



The planetary health need for a degrowth transformation

Winne van Woerden | Commons Network
BE-Cause Conference on Climate Justice & Health Equity| November 2021



Why do we need to talk
about growth?

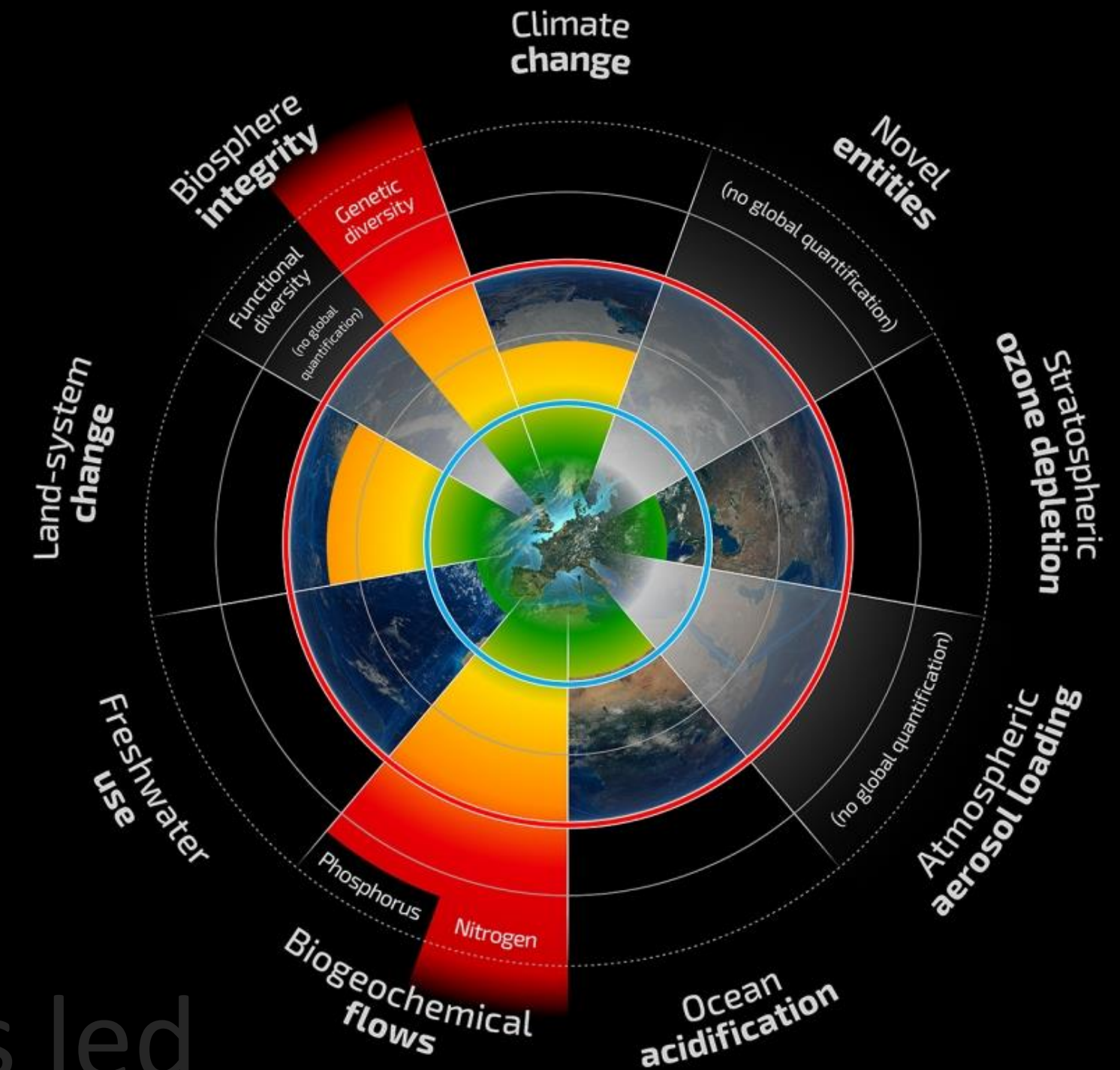
‘the ceilings of a world considered
to be safe for continued social
and biological human well-being’

– Rockström et al. (2009)

...Growth-based thinking has led
to an ecological catastrophe

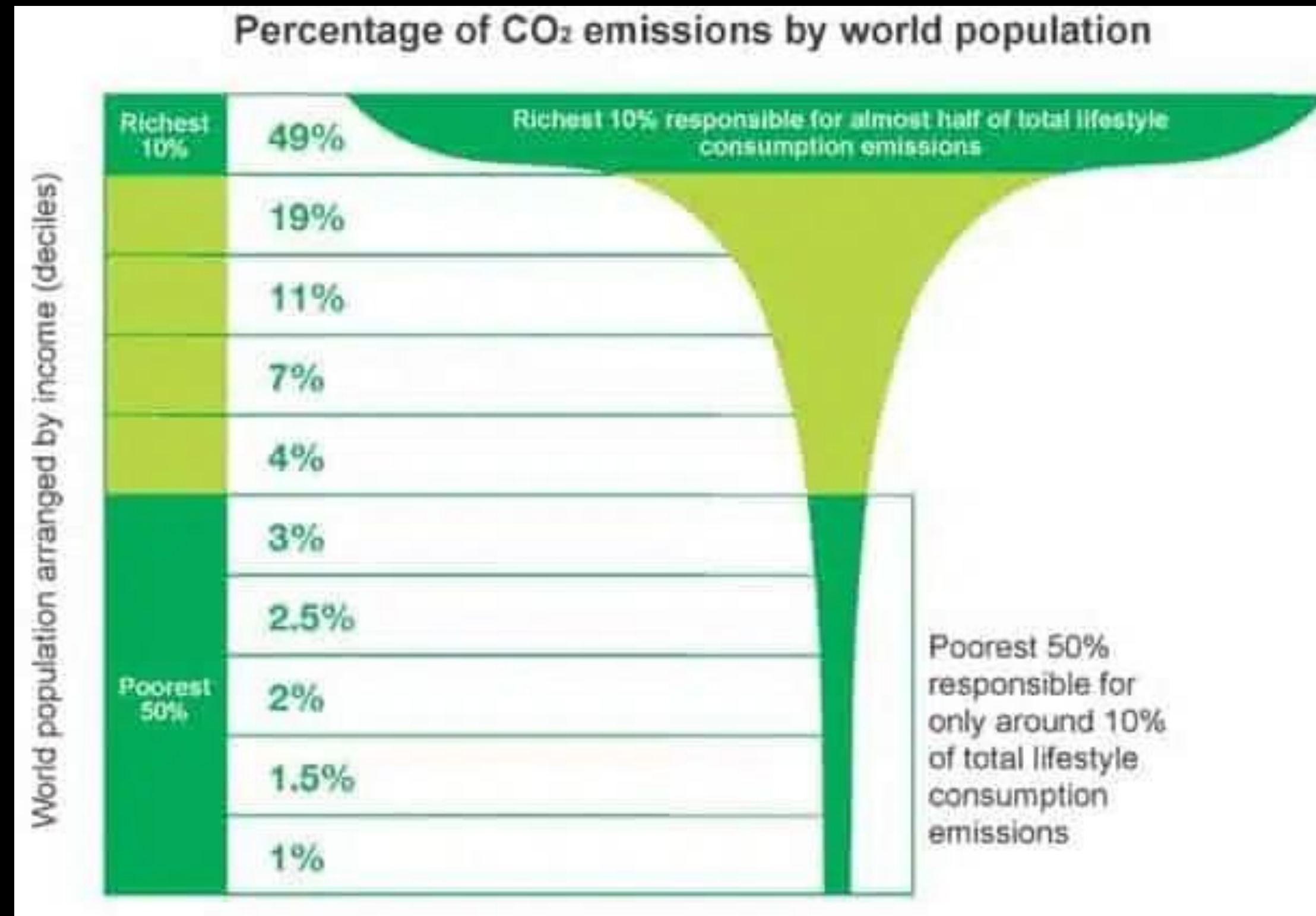
Planetary Boundaries

A safe operating space for humanity

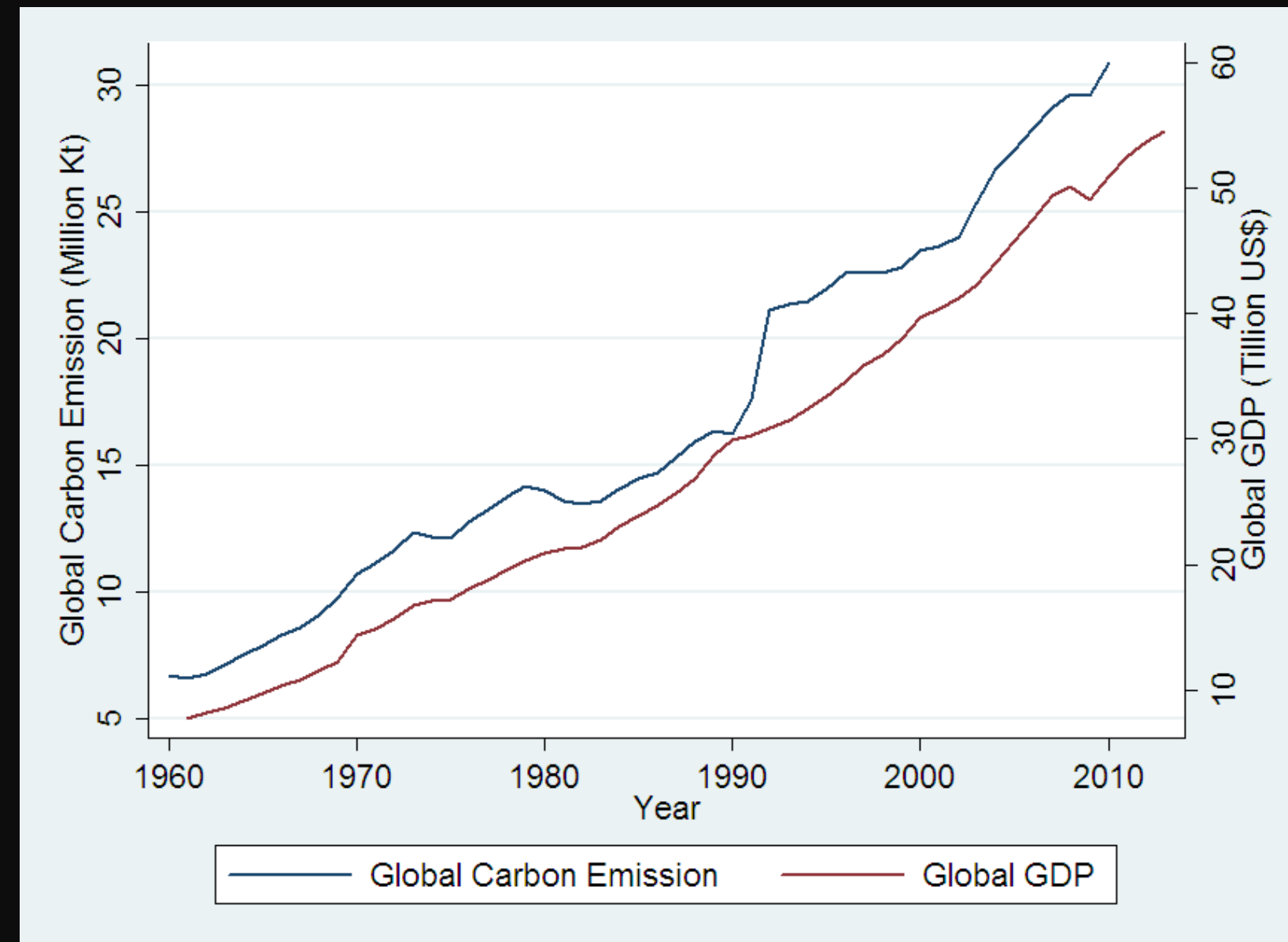


■ Beyond zone of uncertainty (high risk)
■ In zone of uncertainty (increasing risk)
■ Below boundary (safe)
■ Boundary not yet quantified

Who is driving global ecological breakdown?



Energy and resource use, and thus environmental impacts are directly related to GDP growth

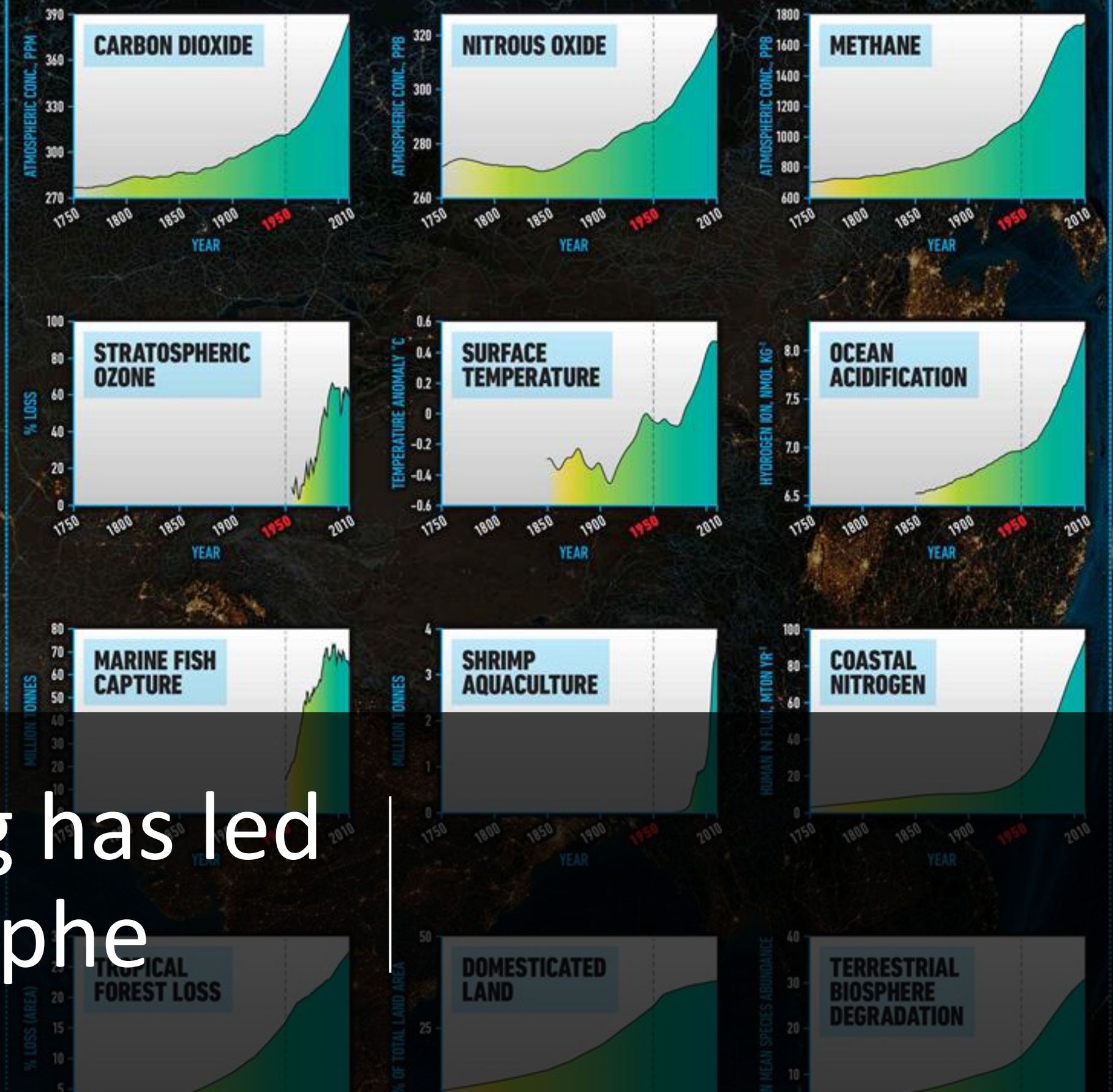


THE GREAT ACCELERATION

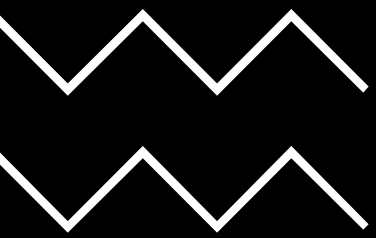
SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRENDS



EARTH SYSTEM TRENDS



...Growth-based thinking has led to an ecological catastrophe



Why no 'green growth?'

More growth = more energy demand

More energy demand makes the transition to renewables only more difficult in the short time we have left.

"Not only is there no empirical evidence supporting the existence of a decoupling of economic growth from environmental pressures on anywhere near the scale needed to deal with environmental breakdown, but also, and perhaps more importantly, such decoupling appears unlikely to happen in the future."

– *The European Environmental Bureau, 2019*



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Jason Hickel  & Giorgos Kallis

Pages 469-486 | Published online: 17 Apr 2019

 Download citation  <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2019.1598964>

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ABSTRACT

The notion of green growth has emerged as a dominant policy response to climate change and ecological breakdown. Green growth theory asserts that continued economic expansion is compatible with our planet's ecology, as technological change and substitution will allow us to absolutely decouple GDP growth from resource use and carbon emissions. This claim is now assumed in national and international policy, including in the Sustainable Development

Related research 

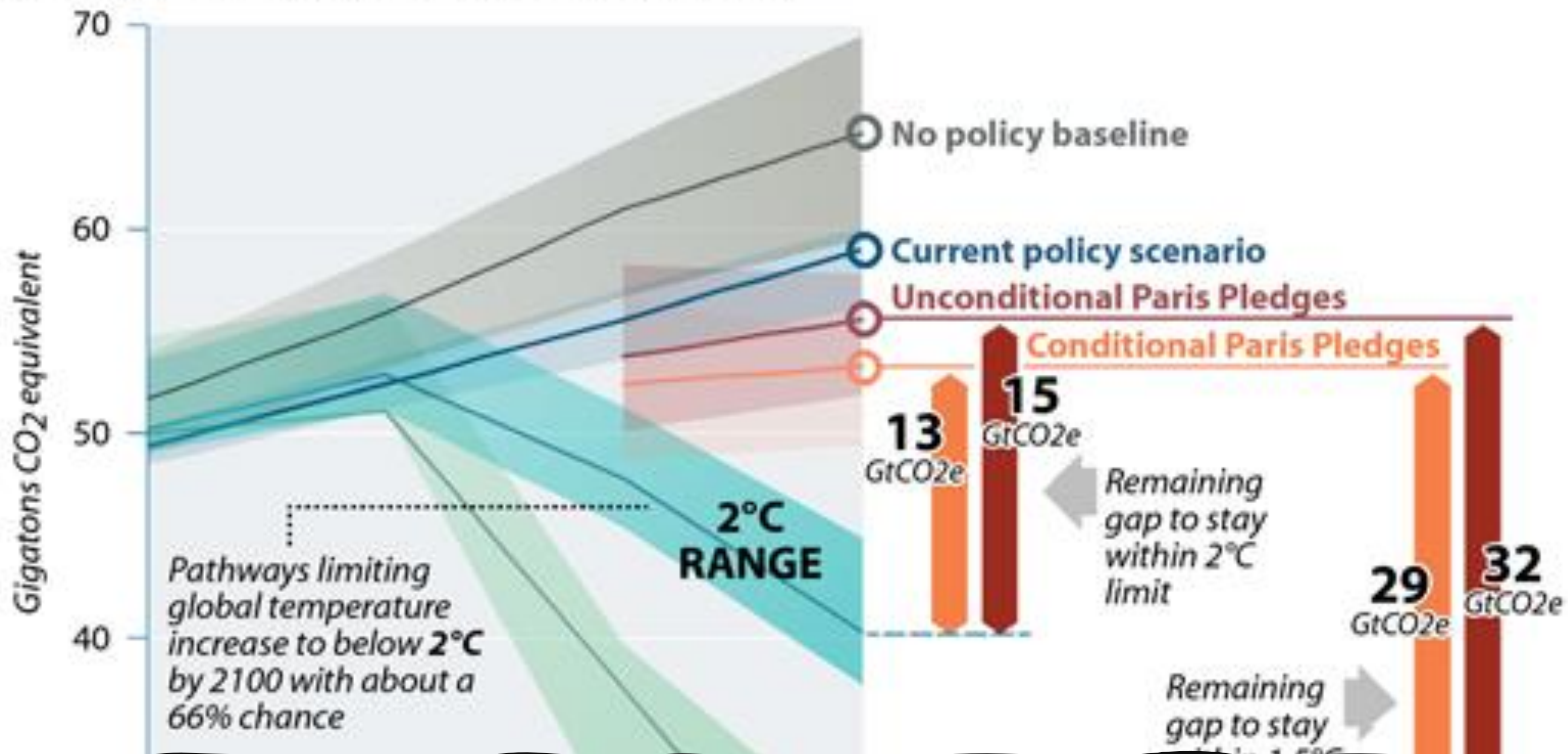
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GLOBAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

1.5°C and 2°C scenarios, estimates to 2030 and beyond



...Growth-based
thinking fails to meet
everyone's needs and
has only increased
inequality

Growth is not an effective mechanism for reducing global poverty.

As the world has become richer, it has also become more unequal.

There is no direct relationship between human wellbeing and GDP growth.

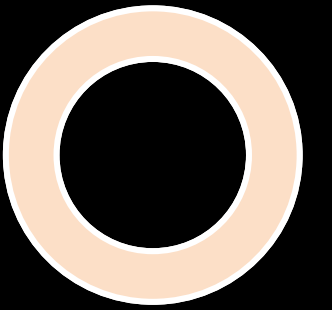
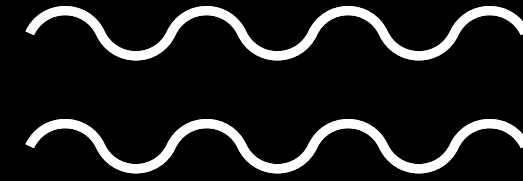
→ We know we can ensure flourishing lives for all with far less energy keeping us below 1,5C



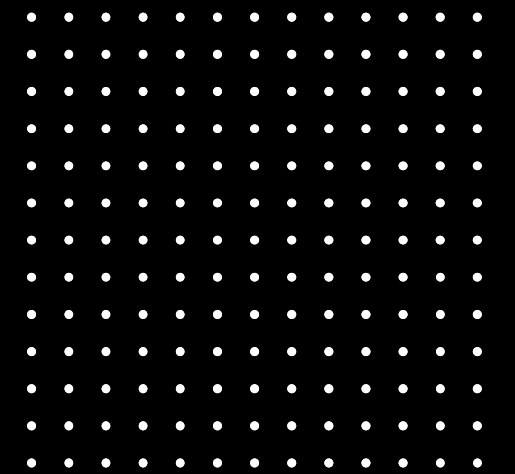
The battle for health equity and ecological justice are part of the same transformational project: The transformation to a post-growth world

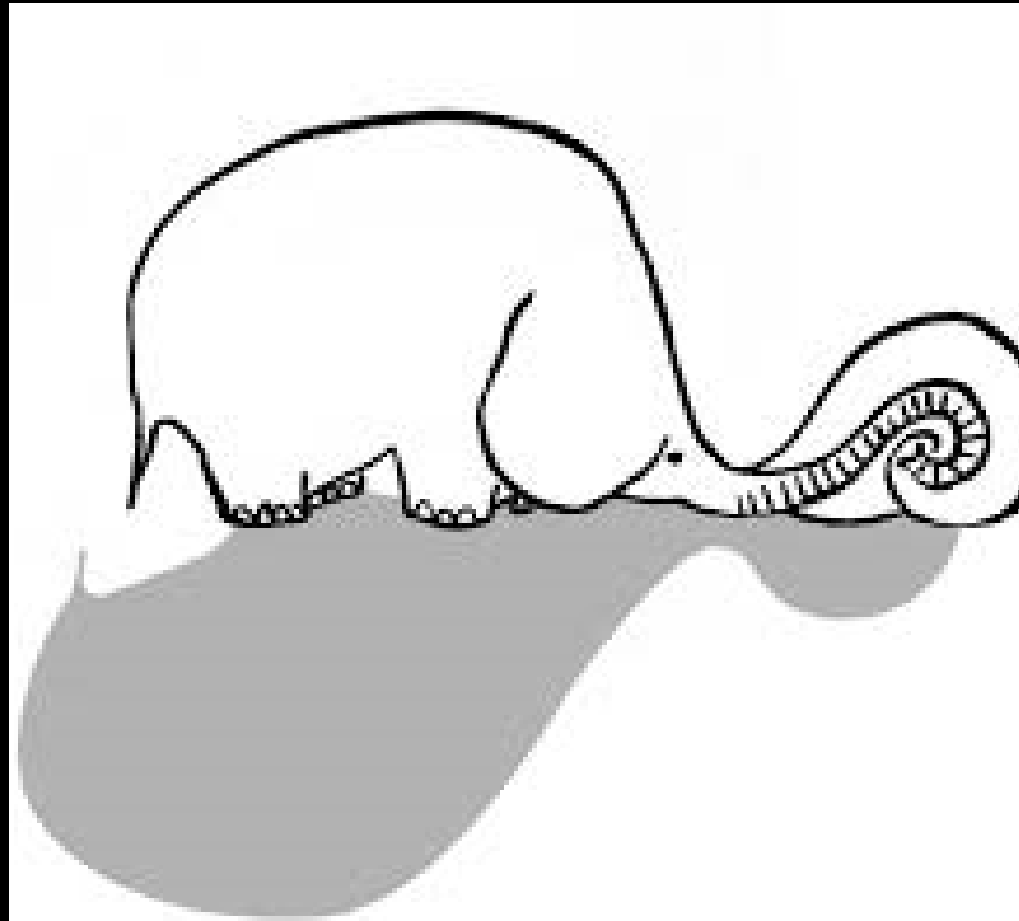
‘Justice is the antithesis of growth - and key to solving the climate crisis’
– Jason Hickel (2021)

A Degrowth transformation



- Reducing our global energy and resource use back to sustainable levels in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being
- By a planned downscaling of the 'economic throughput' of those nations who are currently overshooting planetary boundaries
- And distributing the wealth of the global economy more fairly



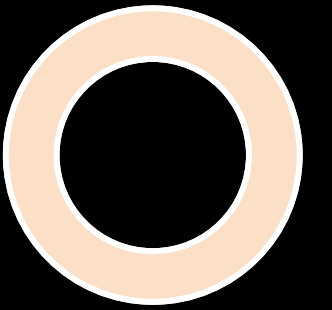


"Degrowth is not about making an elephant smaller, it is about turning an elephant into a snail"

- Authors of 'Degrowth, A vocabulary for a new era (2014)



Key Degrowth policies



- New indicators to measure progress & societal wellbeing
- Relocalisation through promoting commons-based organizing

Decoupling livelihood security from wage work

- Reducing work hours
- A Universal basic Income (UBI) + carbon fees

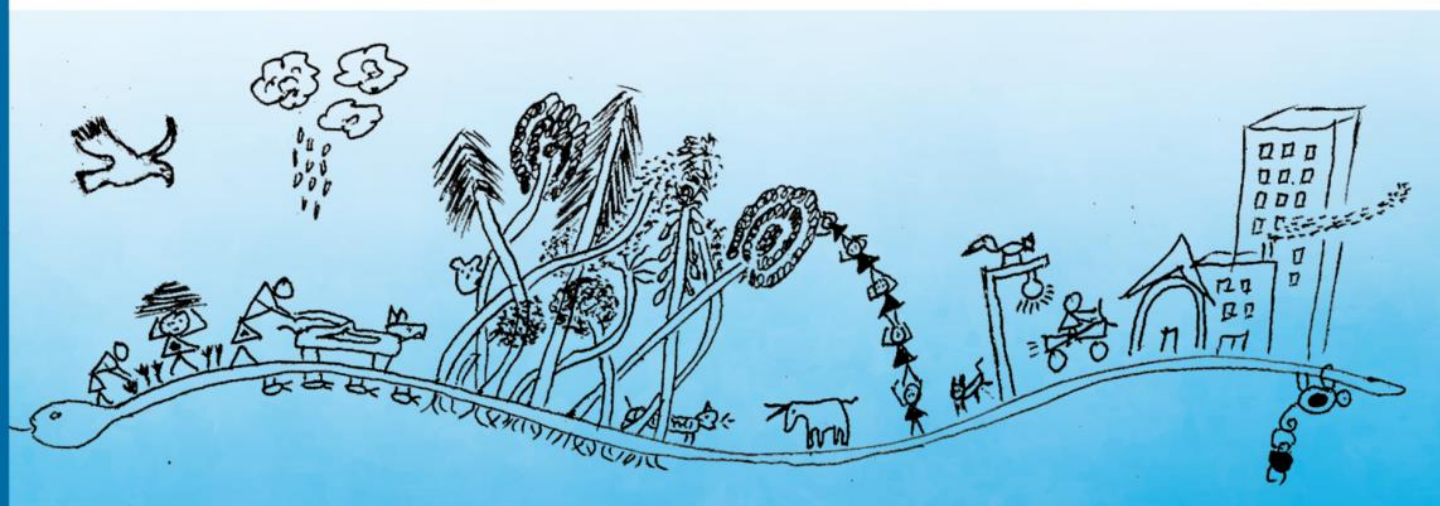
Finance that greens & equalizes

- Progressive wealth taxes
- Community currencies & time banking





PLURIVERSE



A Post-Development Dictionary



EDITORS:

Ashish Kothari • Ariel Salleh • Arturo Escobar

The anti-colonial politics of degrowth: Degrowth and the Global South

Central to degrowth is a critique of colonial, culturally imperialistic beliefs embedded in our current development model → “post-development”

Southern countries should be free to organize their resources and labor around meeting human needs rather than around servicing Northern growth.

Eager to learn more?

Don't hesitate to contact me!

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<https://www.commonsnetwork.org/>



