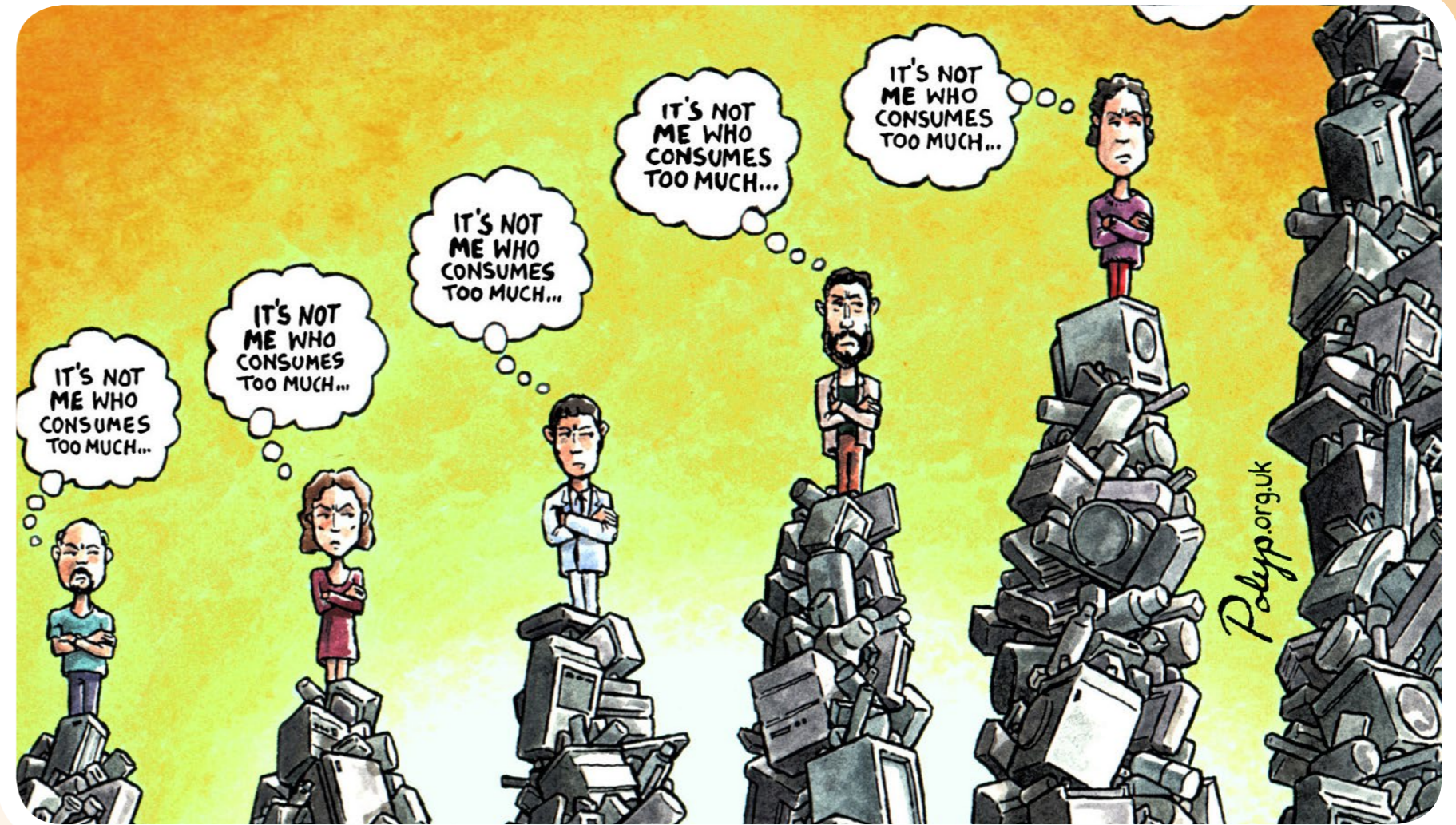


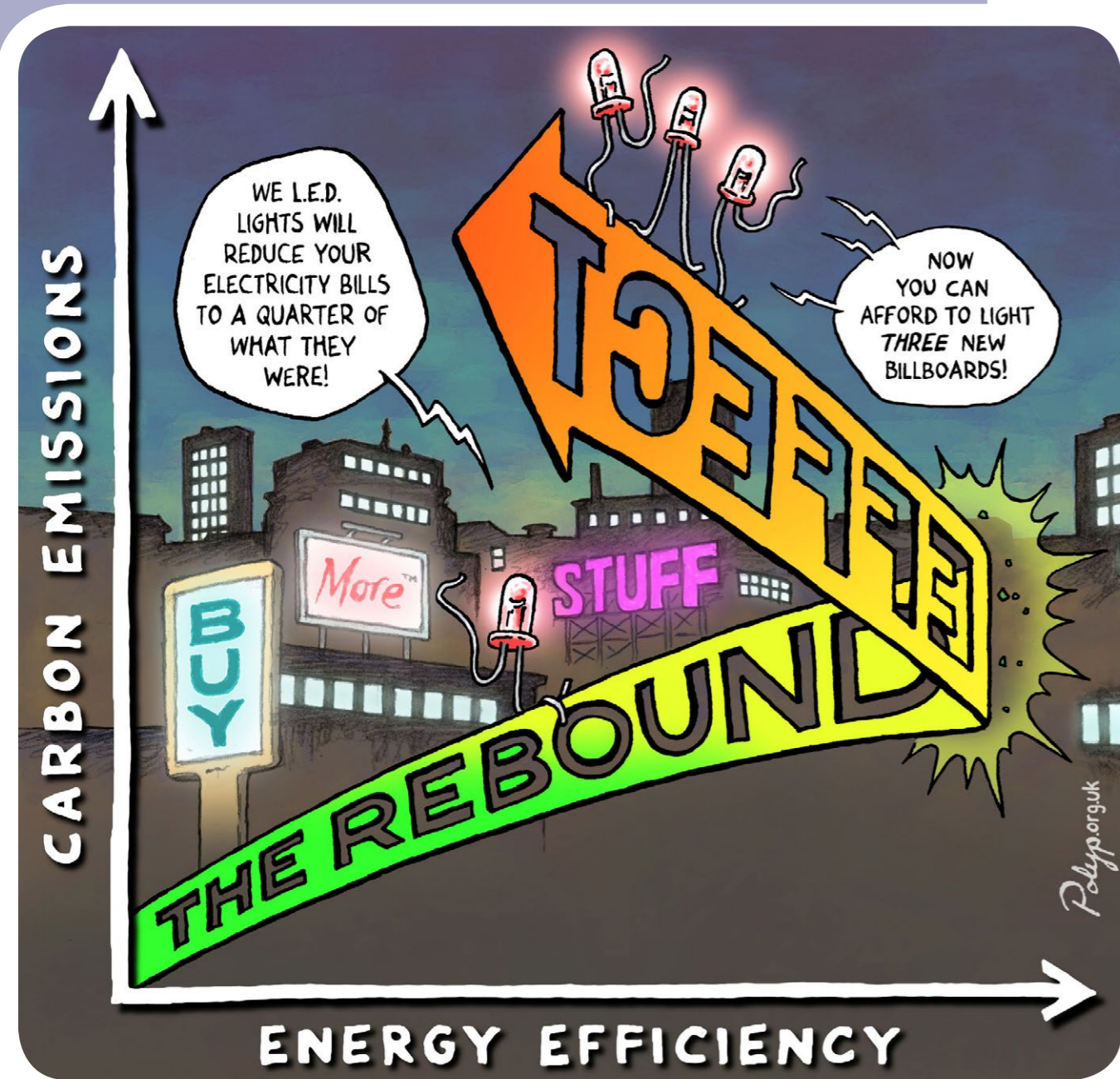
Sustainable Consumption and Social Justice in a Constrained World

How to make it happen ?

We need **sustainable consumption corridors** to simultaneously pursue sustainability and social justice. Such corridors are defined by minimum consumption levels necessary to satisfy an individual's needs (not wants!), as well as the maximum levels that respect the needs of others as well as the planetary boundaries. Within such corridors, individuals are free to design their lives according to their preferences.



One research project on the consumption practices and perceptions of the upper crust demonstrates that even the possession of two dishwashers, plate heating ovens, or multiple refrigerators do not give the sense of excess – as there are always others who consume far more. The interviewees are also reluctant to change their habits, and rather expect others to go first. At the same time these people also seem to be incredibly adaptable if circumstances demand (e.g. a holiday at an off-grid location, moving to a mega city).



Most studies show that efficiency increase has neither reduced environmental impact on a global level – instead most of the environmental pressure has been outsourced to other countries –, nor has it increased wellbeing.

How to
make it
happen
?

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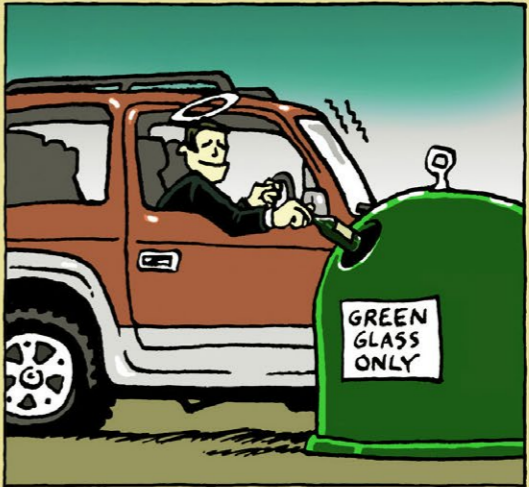
While policy changes have largely focused on increasing efficiency and technological fixes in the past, the effectiveness of this approach is doubtful. The real question is to what extent can increases in efficiency help solve the problem? Even though most estimations show that globally there is a need to reduce our material footprint and greenhouse gas emissions **by 80% before 2050, the results from efficiency gain do not come up to that level.**

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How to make it happen ?

Environmental awareness in consumption is easily subordinated by the lack of access or lock-in to modes of available options (also called a speedwalk effect), while people are driven by ideologies (like the freedom of choice), and the power of advertisement. This means that **environmental awareness raising is not enough**, but a **review of the choice architecture and infrastructure is needed**, together with changes in the societal value system, for instance on what contributes to wellbeing, and what to social status only.

ORDINARY CONSUMER	GREEN CONSUMER
Rarely goes on holiday	Goes on holiday abroad
Buys less things	Buys more (green) goods
Travels by bus	Drives a hybridelectric
Lights heats and cools a small home inefficiently	Operates a much bigger home very efficiently
Does not recycle	Recycles most things

	
FOOTPRINT-CO ₂	FOOTPRINT-CO ₂

Polyp.org.uk

Research among Hungarian consumers shows that there is no significant difference between the carbon footprint of green consumers, who have on average higher income with more energy use and higher mobility, and uninterested consumers.



Research shows that low mental wellness is linked to consumerism and materialist values. On the other hand, less social polarisation can be expected to be positively correlated with better population health and educational performance, greater trust, and less mental illness, violence and obesity. It is this broader context, which provides self-interest motives for sustainable consumption for society at large.

How to
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Sustainable consumption and a good life are only possible in a “good” society. This means things such as having good work, reducing inequalities within the society, having access to services and infrastructures and promoting non-material needs of self realisation.

Sustainable Consumption and Social Justice

in a Constrained World

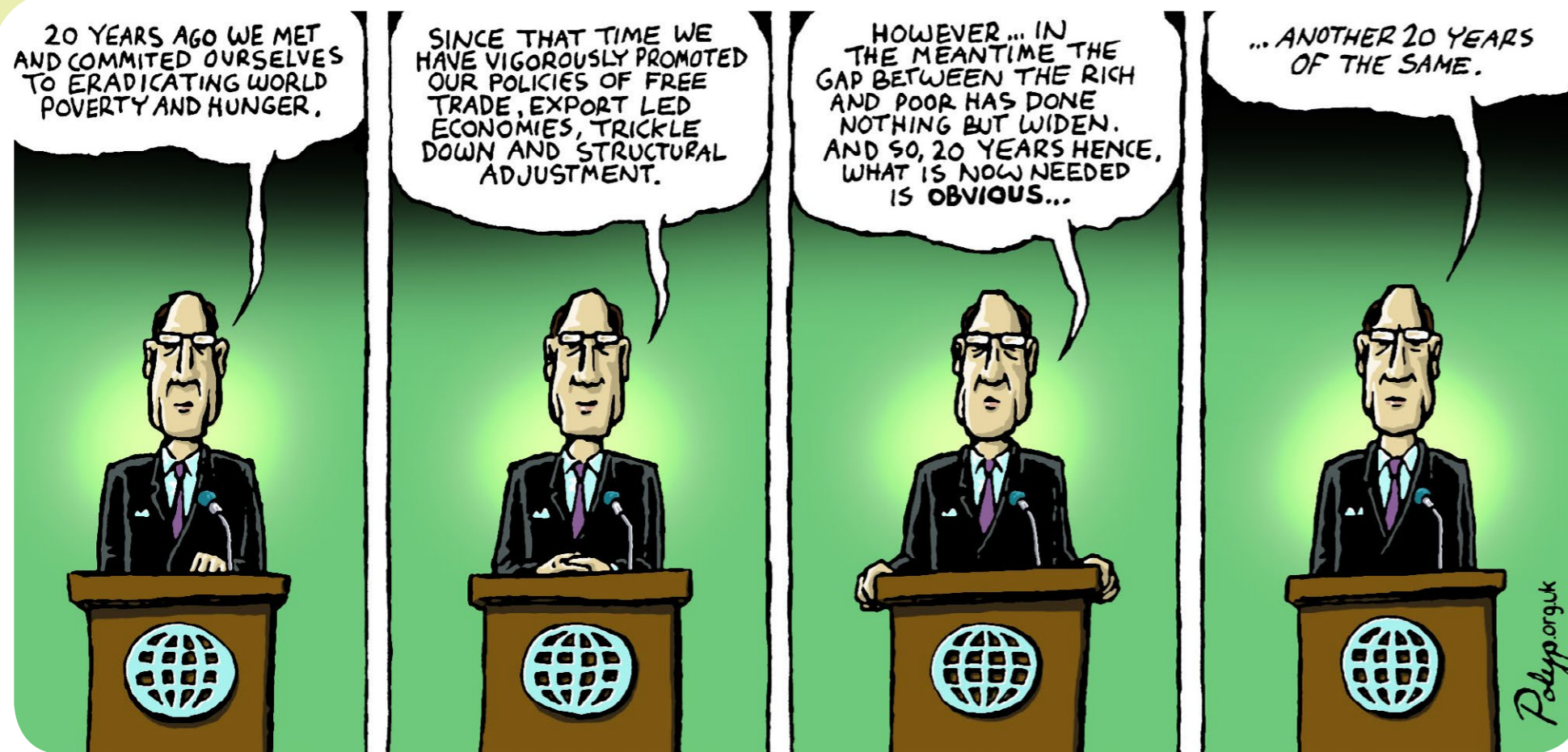
How to make it happen?



Achieving a good life and sustainable consumption in a good society requires far reaching changes, going well beyond the usual actions on environmental awareness raising and increasing efficiency.

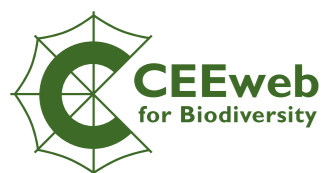
Sustainable consumption corridors can be put into practice through policy mixes like the **European Energy Budget Scheme**, **capping inheritance and income**, and **providing basic income** for everybody to meet their needs.

Introducing targets for absolute reductions can help to develop a global strategy of reduction and convergence on a sustainable level of per capita material and energy use and emissions, while realising the Sustainable Development Goals.



These findings are highlights from a workshop organised by SCORAI Europe, the Resource Cap Coalition and the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary, 29-30 August 2016, Budapest

Please also read the [full proceedings of the workshop](#)



This leaflet is produced with the financial assistance of the European Union within the project “Time for change: Promoting sustainable consumption and production of raw materials in the context of EYD 2015 and beyond”. The contents of this leaflet are the sole responsibility of the authors and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

How to make it happen ?

Sustainable Consumption and Social Justice in a Constrained World

We need to challenge assumptions.

We need to leave our comfort zones.

We need individual and social imaginary for building a good society.