



Sheffield
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Post-growth organisations for the transition towards a Circular Economy

Andrea Genovese, Mario Pansera

Diego Armando Maradona Institute for a People's Circular Economy

Agenda

- Context: is economic growth still possible?
- CE as a contested concept
- An alternative framing of CE
- Practical Examples

What Circular Economy?

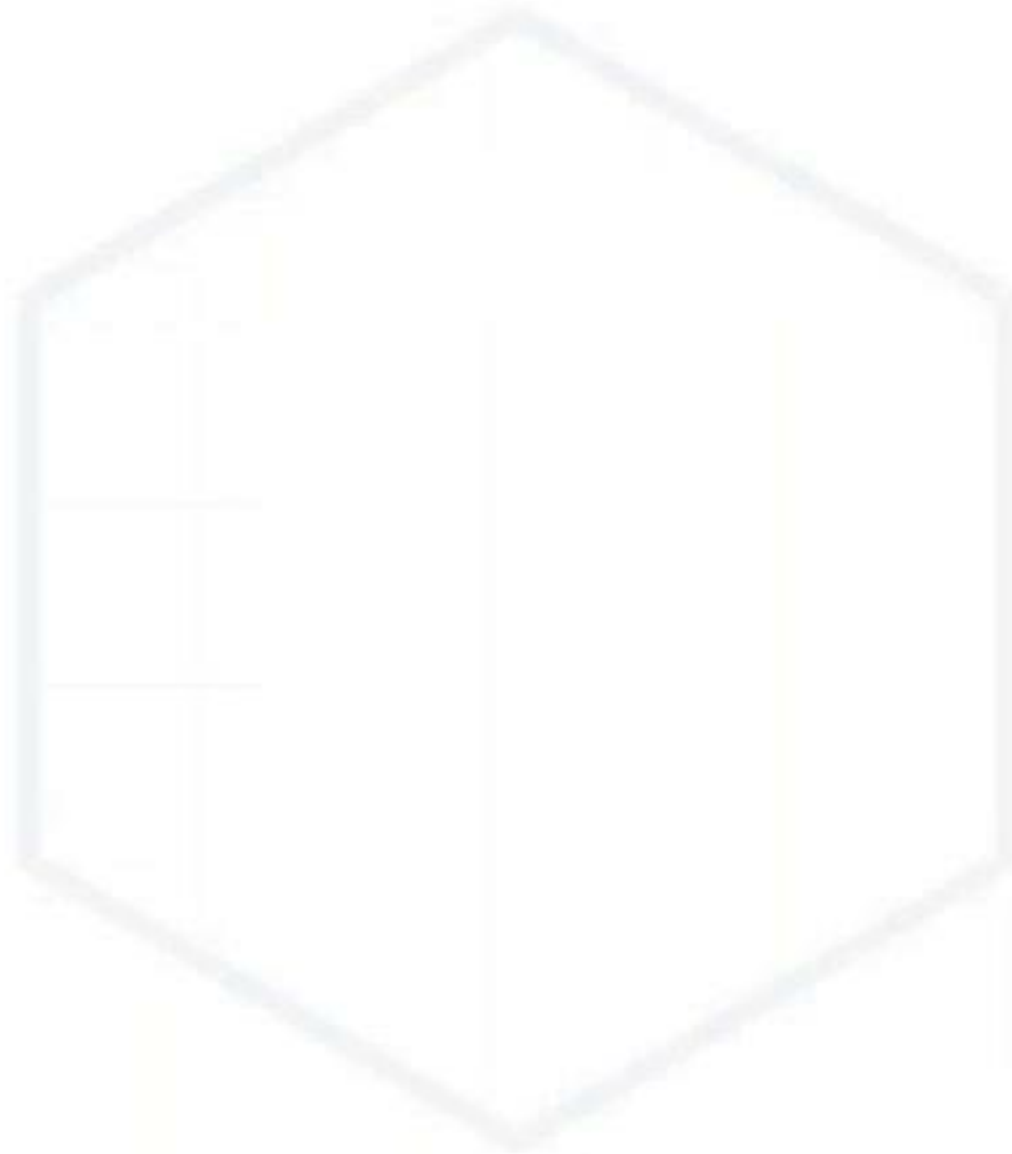


Reduce

Reuse

Recycle

3Rs



What Circular Economy?



Reduce

Reuse

Recycle

3Rs



Reduce (?)

Refuse

Rethink

Reuse

Repair

Refurbish

Remanufacture

Repurpose

Recycle



10Rs



Is this CE desirable?

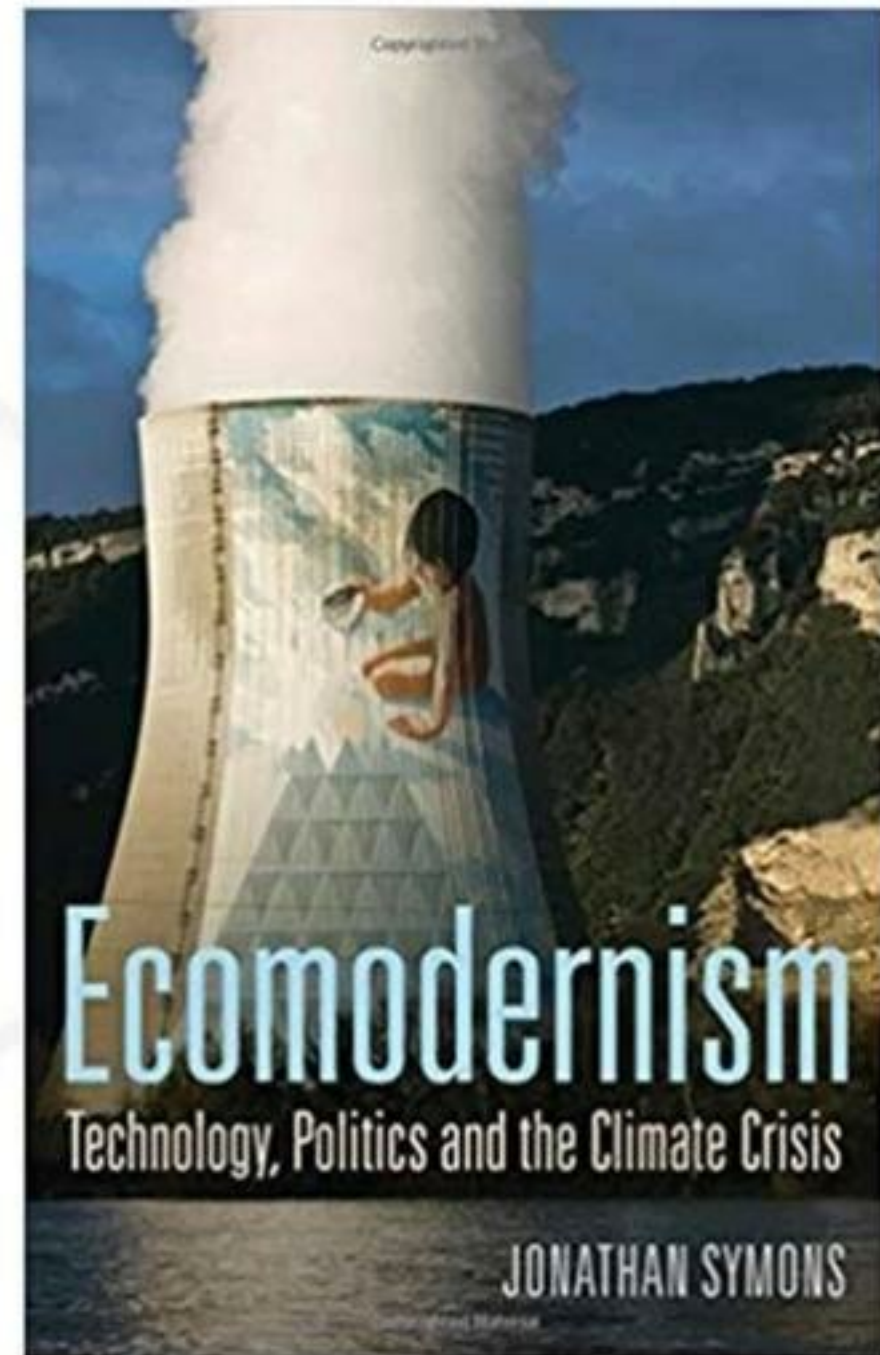
- The CE discourse conveyed by the EU avoids some fundamental questions
 - Who decides what to produce, why to produce, how to produce?
 - **Who wins? Who loses?** What impact on class relations?
 - CE within a growth-oriented (but austerity-driven) framework
 - Maastricht treaty; ESM

Is this CE possible?

- The TFEU obliges EU Member States to comply with budgetary discipline by respecting two criteria:
 - a deficit to GDP ratio not exceeding reference value of 3%
 - a debt to GDP ratio not exceeding reference values of 60%
- **Impossibility of the first CE imperative (reduce)**

An Eco-Modernist CE

- Technology will save us
- The market will take care of it! No need for planning
- No political transformation is required!
- Win - win solutions
- No worries! Keep on growing!



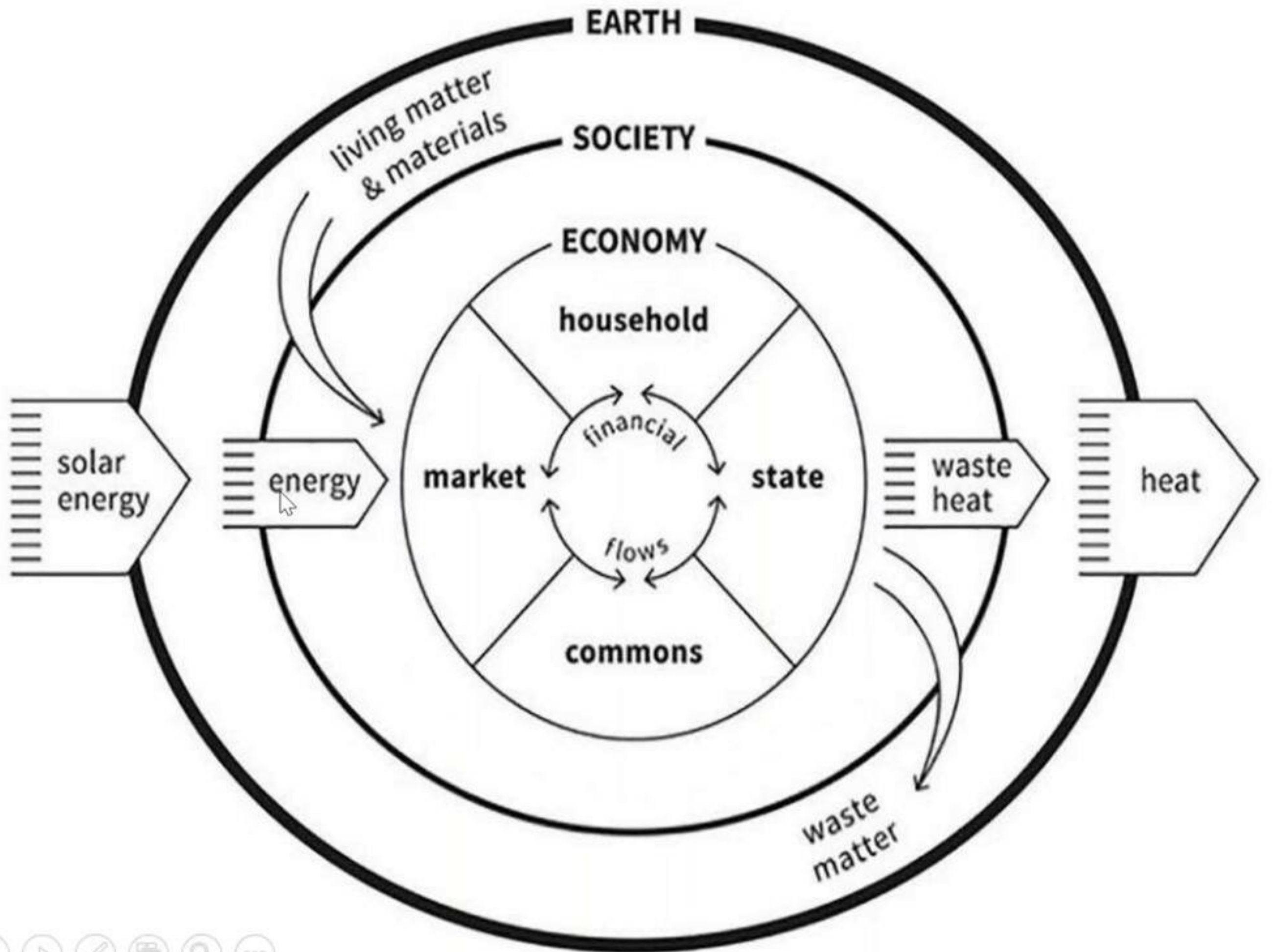
Is CE feasible after all?



**Economy is entropic
It can't be circular!**

At the end...
... the dominant view of
CE is just classic
waste management





Growth?



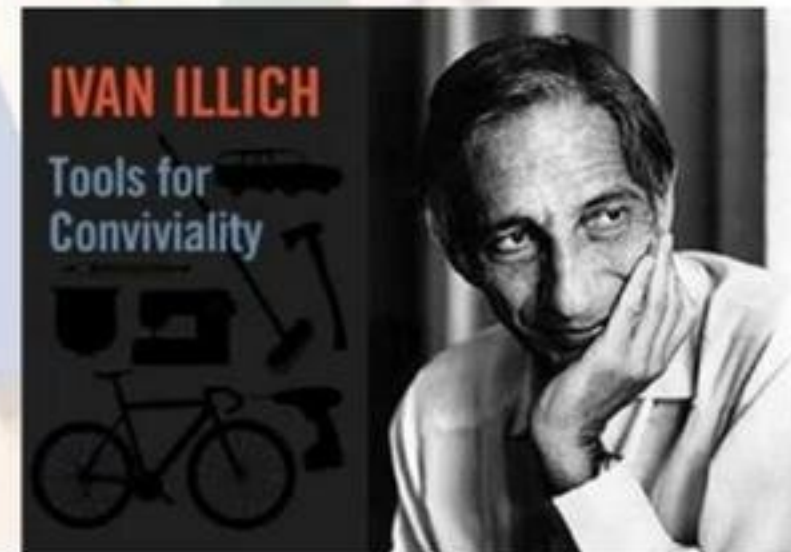
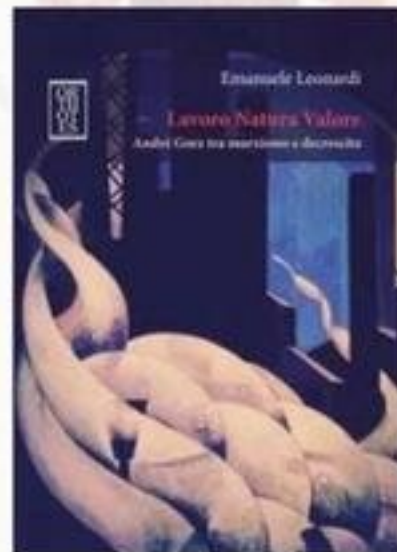
PROGRESS
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THE END

- Economy can't be totally circular
- We must abandon the idea of infinite growth
- CE risks to be a new form of greenwashing
- CE needs to address social justice
- CE needs to address democracy
- CE must be accompanied by a transformation of social order

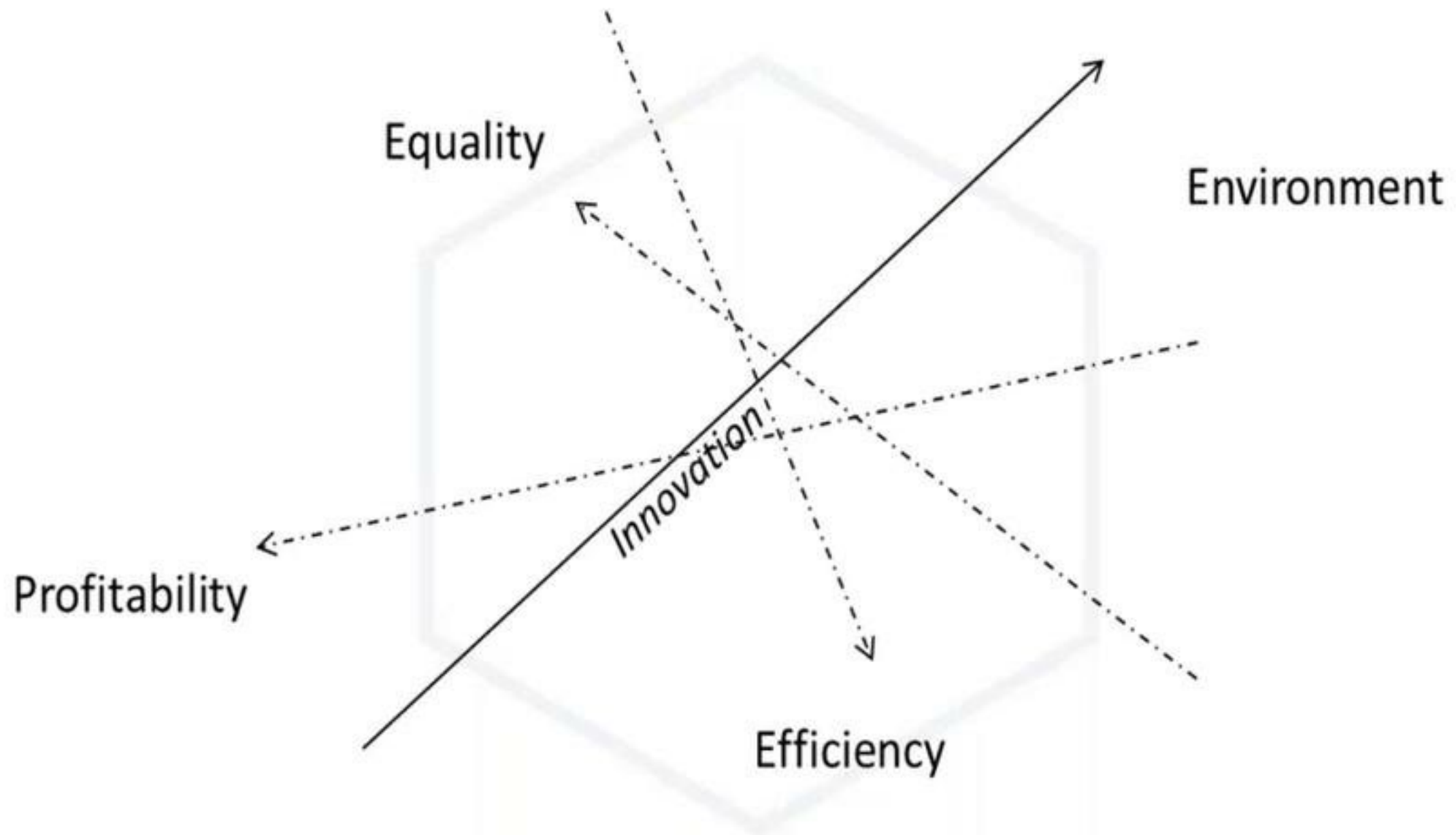
An alternative framing for CE



- “Convivial tools” are tools* which can empower users, give them the opportunity to self-learn and keep the balance between self and ready-made work, and between human activities and the biosphere (Illich, 1973; Gorz, 1980)
- *Conviviality* as opposed to *Industrial Productivity*
- Radically rethinking Labour and the hierarchical organisation of production
- Supply networks and value chains of “liberated” factories



Innovation is political!



Dimension of conviviality



- **Relatedness**
 - *What does it bring about between people?*
- **Access**
 - *Who can produce/use it where and how?*
- **Adaptability**
 - *How independent and linkable is it?*
- **Bio-Interaction**
 - *How does it interact with living organism*
- **Appropriateness**
 - *What is the relation between input and output considering the context?*



Practical Examples

- A set of reflections on formal and informal organisations which, in the current climate, are facing timely challenges, trying to elaborate **innovative** responses
 - Post-growth assumptions
 - Ecological considerations
 - Common challenges

Practical Examples (1)

- How do we deal with industrial crises?
- Could they be a way to implement Convivial CE production practices?

RETAIL OCTOBER 15, 2019 / 4:34 PM / UPDATED A YEAR AGO

Whirlpool to close Italian plant amid protests

By Reuters Staff

2 MIN READ



Practical Examples (1)

- How do we deal with industrial crises?
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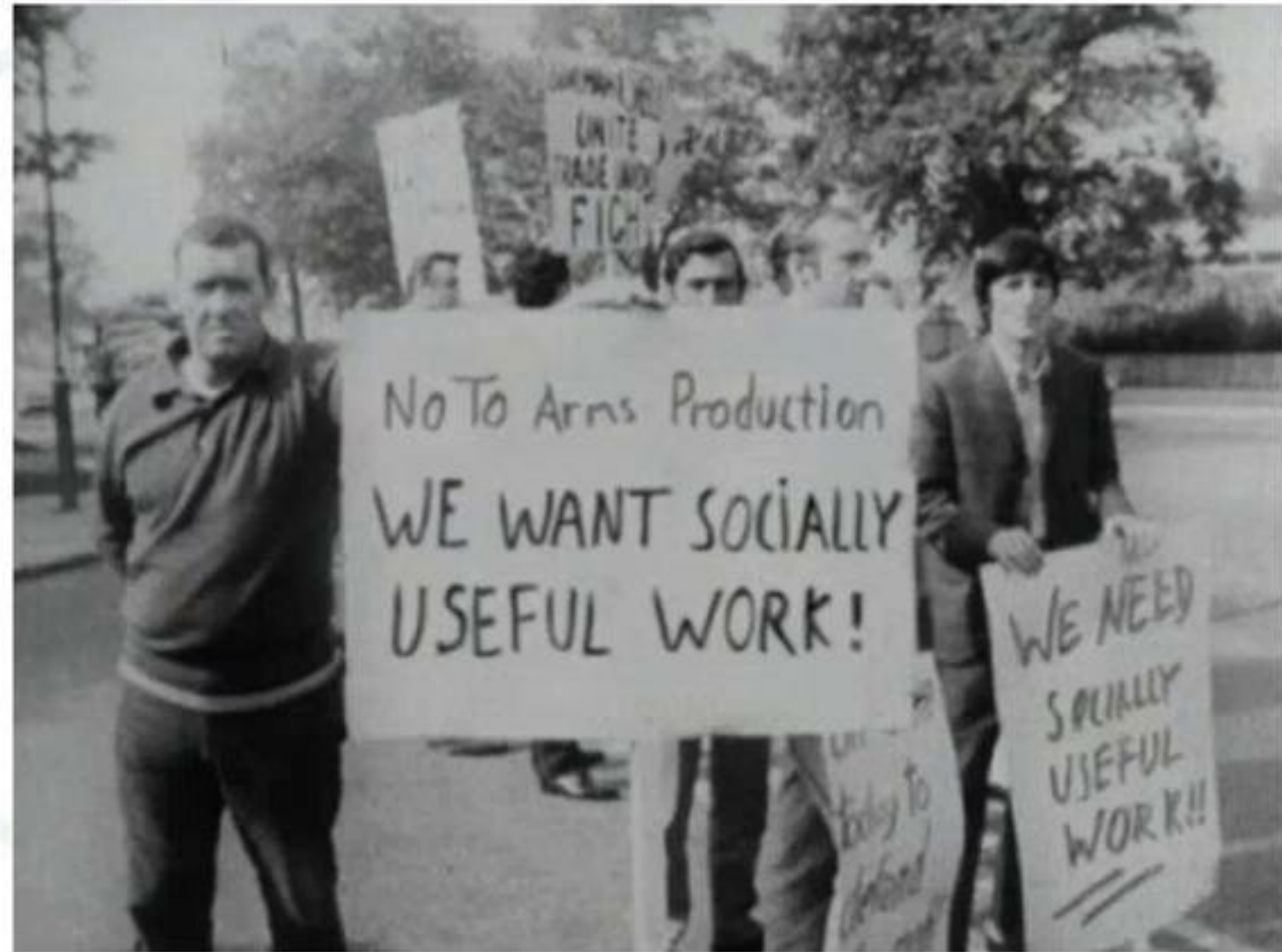
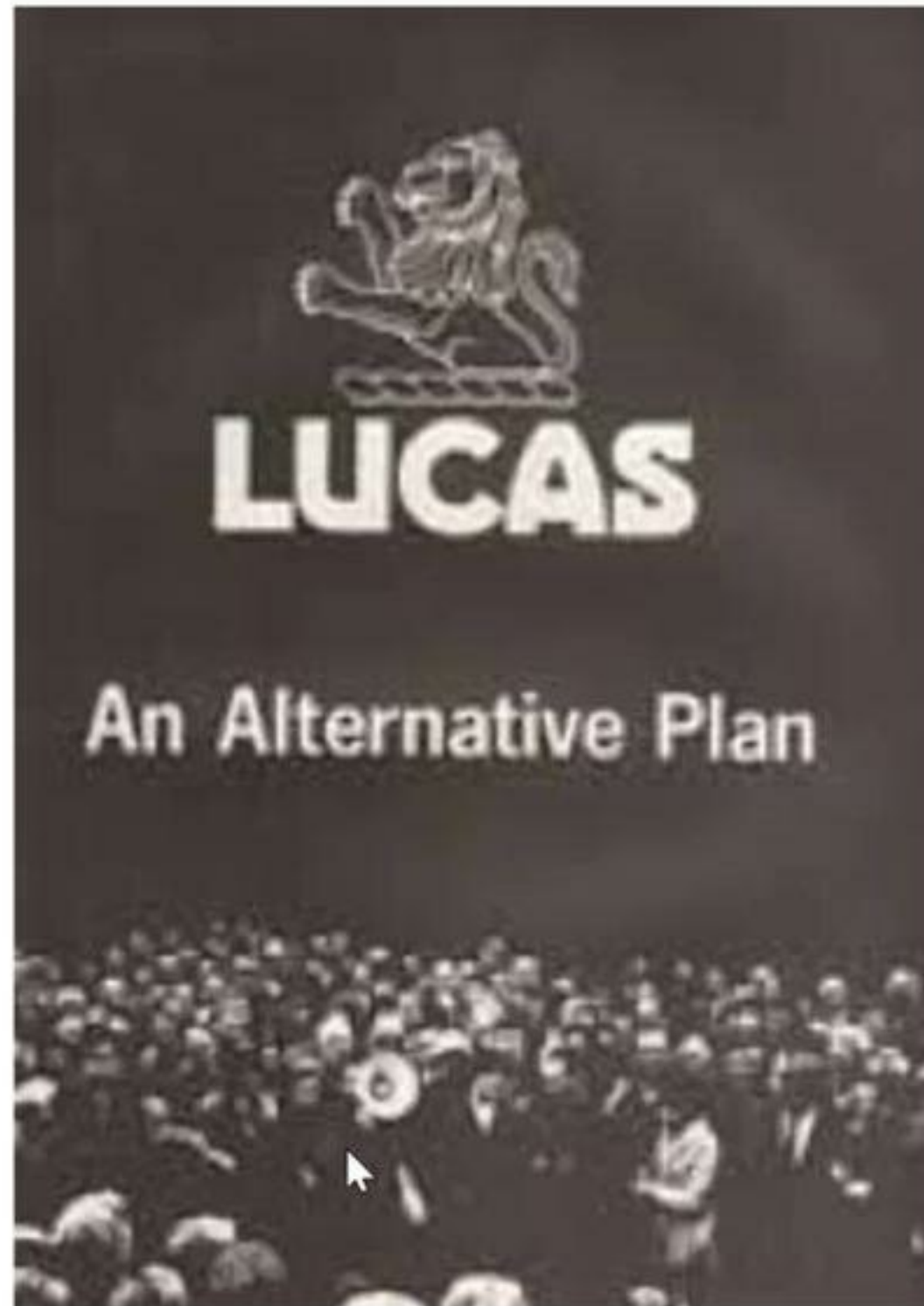


Practical Examples (1)

- How do we deal with industrial crises?
- Could they be a way to implement Convivial CE production practices?



Practical Examples (1)



Practical Examples (2)



Top-Down *linear*
solutions

Scuola, a Napoli i banchi anticovid costruiti dagli studenti



Bottom-up *convivial*
circular solutions

Practical Examples (2)



Top-Down *linear*
solutions

Scuola, a Napoli i banchi anticovid costruiti dagli studenti



Bottom-up *convivial*
circular solutions

Practical Example (3)



Ministers waste £150m buying unusable masks from banker



L'ESPRESSO TV

Mascherine, viaggio nella prima fabbrica pubblica. L'ha costruita la Puglia: «Trenta milioni di pezzi all'anno»

Riqualificato un vecchio capannone nel Barese, l'idea nata a marzo in pieno lockdown. Il capo regionale della Protezione civile: «Garantirà 6-8 mesi di autonomia in caso di nuova emergenza, possiamo produrre anche tute»

di Francesco Strippoli



Expensive outsourcing contracts

Converting existing production capacity to serve local needs



Practical Examples (4)

- Democratically-run cooperatives in agricultural production
- Acknowledgment of “limits” to growth due to physical constraints
 - Geographical constraints limit production area
 - Organic production limits yield
- Still, in order to survive and to minimise risk, they need to sell to big supermarkets!



Key Issues

- Most of the operations, production and supply chain management literature and practice is based on the assumption of an **infinite growth**
 - Data (and **thermodynamic laws**) are showing us that this is not possible!
- We have provided some examples of post-growth operations and production management
- How to expand these to a supply chain level?

An Alternative Organisation

- In **Capital-Managed Firms**, capitalists or their representatives hire workers, pay them a fixed income (the wage rate) and appropriate the residual
- In **Labour-Managed Firms**, workers (or their representatives) 'hire' capital, remunerate it at a fixed rate of interest and appropriate the residual.
- Democratic firms as non-capitalistic entities that reverse the typical capital-labour relation of capitalistic systems.

An Alternative Organisation



- In LM (or Democratic) Firms:
 - Decisions are vested in workers, instead of in capitalists (as is the rule in capitalistic companies)
 - Capitalists and workers switch roles
 - Capitalists take the place of workers as fixed income earners
 - Variable incomes traditionally associated with capitalists are earned by the members of democratic firms

Radical Measures

- CE at the moment looks like classic waste management. We need political action to:
 - Create incentives for democratic post-growth companies (through public procurement and fiscal policy)
 - Create incentives for reconverting unutilised capacity through industrial symbiosis
 - Eliminate subsidies to polluting sectors (extractive industry)
 - Link subsidies to the implementation of CE practices
 - Establish caps (profits, resources, energy, emission etc.)
 - Minimum Universal Basic Income; Care Income; Max Income
 - Revise EU treaties (at the bare minimum, excluding CE investments from TFEUs)



An alternative framing for CE



Marx says that revolutions are the locomotives of world history. But the situation may be quite different. Perhaps revolutions are not the train ride, but the human race grabbing for the emergency brake.

— *Walter Benjamin* —

Our Initiatives

ReTraCEE
Realising the Transition towards the Circular Economy

ProCEEDS
Promoting Circular Economy in the Food Supply Chain



Prosperity without Growth

- Forthcoming:
 - More projects
 - Special Issues
 - Dialogue with Trade Unions and political movements