- ✧ Community education
- ✧ Community empowerment through local projects: e.g. renewable energy; cooperatives

Limitations

Government decides on infra-structure, urban & land-use planning, pollution control, standards (e.g. for buildings), public facilities, taxes, rules for banks, electricity market, etc.

Additional Community Action Needed

to form alliances between environmental, social justice, trade union, peace and public health groups to pressure governments and business/industry on state capture & neoliberalism

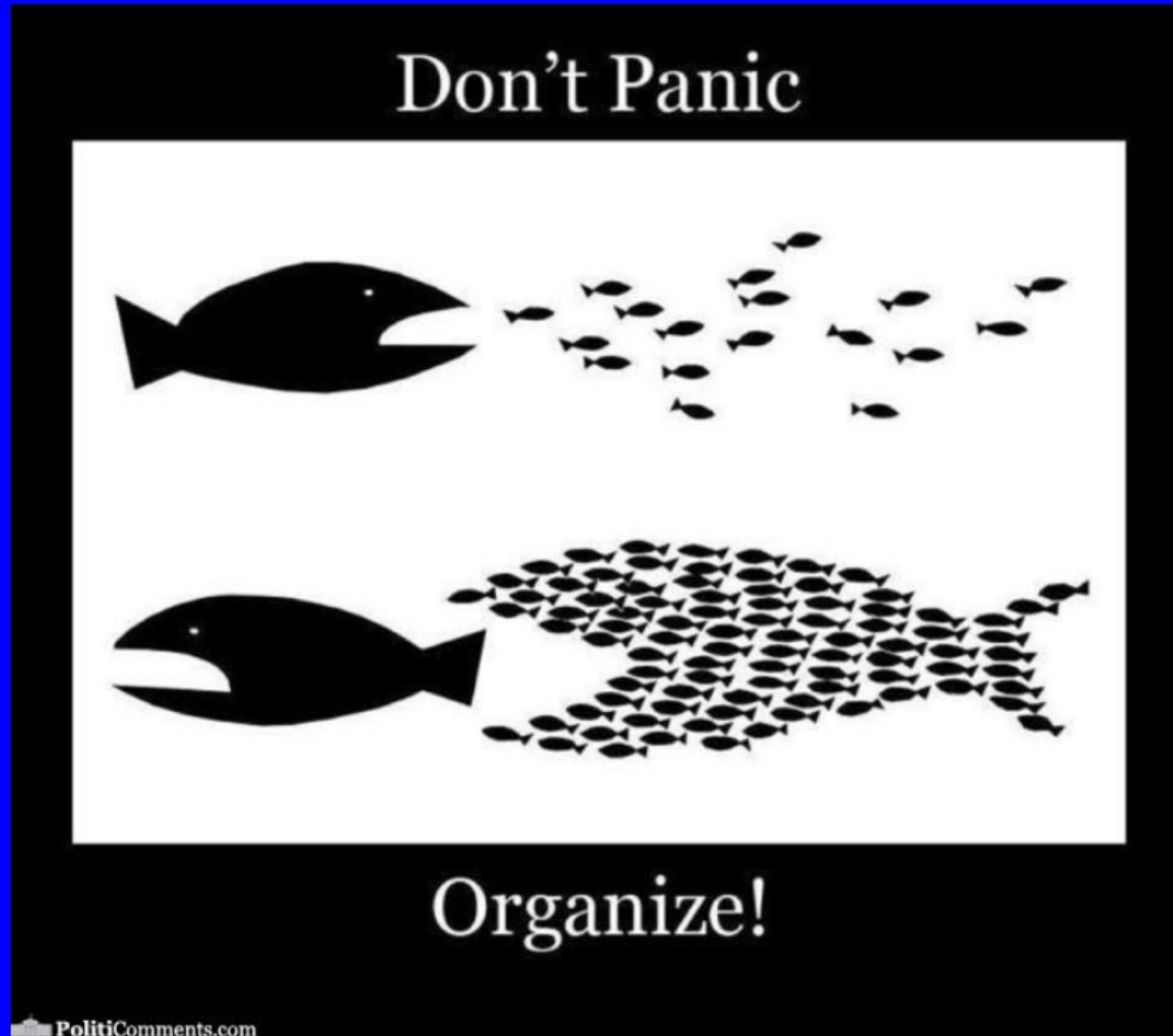


ACF + ACOSS + HRLC



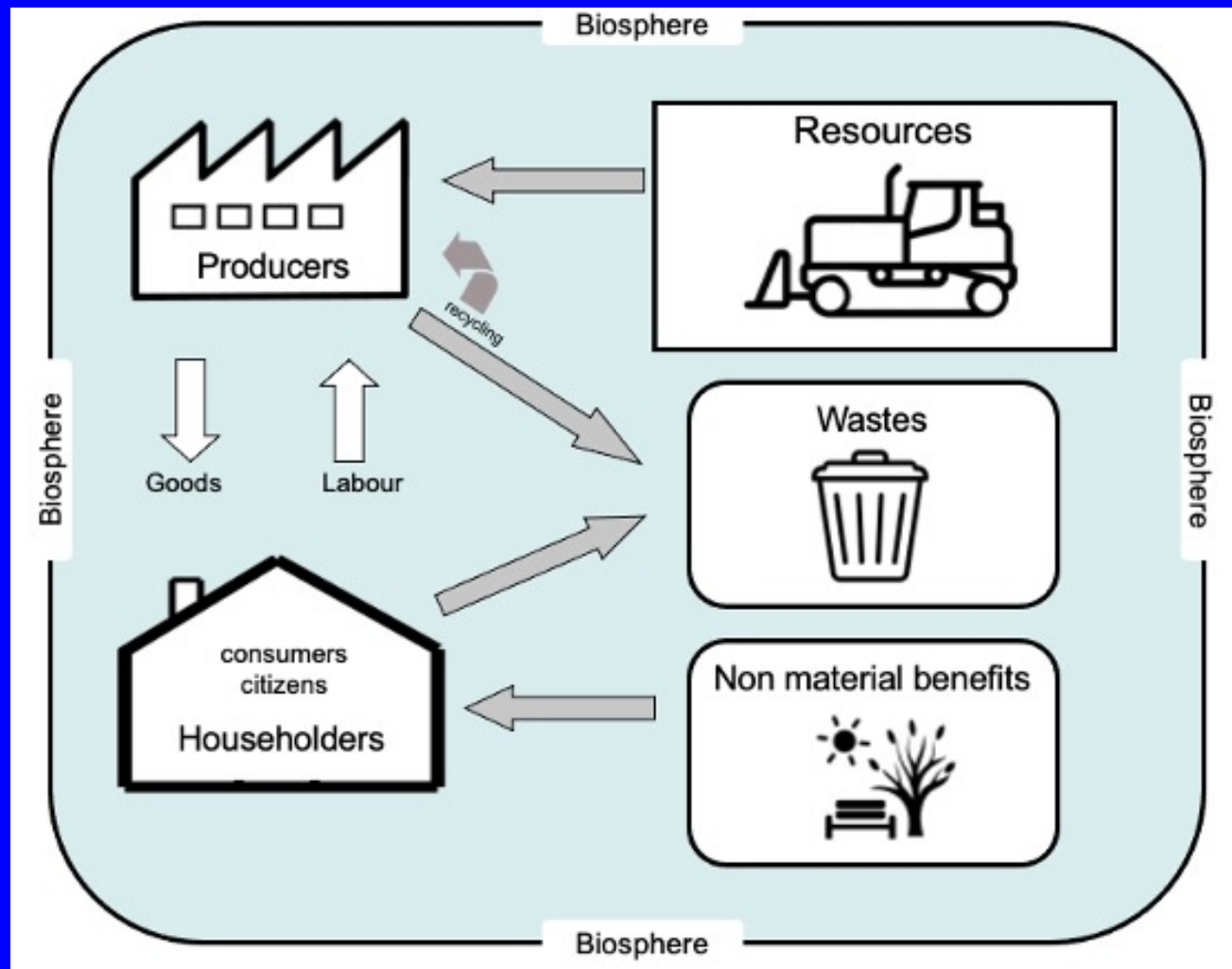
Tactics: nonviolent obstruction, strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, public education, media & social media, lobbying, and legal actions

Community Power through Organisation

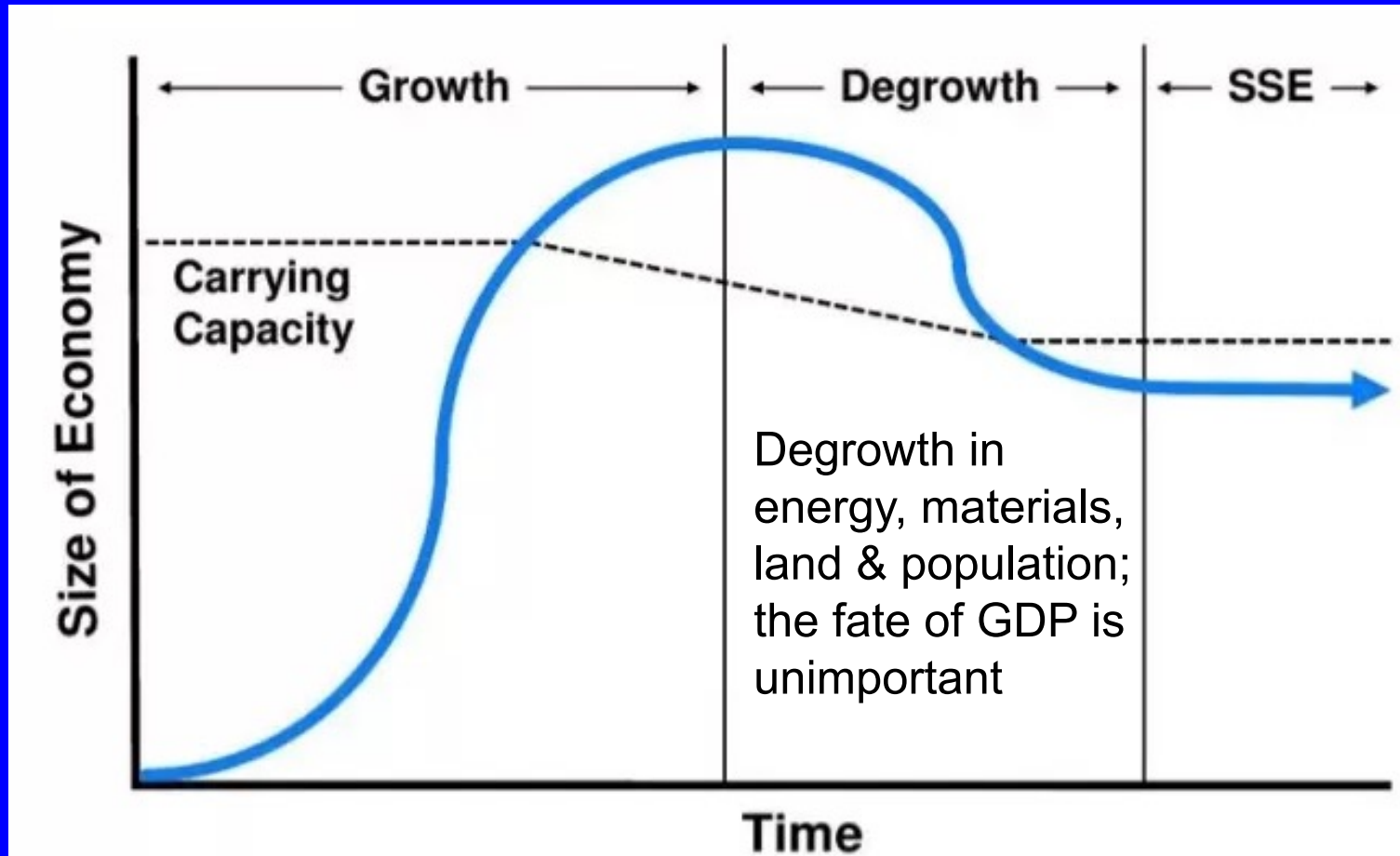


From Neoclassical to Ecological Economics, A Transdisciplinary Field for Transition to Steady-State Economy

- * Priorities are ecological sustainability and social justice
- * Economic efficiency is lower priority; Pareto efficiency is nonsense
- * GDP is not a good indicator of human wellbeing
- * Steady-state physical economy is essential
- * Feasibility of SSE supported by modelling



'Strong' Ecological Economics => Planned Degrowth by the Rich Countries



Degrowth must constrain spending by the rich, who have by far the biggest environmental impacts.

Hence, taxes on wealth, inheritance and business air travel

Degrowth + Universal Basic Services (UBS)

- ✦ UBS comprise expanded public housing, health, education, transport, child care, aged care, national and local parks (e.g. Denmark today)
- ✦ UBS can provide a social wage, reducing need for high monetary wage & economic growth, thus motivating and facilitating the transition
- ✦ UBS economic activities have relatively low material, energy and land requirements
- ✦ UBS can be implemented within a market economy with priorities ecological sustainability & social justice



Degrowth + Job Guarantee (JG)

- ★ Federal government pays basic wage to all unemployed who wish to work
- ★ Jobs provided by all spheres of government & registered community groups
- ★ JG is NOT work for the dole. Workers can leave or rejoin the program at will
- ★ JG is much less expensive than universal basic income

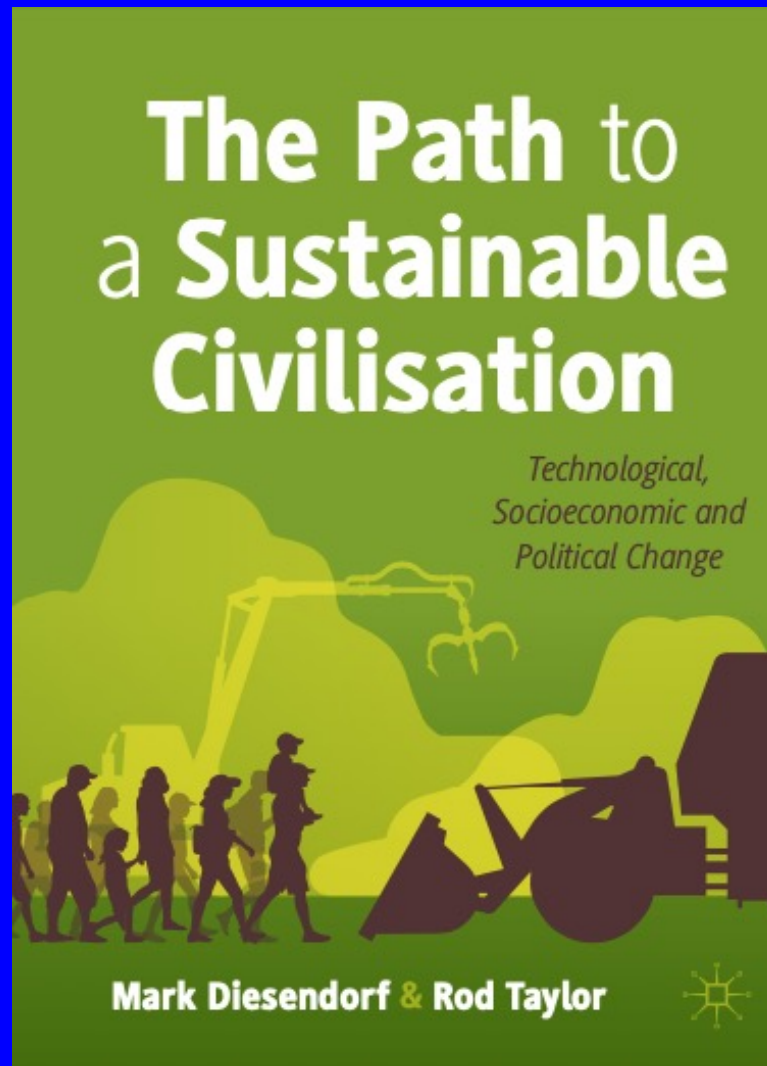
- ★ Jobs created are outside the for-profit market:

- protecting & restoring natural environment
- citizen science
- visitors and companions for the ill, less able & aged
- staffing reuse & recycling centres
- support for firefighters
- community activities and the arts
- guides for tourists in cities and national parks



- ★ JG acts as a buffer during economic booms and recessions

There may still be time to take the path, but it's tough!



The alternative is the
collapse of civilisation

Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of Springer Nature, 2023
<https://sustainablecivilisation.com>