

**7AM**

12PM in London (GMT), 9PM in Tokyo (GMT+9)

**Theoretical Biology and History of  
Biology**

**Moderator:** Yashvardhan Jain, *Indiana University*

**Presenter:** Manfred Laubichler, *Arizona State University*

The background features several abstract, overlapping shapes in shades of light blue and green. These shapes are filled with numerous small, multi-colored dots in red, green, and blue, creating a textured, particle-like appearance. The shapes are arranged in a somewhat vertical, descending pattern from the top right towards the bottom left.

**Manfred Laubichler, *Arizona State  
University and Santa Fe Institute***

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# On the Dynamics of the Anthropocene

Manfred D. Laubichler



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE  
OF GEOANTHROPOLOGY



SANTA FE INSTITUTE



COMPLEXITY  
SCIENCE  
HUB  
VIENNA



Global Climate Forum

# THE ANGEL OF HISTORY



Angelus Novus, Paul Klee

This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

-Walter Benjamin

# The Challenge

- We have entered the Anthropocene— a consequence of complex and long co-evolutionary dynamics!
- We are shaping and engineering our planet at global scales
- Humankind is no longer in a safe operating space
- New Global Challenges emerge at rapid pace that contribute to *systemic risks and systems' failures*
- **A new scientific understanding is needed to meet these challenges**

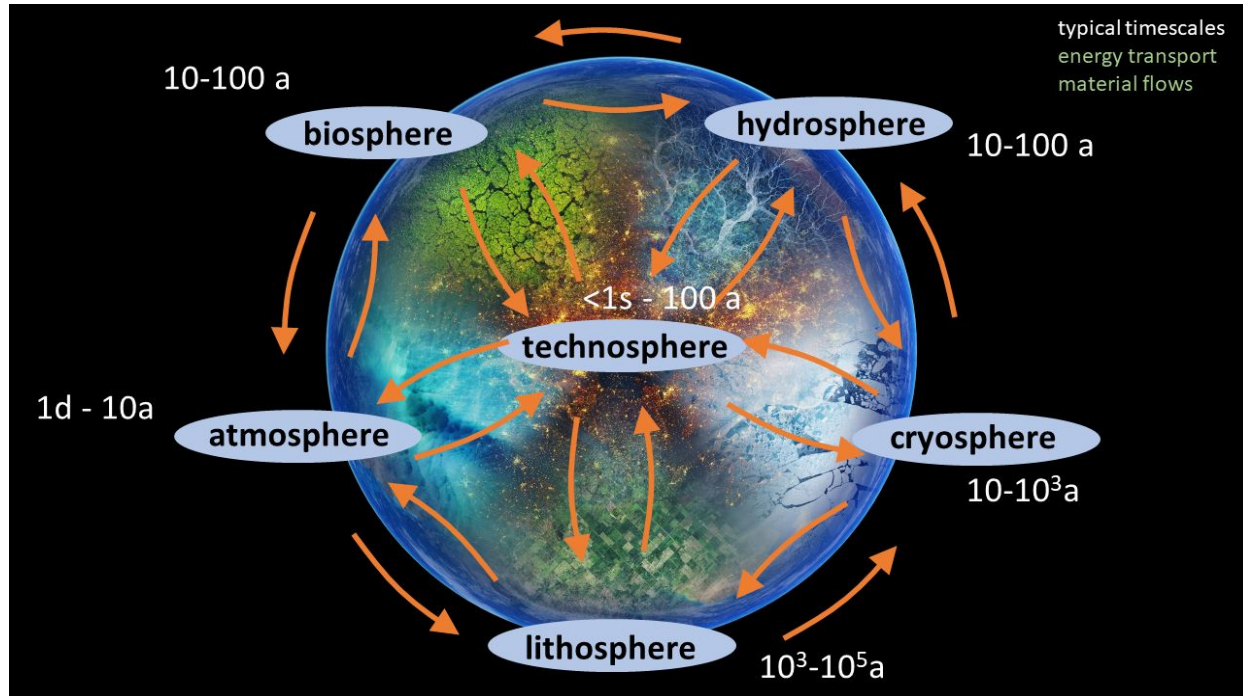


# The deep history of evolved complexity — a story of major transitions

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- The origin of life, cellular life, multicellular life, etc.
- Major interconnected transitions in:
  - Organization, including social organization
  - Energy systems
  - Knowledge and information flows
  - Material Flows
- Emerging layers of complexity and feedbacks
- The Technosphere is such a major transition in evolution

# The Technosphere as a major transition in evolution



# Standard Evolutionary Theory is insufficient

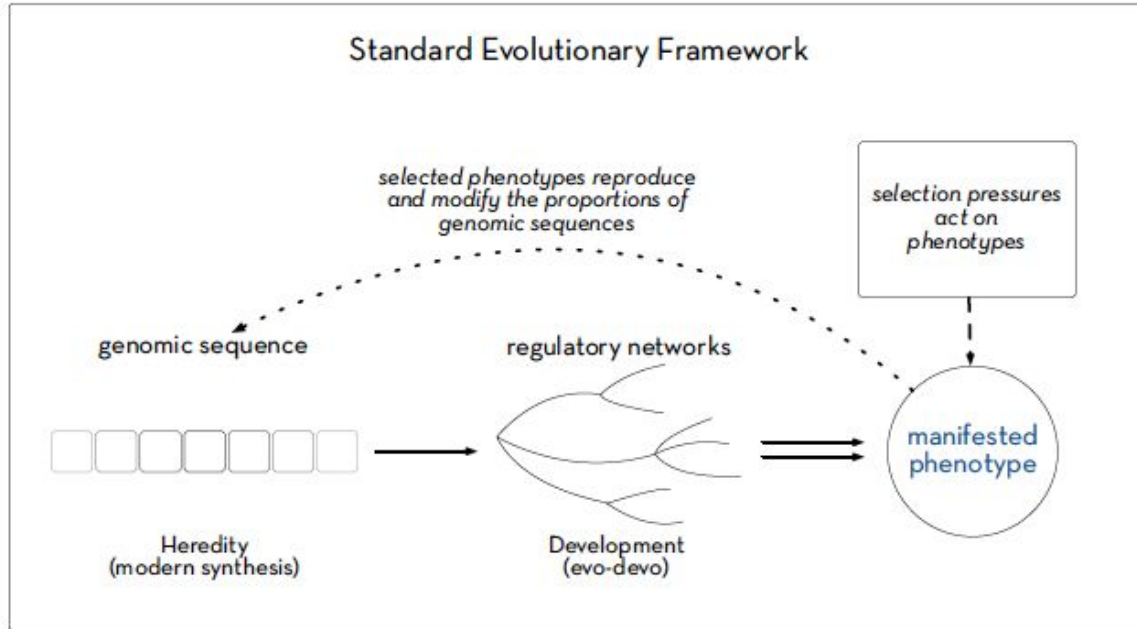


Figure 1: The Standard Evolutionary Framework.

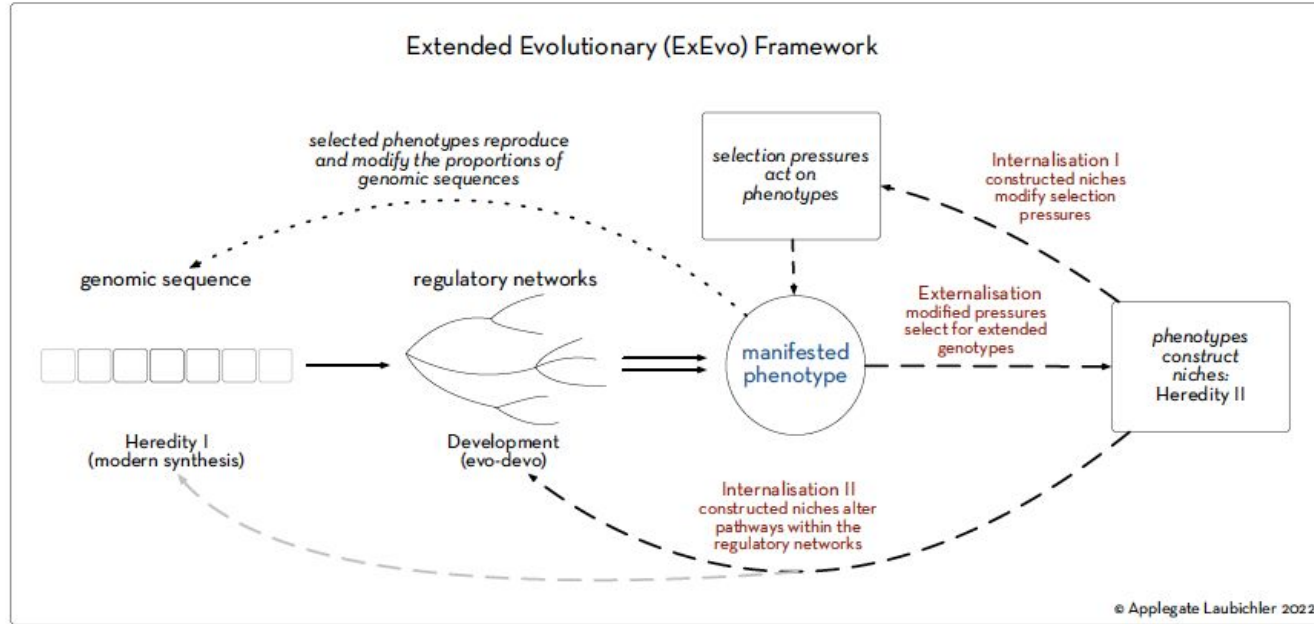


# Standard Evolutionary Theory is insufficient

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- Selection as the main effective feedback mechanism
- Explanations of the origin of variation outsourced to physics
- Evolutionary dynamics as a temporal sequence of allele frequencies
- Implicit assumption of optimization
- ODEs as the mathematical structure with a strong preference towards equilibrium dynamics

# Extended Evolutionary Theory



# Extended Evolutionary Dynamics

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Over evolutionary time scales the interaction between systems and their niches exhibits two types of simultaneous dynamics:

**Externalization:** Actions of the system construct the niche and stable aspects of the constructed niche then act as regulatory elements contributing to the control of the system's behavior

**Internalization:** Elements of the niche that have the potential to regulate system behavior are incorporated into the regulatory network in a stable way (often replacing previous internal elements)

# Extended Evolution

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- Emphasis on complex systems transformations and multiple feedback mechanisms
- Developmental mechanisms explain the origin of variation
- Evolutionary history not time
- Path-dependency and construction
- Mathematical structure more complex focused on stochastic processes and non-equilibrium dynamics

# Mathematically integrating development, heredity and population dynamics

Developmental (fine) Time Scale:  $k=1, \dots, K$  developmental time points

Latent states

$$\mathbf{x}_{d,k}^t = f(\mathbf{x}_{d,k-1}^t, \mathbf{w}_{d,k}^t)$$

Possibly nonlinear state transition function

Process noise term

Noisy measurements

$$\mathbf{y}_{d,k}^t = d(\mathbf{x}_{d,k}^t, \mathbf{v}_{d,k}^t)$$

Possibly nonlinear measurement function

Measurement noise term

Noise parameters

$$\boldsymbol{\theta}_{d,k}^t \sim \nu(\boldsymbol{\theta}_{d,k-1}^t, \boldsymbol{\theta}_{d,k}^t)$$

Transition kernel

Developmental Trajectory for  $d$ -th individual in generation  $t$   $\mathbf{X}_{d,(K)}^t = \{\mathbf{x}_{1,d}^t, \mathbf{x}_{2,d}^t, \dots, \mathbf{x}_{K,d}^t\}$

# Mathematically integrating development, heredity and population dynamics

The developmental trajectory becomes the input for next time scale

$$\mathbf{X}_{d,(K)}^t = \{\mathbf{x}_{1,d}^t, \mathbf{x}_{2,d}^t, \dots, \mathbf{x}_{K,d}^t\}$$

**Intergenerational (coarse) Time Scale:  $t=1, \dots, T$  Generations**

Latent states  $\tilde{\mathbf{X}}_{d,t}^{(K)} = g(\tilde{\mathbf{X}}_{d,t-1}^{(K)}, \mathbf{X}_{d,(K)}^t, \hat{\mathbf{w}}_{d,t})$

Possibly nonlinear transition function  
(also encodes a time-varying network describing interactions between individuals in a population)

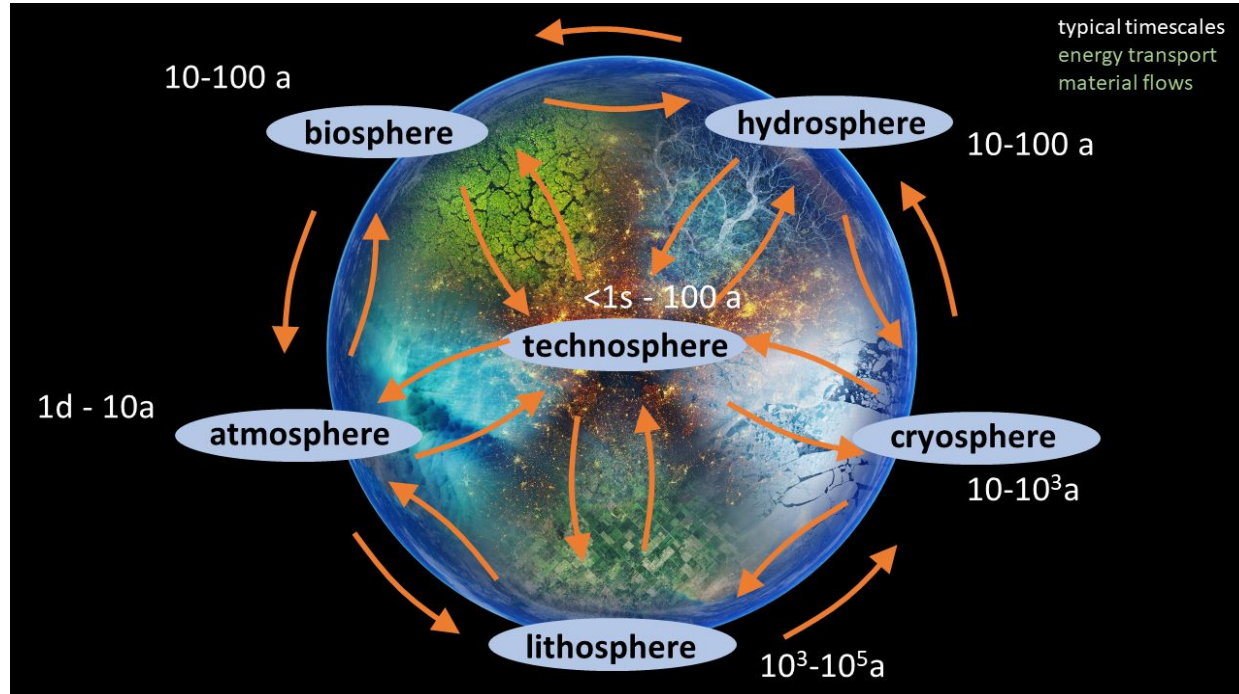
Coarse time scale noise parameters  $\Lambda_{d,t}^{(K)} \sim \eta(\Lambda_{d,t}^{(K)}, \Lambda_{d,t+1}^{(K)})$

Measurements  $\mathbf{Y}_{d,t}^{(K)} = b(\tilde{\mathbf{X}}_{d,t}^{(K)}, \hat{\mathbf{v}}_{d,t})$

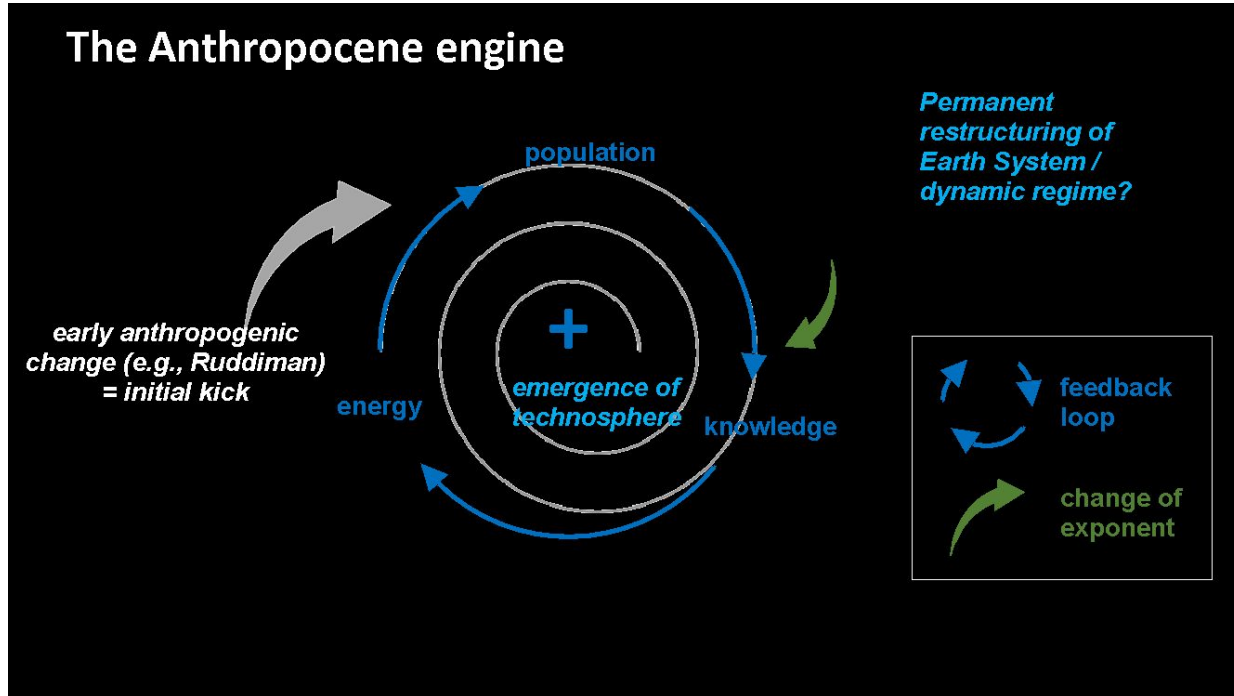
Possibly nonlinear measurement function

\*Cool note: setting  $\mathbf{k}=1$ , iterate over  $\mathbf{t}$ , can recover population genetics models;  
setting  $\mathbf{t}=1$ , iterate over  $\mathbf{k}$ , can recover models of development/GRNs

# The Technosphere as a major transition in evolution



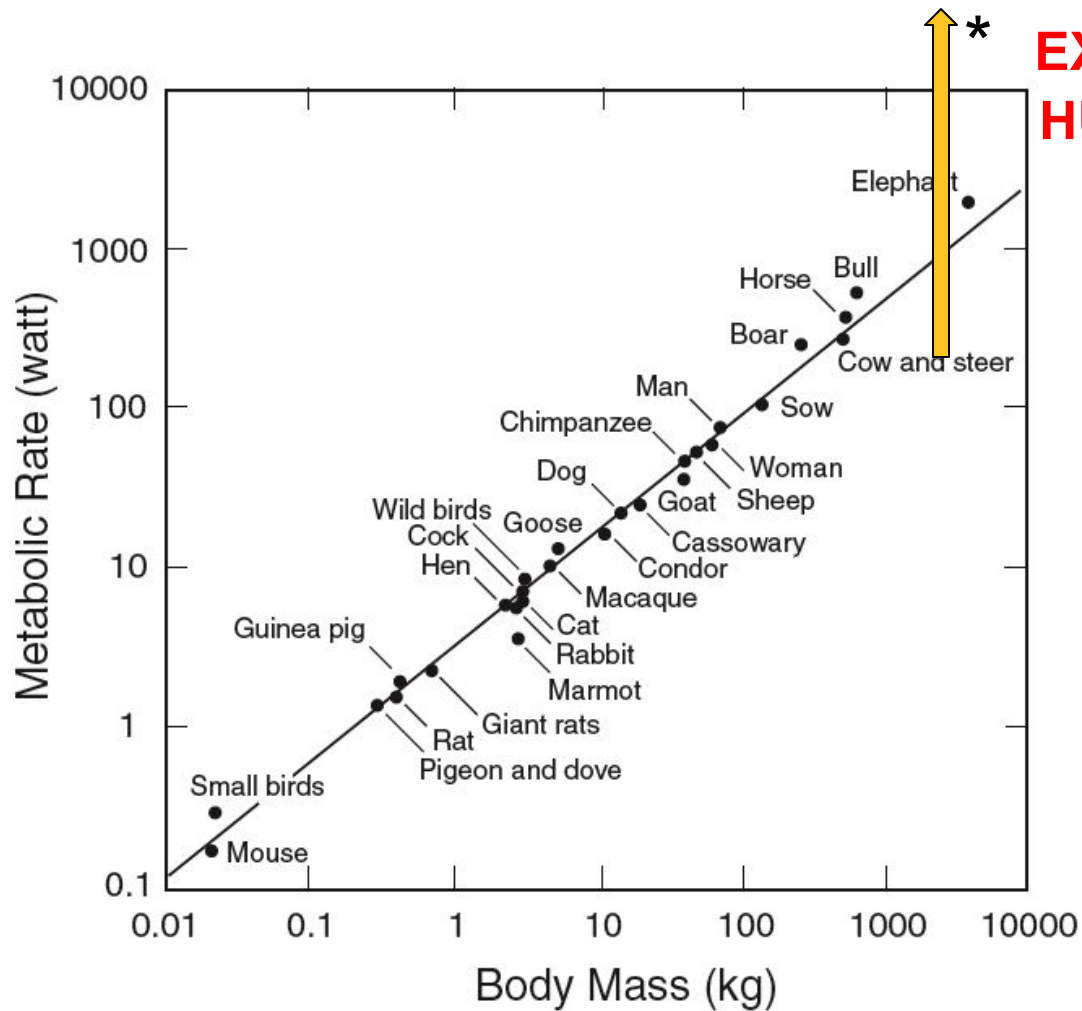
# The dynamics of the Anthropocene



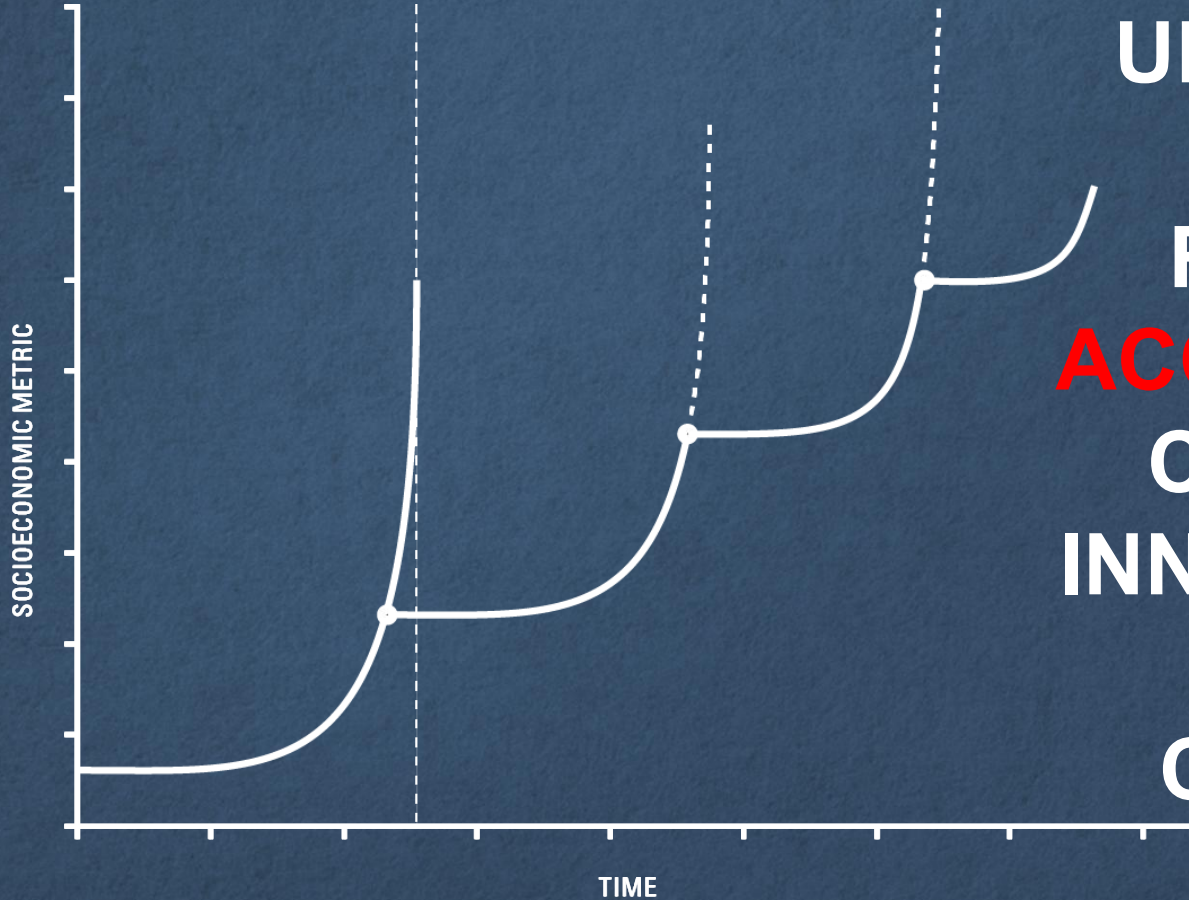


Our “natural” metabolic rate *~90 watts*

Our social metabolic rate *~11,000  
watts*



**EXTENDED SOCIAL  
HUMAN**



**UNBOUNDED  
GROWTH  
REQUIRES  
ACCELERATING  
CYCLES OF  
INNOVATION TO  
AVOID  
COLLAPSE**

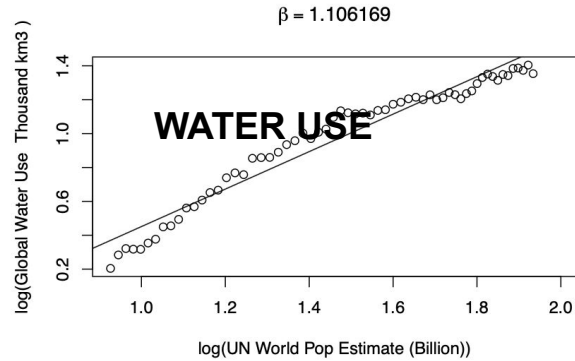
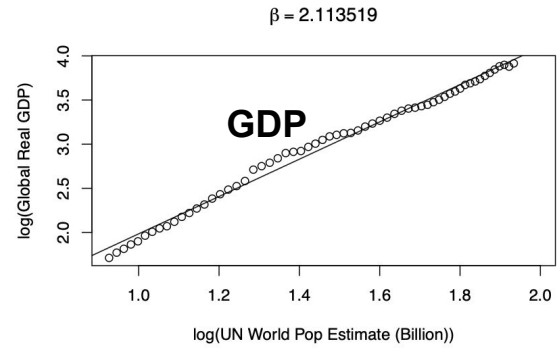
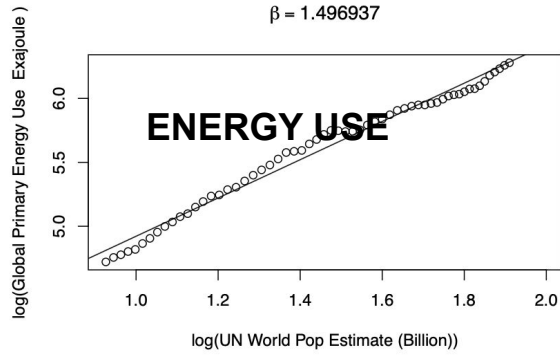
# The Question



**CAN WE EXTEND THIS FRAMEWORK TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMIC AND EVOLUTION OF THE ENTIRE PLANET CONSIDERED AS AN INTEGRATED, NETWORKED COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEM (THE ANTHROPOCENE)?**



D. Painter, M. Laubichler, C.P. Kempes & G.B. West; work in progress



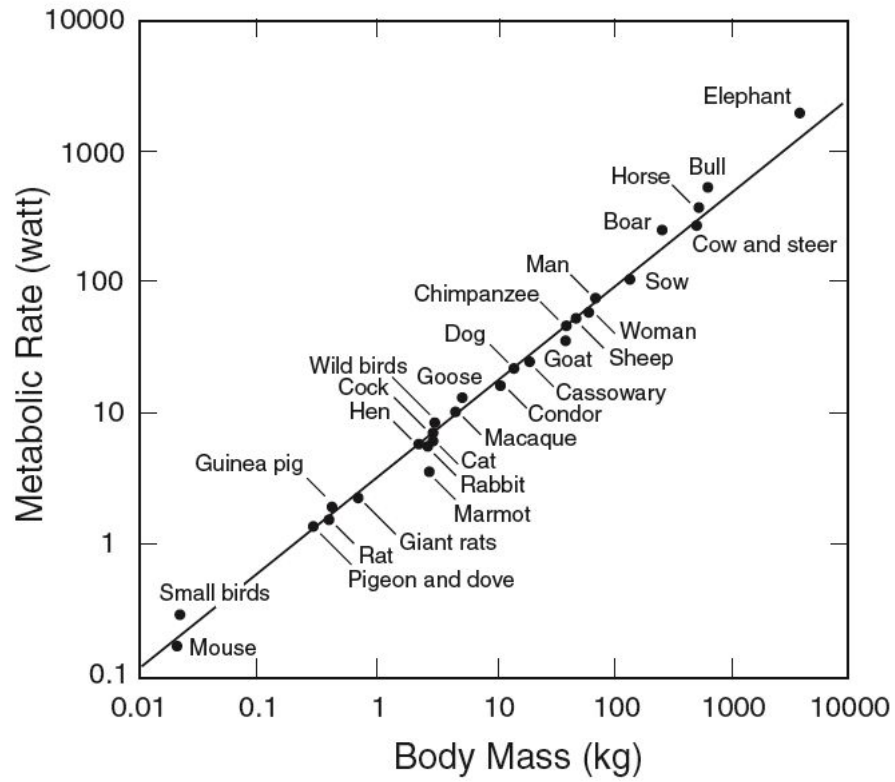
# Biological Scaling

**BIOLOGICAL METABOLIC RATE ( $B$ )**



***THIS IS THE RATE AT WHICH  
ENERGY NEEDS TO BE SUPPLIED  
TO AN ORGANISM IN ORDER TO:***

- ***MAINTAIN ITS PRESENT INACTIVE STATE  
(BASAL METABOLIC RATE)***



# 100 Watts or 2000 calories a day

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1

=



1



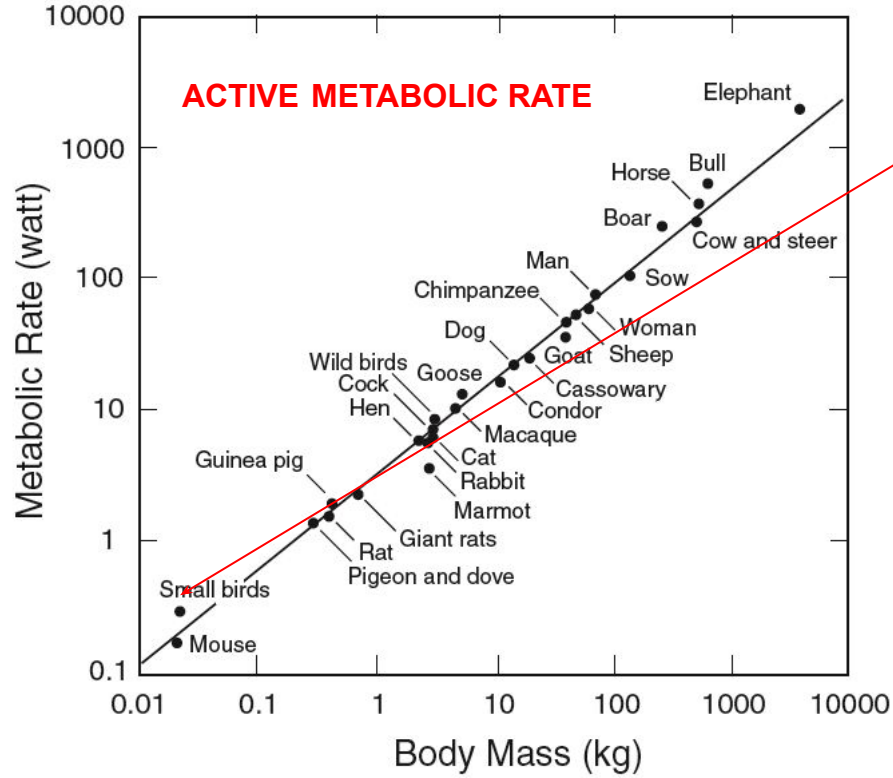
**BIOLOGICAL METABOLIC  
RATE (B)**

***THIS IS THE RATE AT WHICH  
ENERGY NEEDS TO BE  
SUPPLIED TO AN  
ORGANISM IN ORDER TO:***

- MAINTAIN ITS PRESENT INACTIVE  
STATE (BASAL METABOLIC RATE)***

***ACTIVE METABOLIC RATE IS  
APPROXIMATELY 2-3 TIMES  
BASAL METABOLIC RATE  
WITH APPROXIMATELY THE  
SAME EXPONENT***

***THIS WAS TRUE FOR  
HUMAN BEINGS IN OUR  
“NATURAL” STATE***

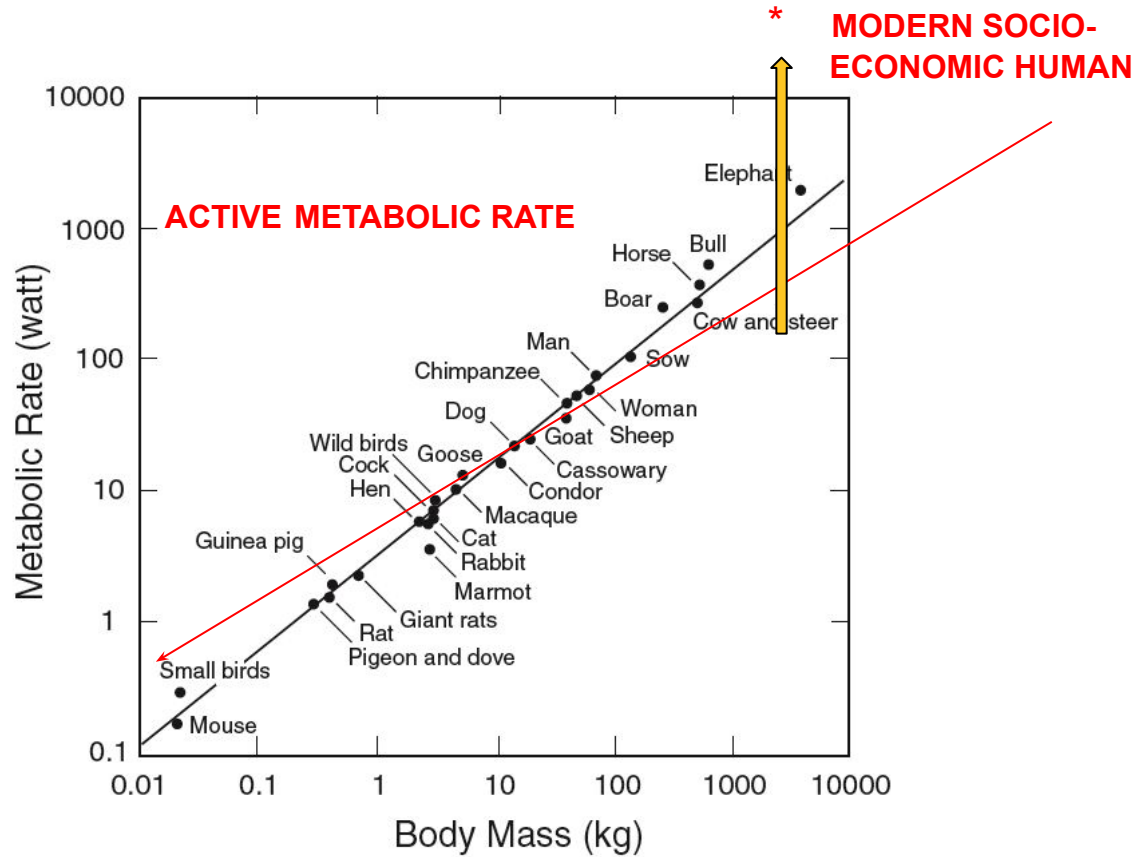


# FOR MODERN HUMANS, ACTIVE METABOLIC RATE

≈ SOCIAL METABOLIC RATE (Y)

***THIS IS THE RATE AT WHICH ENERGY, IN ITS  
BROADEST SENSE, NEEDS TO BE SUPPLIED IN  
ORDER TO:***

- i) MAINTAIN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM,  
INCLUDING ALL INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
INDIVIDUALS, IN ITS PRESENT STATE***
  
- i) EFFECT CHANGE BY GROWING OR DEVELOPING  
NEW INFRASTRUCTURE, PEOPLE, IDEAS,  
INSTITUTIONS, ETC, ETC***



Our “natural” metabolic rate *~90 watts*

Our social metabolic rate *~11,000  
watts*

We are equivalent to a

*30,000 kg Gorilla*





# 12 *Elephants*



# TIME EVOLUTION (GROWTH) OF THE TECHNOSPHERE

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## ***SOCIAL METABOLIC RATE***

***(RATE AT WHICH ENERGY, IN ITS BROADEST SENSE, IS SUPPLIED FOR)***

## ***= MAINTENANCE***

***(OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM IN ITS PRESENT STATE, INCLUDING ALL  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDIVIDUALS)***

***+***

## ***NEW GROWTH***

***(ADDING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE, PEOPLE, IDEAS, INSTITUTIONS, ETC, ETC)***



**BORROWING THE CONCEPT OF AN  
“EXTENDED PHENOTYPE”  
FROM BIOLOGY, EXPRESS THIS IN TERMS OF THE  
ENERGY BUDGET OF**

***“EXTENDED INDIVIDUALS”*  
WHICH INCLUDES THEIR ASSOCIATED PHYSICAL AND  
SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND INTERACTIONS**

# SUPPLY MAINTENANCE GROWTH

***i) IN SOME SMALL TIME INTERVAL  $\Delta t$  THE SUPPLY OF SOCIAL METABOLIC ENERGY IS***

$$Y(N)\Delta t = \left[ \sum_{j=1}^N R_j(N) \right] \Delta t + \sum_{j=N}^{N+\Delta N} E_j(N)$$

***$R_j(N)$  = RATE AT WHICH THESE RESOURCES ARE USED BY THE  $j^{\text{th}}$  INDIVIDUAL TO MAINTAIN HIS/HER/ITS LIFE-STYLE, ETC)***

***$E_j(N)$  = COST OF ADDING THE  $j^{\text{th}}$  INDIVIDUAL TO THE POPULATION***

## ii) AVERAGE AND TOTAL COSTS

FOR BASAL MAINTENANCE

$$\bar{R}(N) \equiv \frac{R(N)}{N} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{j=1}^N R_j(N)$$

$$\bar{E}(N) \equiv \frac{E(N)}{N} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{j=1}^N E_j(N)$$

FOR ADDING NEW INDIVIDUAL

$$\frac{dE(N)}{dt} = Y(N) - R(N)$$

LEADING TO

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = \frac{N}{\beta_E(N)} \left[ \frac{Y(N) - R(N)}{E(N)} \right]$$

iii) WHICH CAN BE EXPRESSED AS

$$\beta_E(N) \equiv \frac{d \ln E(N)}{d \ln N}$$

## THE ANTHROPOCENE EQUATION REDUCES TO

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = \frac{N}{\beta_E T} \left[ \frac{Y(N)}{R(N)} - 1 \right]$$

**WHERE**

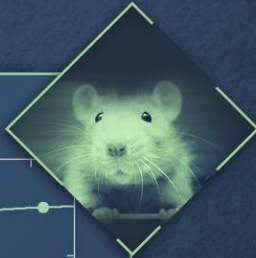
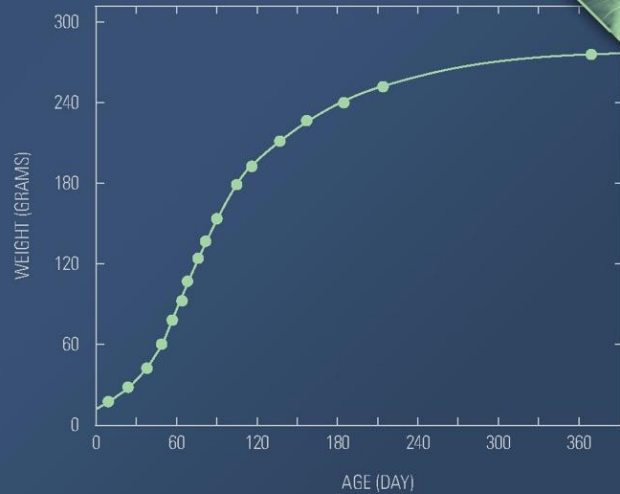
$$\beta_E(N) \equiv \frac{d \ln E(N)}{d \ln N}$$

## ***IN THE BIOSPHERE***

**MAINTENANCE NEEDS (DEMAND) GROW FASTER THAN SUPPLY (METABOLIC RATE IS SUB-LINEAR)**

**⇒ GROWTH EVENTUALLY CEASES LEADING TO A FINITE SIZE OR FINITE CARRYING CAPACITY**

## GROWTH CURVE OF RAT



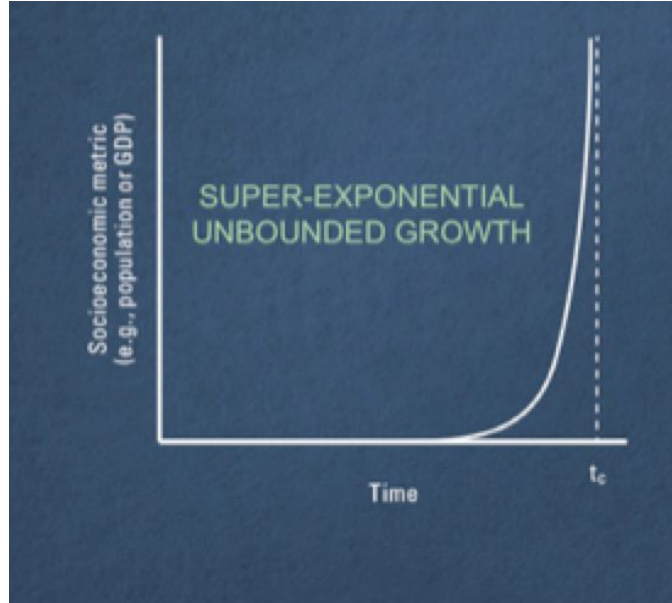
SUB-LINEAR SCALING LEADS  
TO BOUNDED GROWTH

*IN THE **TECHNOSPHERE***

**SUPER-LINEAR SOCIAL METABOLIC RATE  
(THE SUPPLY) GROWS FASTER THAN MAINTENANCE NEEDS (THE  
DEMAND)**

**⇒ OPEN-ENDED GROWTH**

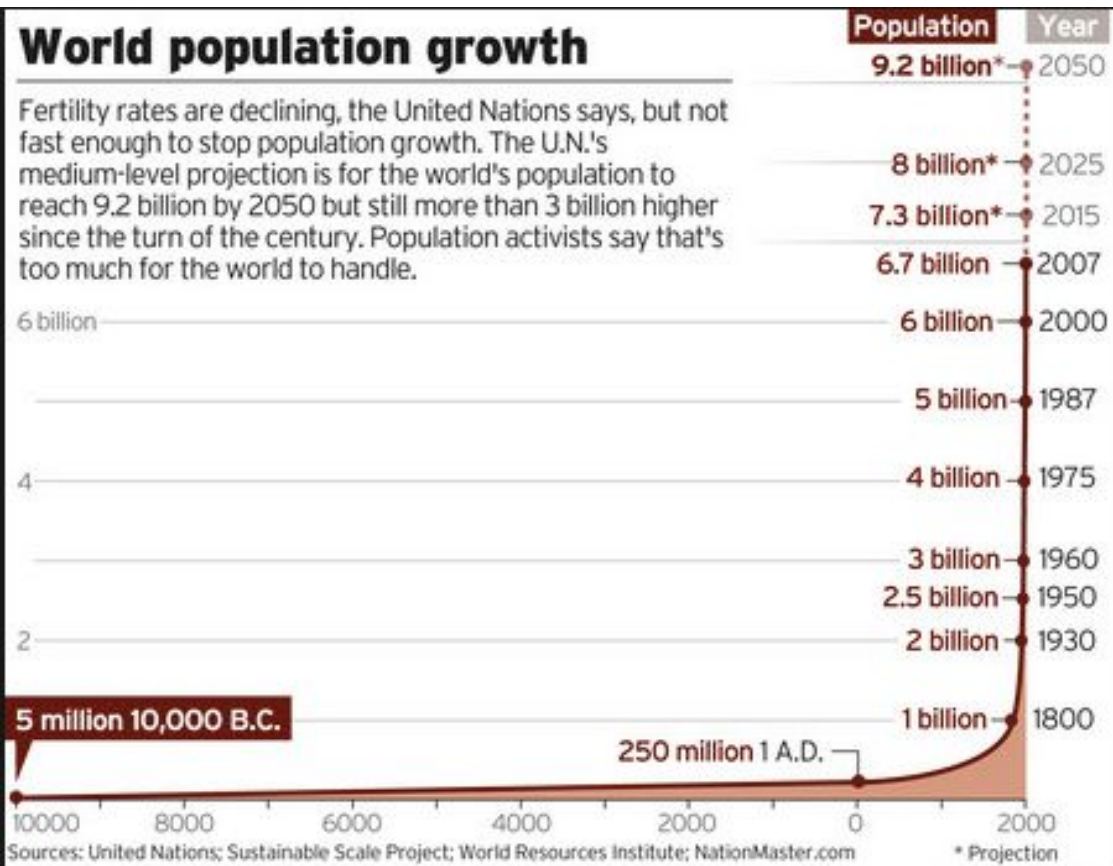
# SUPERLINEAR SCALING LEADS TO UNBOUNDED GROWTH





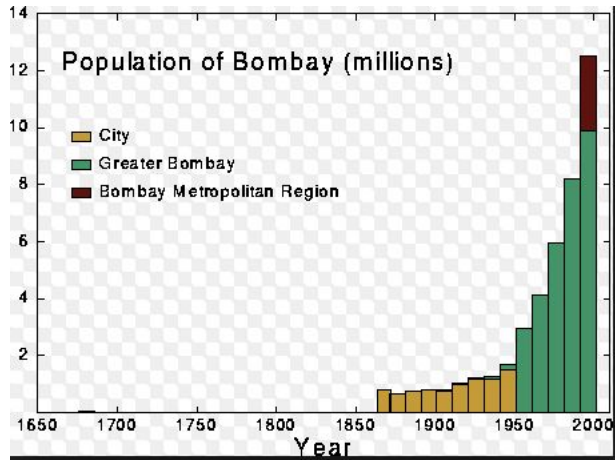
## World population growth

Fertility rates are declining, the United Nations says, but not fast enough to stop population growth. The U.N.'s medium-level projection is for the world's population to reach 9.2 billion by 2050 but still more than 3 billion higher since the turn of the century. Population activists say that's too much for the world to handle.

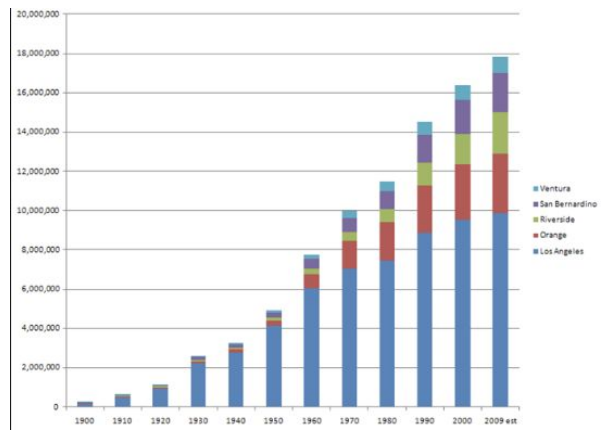
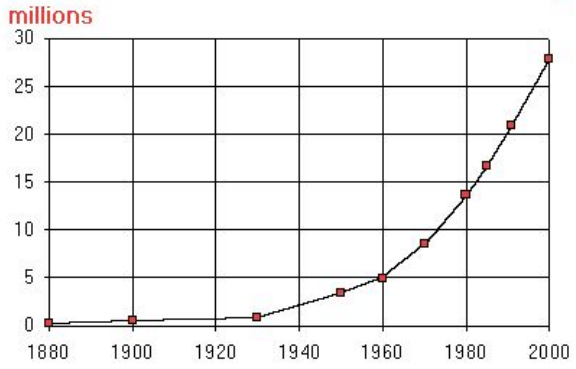


Sources: United Nations; Sustainable Scale Project; World Resources Institute; NationMaster.com

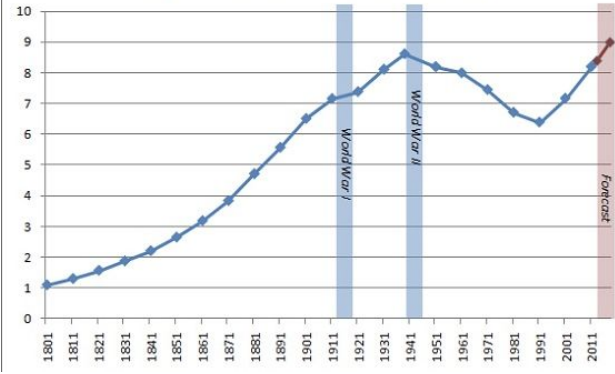
\* Projection



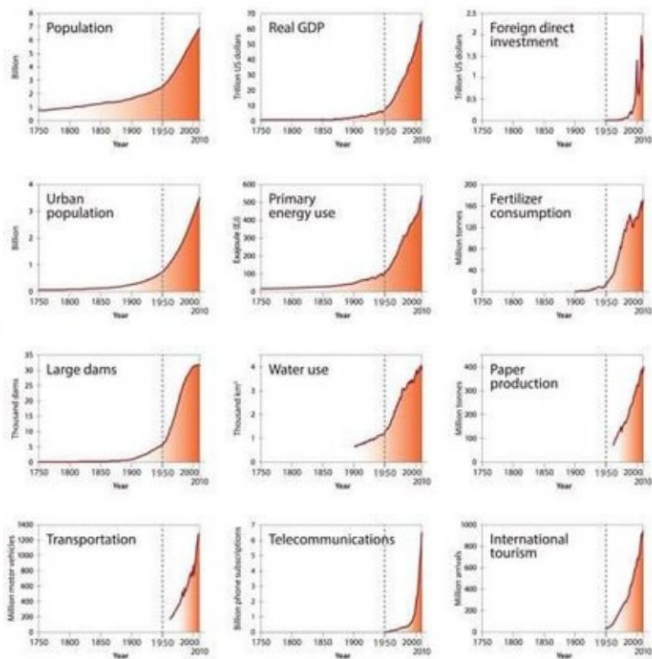
## Population of Mexico City



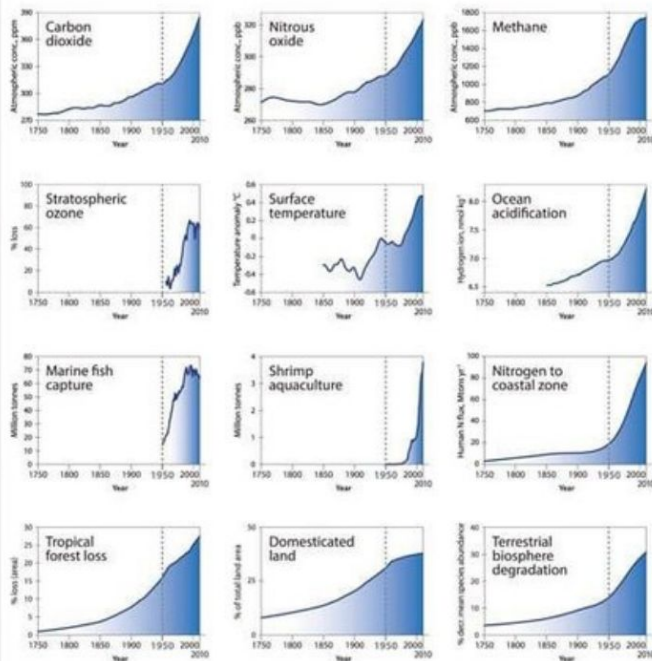
### Population of London (millions)



## Socio-economic trends



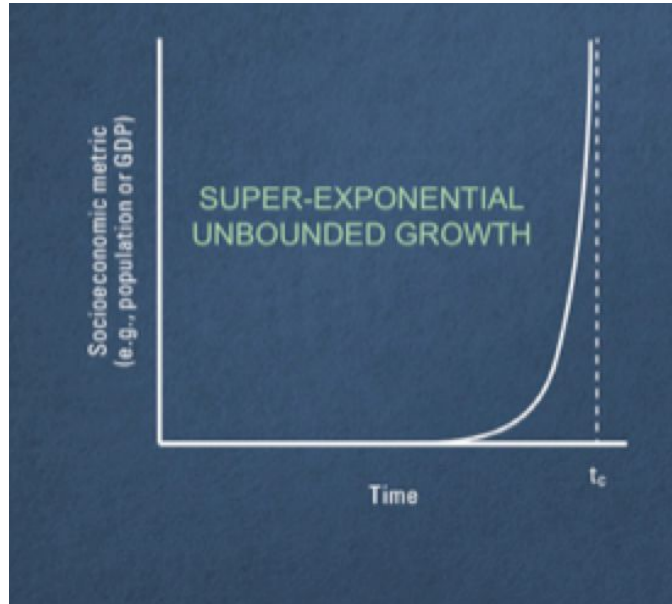
## Earth system trends



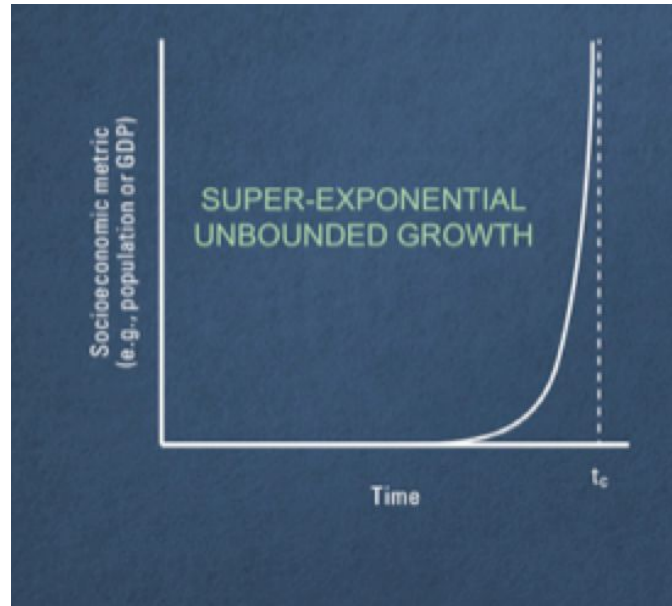
### Updated Great Acceleration Graphs

Source: Will Steffen et al. "The trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration." The Anthropocene Review, March 2015

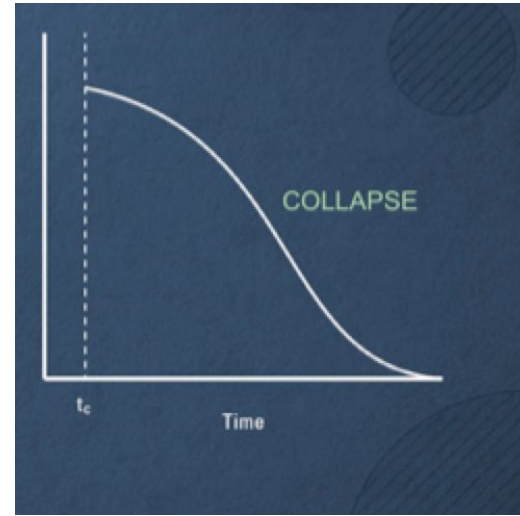
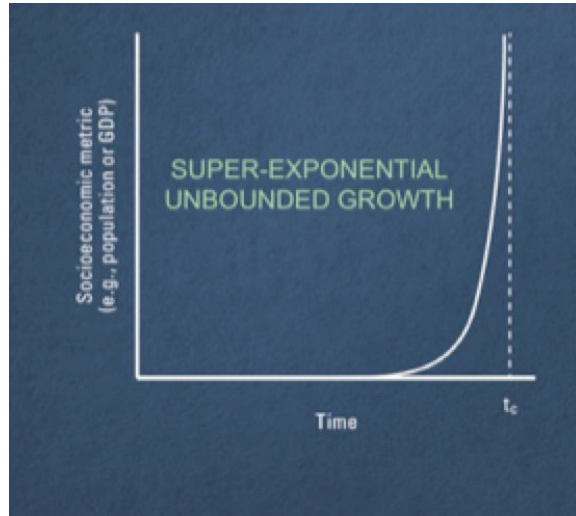
# BUT IT ALSO LEADS TO



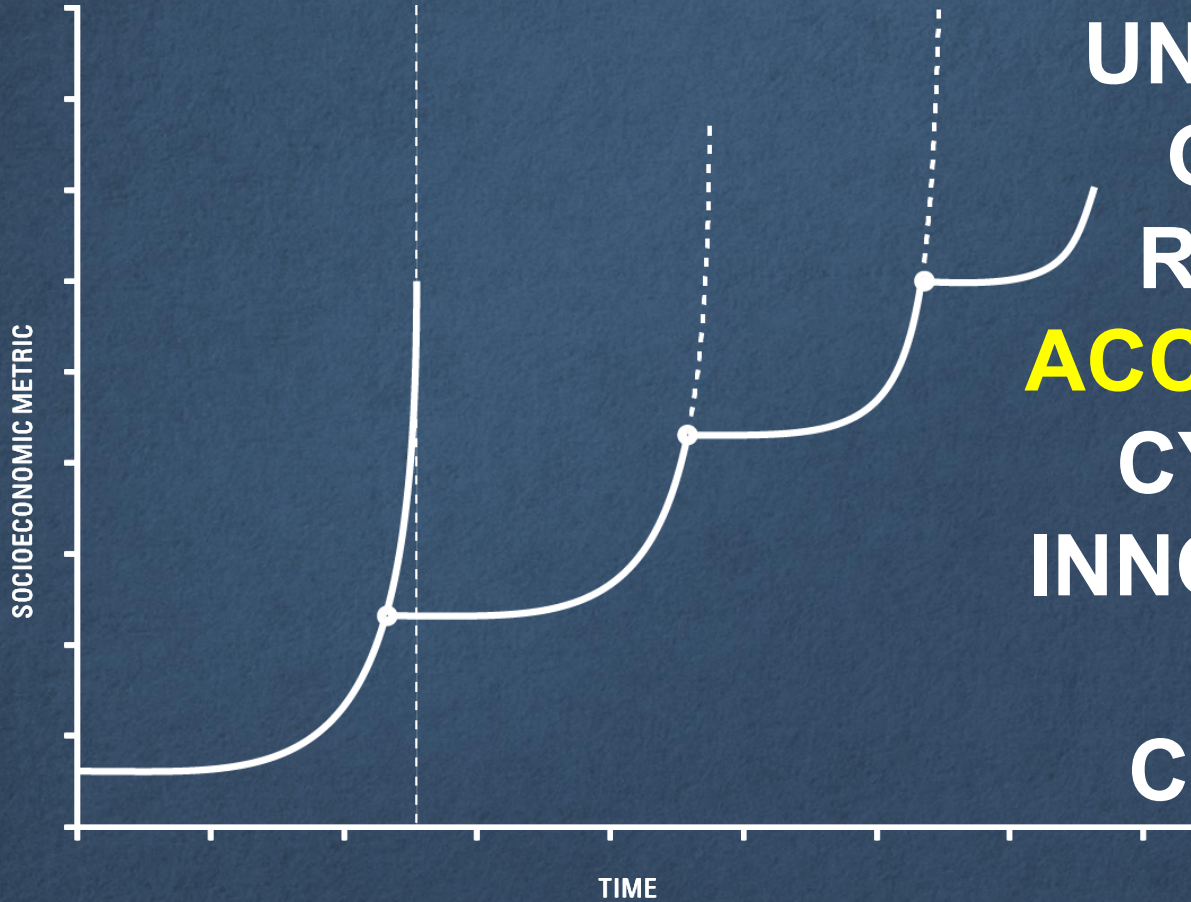
# A FINITE TIME SINGULARITY AT $t = t_c$



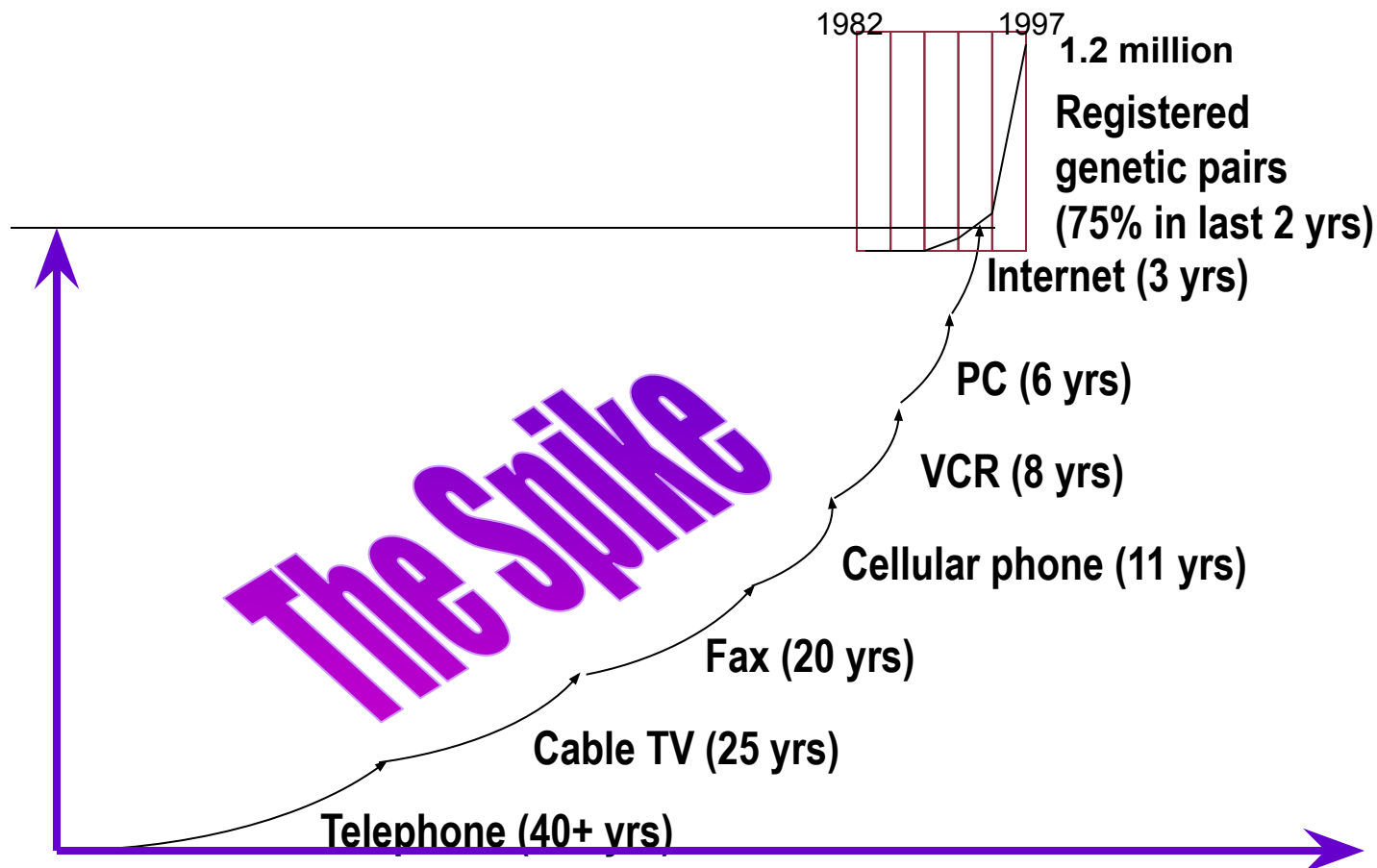
# AND COLLAPSE WHEN $t > t_c$



THE NOT SUCH GOOD NEWS!



**UNBOUNDED  
GROWTH  
REQUIRES  
ACCELERATING  
CYCLES OF  
INNOVATION TO  
AVOID  
COLLAPSE**

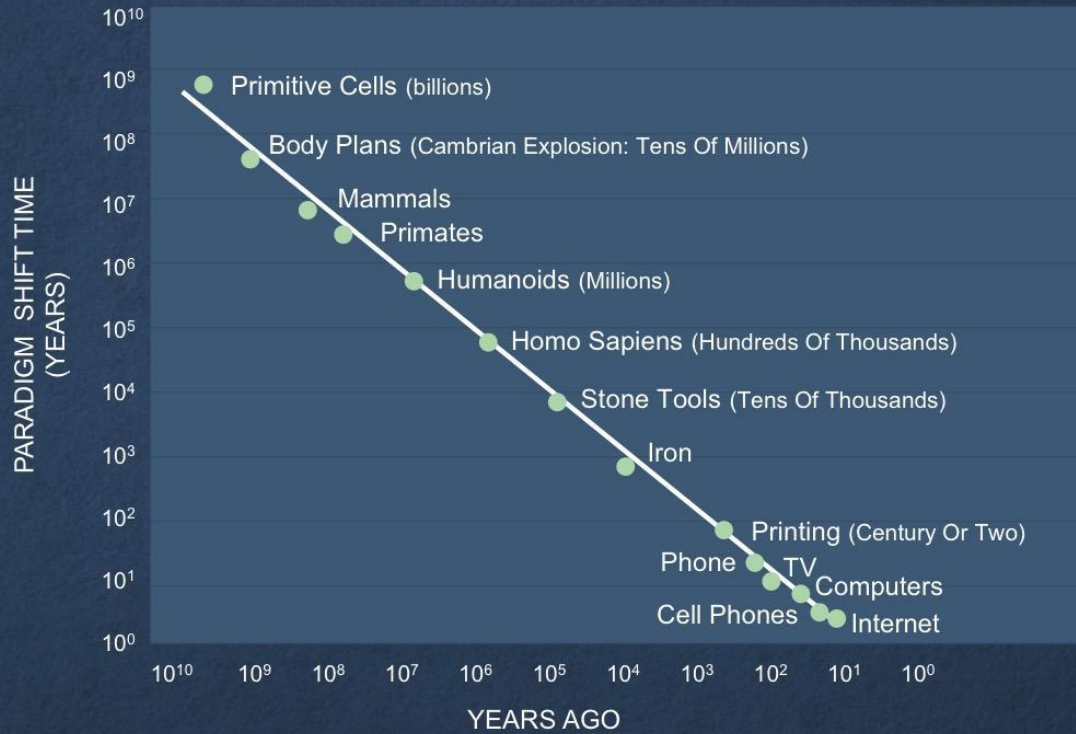


**Years to reach 10 million customers (US)**

*Time*



# SEQUENCE OF SINGULARITIES



# POWER LAW APPROXIMATION (MOTIVATED BY NETWORKS & DATA)

$$\begin{aligned}Y(N) &= Y_0 N^\beta \\R(N) &= R_0 N^{\beta_R} \\E(N) &= E_0 N^{\beta_E}\end{aligned}$$

**LEADS TO “EXACT” SOLUTION**

$$N(t) = \left(\frac{R_0}{Y_0}\right)^{1/\gamma} \left[\frac{1}{1 - e^{-(t_c - t)/T_0}}\right]^{1/\gamma}$$

**WHERE  $\gamma \equiv \beta - \beta_R$  AND THE SINGULARITY AT  $t = t_c$  IS GIVEN BY**

$$t_c - t_0 \approx \left[\frac{1}{N_0^\gamma} \frac{R_0}{Y_0}\right] T_0 = \left[\frac{R(N_0)}{Y(N_0)}\right] T_0$$

## THE APPROACH TO THE SINGULARITY AS

$t \rightarrow t_c$

$$N(t) = \left( \frac{R_0}{Y_0} \right)^{1/\gamma} \left[ \frac{T_0}{t_c - t} \right]^{1/\gamma}$$

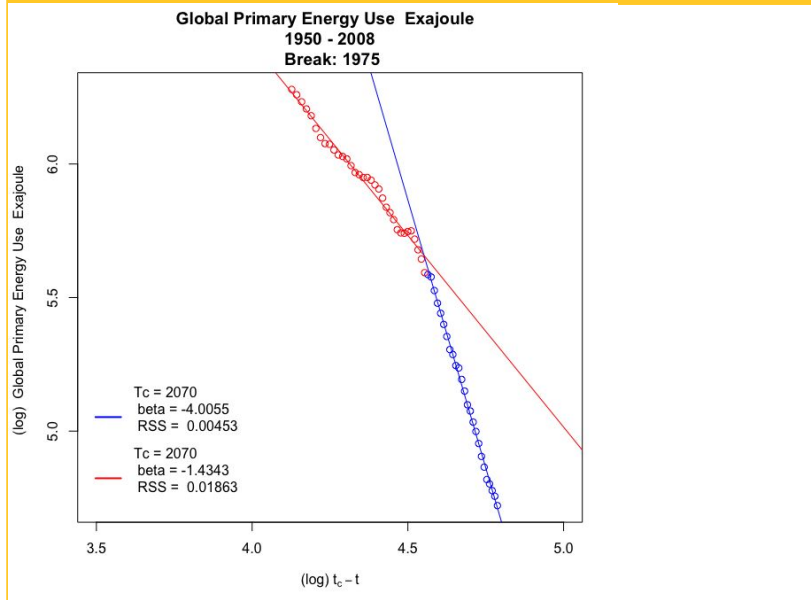
THEORY PREDICTS THAT LOGARITHMIC  
PLOTS OF MAJOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC METRICS  
(ENERGY, WATER,....) AGAINST THE TIME TO  
THE NEXT SINGULARITY:

$$\log Y(t) \text{ vs. } \log (t_c - t)$$

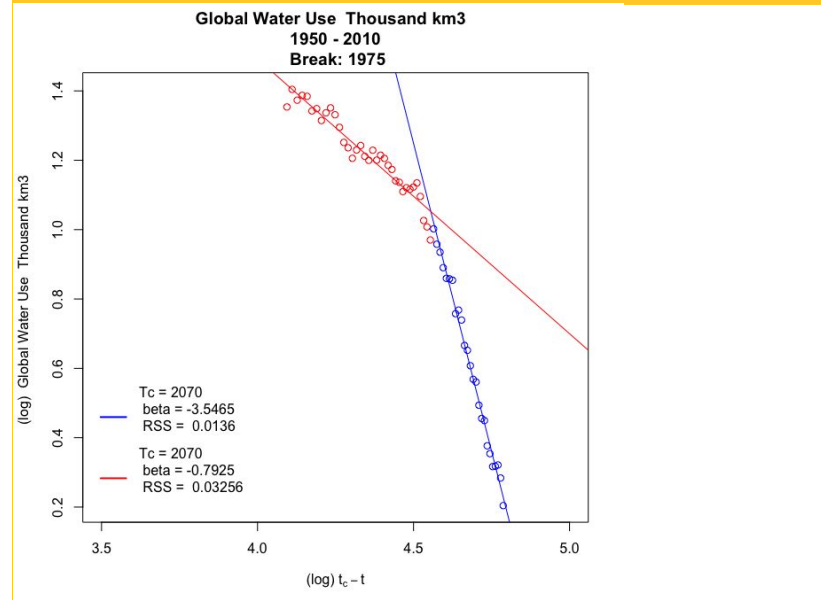
SHOULD YIELD **STRAIGHT LINES** WITH PREDICTED  
VALUES OF THE SLOPES AND INTERCEPTS

# When will we reach the next singularity?

## GLOBAL ENERGY USE

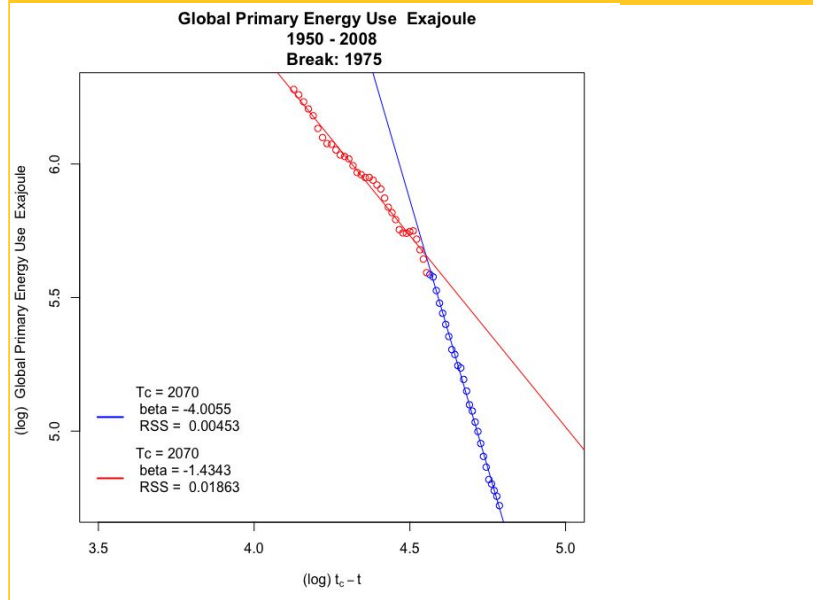


## GLOBAL WATER USE

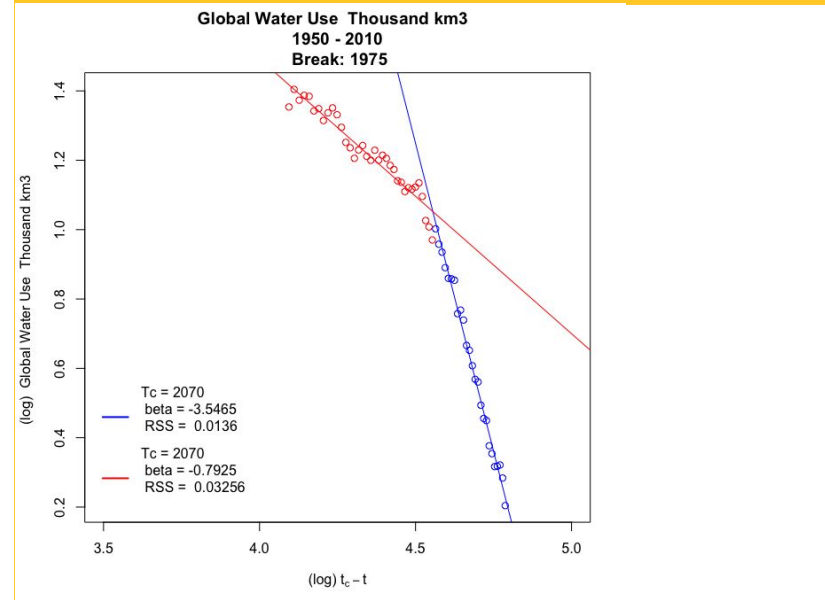


# SUGGESTS THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT “PARADIGM SHIFT” AND WE AVOIDED A SINGULARITY IN MID-1970’S (AROUND 1975) SPECULATIONS?

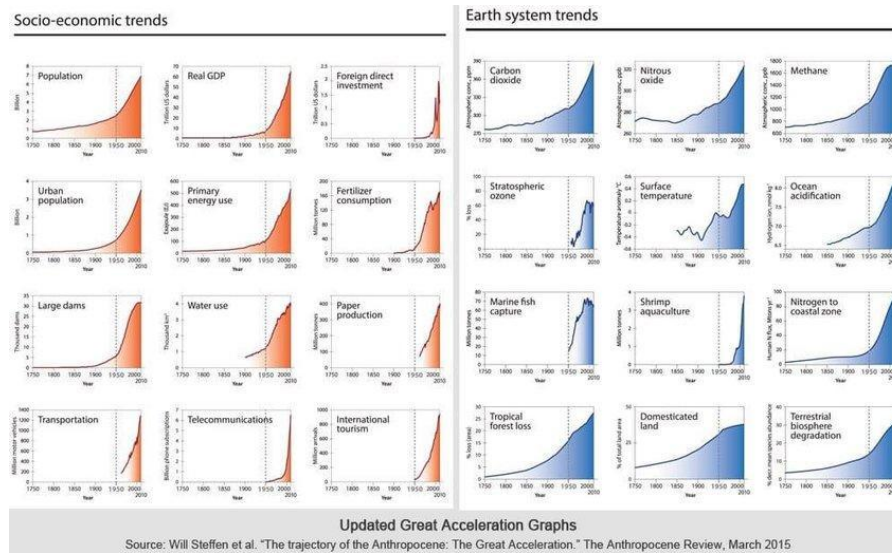
## GLOBAL ENERGY USE



## GLOBAL WATER USE



# WHY 1975 MATTERS?



## The phenotype of the Great Acceleration

However, once we analyzed this in the context of the Anthropocene Equation

**We found that most of these time series have a breaking point around 1975**

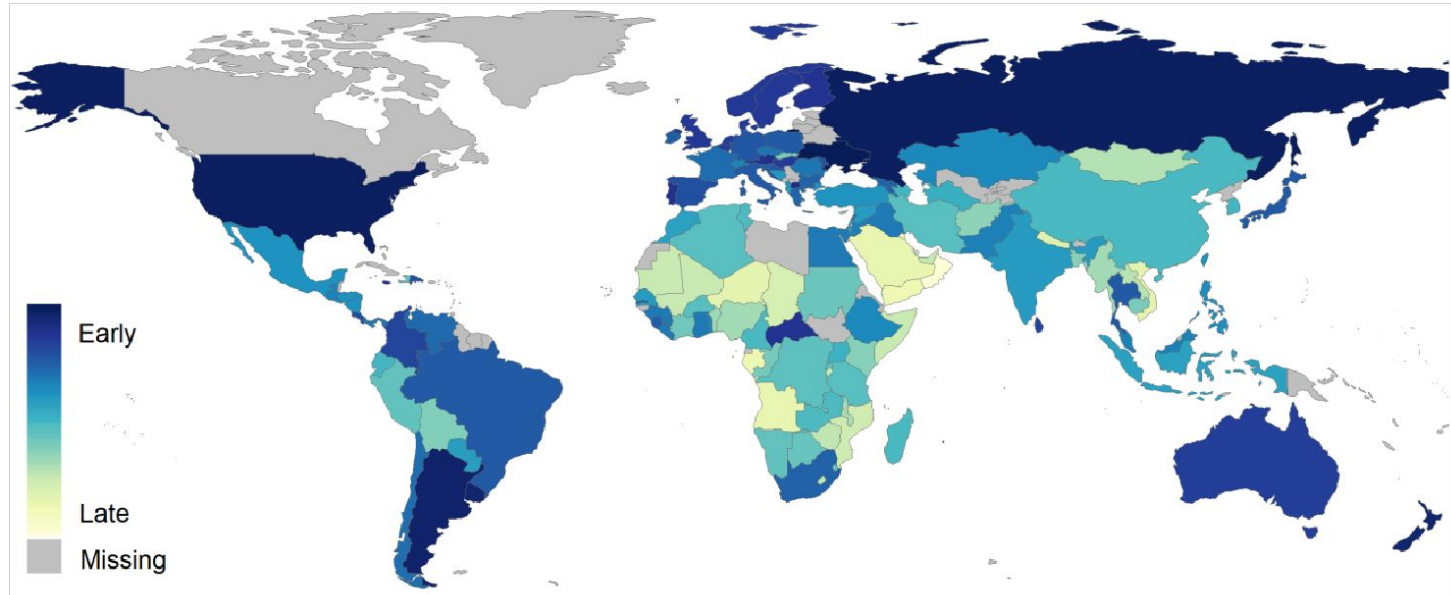
# Breakpoint Analysis and Regression Data

	Bkpt.	(b) $T_c$	(b) $\alpha$	(b) $\beta$	(b) $RSS$	(a) $T_c$	(a) $\alpha$	(a) $\beta$	(a) $RSS$
Pop	1990	2070	9.9579	-1.8825	0.00754	2070	5.3777	-0.8411	0.00181
GDP	1975	2030	16.8496	-3.4522	0.009	2070	12.8135	-2.1577	0.0257
FDI	1976	2030	45.9047	-12.4274	4.211	2070	40.8427	-9.7455	4.1214
Energy	1976	2070	23.6423	-3.9532	0.0071	2070	12.0791	-1.4092	0.0144
Fertilizer	1976	2070	41.0339	-8.0031	0.0588	2070	8.808	-0.9034	0.1452
Dams	1976	2070	27.5555	-5.3904	0.0205	2070	7.3844	-0.9358	0.1108
Water	1976	2070	16.818	-3.464	0.02	2070	4.5376	-0.763	0.0249
Paper	1976	2070	27.5113	-4.9343	0.0626	2070	15.5778	-2.3176	0.0866
Cars	1975	2070	31.1649	-5.5566	0.0032	2070	18.7008	-2.8096	0.137
Phones	1960	2030	150.4055	-36.0515	4.2076	2030	12.0812	-3.4157	0.8229
Tourism	1974	2070	53.2723	-10.4434	0.0129	2070	20.3643	-3.2765	0.0912
$CO_2$ ppb	1975	2030	6.3865	-0.1481	0.0001	2070	7.3671	-0.3443	0.0001
$CO_2$ emm.	1975	2070	38.3286	-4.7437	0.0038	2030	19.1967	-0.6279	0.029
$NO_2$ ppb	1975	2030	6.063	-0.0913	< 0.0001	2070	6.4724	-0.1693	< 0.0001
$NO_2$ emm.	1985	2070	23.2238	-1.8763	0.0148	2030	15.2467	-0.1009	0.0411
$NH_4$ ppb	2005	2070	10.8704	-0.7966	0.0639	2070	8.2579	-0.193	< 0.0001
$NH_4$ emm.	1975	2070	19.0718	-0.7818	0.001	2030	16.7394	-0.2914	0.0383
Ozone	1990	2070	31.4243	-6.2237	2.6573	2070	2.97775	0.2674	0.3402
Temp.	2000	2070	48.7216	-11.5685	3.9842	2070	1.9832	-0.6672	0.0164
Oceans	1975	2030	2.4001	-0.1054	0.0001	2070	3.2059	-0.2686	0.0001
Fish	1985	2070	23.1329	-4.22	0.8764	2030	4.0347	0.0556	0.0351
Shrimp	1995	2070	70.0562	-16.1437	6.95956	2070	31.6365	-7.3796	0.25515
Forests	1975	2070	7.7973	-1.0383	0.0109	2070	5.8471	-0.617	0.0015
Dom. Land	1975	2070	1.5169	-0.5538	0.0057	2070	-0.4229	-0.131	0.0023
EPO Pat.	1985	2070	122.8245	-25.2107	0.9996	2070	19.2434	-1.9703	0.4205
USPTO Pat.	1975	2070	29.7506	-4.0308	0.0905	2030	16.0729	-1.2328	1.6252
WoS Pubs.	1975	2070	55.2422	-9.2019	0.2478	2030	17.6028	-1.053	0.1233

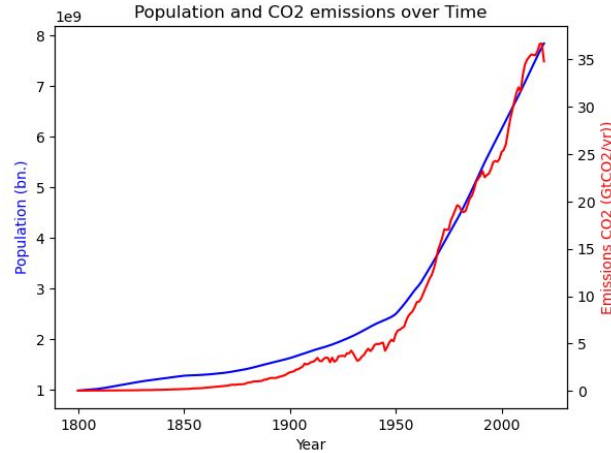
Table 2: Breakpoint Regression Data. (b) = Pre-breakpoint, (a) = Breakpoint and beyond.



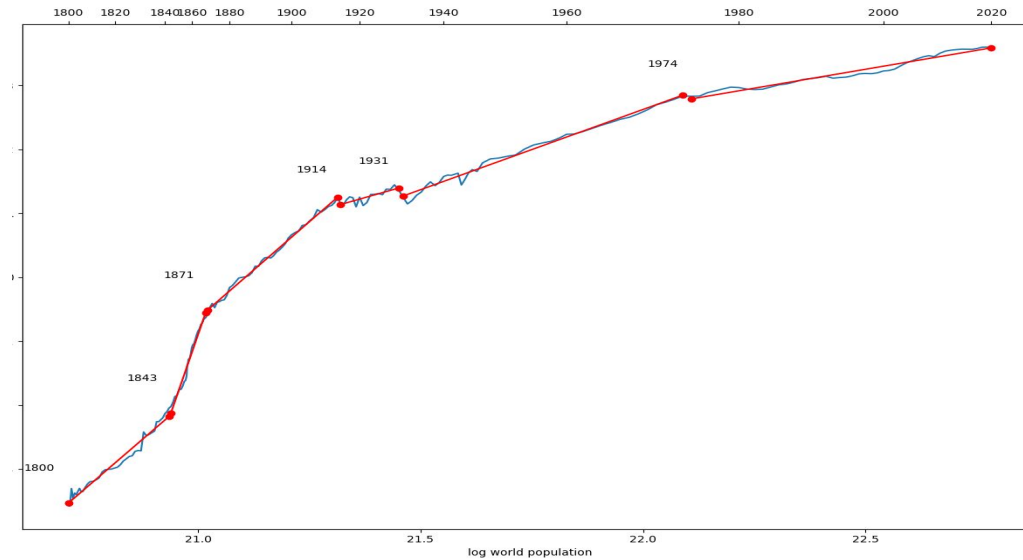
# Waves of acceleration: timing of largest acceleration events —Jonathan Donges



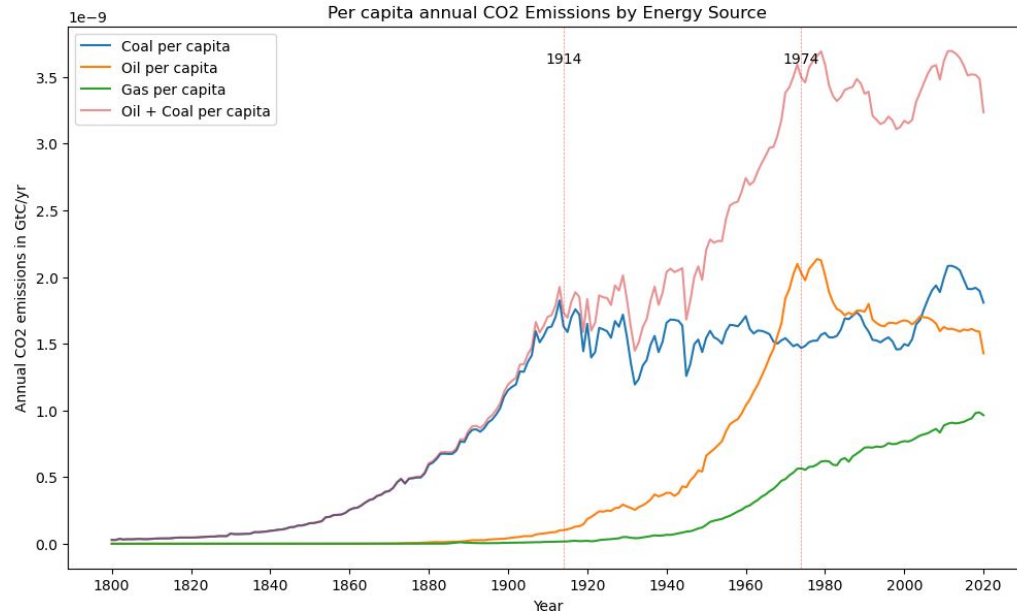
# Examining the Relationship Between Population Growth and CO2 Emissions from Fossil Fuels—Jochen Büttner



# Population Growth and CO2 Emissions from Fossil Fuels - scaling analysis



# Population Growth and CO2 Emissions from Fossil Fuels - The 1914 macro-level shift



# Crucial Observations/Lessons

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- Complex evolving systems are governed by regulatory structures
- Complex evolving systems construct their niches
- These dynamics introduce feedback into these systems
- Dynamically stable systems have the right balance between positive and negative feedback loops

# Elimination of negative feedback in the course of human history

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- Starting in the Neolithic humans began to eliminate negative feedback
- They closed the positive feedback loop between **population – knowledge – energy**, or the Anthropocene (innovation) engine
- As a consequence, we see the continuous acceleration of human history and the emancipation of humans from their environment
- The current crisis is the culmination of these trends

# What can be done?

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- Introducing negative feedback into the system
- Values, norms, laws and regulations make up the social regulatory system of humanity
- Hierarchical and lateral regulation
- Nation states and global civil society
- The role of (scientific) knowledge
- Broad, integrative and transdisciplinary knowledge

# How can it be done?

## DECISION

A team science approach to understanding and **solving complex problems.**

## THEATER





# Thank You

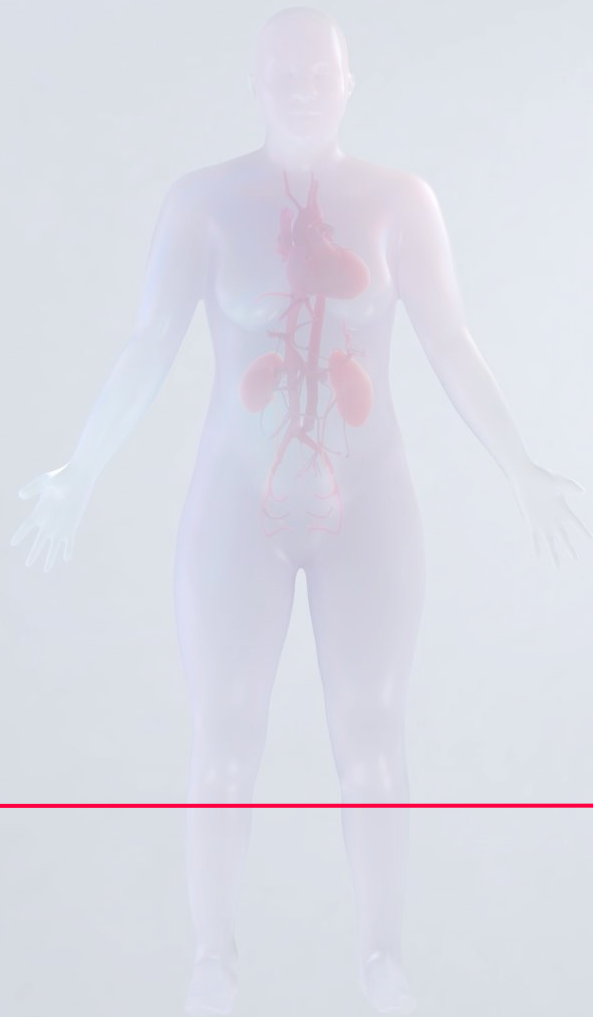
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**Collaborators:**

**Günter Wagner, Rob Page, Jürgen Gadau, Peter Stadler, Carlo Jäger, Chris Kempes, Deryc Painter, Jürgen Renn, Peter Schlosser, Geoffrey West, Ricarda Winkelmann, Patrick Roberts, Chris Carleton, Sarah Wolf, Joffa Applegate**

# Q&A

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<https://humanatlas.io/events/2024-24h>

# Questions

How do we define a Multiscale Human?

How do we map a Multiscale Human?

How do we model a Multiscale Human?

How can LLMs or RAGs be used to advance science and clinical practice?

**Thank you**

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