

# Toward an Ecological Civilization

*Vision, Principles, and Pathway*

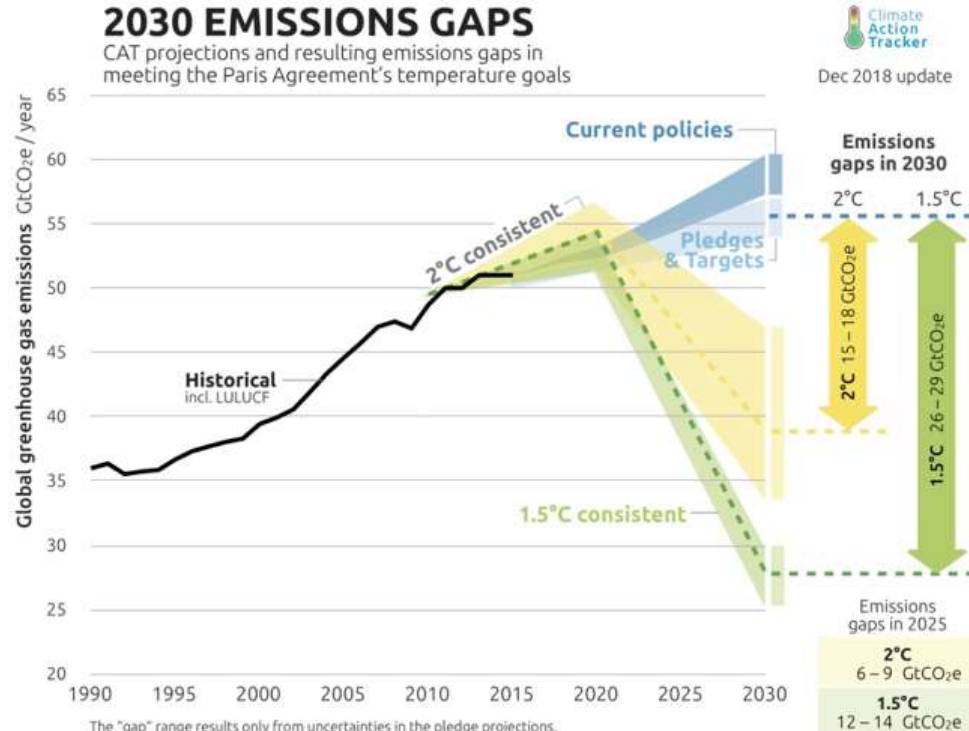
Presented by  
Jeremy Lent

# A Civilization Heading for Collapse

# Our home



# We're heading in the wrong direction...





# Serious risk of civilizational collapse

**Earth System moves to a new state;  
modern civilisation collapses**

**Feedbacks push climate change higher;  
abrupt changes much more likely;  
massive impacts to humans**

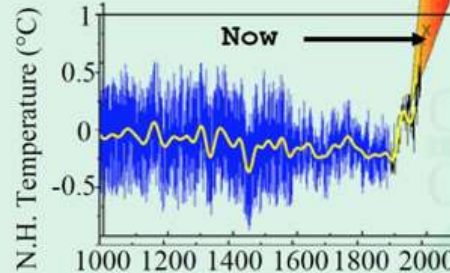
**Loss of Greenland ice sheet**

**Large biodiversity loss;  
coral reefs disappear**

**"Committed" Climate Change**

IPCC Projections  
2100 AD

Global Temperature (°C)



Vast ecological destruction across the board



# UN IPBES report



# Half of all marine life lost in 40 years



**Half of all marine life lost in 40 years: WWF report**

The populations of some marine species have declined by 49 per cent in just four decades, according to one of the most extensive surveys of sealife ever compiled.



# Rainforests are disappearing

## **ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST RAINFORESTS COULD BE WIPED OUT BY 2100**

Satellite data indicates that the Congo Basin lost an area of forest larger than Bangladesh between 2000 and 2014.

MORGAN ERICKSON-DAVIS · JAN 1, 2019



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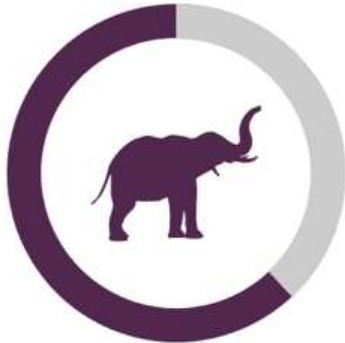
MORGAN ERICKSON-DAVIS · JAN 1, 2019

## Amazon rainforest deforestation 'worst in 10 years', says Brazil

🕒 24 November 2018



# 60% decline in animal populations



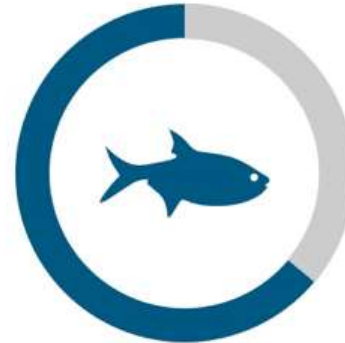
**- 38 %**

The terrestrial LPI shows that populations have declined by thirty-eight percent overall between 1970 and 2012.



**- 81 %**

The freshwater LPI shows that on average the abundance of populations monitored in the freshwater system has declined by eighty-one percent between 1970 and 2012.



**- 36 %**

The marine LPI shows a thirty-six percent overall decline between 1970 and 2012.



# Insect collapse around the world



**More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas**

Caspar A. Hallmann, Martin Sorg, Eelke Jongejans, Herik Siepel, Nick Hoffand, Heinz Schwan, Werner Stenmans, Andreas Müller, Hubert Sumser, Thomas Hörren, Dave Goulson, Hans de Kroon

Published: October 18, 2017 • <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>



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**Insect collapse: 'We are destroying our life support systems'**  
Scientist Brad Lister returned to Puerto Rican rainforest after 35 years to find 98% of ground insects had vanished

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**Insect collapse: 'We are close to losing life support systems'**  
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## California's Monarch Butterflies Hit 'Potentially Catastrophic' Record Low

A discouraging survey of California's monarch butterfly population signals bad news for the at-risk species.

SHARE | TWEEET



Research butterfly, Image: Pixabay



By 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish



# Vast ecological destruction across the board



5 bn facing water shortage in 2050

# Vast ecological destruction across the board



5 bn facing water shortage in 2050

Over 500 dead zones in the ocean



# Vast ecological destruction across the board



5 bn facing water shortage in 2050

Over 500 dead zones in the ocean

Annihilation of coral reefs worldwide

# Vast ecological destruction across the board



# A system designed to mint billionaires

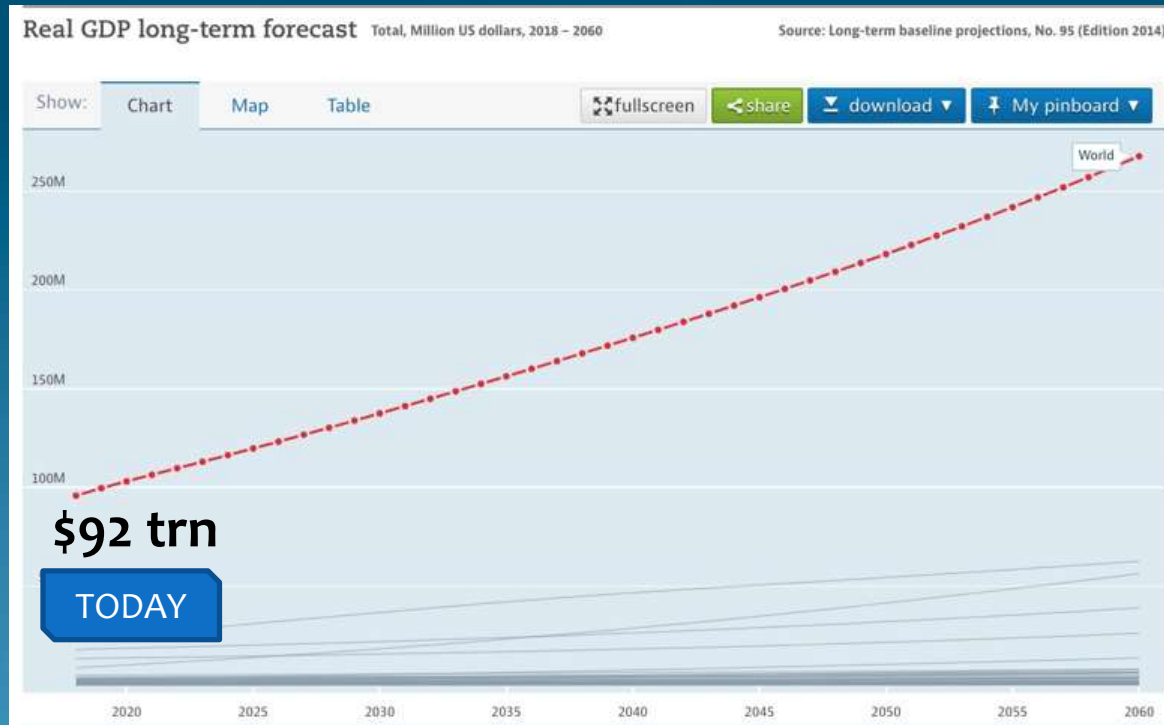




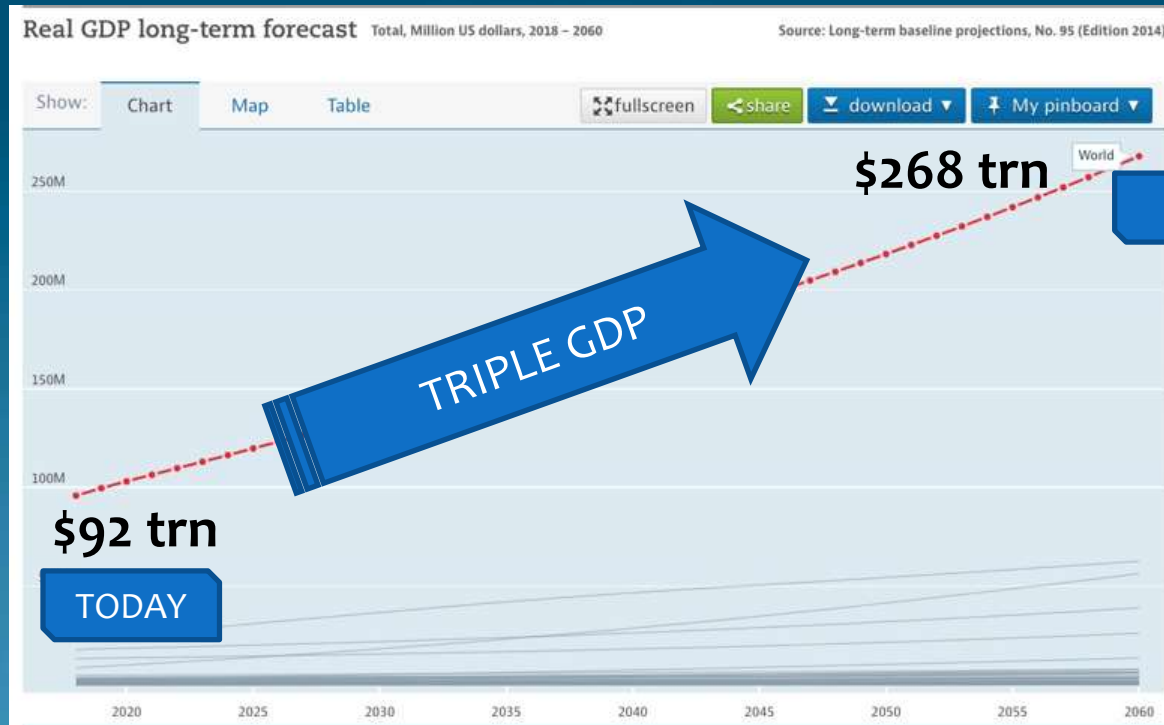
69 of the world's 100 largest economies  
are transnational corporations



# Global production today at \$92 trillion



# Global production projected to triple by 2060



How Did We Get Here?

JEREMY  
LENT



# THE PATTERNING INSTINCT

A Cultural History  
of Humanity's Search  
for Meaning

*Foreword by FRITJOF CAPRA*



# Hunter-gatherers: Nature is a Giving Parent



## Nature is a giving parent

All living beings are family





## Nature is a giving parent

All living beings are family

We all have an intimate relationship with spirits





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We all have an intimate relationship with spirits

We can trust Nature to meet our needs



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Everything is connected



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We can trust Nature to meet our needs

Everything is connected

The natural world has intrinsic value





# Great transitions in human history



# Agriculture: emergence of separation



- ❑ Humans separate from Nature
- ❑ Humans separate from other humans

## Hierarchy of the gods





## Hierarchy of the gods

Intrinsic value of wealth,  
possessions, and power



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Can't trust the gods:  
need for worship,  
sacrifice and priesthood





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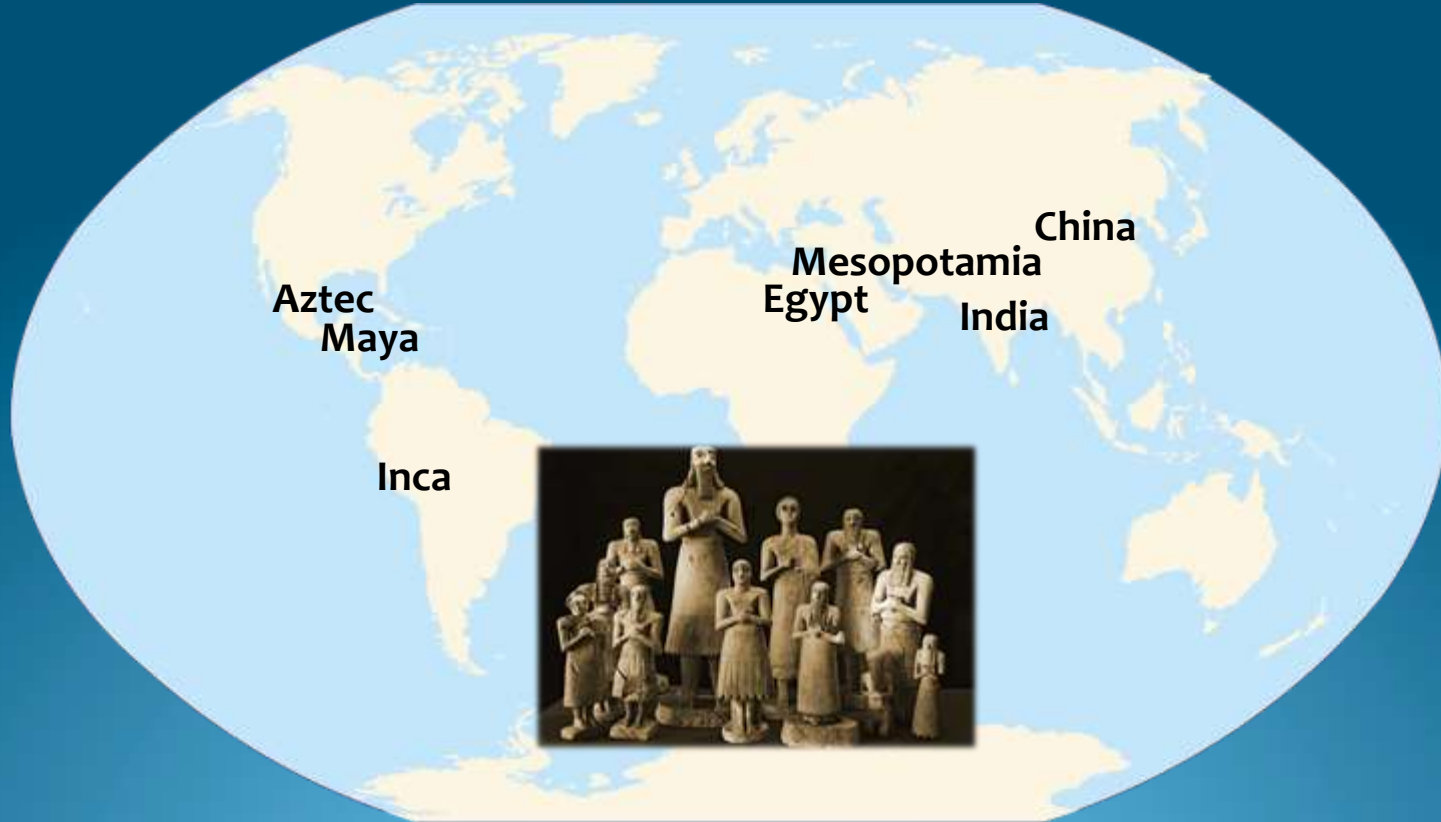
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Respect the hierarchy—and the patriarchy

# Shared by early civilizations throughout the world



Aztec  
Maya

Inca

Mesopotamia  
Egypt

China  
India



## Two unprecedented patterns of meaning



## Two unprecedented patterns of meaning





# An interconnected cosmos of yin and yang



## Pondering the Tao



## Harmonic web of life



## Two unprecedented patterns of meaning



Greece

China



## Dualism: split cosmos, split human



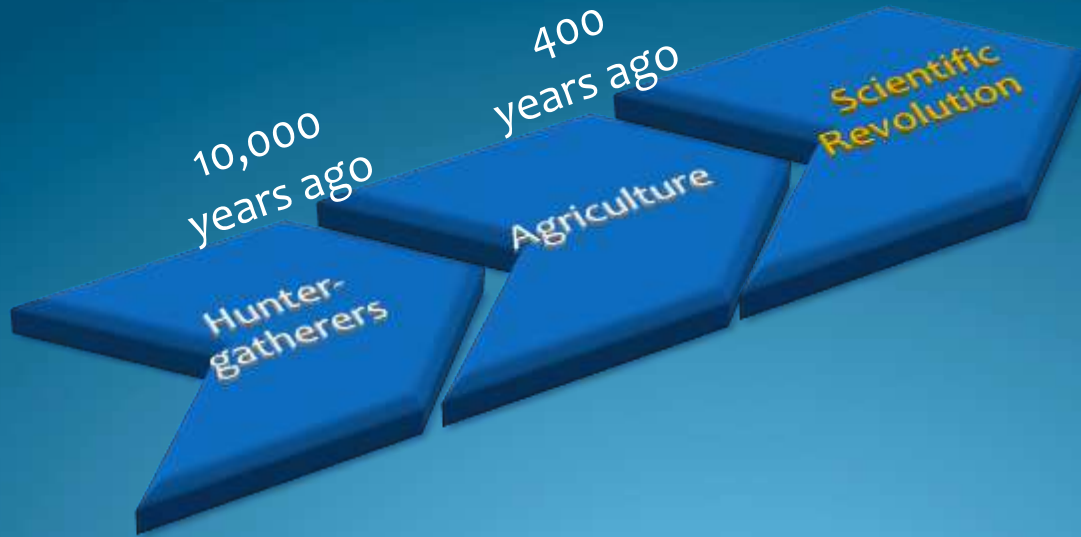
# Christian Rationalism



# God as the great clockmaker



# Great transitions in human history





# Nature's perfect geometry



# Scientific Revolution: Nature is a Machine



=



# The Conquest of Nature



“establish and extend the **power of dominion** of the human race itself over the universe”

“render ourselves the **masters and possessors of nature**”

Francis Bacon, prophet of the scientific age

## Conquering nature... and other continents





# The Modern Story



We are all separate  
from each other



We are all separate  
from each other

We are all selfish



CNNMONEY NOW

MEASURING THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

CNN

6:37 AM ET



We are all separate  
from each other

We are all selfish

Nature is a  
machine





We are all separate  
from each other

We are all selfish

Nature is a  
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Technology is  
the solution

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**EVERYTHING IS MEANINGLESS: FILL IT WITH  
CONSUMERISM**

**CNN**  
6:37 AM ET

# Technology-driven zombie lifestyles



# The greatest inequality in history

Wealthiest 26 billionaires...





# The greatest inequality in history

Wealthiest 26 billionaires...



... Half the world's population

3.8 billion people

# Ransacking the earth



Tar sands extraction—Alberta, Canada

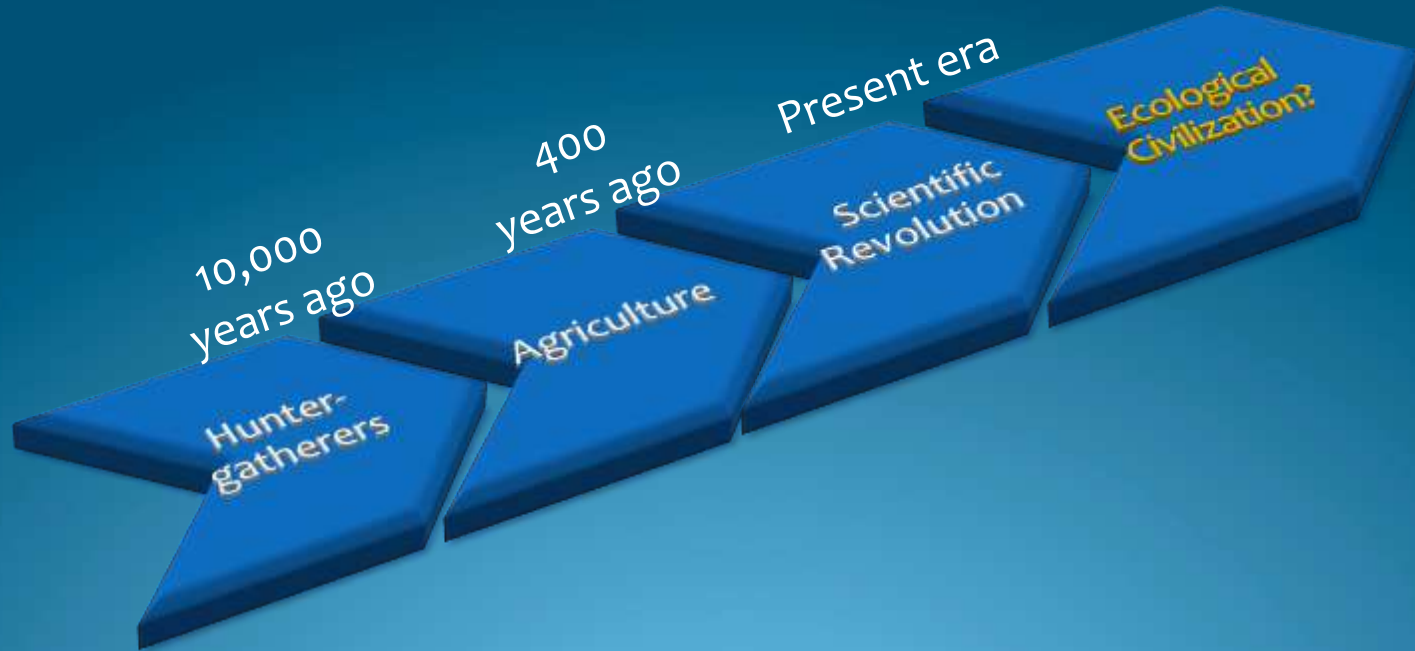


# Existential crisis of climate breakdown



Flooding in Bangladesh submerged one-third of the country in 2017

# Great transitions in human history





# Ecological Civilization

# What is an Ecological Civilization?

Transforming the basis of our global civilization



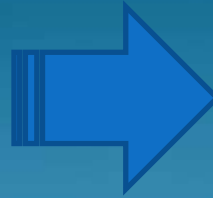
Wealth-based

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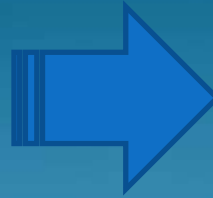
Life-based

# What is an Ecological Civilization?

Transforming the basis of our global civilization



Wealth-based



Life-based

Global cultural/economic system promotes sustainable flourishing for humans and Earth



# Ecology: how living systems self-organize



Ecologies can remain resilient for millions of years



# The Ecological Civilization story

“We are all interconnected in the web of life”





# Principles of an Ecological Civilization





Respect the dignity of all people and groups



The inherent right of every person to participate in political power

# Symbiosis: living for the common good



Each party contributes and receives reciprocally

# Holarchy: each part of a greater whole



The health of the whole requires the flourishing of each part



# Society organized based on bioregions

- Regions have different needs and affinities based on their ecological context
- Communities connect with the land rather than global flows

## The bioregions of California





## Recognizing humanity as embedded within the natural world



Slogan in Paris during  
COP21, 2015

# Sustainable flourishing into the long-term future



## Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy

*“In our every deliberation, we  
must consider the impact of  
our decisions on the  
next seven generations.”*

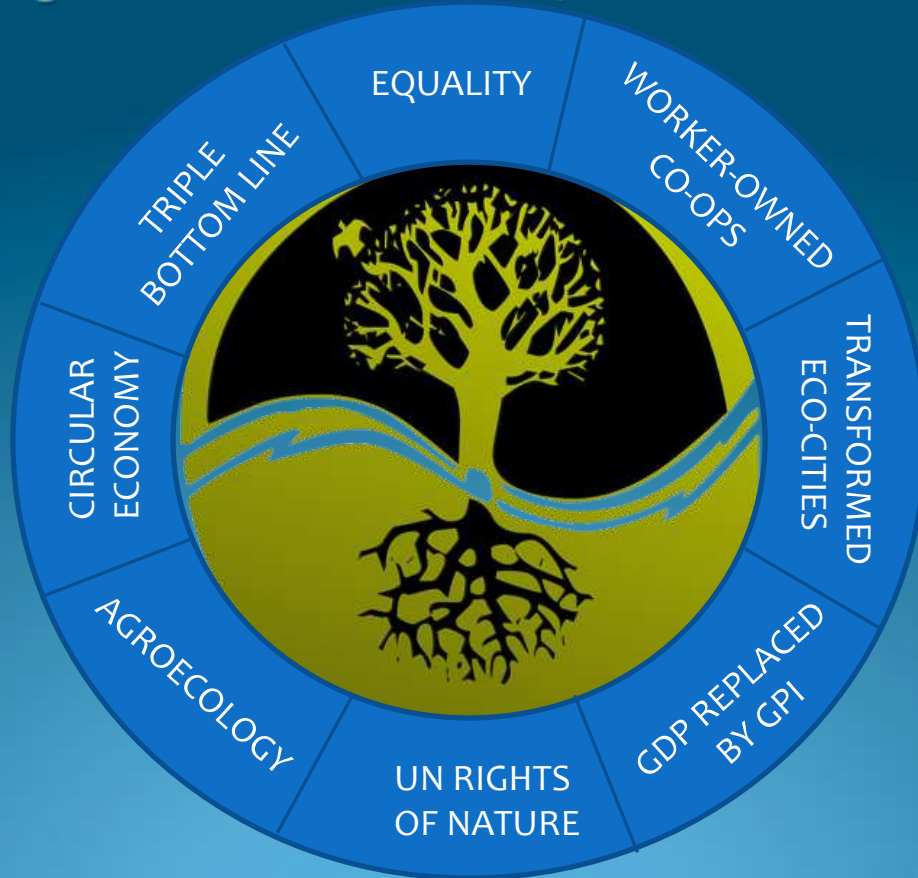
# Humility: recognizing the unpredictability of complex systems

## The Web of Life



Human activity affects the entire system in nonlinear and unexpected ways

# An Ecological Civilization in practice





# Reduction in global income inequality



- ✓ Just transition from fossil fuel economy
- ✓ Global Wealth tax
- ✓ Universal Basic Income
- ✓ Property returned to the commons

# Corporations existing for humanity rather than shareholder returns

- Transnational corporations fundamentally reorganized
- **Triple bottom line** required for corporate charters
- **Strict limits on advertising**

## Triple Bottom Line



# Worker-owned co-ops becoming major force in global commerce



## Ecological values

- Equity & Fairness
- Solidarity
- Social Responsibility
- Democracy
- Transparency

# Circular Economy increases employment while reducing waste

- Products designed for repair and recycling
- Sourcing from recycled materials
- Waste virtually eliminated





# Cities designed on ecological principles



- **Community gardens** on every block
- Extensive use of:
  - Energy efficient designs
  - Rooftops
  - Aquaponics
- **Cars banned** from city centers

# Agroecology replacing global industrial monocrops

- Based on **permaculture principles**
- Greater crop **biodiversity**
- Greater **water & carbon efficiency**
- Virtual **elimination of synthetic fertilizer**



# GDP replaced by Genuine Progress Indicator to measure national activity

Factors in:

- **Negatives**

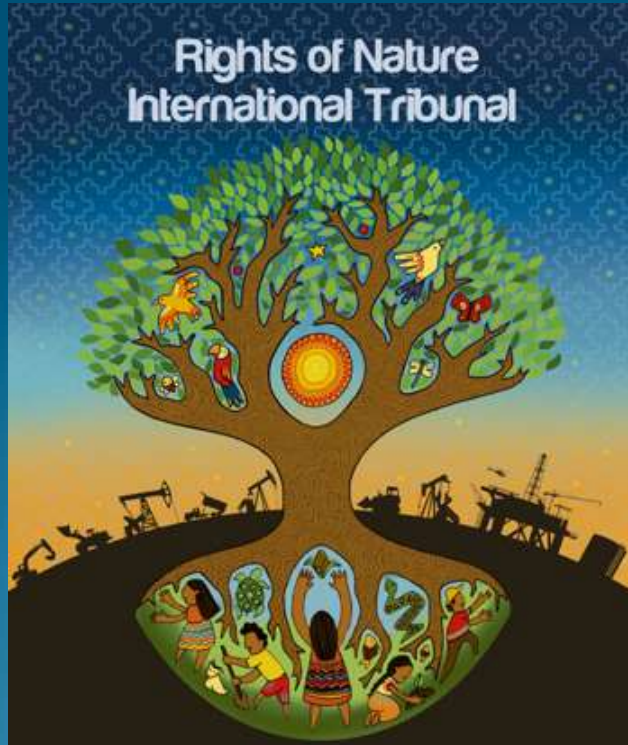
- Income inequality
- Environmental pollution
- Crime

- **Positives**

- Volunteer work
- Household work
- Education



# UN Rights of Nature puts natural world on same legal standing as humanity



- Personhood given to
  - Ecosystems
  - High-functioning mammals
- Ecocide defined as an international crime

[www.StopEcocide.earth](http://www.StopEcocide.earth)



# Nonlinearity of Change

# Women's Suffrage

1897

- National Union for Women's Suffrage founded in England
- 3,000 people march in London for women's right to vote in 1907



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## 1920s

Women gain right to vote:

UK 1918–28

US 1920

France 1944

Mexico 1947

# Civil Rights in United States

## 1955

- Rosa Parks arrested for refusing to give up her seat in the bus
- Montgomery Bus Boycott lasts over a year
- Black churches burned, black citizens arrested



Rosa Parks



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Martin Luther King

## 1963–64

- March on Washington in 1963 with 200,000+ people
- Martin Luther King: “I have a dream”
- Civil Rights Act passed into law by President Johnson

# Same sex marriage

## 1996

- Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passed by both Houses of Congress with large, veto-proof majorities
- Signed into law by President Bill Clinton
- Codified non-recognition of all same-sex marriages for all federal purposes



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## 2015

- DOMA completely overturned
- Federal government recognizes same sex marriage with full benefits
- More than 55% of Americans approved same sex marriage by this time

# #MeToo movement

**2006**

Civil rights activist  
Tarana Burke uses  
phrase “Me Too”  
to raise awareness  
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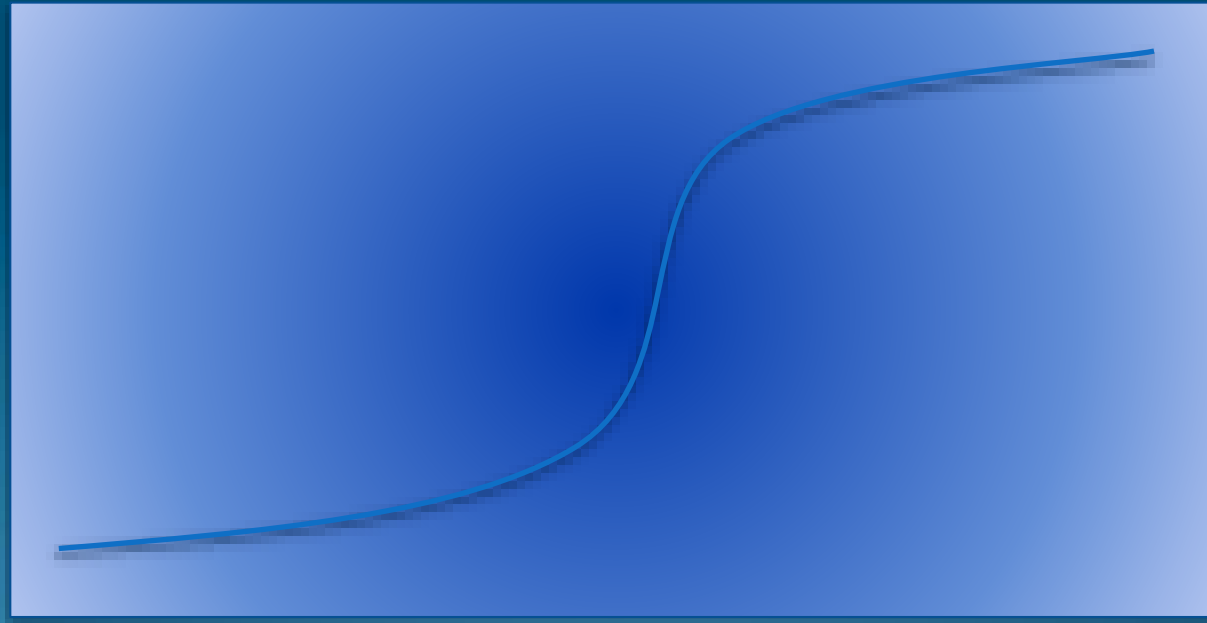


**2017**

- #MeToo hashtag goes viral
- Harvey Weinstein arrested for sexual assault
- Potentiates movement to transform abusive cultural norms

# Public support follows a nonlinear path of change

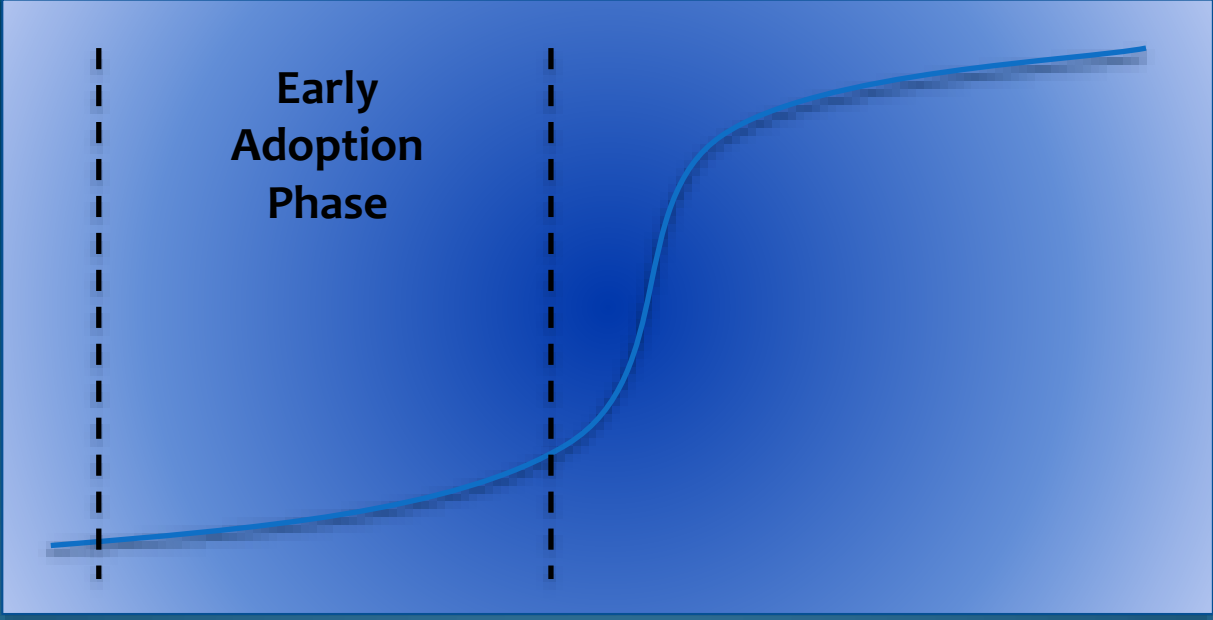
Public  
support



Time

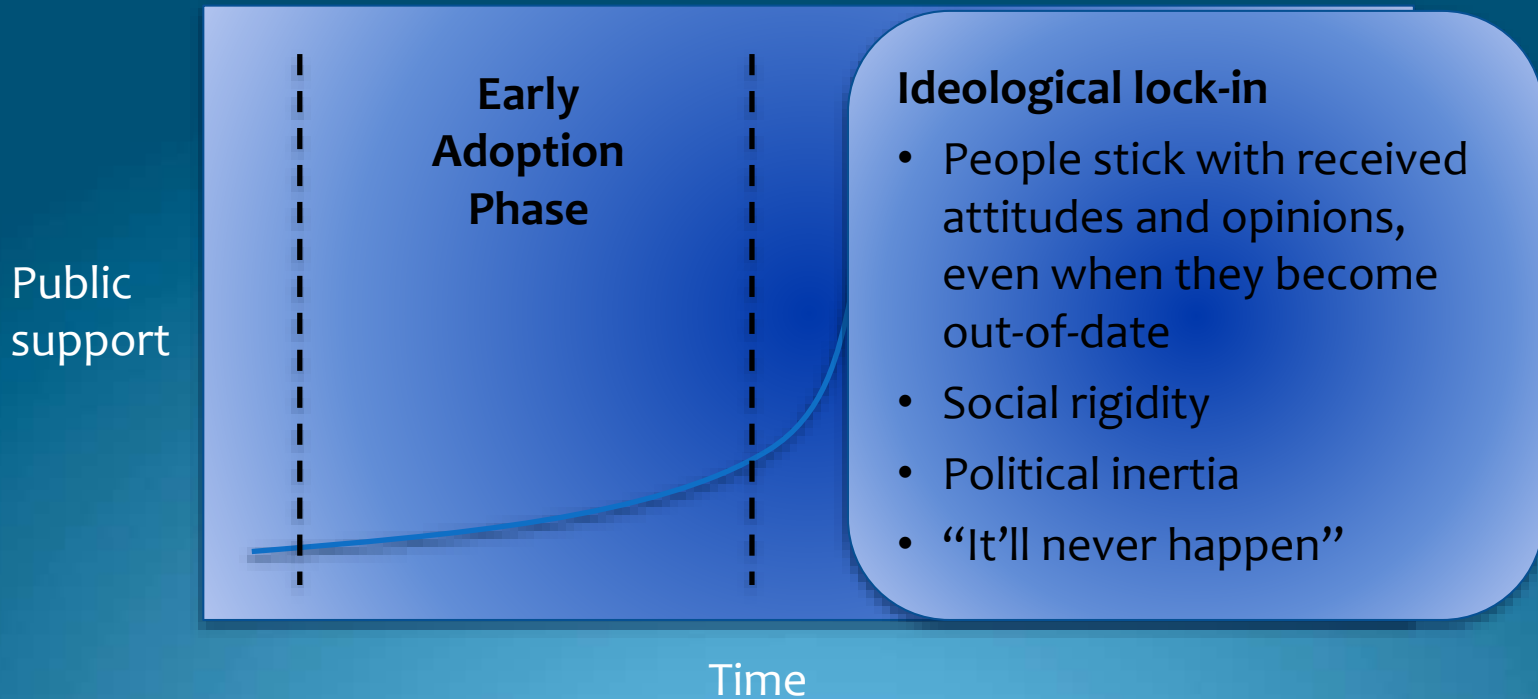
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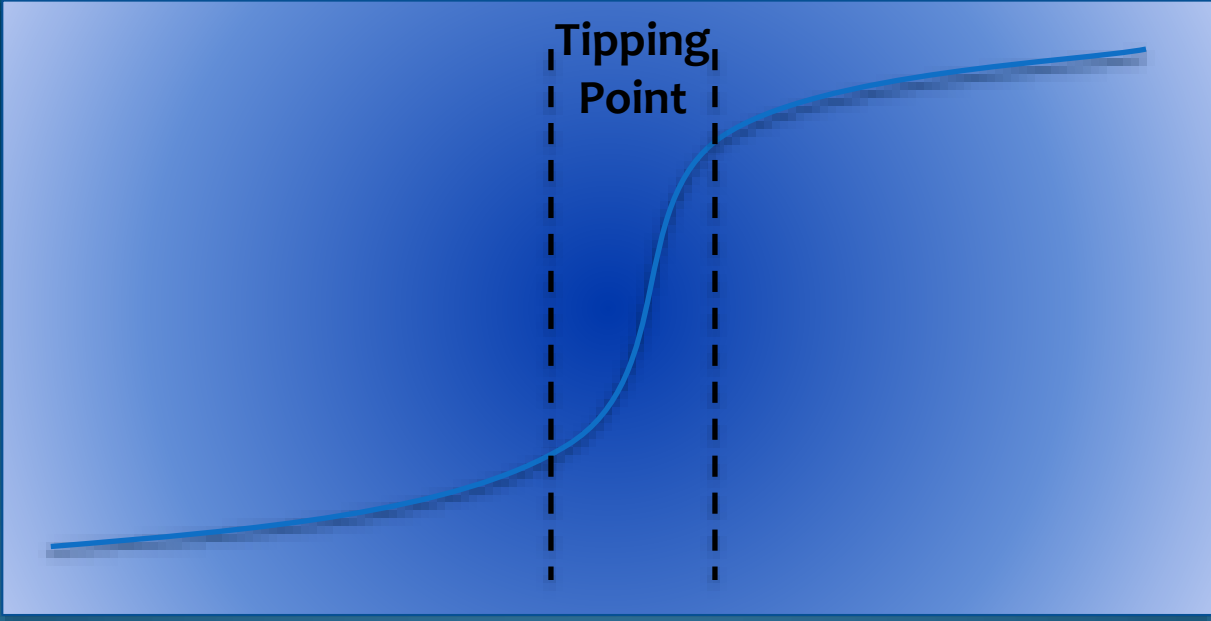
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Public support



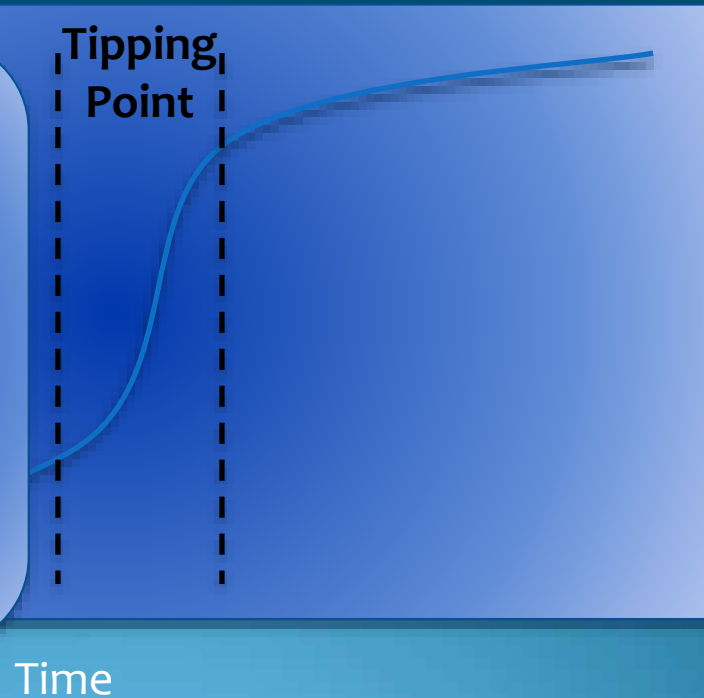
Time

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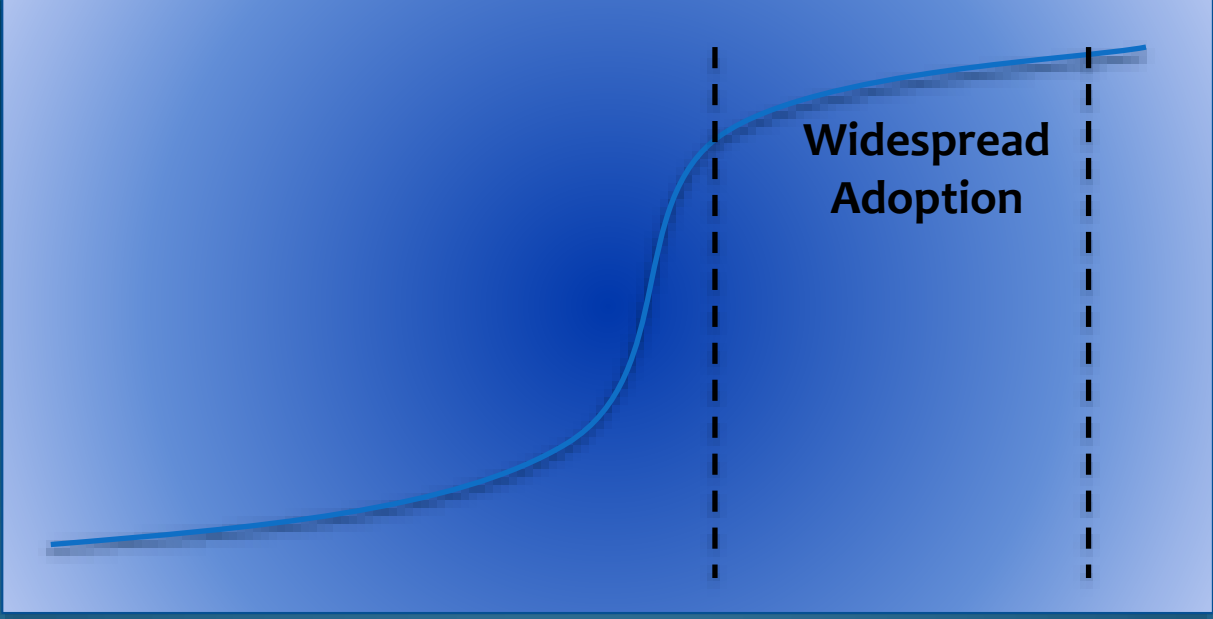
## Crescendo of change

- Influential thought leaders attract increasing numbers
- “Stickiness” of old thinking superseded by pull of new ideas
- “Herd instinct” shifts direction towards new thinking



# Public support follows a nonlinear path of change

Public support



Time

**Widespread  
Adoption**

# Public support follows a nonlinear path of change

Public  
support

## New stable state

- New ways of thinking institutionalized
- Die-hard reactionaries in the minority
- “It was inevitable”

Widespread  
Adoption

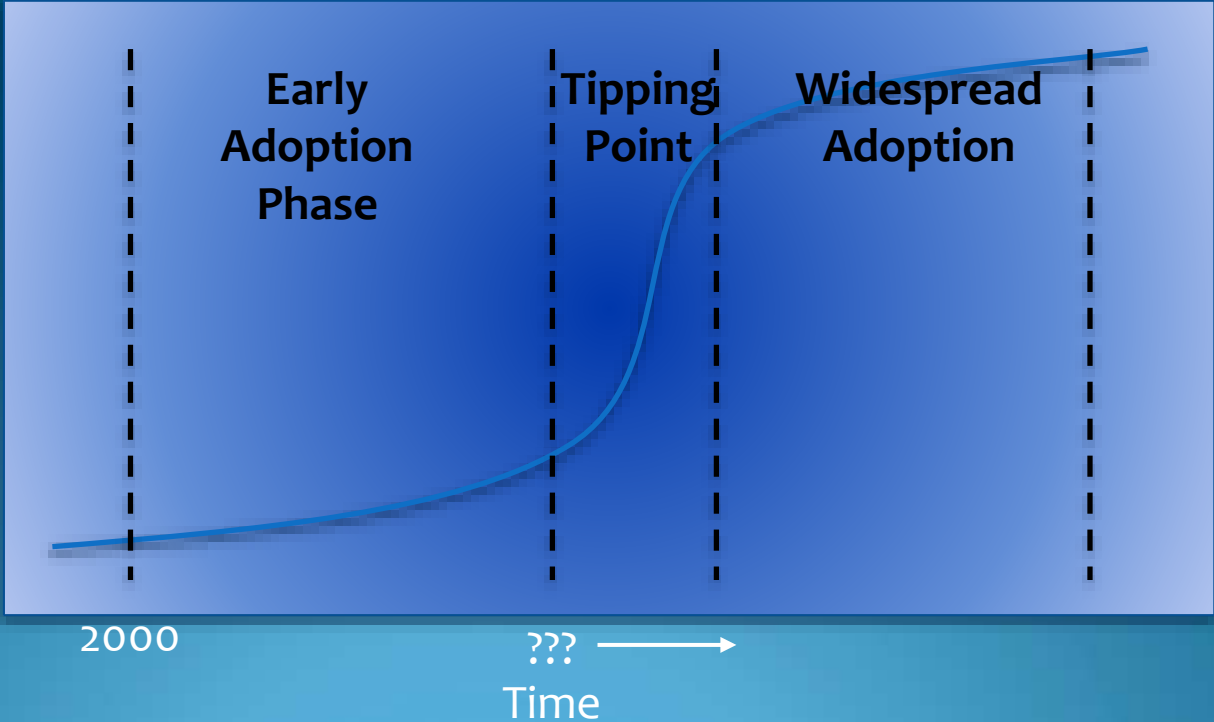
Time



# Potential for transition to Ecological Civilization

Trajectory to Ecological Civilization

Public support

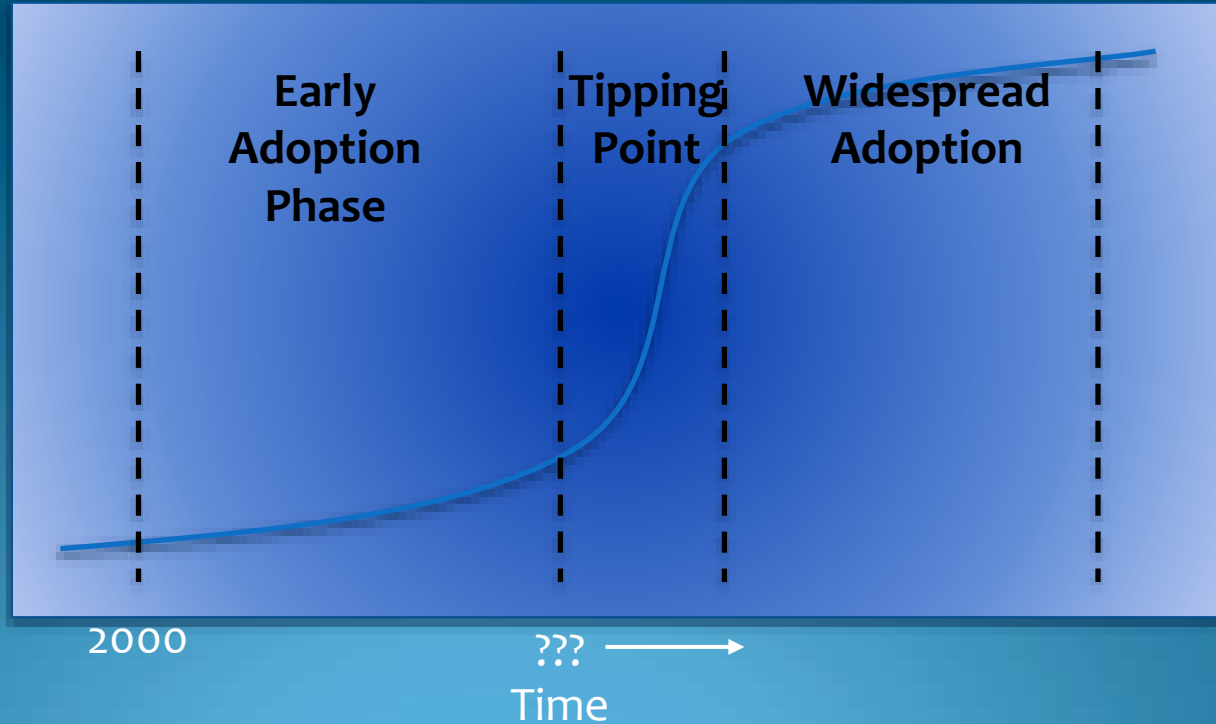


# Potential for transition to Ecological Civilization

## Magnitude of crisis

- Climate emergency
- Global inequality
- Environmental collapse
- Breakdown of political norms

## Trajectory to Ecological Civilization



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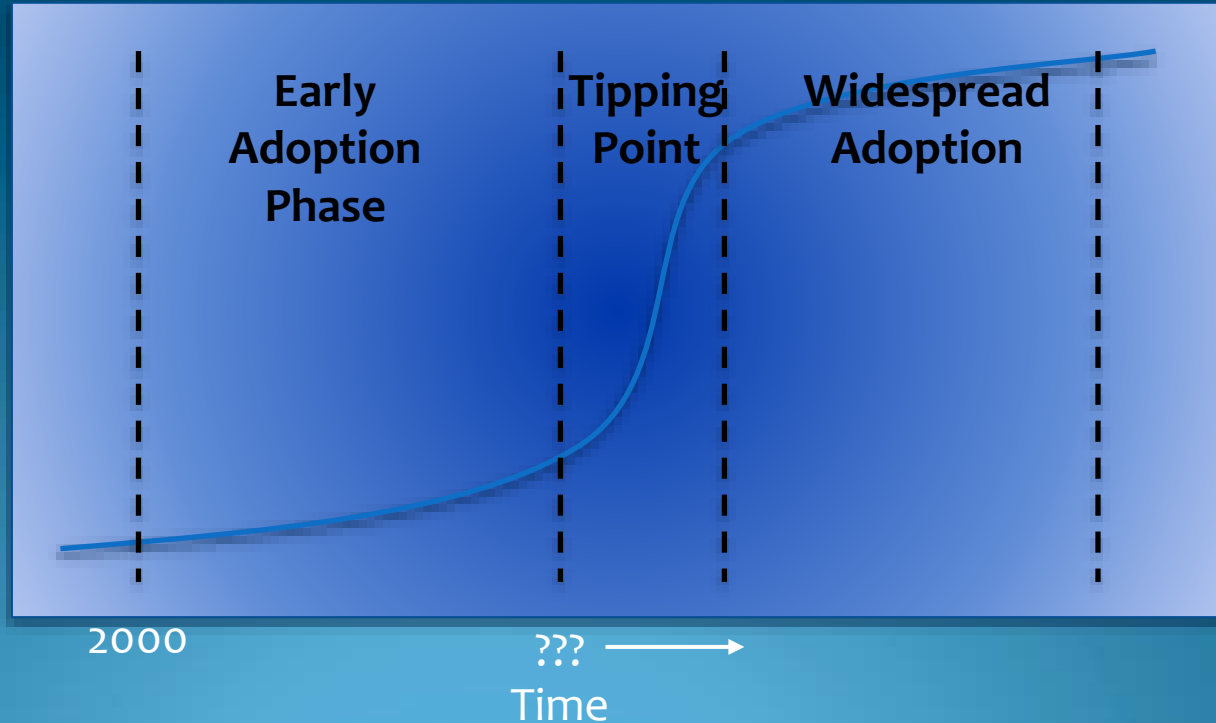
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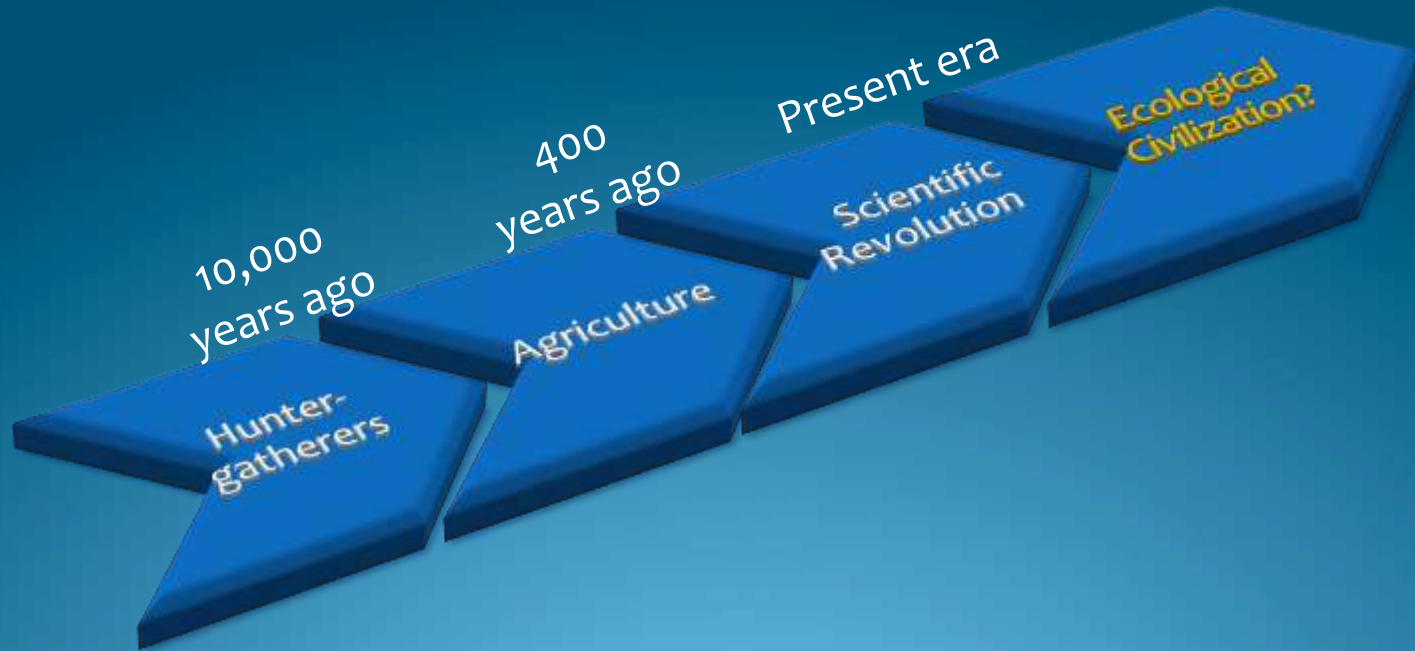
## Rise of internet

- Increased transmittal speed of new ideas
- Emergent global sense of shared humanity

## Trajectory to Ecological Civilization



# Great transitions in human history





# Potential for transition to Ecological Civilization

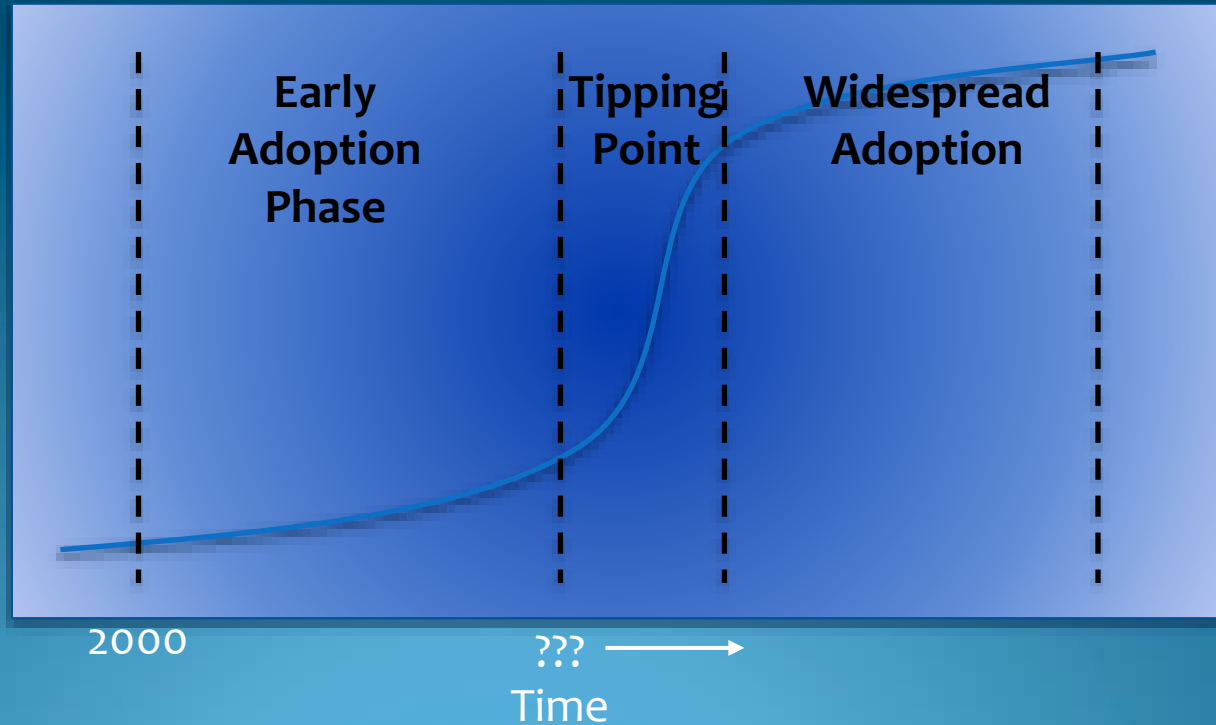
## Trajectory to Ecological Civilization

### Speed

Only a few decades,  
not hundreds or  
thousands of year

### Intentionality

Need to consciously  
change our own  
values and behavior



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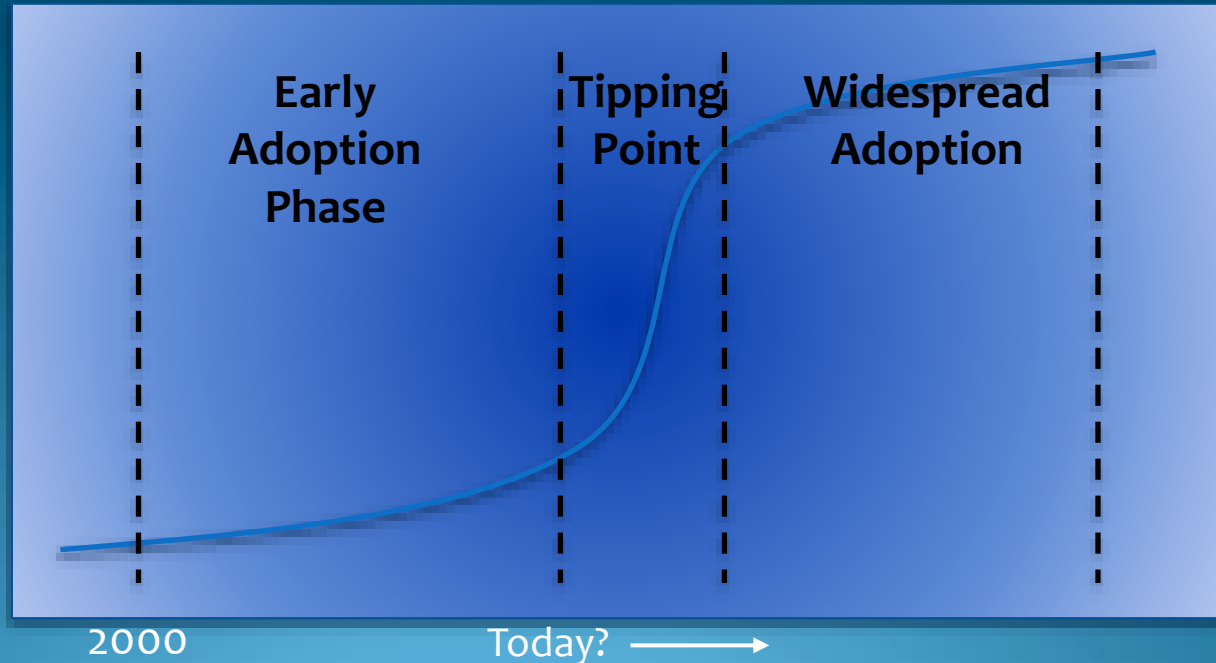
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Would represent a unique achievement in human history

# August 2018

Greta Thunberg skips school to begin solitary demonstration outside the Swedish parliament



## August 2018

Greta Thunberg skips school to begin solitary demonstration outside the Swedish parliament



## April/May 2019

- 1.5 million schoolchildren protest worldwide
- Extinction Rebellion closes down Central London for a week
- UK Parliament announces a “climate emergency”



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world.

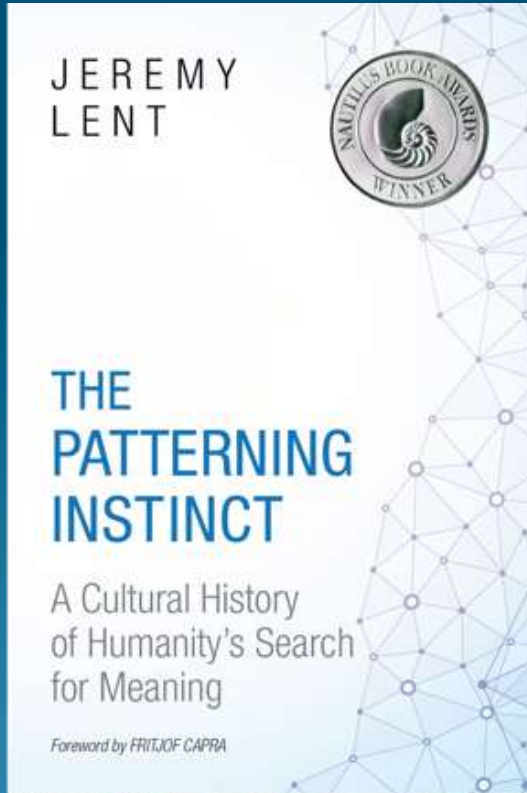
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

We owe it to Greta Thunberg...



# Further reading



## Websites

[Jeremylent.com](http://Jeremylent.com)

[Liology.org](http://Liology.org)

## Forthcoming Book

*The Web of Meaning  
Integrating Science and  
Traditional Wisdom to  
Find Our Place In the Universe*