

The Treadmill of Production

Social System – Ecosystem Dynamics

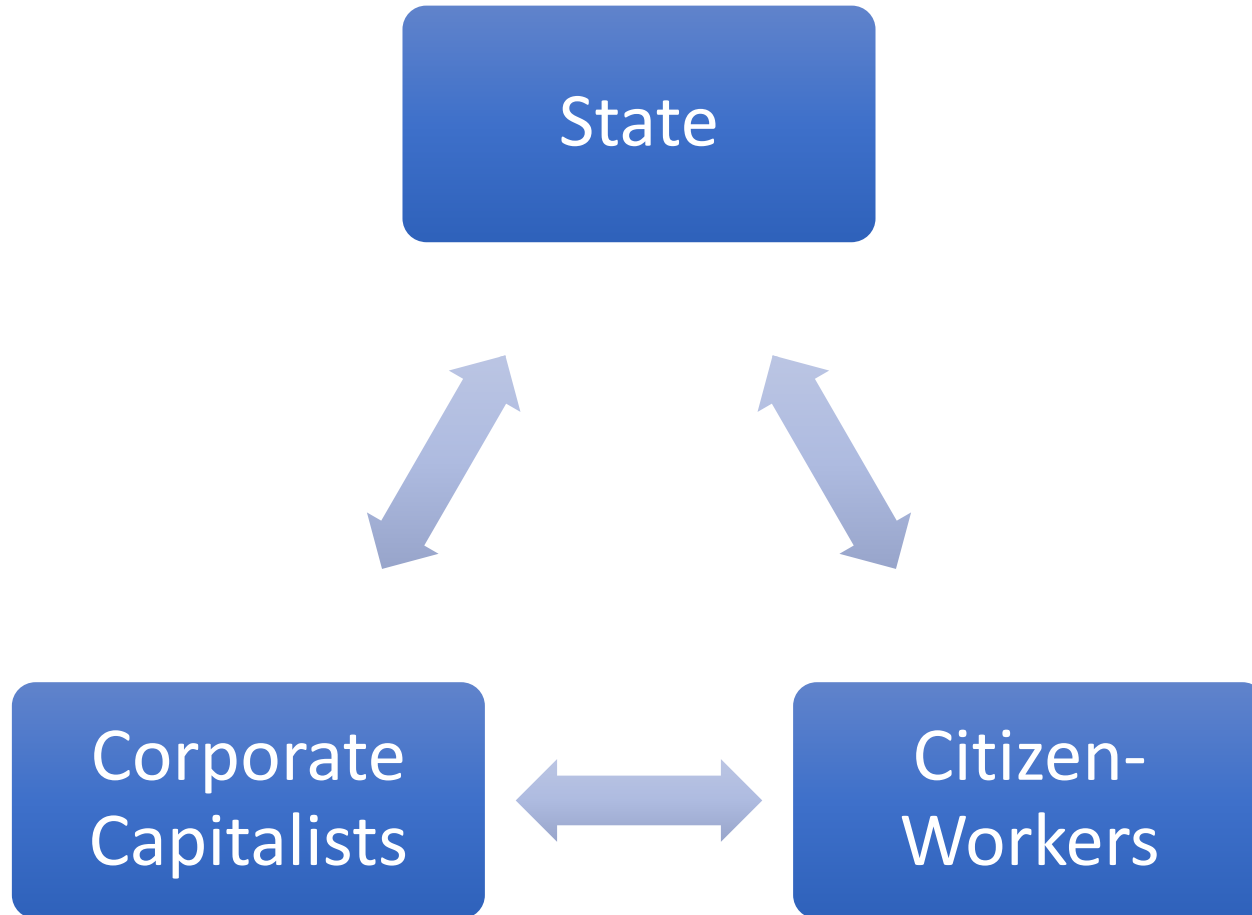
Thesis

- Productive forces of society create **ecological disruptions and social disruptions** that go hand in hand
 - Additions = pollution
 - Withdrawals = depletion
 - Social disturbances = inequality, insecurity, bad health, etc
- **Social response** to solving problems of ecological and social disruptions is to increase production
- The cycle continues

*Why is this? What's the logic in this?

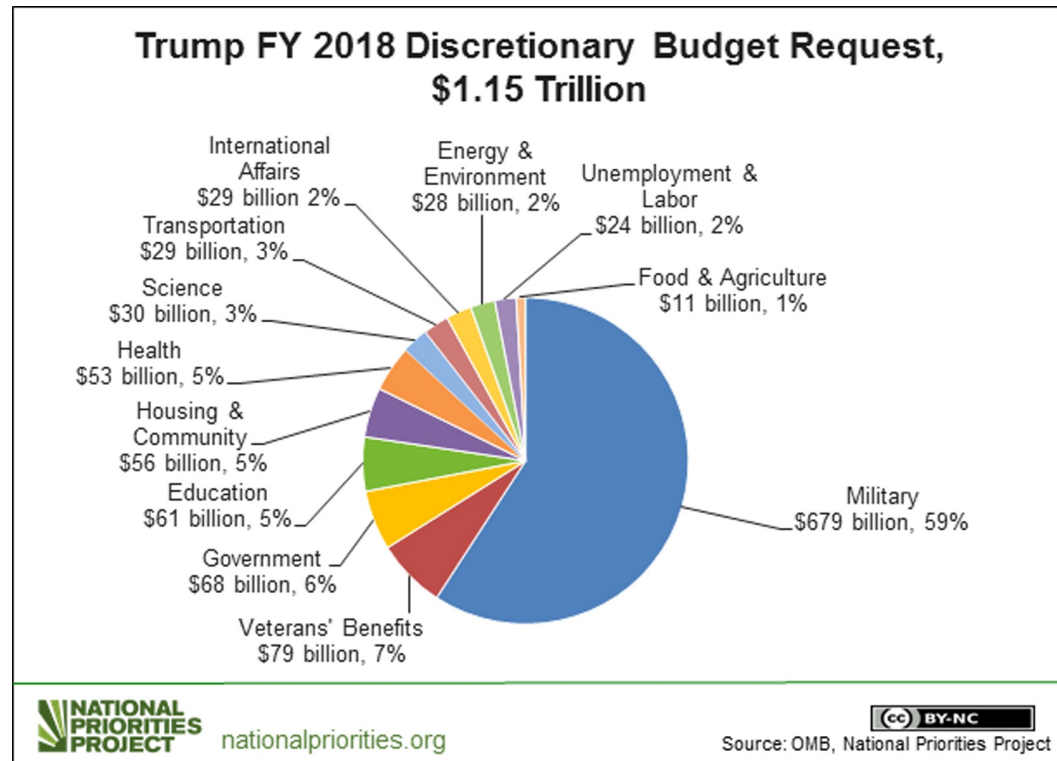
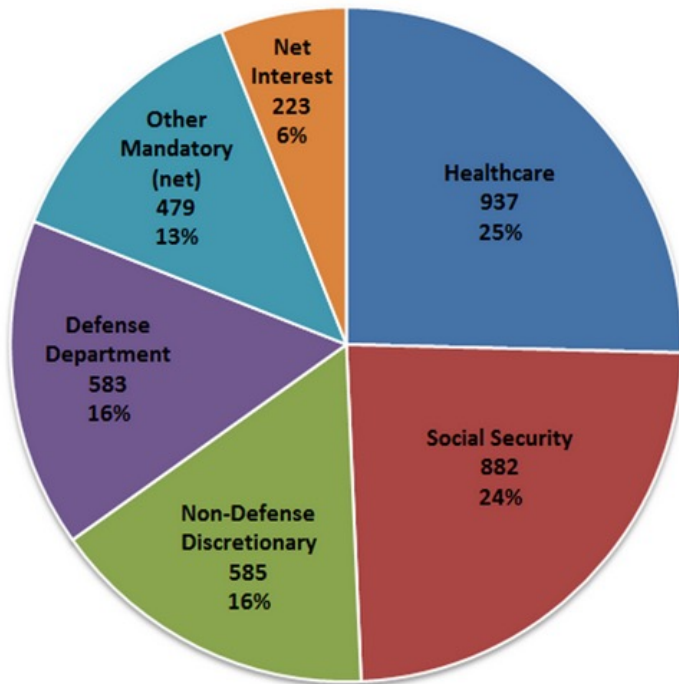
Actors in the Treadmill

(aka the growth coalition and the triumvirate of growth)



Logic of Actors - State

- Dual logics:
 - Accumulation (via corporate profits)
 - Legitimation (via voting workers and social welfare)



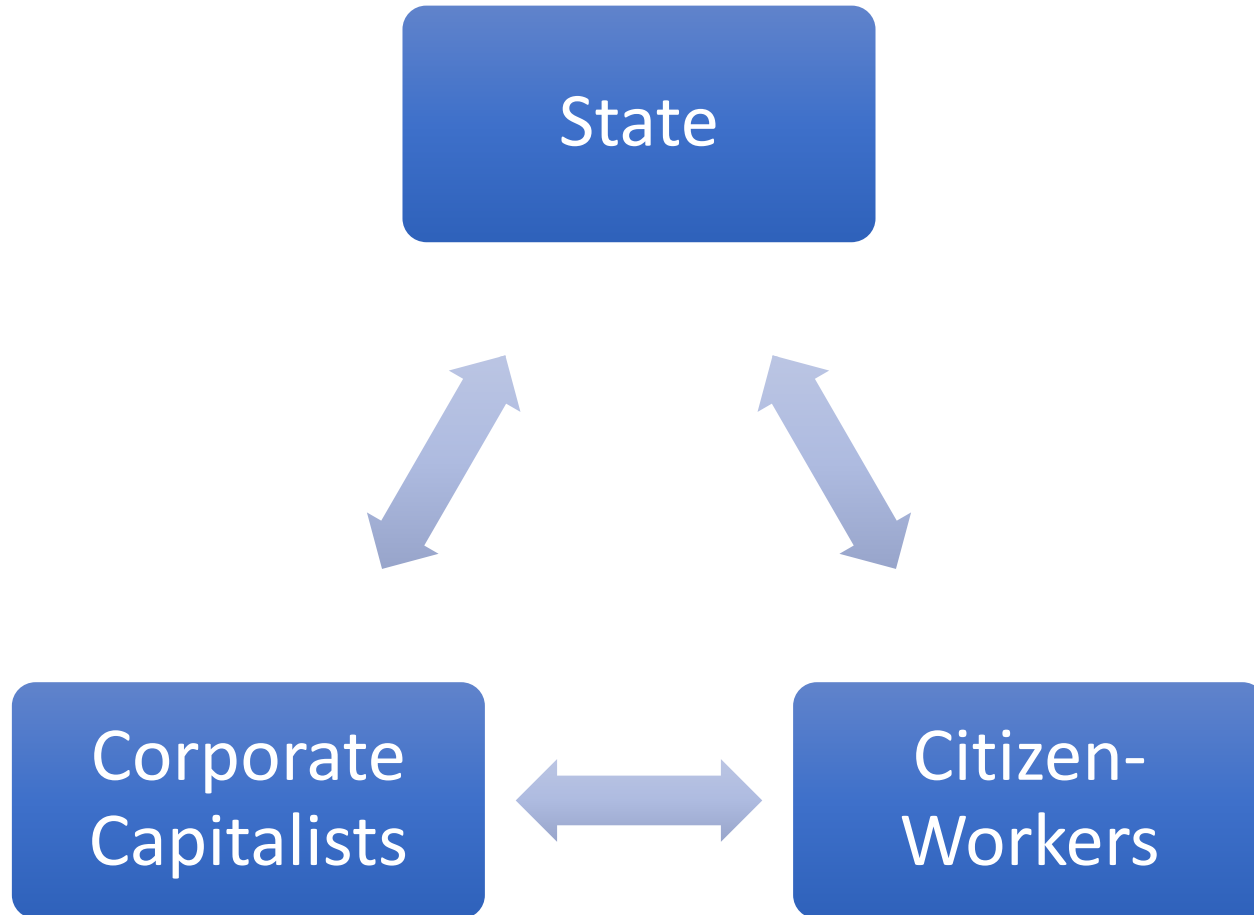
Logic of Actors - Corporations

- Maximize profit
 - Minimize costs of inputs, such as natural resources (sometimes leading to ecological externalities)
 - Minimize costs associated with regulation
 - Minimize labor costs by cutting wages, downsizing workforce, reducing workers' benefits, relocating workers
- Reinvestment
- Technology – Replace Workers with Energy and Chemicals

Logic of Actors – Citizen/Workers/Consumers

- Need jobs (corporation)
- Want consumer goods
- Need government aid when displaced
- (And need government protection from environmental ills)

All three logics lead to desire for
GROWTH!!!

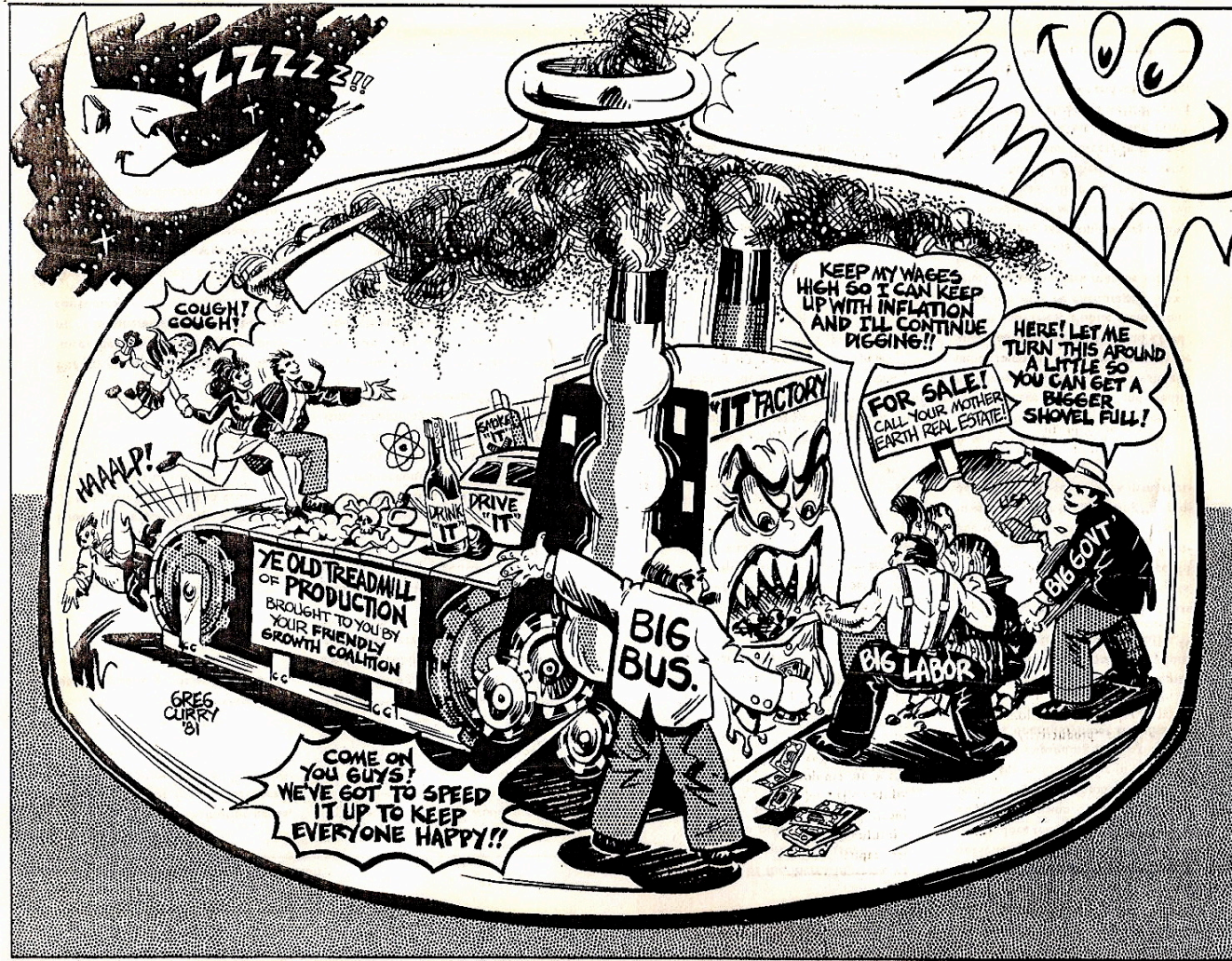


Growth as the Solution to Problems of Growth

- Workers are replaced by technology (energy and chemicals)
- Displaced workers need jobs
- Expanding production adds jobs
- Each new job represents increased energy demand
- Each new job represents increased chemical use
- Each new job represents more production (withdrawals & additions)
- Same number of jobs at higher ecological impact

- Treadmill = running faster but staying in place
- Same social benefits at higher environmental cost

What does this add up to?



Negative consequences

- Socially – unemployment, insecurity, unrest
- Environmentally – depletions, pollutions, abandoned factories and toxic waste sites
- Yet the cycle continues!

How to slow the treadmill? (in other words: create more ecological protection and more social benefits?)

- Blue-green alliances – choose good jobs AND environmental protection
 - <http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/about>
- Degrowth – consume less, share more
 - <http://www.degrowth.org/>
- Redefine “progress”
 - e.g. Happy Planet Index
 - Sumak kawsay
- Keep the “oil in the soil”
 - e.g. YasUnidos
 - e.g. divest in oil
- Transition towns – work locally to develop solutions
 - <http://transitionus.org/transition-town-movement>