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The Path to a Sustainable Civilisation

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Existential Threat to Civilisation:
Climate Change can be halted, but time is running out



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.

Democracy or Autocracy?



In NSW, penalties of \$22,000 or two years in jail could be enforced for illegal protests that disrupt economic activity.
In SA, for “obstructing a public place”, \$50,000 or 3 months in jail.

Offensive 'Defence' or Defensive Defence?



Existential Threat to Civilisation: Nuclear War



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



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; also some religious organisations and some professions
- ✳ 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'



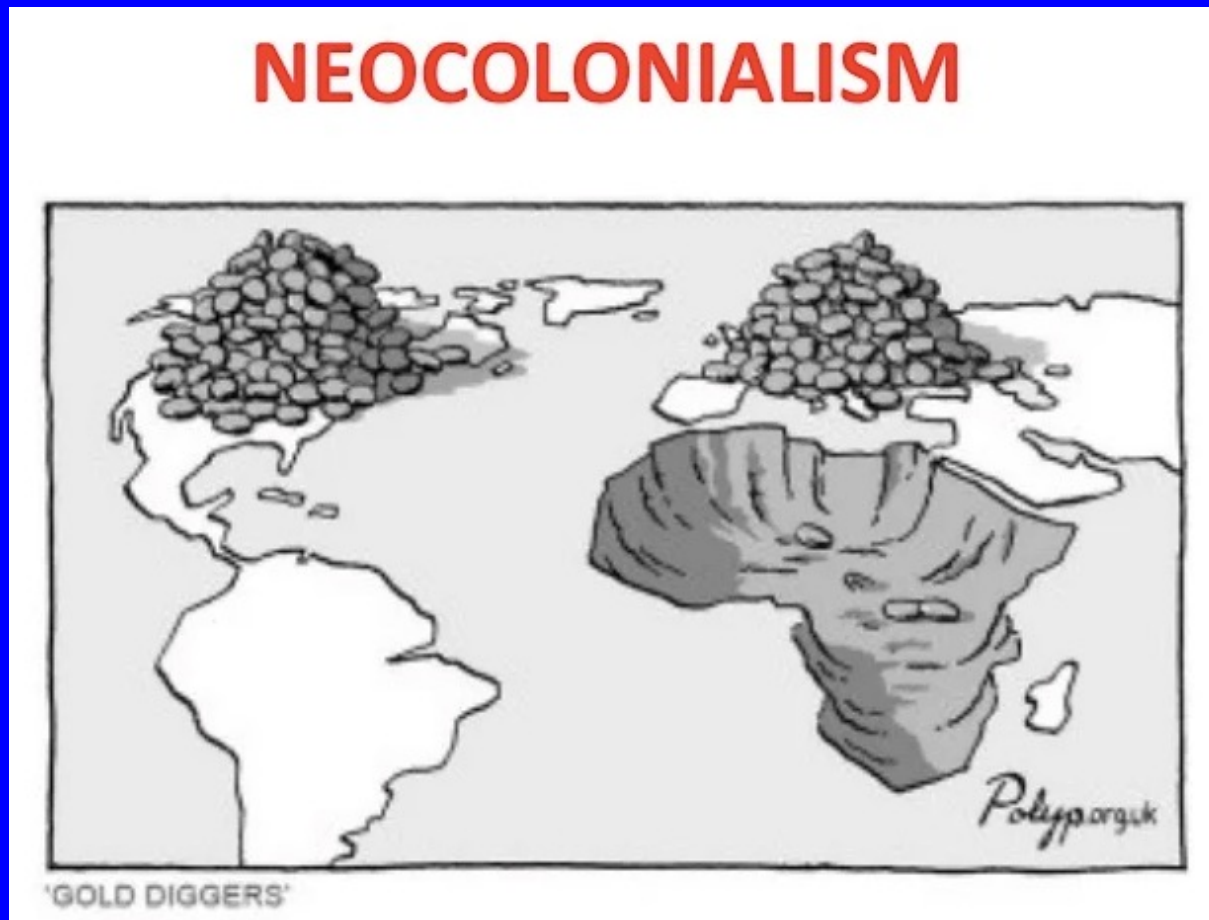
- ✧ Australian Strategic Policy Institute is funded by US & Australian governments and the weapons industry
- ✧ Former Defence Minister appointed president of a major contractor to Defence
- ✧ Before Australian government joined AUKUS and announced it would buy nuclear submarines, 5 'retired' US admirals 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

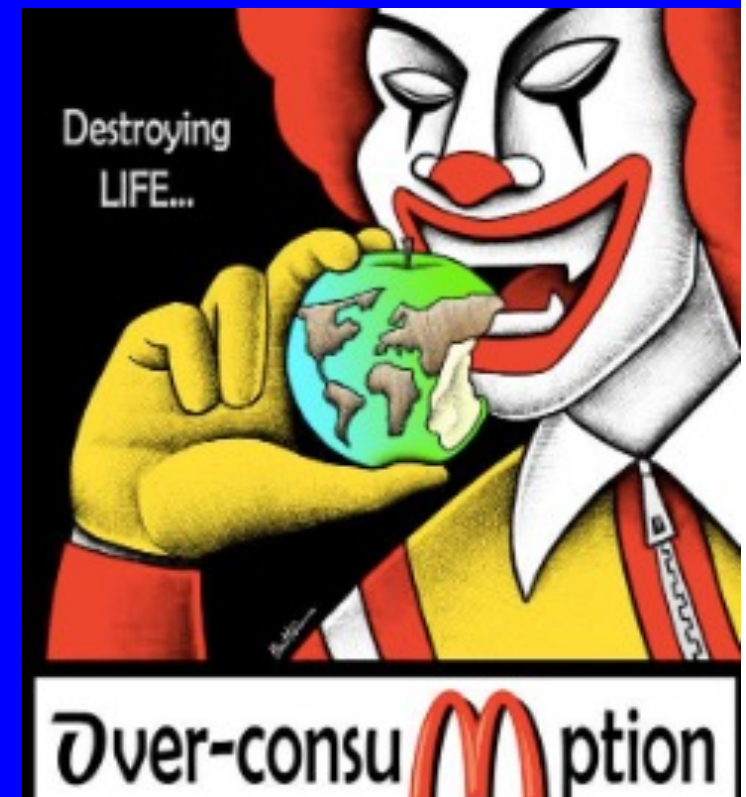


State Capture by Conventional Economics

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

Refutation

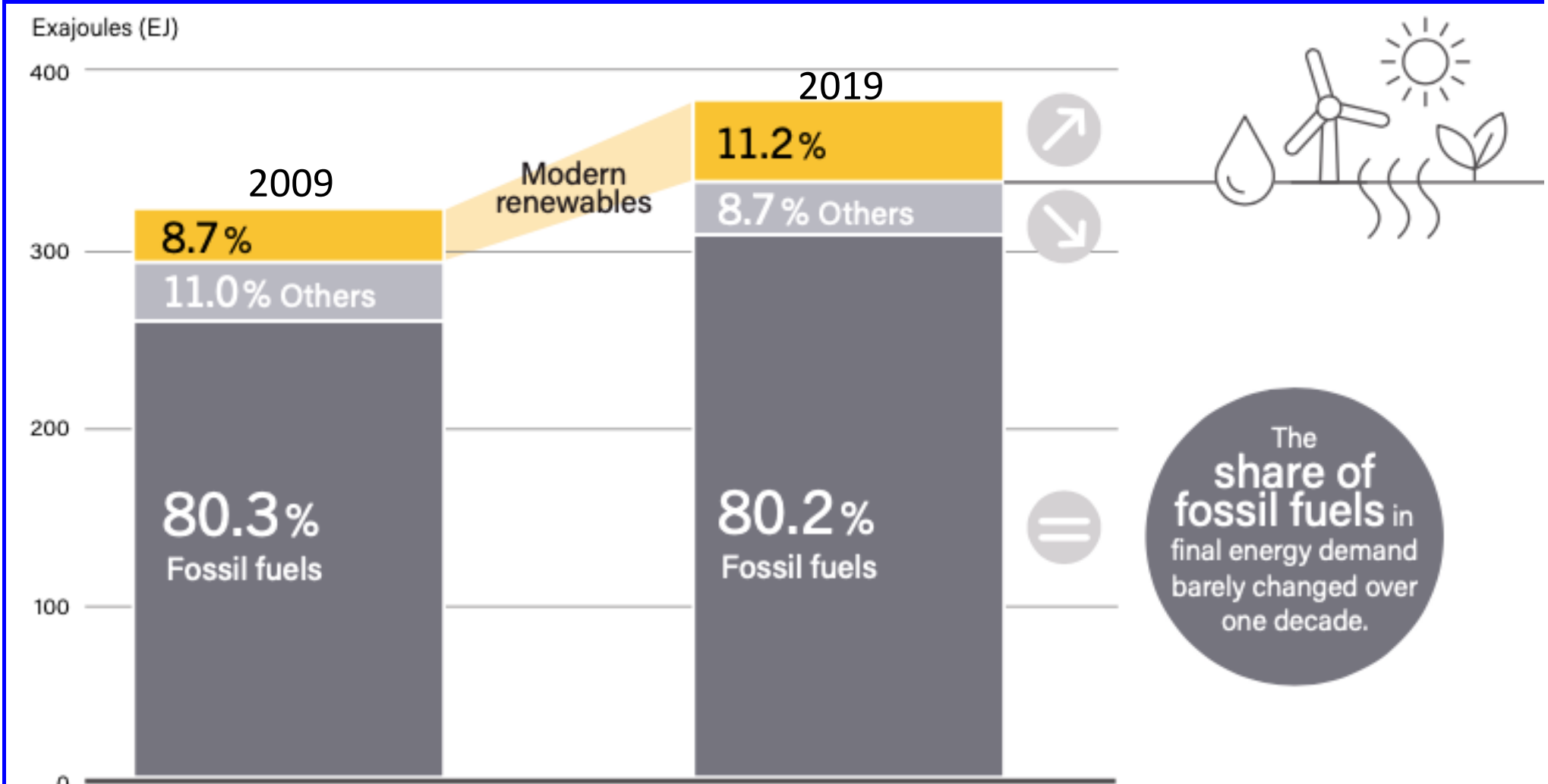
- ✧ We humans are totally dependent on natural systems which we are destroying by growth in consumption
- ✧ Beyond a certain level, additional consumption doesn't improve happiness or wellbeing
- ✧ Growth in consumption delays the substitution of clean technologies for dirty technologies



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

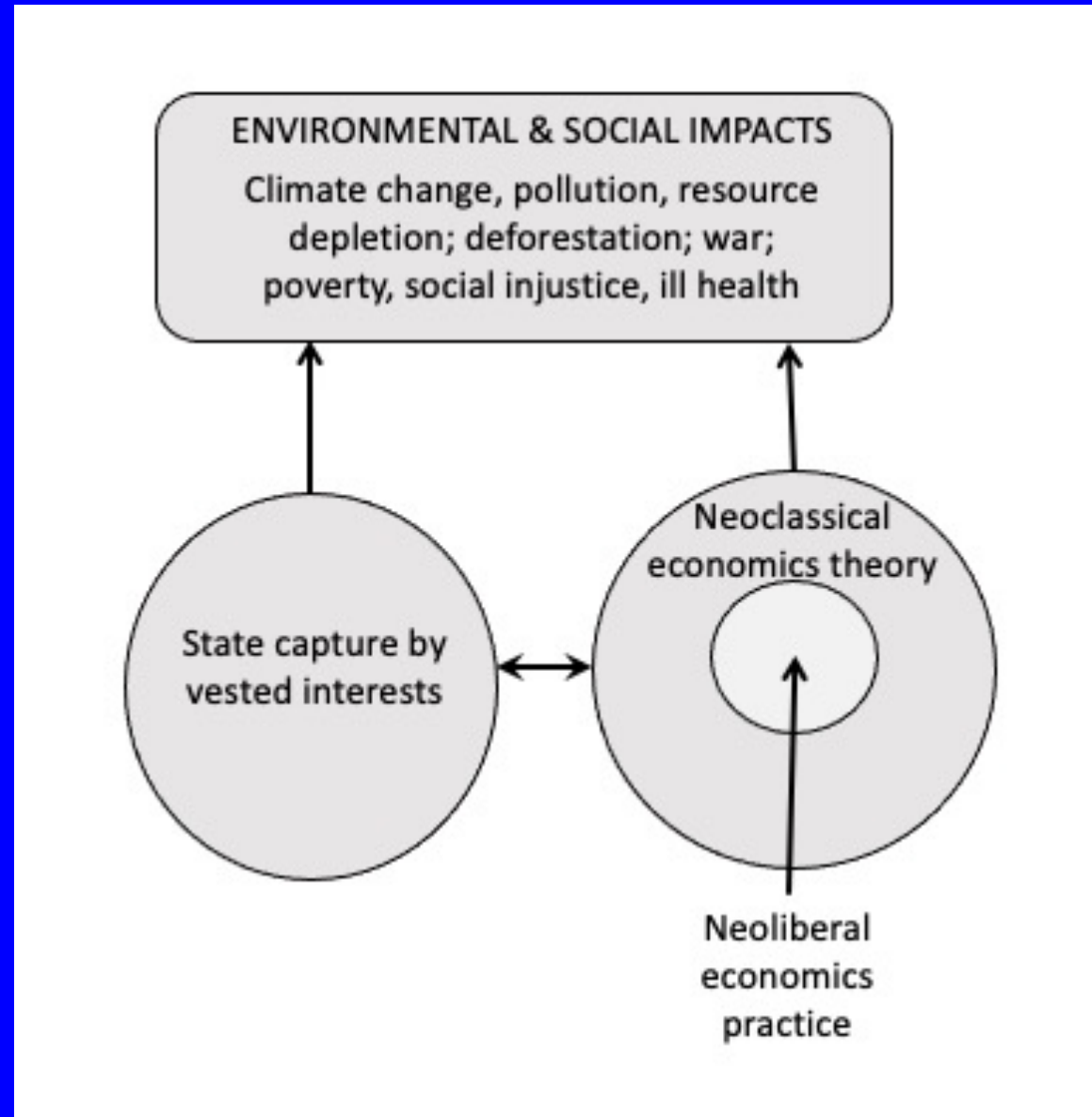
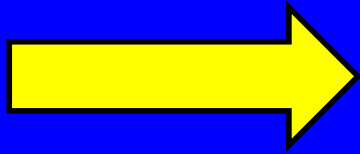
Neoliberal Ideology: “Shrink the government and public service; leave major decisions & programs to the market”

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.

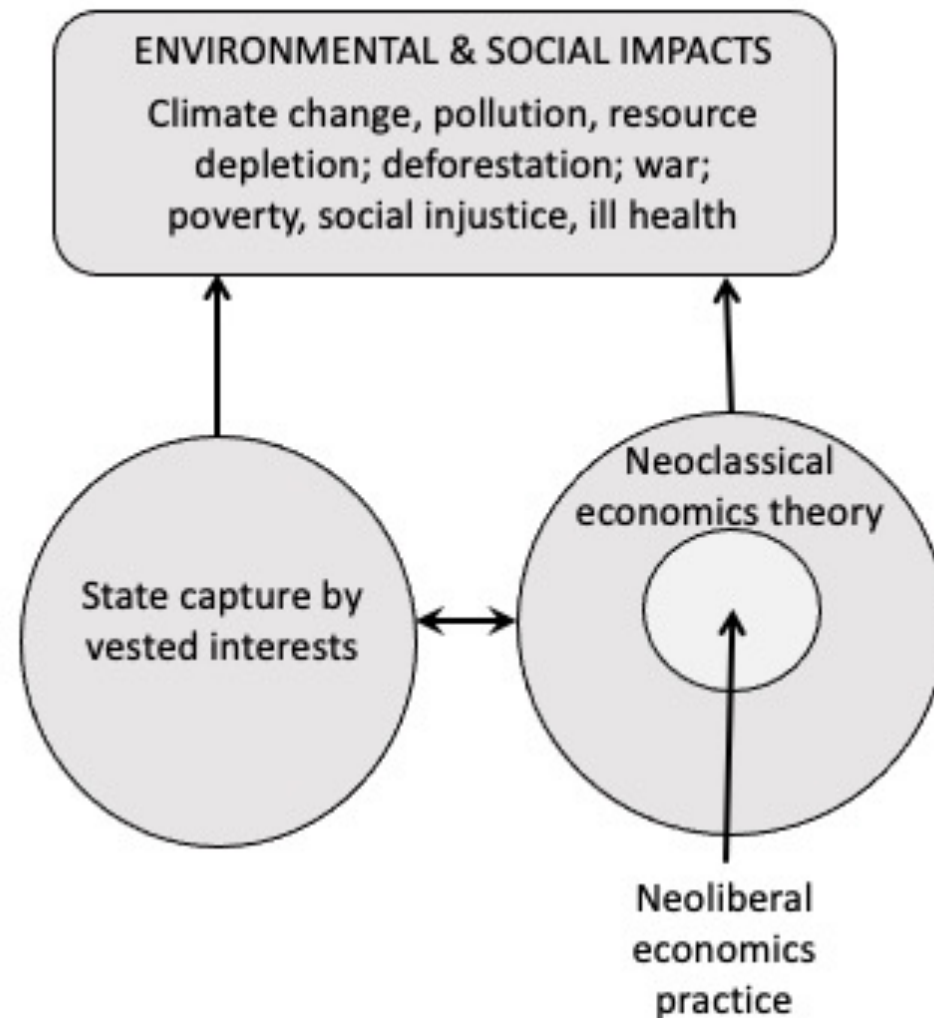
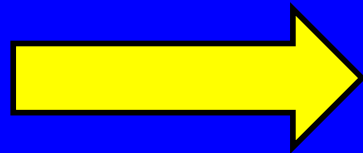
Community Campaigns address Specific Issues

Community
campaigns



We must also Weaken the Driving Forces

Driving forces



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



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, etc.

**Additional Community Action Needed to
form alliances to pressure governments and business/industry
on state capture & neoliberalism as well as on specific issues**



ACF + ACOSS + HRLC



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

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
- ✧ Environmental sustainability and social justice must be addressed together, because:
 - ✧ Rich countries and rich individuals have by far the biggest environmental impacts
 - ✧ Most people will support the transition if their basic needs are met
- ✧ Feasibility of SSE with full employment is supported by biophysical and macroeconomic modelling
- ✧ Policies needed include working time reduction, wealth & inheritance taxes, stabilising population, job guarantee and universal basic services

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



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

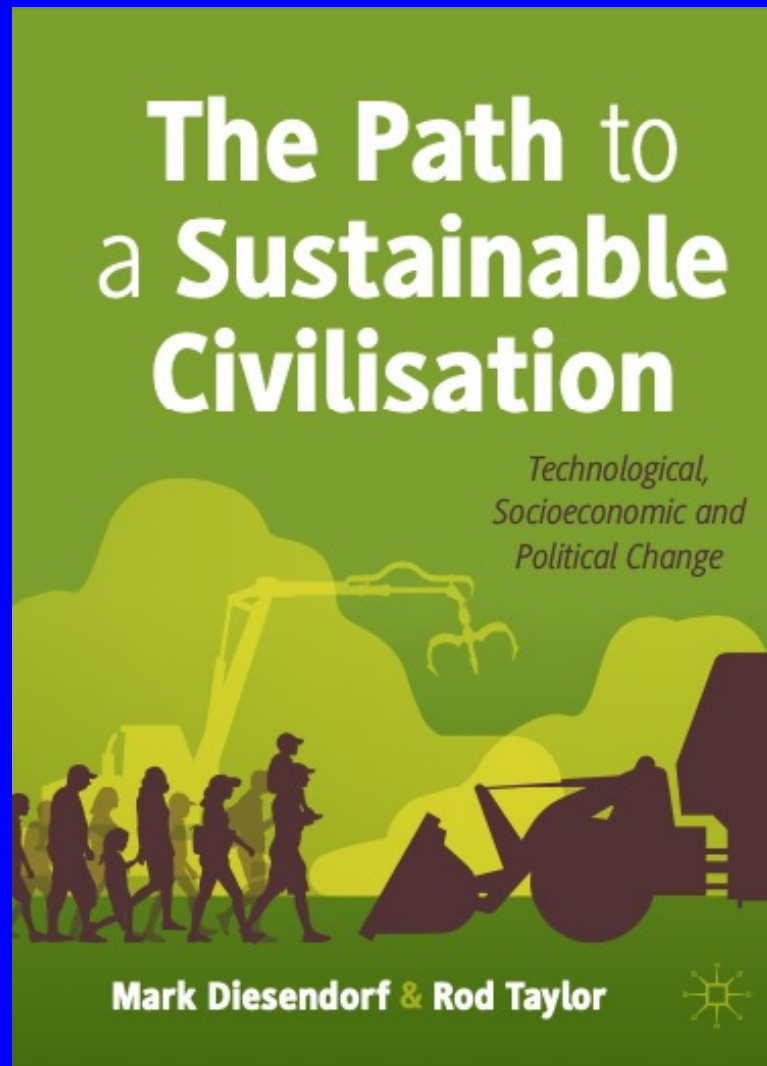
- ★ Jobs created are outside the for-profit market:

- 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

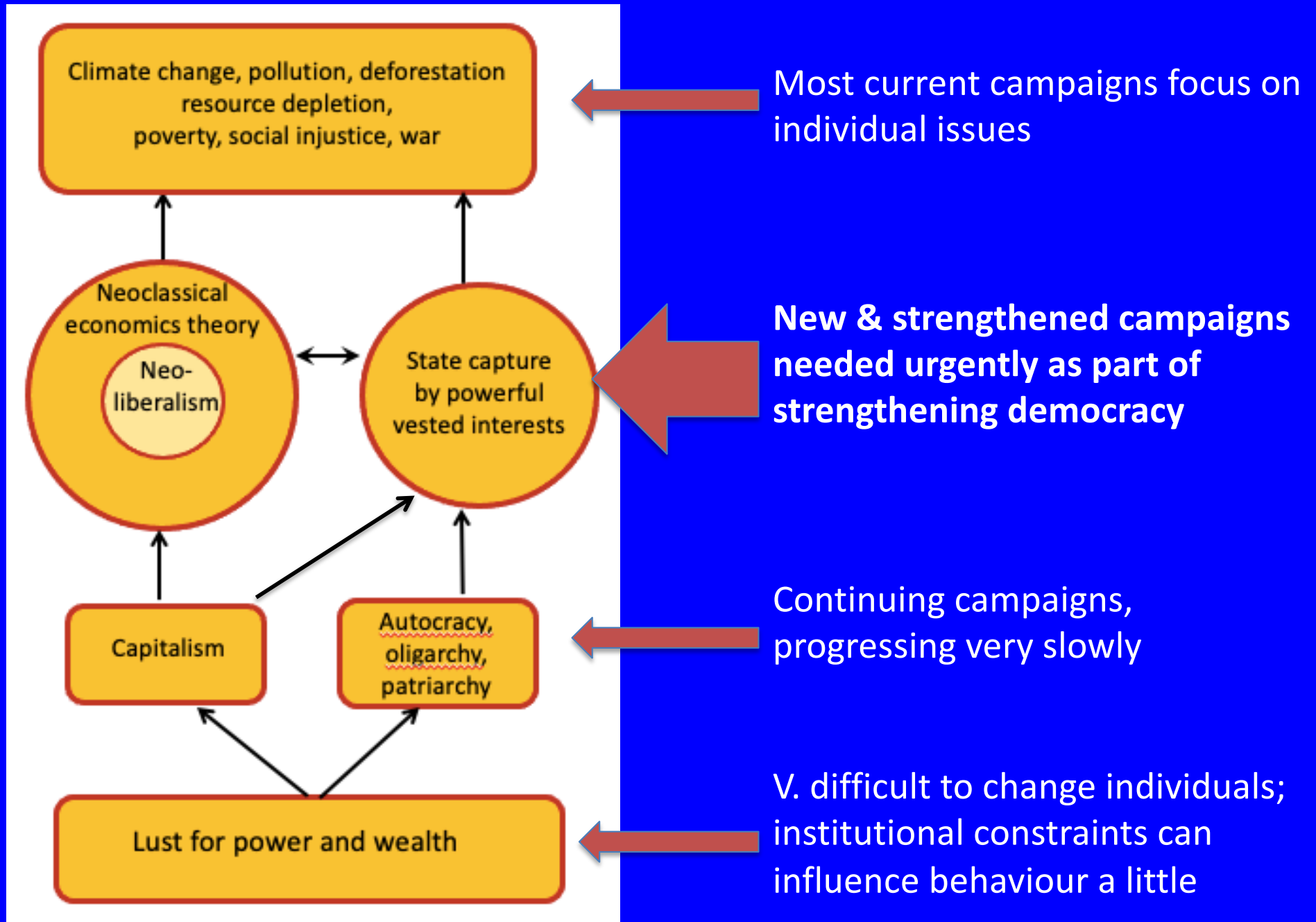
Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of Springer Nature, 2023
<https://sustainablecivilisation.com>

Supplementary Slides

Strategy to Reduce Prevalence of War and Risk of Nuclear War

- * No national involvement in overseas wars unless approved by Parliament
- * Armaments based on defensive defence strategy
- * All nuclear weapons countries and alliances legislate no first use of nuclear weapons
- * All non-nuclear weapons countries join UN Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
- * Strengthen Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to place uranium enrichment and reprocessing of spent fuel in the civil nuclear fuel cycle under complete international control
- * Create government Departments of Peace and university peace research centres
- * National social defence program

Driving Forces of Unsustainability



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.

Global Renewable Energy Growth Rates needed to replace all Fossil Energy by 2050

Update of Mark Diesendorf & Steven Hail (2022). *Energies* 15:5908,
<https://doi.org/10.3390/en15165908>

Scenario for growth or decrease in total final energy consumption	Linear growth of renewable energy (required growth rate x 2015–2019 rate)	Exponential growth of RE	
		Doubling time (years)	No. of doublings from 2019 to 2050
BAU: TFEC increases by 50% from 2019 to 2050 → 572 EJ	15	6.2	4.5
TFEC decreases to half BAU 2050 level → 286 EJ	7	8	3+
TFEC decreases to half 2019 level: 209 EJ	5	9.2	3