



VIII Jornadas
Asociación Argentino
Uruguay de Economía
Ecológica - ASAUEE

Well-being in Latin America: Political and Cultural Issues

Enrique Ortega^{1*}, José Maria Gusman-Ferraz¹, Alberto López Calderón²,
Gilmar Barreto¹, Ana Carolina Assis¹, Mariana Oliveira¹,
Jean Pierre Lopez Vargas¹, Maria Elizabeth G. Thielemann¹,
Rosana I. Corazza¹, Paulo S. Fracalanza¹

¹ University of Campinas, SP, Brazil;

² Argentinean-Uruguayan Association for Ecological Economics

* E-mail for correspondence: ortega@unicamp.br

In our memory, Modernity evolution has three main stages:

- 1. Portugal and Spain developed a cultural, political and military project** to trade directly with the East through the Atlantic Ocean;
- 2. The Iberian conquest and colonization allowed a huge transfer of gold and silver, that modified the world's economy;**
- 3. Besides that, there were expropriation of common lands, slavery traffic for plantations and mines, nature destruction, economic wars, environmental disasters and finally Climate Change.**

Modernity epoch is coming to an end and its legacy is a ruined society with a non sustainable economic structure and damaged ecosystems that will demand a great effort and time to recover.

Future is at risk! A cultural-political project with new purposes is needed!

Therefore, instead of talking about modernity disasters:

- I will talk about **one Amerindian utopia** that constitutes a **living example** of sustainability, resilience and equality.
- I will make a **short description** of the **basic unit** of remnant **Amerindian communities** whose organization and culture allowed them to survive conquest and colonial domination.
- The idea is **to study and discuss the possibility of adopting this kind of system** (**Sumakawsay**) as a **model in the transition** to self-sufficient, autonomous and truly democratic societies.

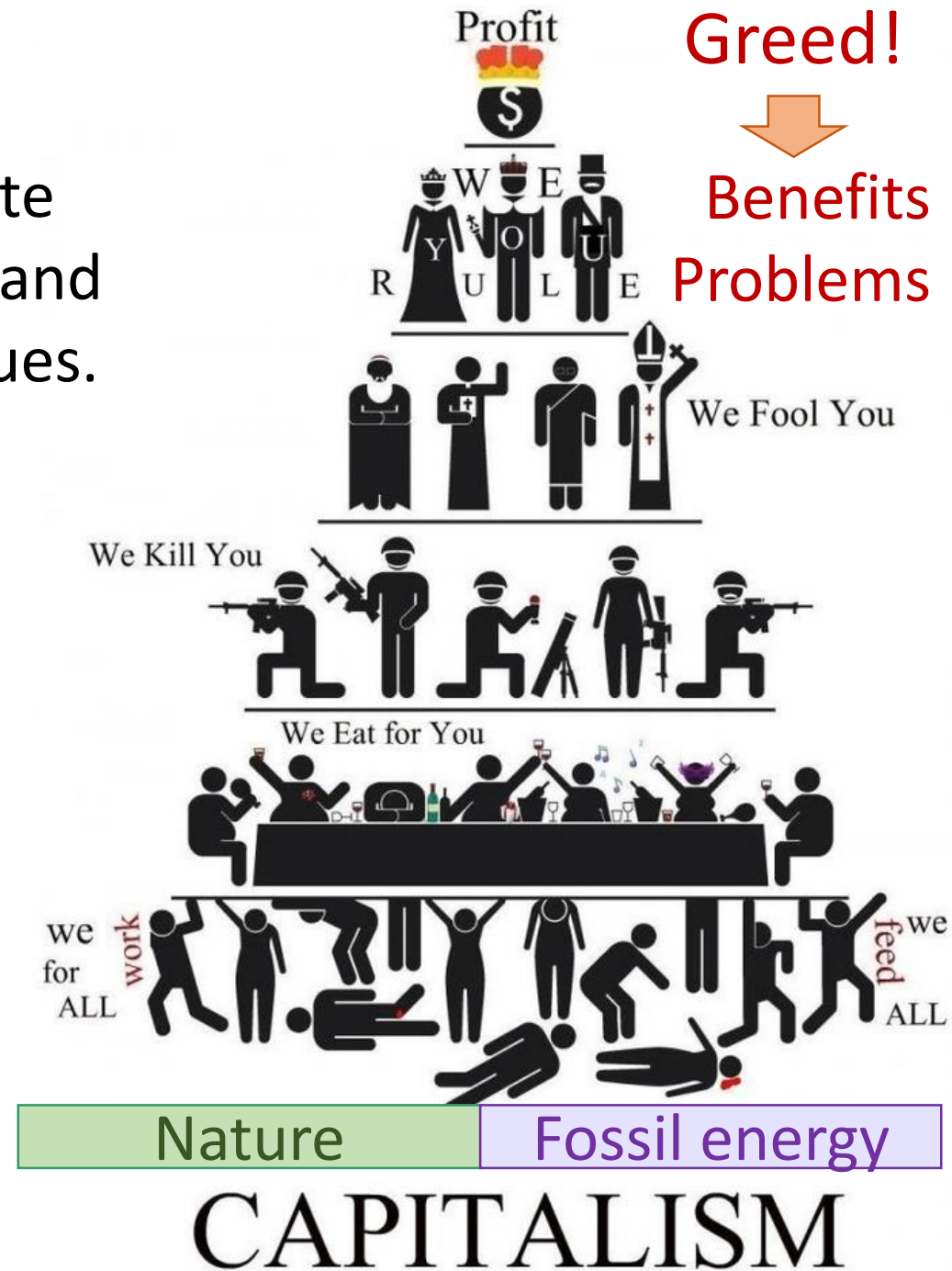
Capitalism: Greed and Growth!

In order to survive, Capitalism needs to eliminate competitors, by increasing (always) **scale, area** and **intensity** to open markets and change local values.

But, in a time where world's economy is at its climax and needs to face decline and climate change, **Capitalism is not adequate!**

Oil's high price and social and environmental problems, will demand a **new political and cultural project with productive systems able to fit natural cycles.**

Population will need to reorganize, relocate and adjust to renewable sources all over the world.



Social change is necessary!

Neoliberal policy imposes **austerity** (falling wages, rising unemployment and withdrawal of public services as health, education and social welfare) then, **for most Latin Americans, capitalism is a nightmare** (Barkin, 2001).

In these circumstances, a significant number of people try to build their own **forms of survival to ensure a minimum income and not to fall into misery**. Many of them are forced to emigrate and accept temporary and low quality jobs!

A social change within a geological era change!



Nowadays, there is a conflict between capitalism and socialist proposals. In many Latin American countries, middle classes and even poor people are being mobilized by external political forces that defend neo-liberalism that will lead to more wealth transfer, poverty and nature destruction.

After neo-colonization: a second emancipation is needed!

..both in the North and in the South!



How can we organize?

Knowledge is necessary to understand current dystopia (causes, processes, results) and past and new utopias!

The concept of **well-being** and **well-living** varies with **time, geography** and **social organization**

Modern societies in Europe

Ruling class

Middle class with work

Well being
(hidden crisis)

Middle class without work

Poor people with work

Poor people without work

Rebirth of Commons
(Europe and World)

Eco-socialism

Neo-colonies in Latin America

Ruling class

Middle class with work

Capitalism in
the North

Middle class without work

and in the South

Poor people with work

Well being
(explicit crisis)

Poor people without work

Utopia of Well living

Remnant
Commoners

Thousands of people, among millions living in precariousness and lack of perspectives, begin to think in options and strategies, some of which emerge from the **indigenous sustainable and resilient communities** (Barkin, 2001, Martínez Alier, 1995).



Decimal organization
(without excessive accumulation) 9

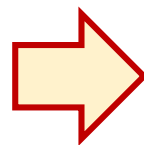
The dominant countries economic model can not be generalized and, even more, it can not be maintained, as well as their population size.

- Population depends on biomass, that can be produced in two forms:
 - (a) **Ecosystems, using renewable resources, can sustain a small population.**
 - (b) Human modified ecosystems, using chemical products obtained from oil, can sustain more population (2 to 6 times more) but only **temporarily** (this means a peak and a decline, and high social and environmental costs).
- Besides that, **natural resources are at risk** (water, air, soil, biodiversity), as well as the ecosystem functions that regulate the biosphere behavior. Within the ecologists and climate scientists there is a **great worry about biosphere's health** (Wilson, 1992).

- According with Barkin (2001), the path to Sustainability demands a **strategy to fortify the marginalized sectors** in order to **overcome the modernity dualism (dominators / excluded)**.
- In Ecuador, Bolivia and Mexico, due to historical processes, ethnic composition and resilient indigenous culture this kind of **strategy** is possible (Barkin, 2001). There are some possibilities in Peru and Central America.
- In other Latin American countries the ecological transition is more difficult due to the prevalence of the **dualistic Eurocentric culture** [a **philosophy** that divides the world in two spaces (the zones of being and not being human) and tries to impose its cosmovision to the world].

The social solution for the crisis

- It is necessary to change the **oppression and death culture** into a culture capable of **recovering and reproducing life** (Barkin, 2001).
- And also, a **global pact** to promote a **diversified structure** to include the excluded (people and nature).
- Barkin and Elizalde (2012) wonder what can be drawn from the scientific projections to **create the necessary social power to react**. They and other scientists, such as Dussel (1990, 1995), Odum and Odum (2001) and Hinkelammert and Mora (2005), consider that **the challenge is to subordinate economy to ecology and ethics**.



- To escape the neoliberal fallacy (a dystopia), **new utopias are needed**, among them those of indigenous peoples, fought and marginalized for centuries, but present in global discussions about planet future!
- The premise is to substitute the **Anthropocentric vision**, present in Capitalism and Socialism, by the **Ecocentric vision** (Acosta, 2016).
- Acosta (2016) says that the “**Well-living philosophy**” or “**Sumakawsay**” is an **Ecocentric Culture** that questions the **European concept of Economic Well-being**.
- Sustainable development is an idea whose time has come, but, as Sumakawsay communities show, it requires to **confront and overcome the interests of the powerful minority that rules the world**.

Modern societies

Urban societies that depend on resources from abroad. It is an **economic well-being** system of **unhappy people**.

Life without family links and no community links.

Sumakawsay

Well-living is different! It is based on the preservation of a life-style that uses mainly local renewable resources.

A model developed by commoners that live in the country and **consider nature as subject ...** and not as an object.

Nature is a loving mother, this approach promotes fraternal interaction with all living things.

It assumes the need of taking care of all that surround us.

Preservation of ancestral practices allows to face-up propagation of non sustainable “modern technologies”

Reorganization of national states integrating multiple cultures.

A democratic order able to take decisions by consensus and complementarity.

A conceptual framework based on indigenous intellectuals and also from philosophers of other origins.

A space of democracy that lives with equality and tolerance with the different.

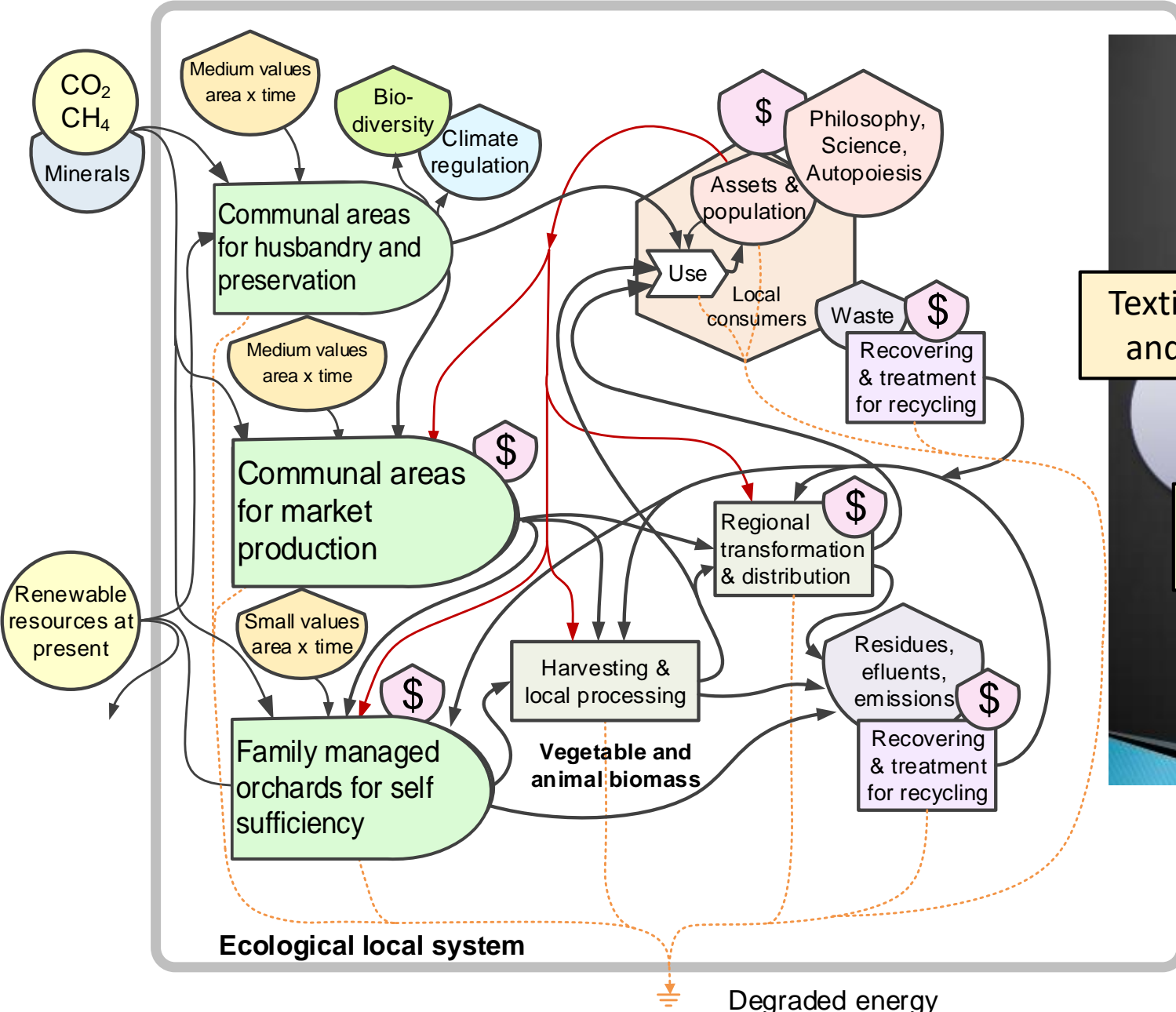
A space for reciprocity and conviviality that warrants all life aspects.

A space where those who rule, govern obeying the commoners.
A living utopia!

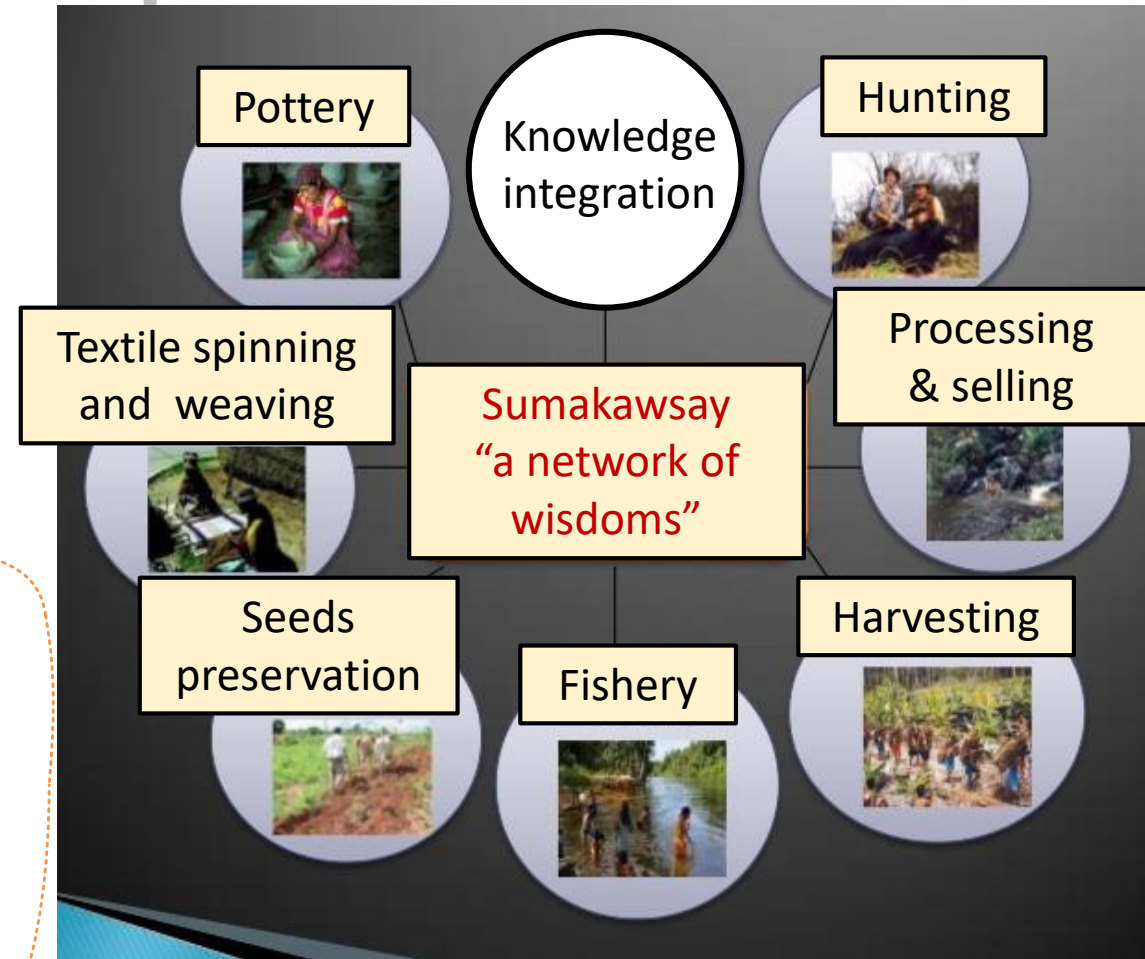
Sumakawsay Principles



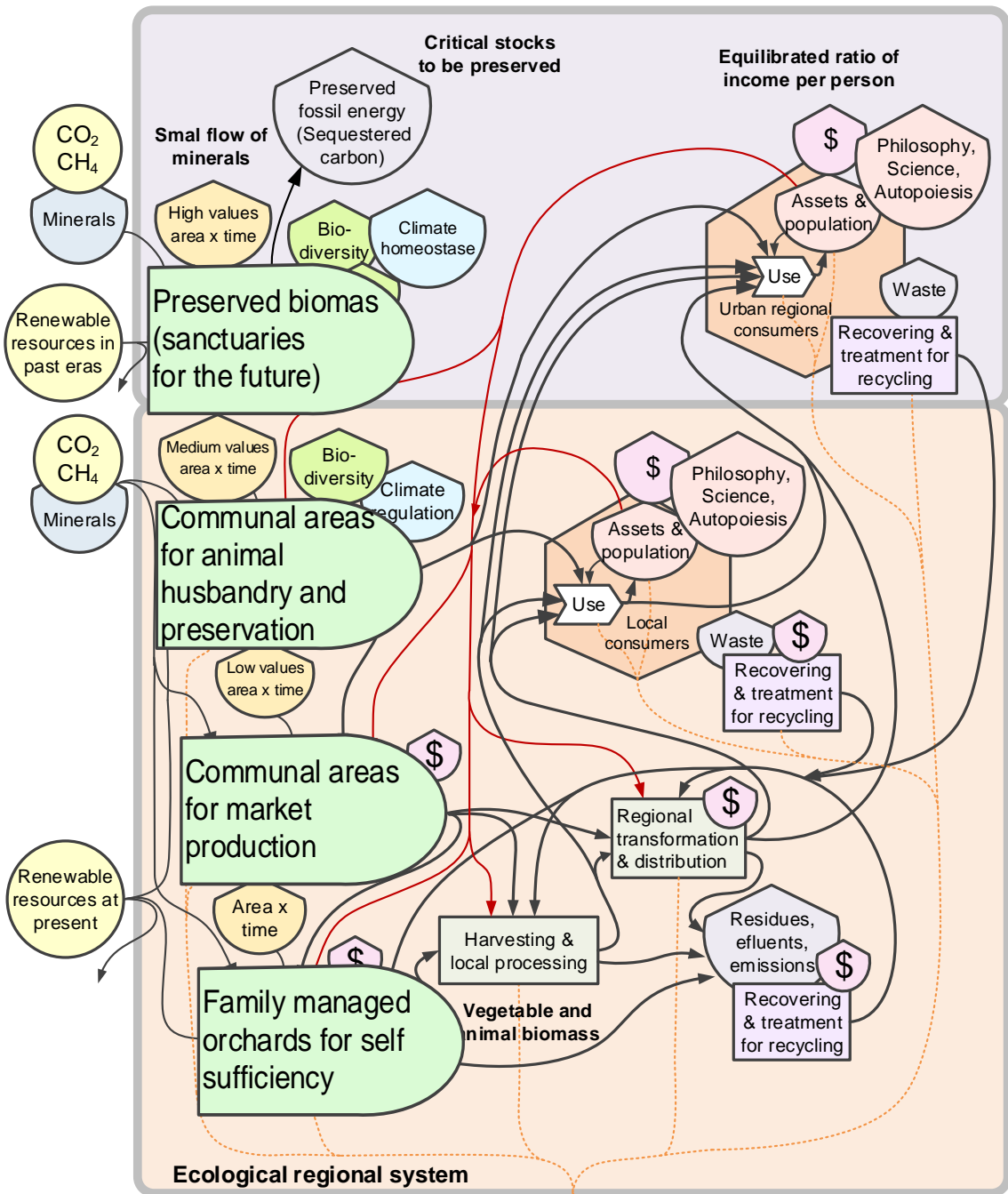
Potential energy



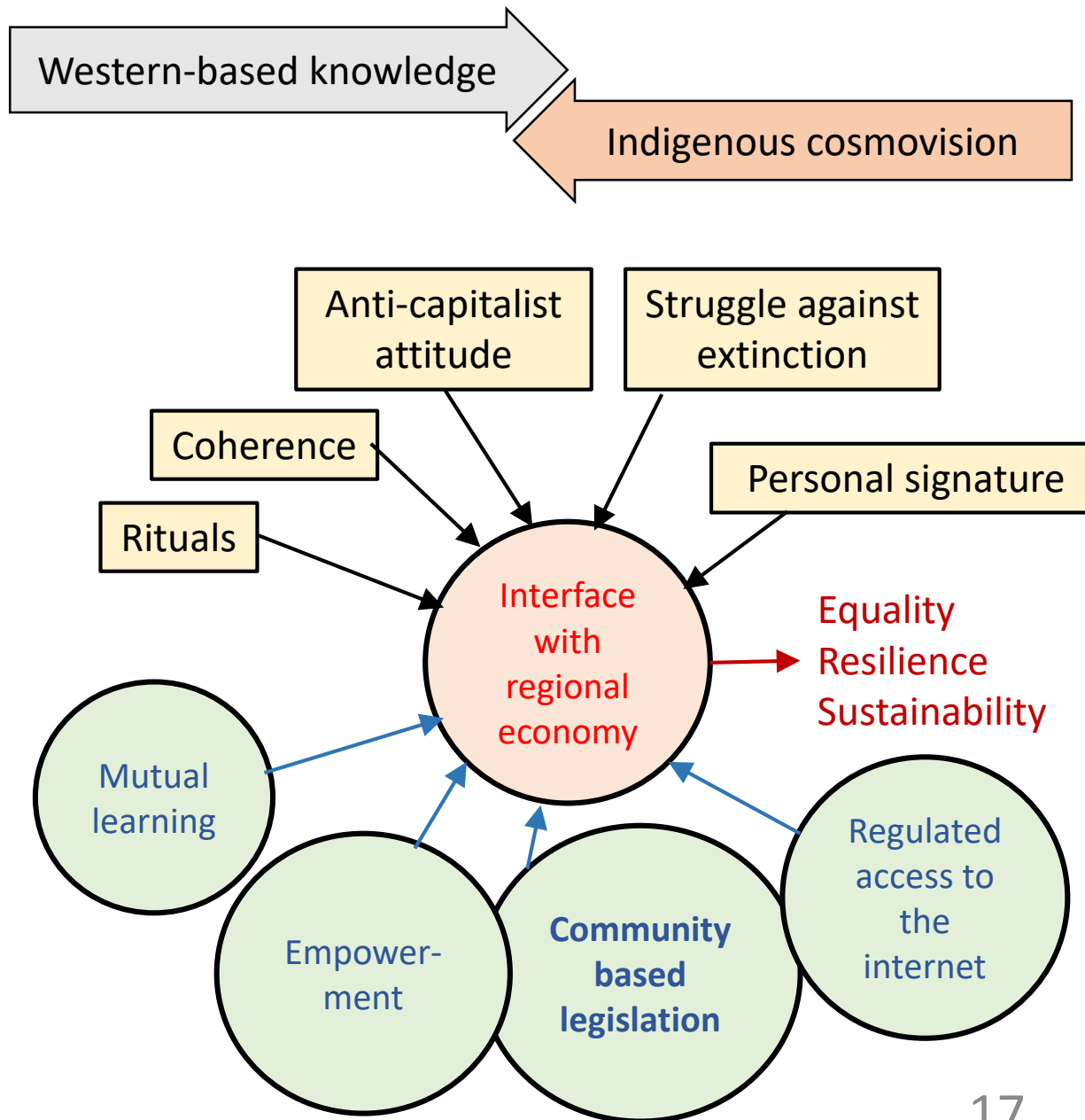
Diversity and simplicity



Sustainable intensification of human density in rural space



Key factors of success are based on:



Strategies for Sustainable Development

According to Barkin e Lemus (2015):

- (a) Autonomy
- (b) Solidarity
- (c) Self-sufficiency
- (d) Productive diversification
- (e) Sustainable use of regional resources,
- (f) Participation of local community in planning, execution and maintenance
- (g) **Obtaining a surplus to support community activities**

Vision of the rural ecological community

Complementary efforts **+**

According to Acosta (2016):

- (a) Reduce population growth
- (b) Reduce dependence on oil and mining
- (c) Eliminate monoculture
- (d) Reduce waste
- (e) **Promote a better distribution of wealth and income**
- (f) Change technological standards
- (g) Promote sustainable cultures in all territories

Vision of the urban community that wants to become ecological

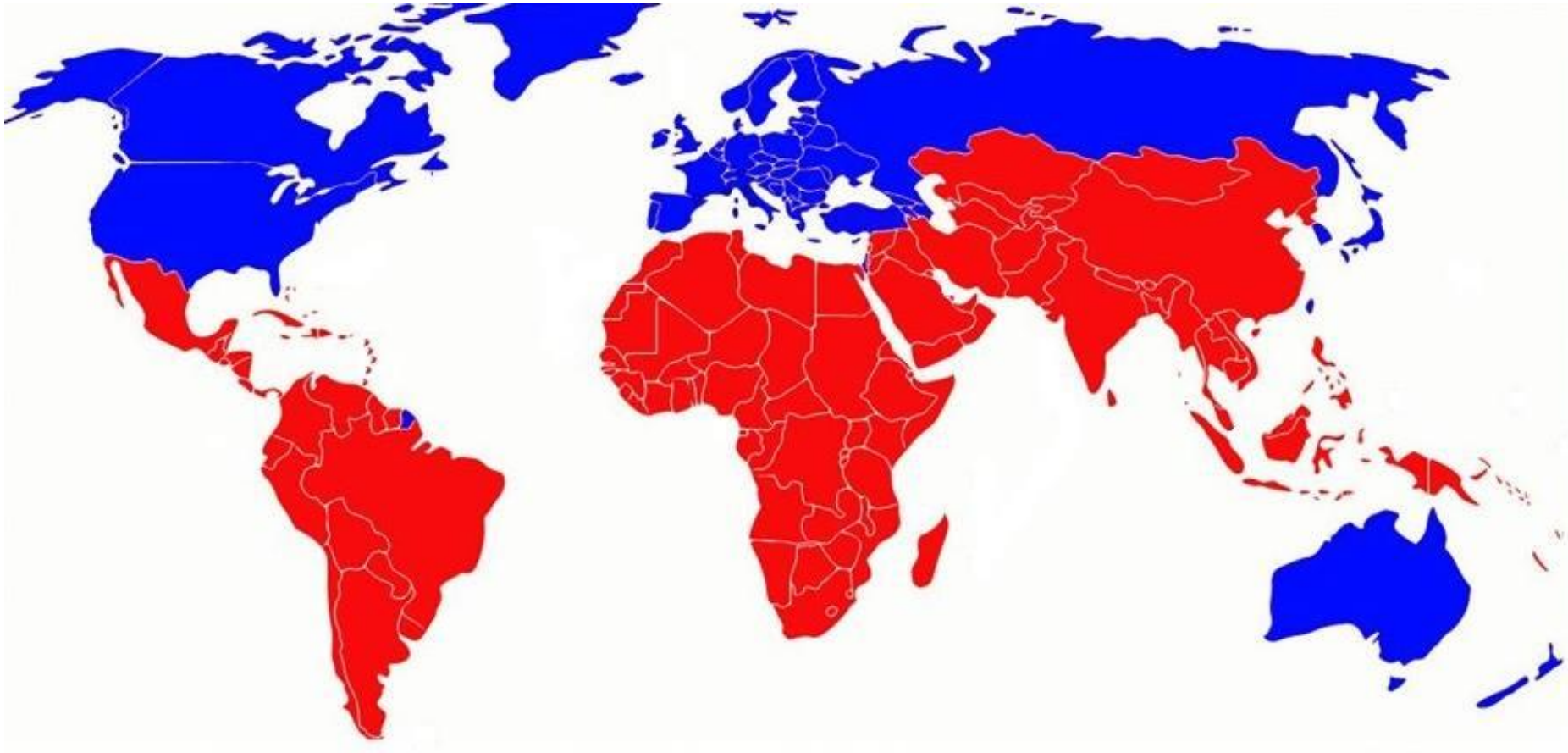
It is necessary to critique the idea that growth is the solution!

- The perpetuation of a global system that generates increasing inequalities can not be justified. Besides that, coping with the crisis of an overpopulated urban society requires profound reflection (Barkin, 2001).
- The decline policy is more than just opposing exploitation or reducing working time due to technological advances; it needs a **radical change in production and consumption**, it requires a **cultural transformation!**
- Knowledge and self-determination of ecological communities must be recognized to confront the current economic system (Acosta, 2016).
- It is essential to start with a **common vision of the future**, to reverse the historical trend of enriching the few in the detriment of the majority (Barkin & Lemus, 2015).

Our time is short to change the current working system

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2017/09/14/1618481114.full>

To overcome Modernity bipolar economy **we need to establish, as criteria, 3 principles: Degrowth, Ecological Socialism and Sumakawsay.**





Sumakawsay is an interesting option because it is able to withstand a relatively high density of people in rural areas and provide products for a moderate urban consumption.

Could this model be used in the transition towards sustainable societies?

We should make **critical analysis!**

For all proposals:

- **Those that Modernity offers** for the transition towards sustainability.
- **Utopias** from social movements all around the world.

By **critical analysis** we mean a combination of **Emergy Assessment, Support Capacity and Resilience Analysis, Marxist critical study, Decolonization Philosophy** and **Climate Mitigation Structuring.**

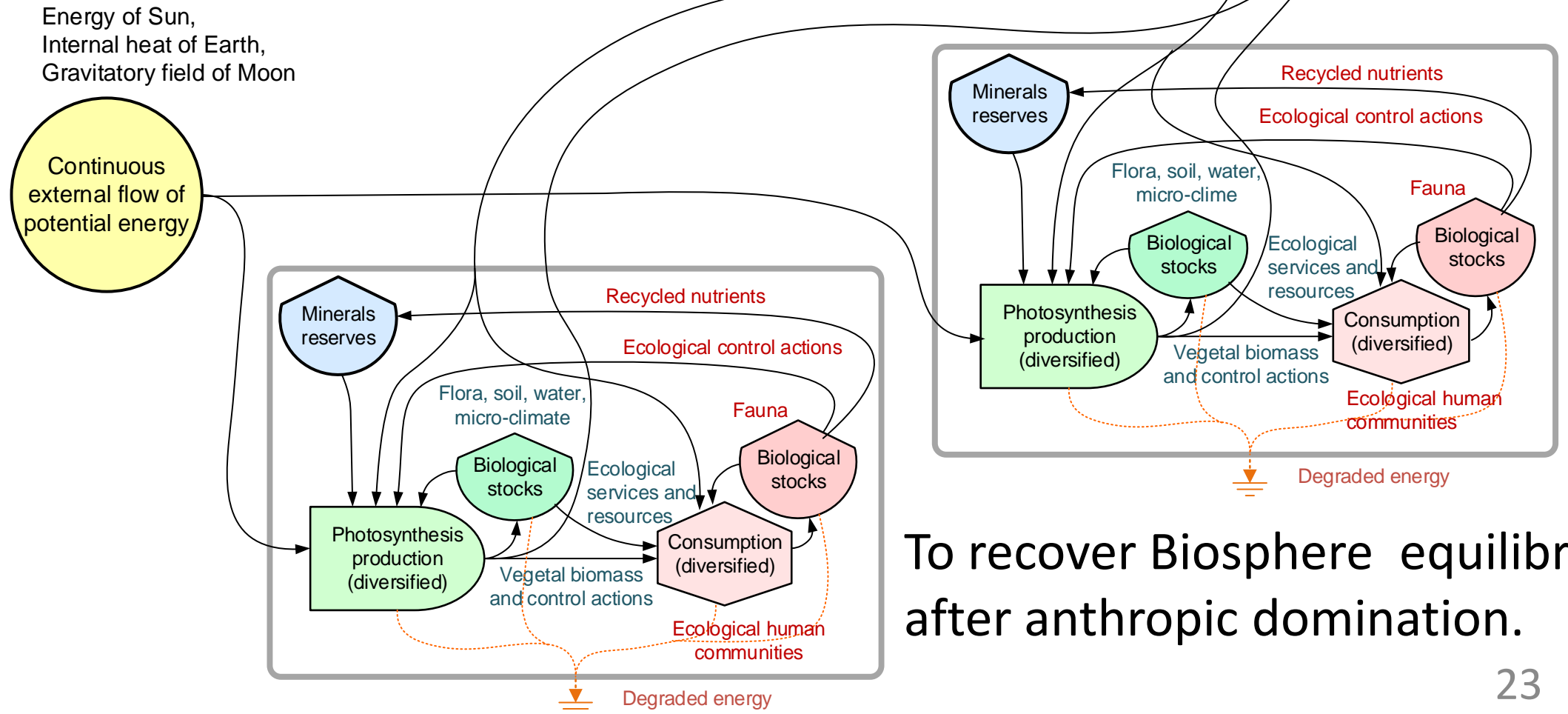
We would have to:

1. Find out **who is working on social transition** towards ecological growth and fossil energy divestment, in order to create a catalog to inform who is doing what, how, where and if they want to collaborate.
2. We need to start from two consensus: (a) that Capitalism leads us to collapse and extinction, and (b) that we need to **strengthen the social base**.
3. **Encourage people to act in networks.**
4. Organize task forces to create networks for **open-training** in Systems Ecology, Geopolitics, Philosophy and Ethics of Decolonization/Liberation.
5. Modeling/simulation of Global System to **evidence current trends and offer sceneries and stages of true sustainability systems.**

The transformation of the dual economy into an ecological and ethical economy requires **parallel efforts** in the metropolis and in the colonies to recover resilience and build-up truly sustainable systems.



Ecosystems should be recovered everywhere.



To recover Biosphere equilibrium, after anthropic domination.

We are ready for networking!

Our main research themes are:

1. **Modeling of current bipolar world system** and its transition to an autonomous and sustainable democratic system.
2. Studying the **transition from agrochemical to agroecological systems** of high sustainability, resilience and equity.
3. Use of Sumakawsay (and other ecological models) as reference for **rural and urban transformation** to sustainable and interconnected societies.
4. Organization of **on-line courses** on these topics in different languages.

Thanks!

<http://www.unicamp.br/fea/ortega>