



CLIMATE DEMOCRACY LAB

The Conditions for Democratic Solutions to the Ecological Crisis

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Outline of the presentation

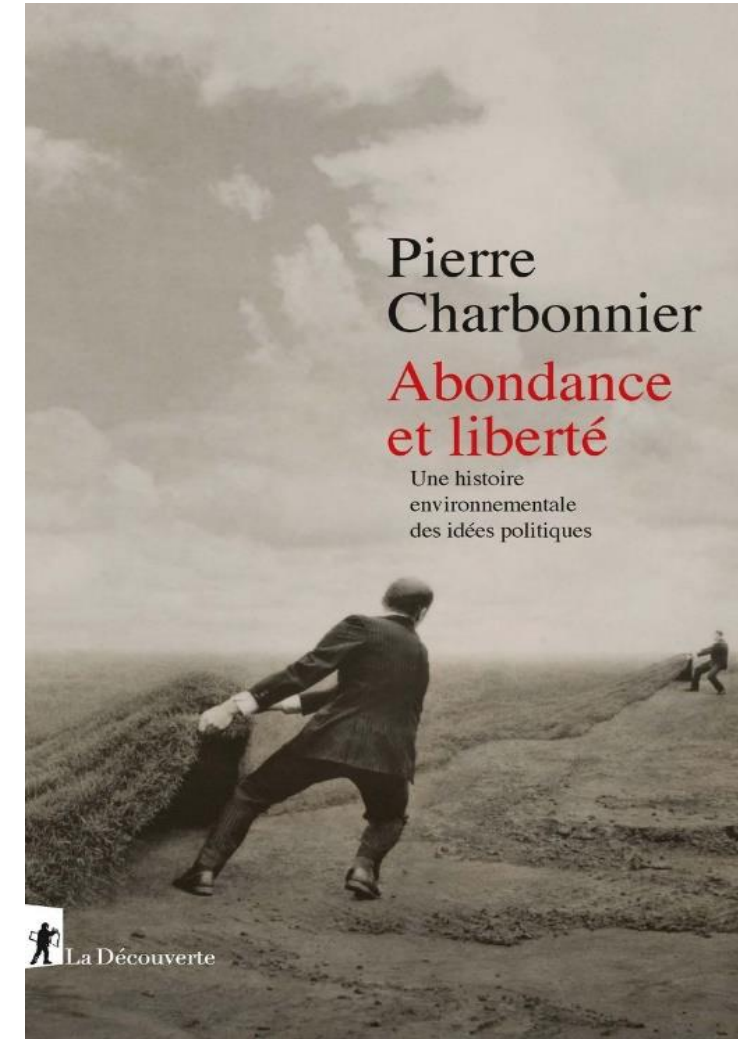
- 1. Why democracy is not a straightforward solution to the ecological crisis?
- 2. What are the main pitfalls of existing democratic solutions to the climate crisis?
- 3. What combination of different forms of democracy might work?

1. Why democracy is not a straightforward solution to the ecological crisis?

- The thrive of productivism is parallel to that of modern (liberal) democracy
- The three contradictions of democracy
- The authoritarian tentation and failures

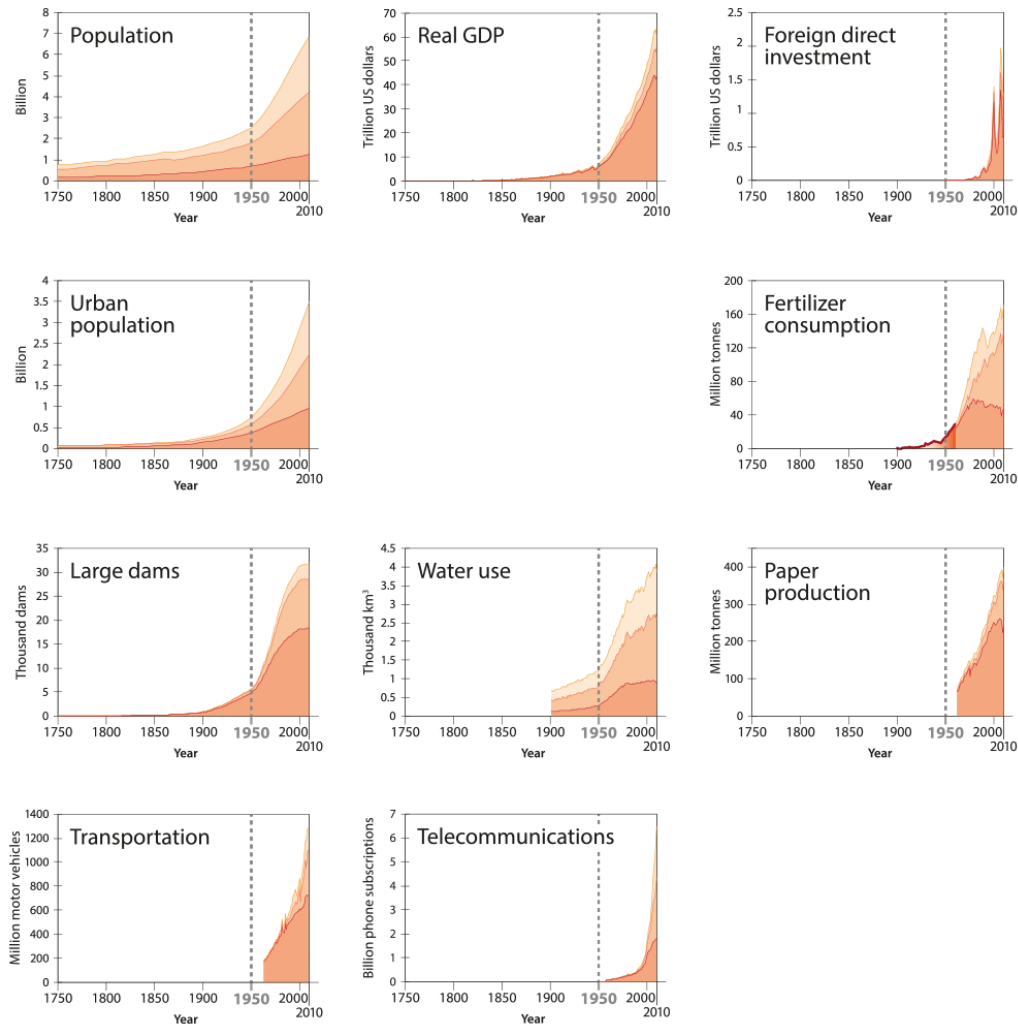
Modern democracy and Productivism

- Modern democracies are historically linked to the productivist revolution
 - The history of industrial revolution is parallel to that of modern democracy
 - The *magics* of the production and consumption society
 - Economic growth and democratization: a mathematical equation up until the 1980s (Lipset)
- Productivism as a metaparadigm
 - The organization of economic life in which production is the first objective (Rey and Hordé 1998)
 - Common to both dominating political economies in the XXth century (capitalism and communism)

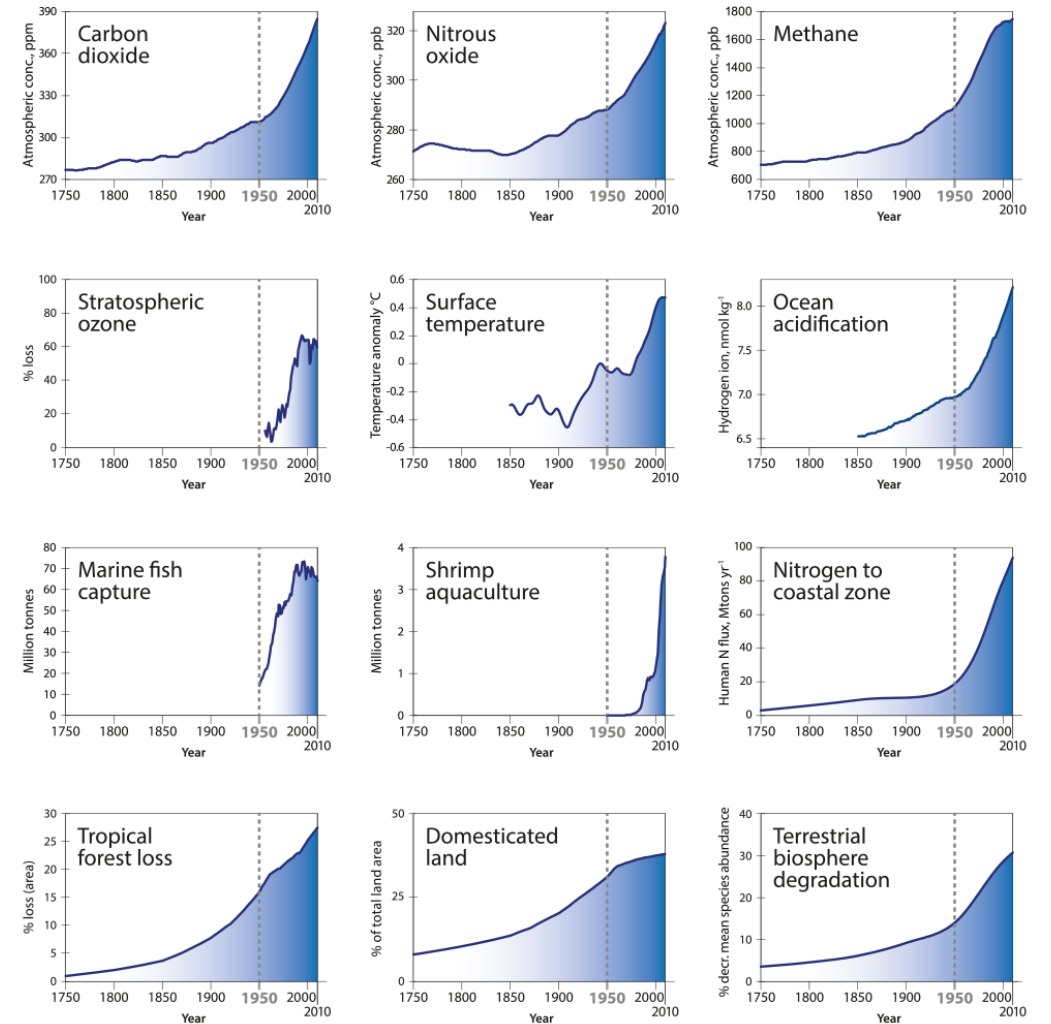


Modern democracy and Productivism (2)

Socio-economic trends

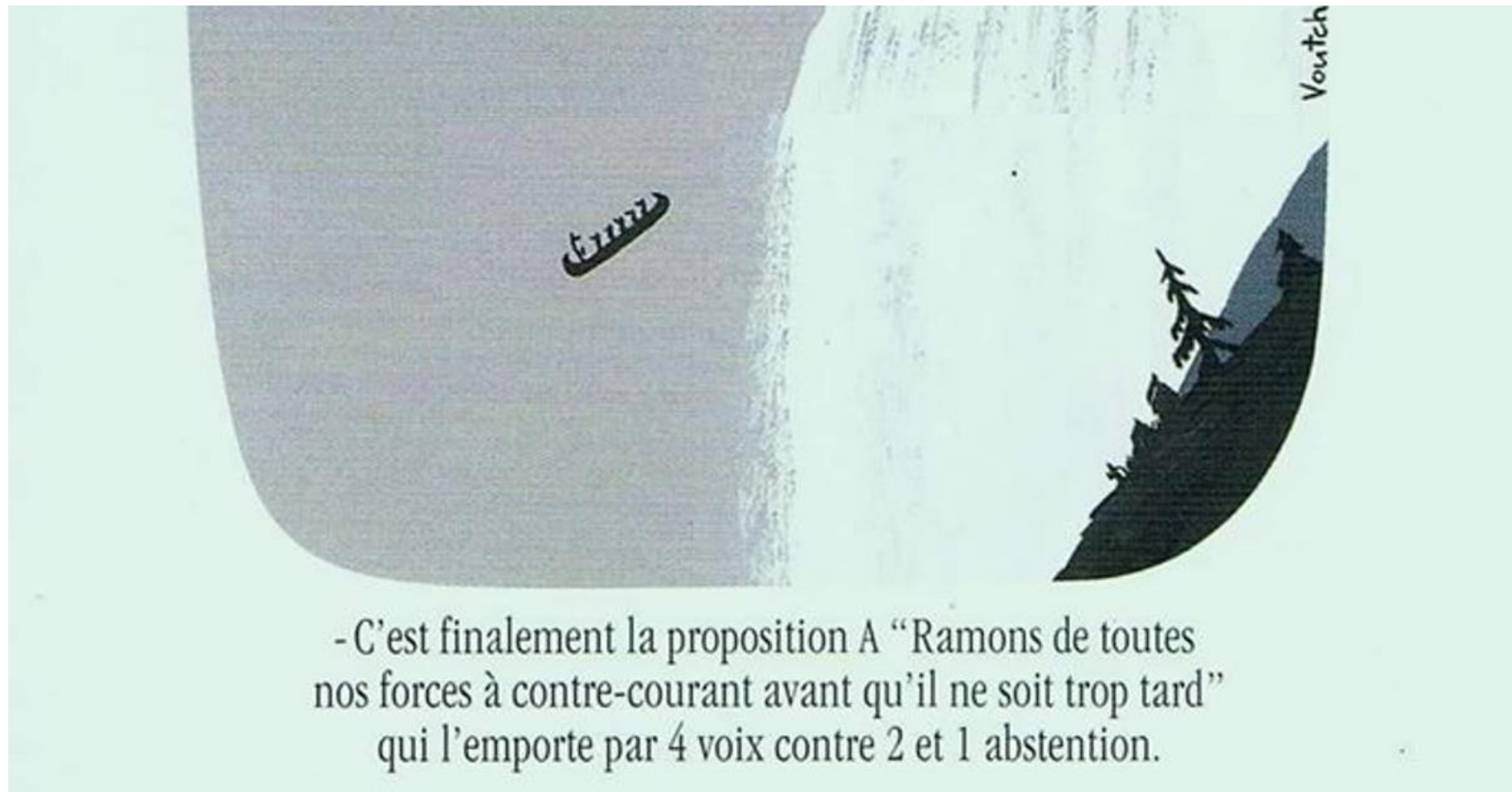


Earth system trends



The three contradictions of democracy

- Material (resources)
- Time (deadlines for action)
- Democracy (what choices do we have?)



The authoritarian tentation and failures

- The authoritarian tentation

- Hans Jonas : A “tyranny by a well-informed and benevolent elite”, unhampered by the need to win elections or protect liberal rights, might coerce self-interested individuals into acting in the collective interest
- James Lovelock : suspend democracy for a certain time

- The authoritarian failures

- In facts, authoritarian regimes are less efficient than democracies in terms of managing the environment
- Action regarding environmental policy making often comes from the mobilization of free citizens in democratic settings
- More often than not, it is about environmental authoritarianism rather than authoritarian environmentalism (Fagan et Oldfield 2022)

2. What are the main pitfalls of existing participatory solutions to the climate crisis?

- Competition between unequals and the anti-climate backlash
- Information and participation biases
- Overly broad agenda and toothless decisions
- Advisory status of participatory institutions

3. What combination of different forms of democracy might work?

- Empower citizens through public information and active *popular* education AND disempower anti-ecological interests
- Retribute (or force) participation to maximize it
- Take time to provide clear and complete information and guarantee a thorough deliberation
- Reduce the scope of decisions to leave little choice to elected representatives
- Combine structural change with symbolic policies
- Win elections