

# Lecture 02

## Market Failures

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Ivan Rudik  
AEM 4510

# Roadmap

- What are market failures?
- When do they happen?
- What are the consequences?

# Market failures and the environment

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# The ideal world

In the best case scenario, a market equilibrium leads to the efficient allocation

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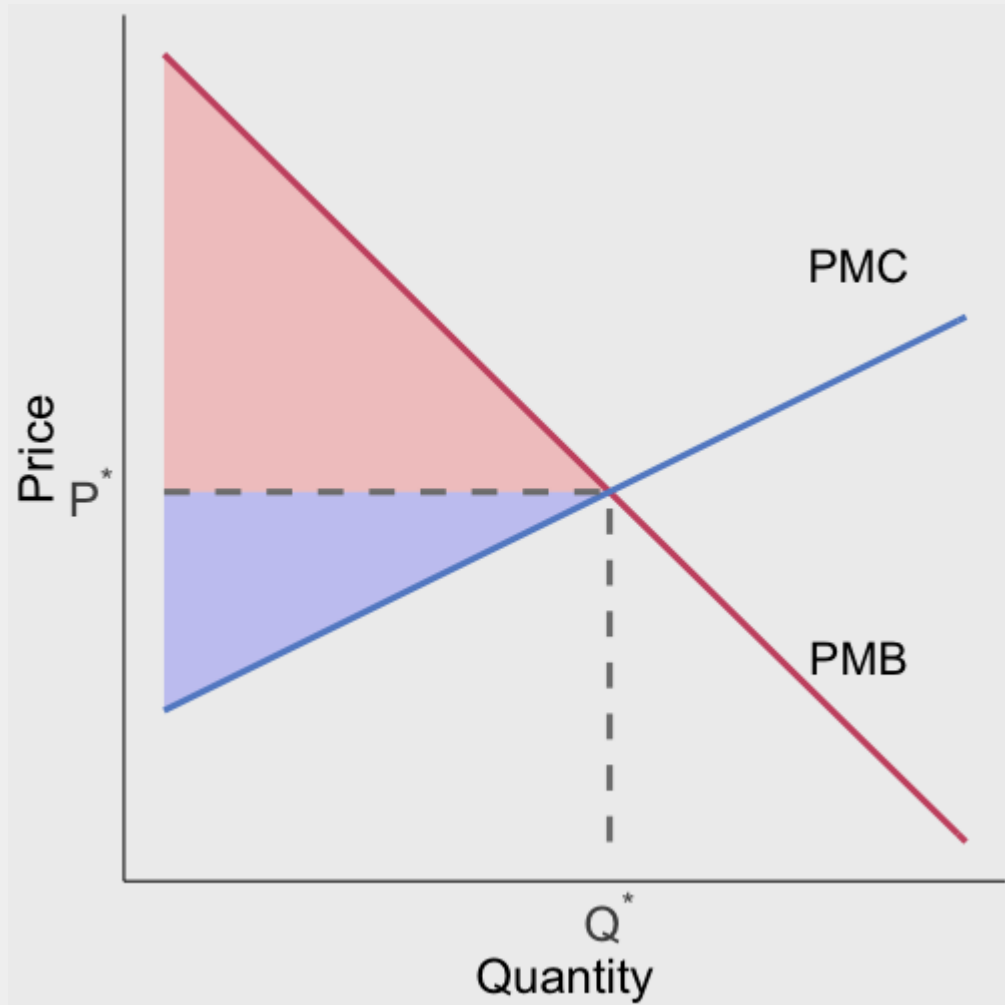
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# Market equilibrium

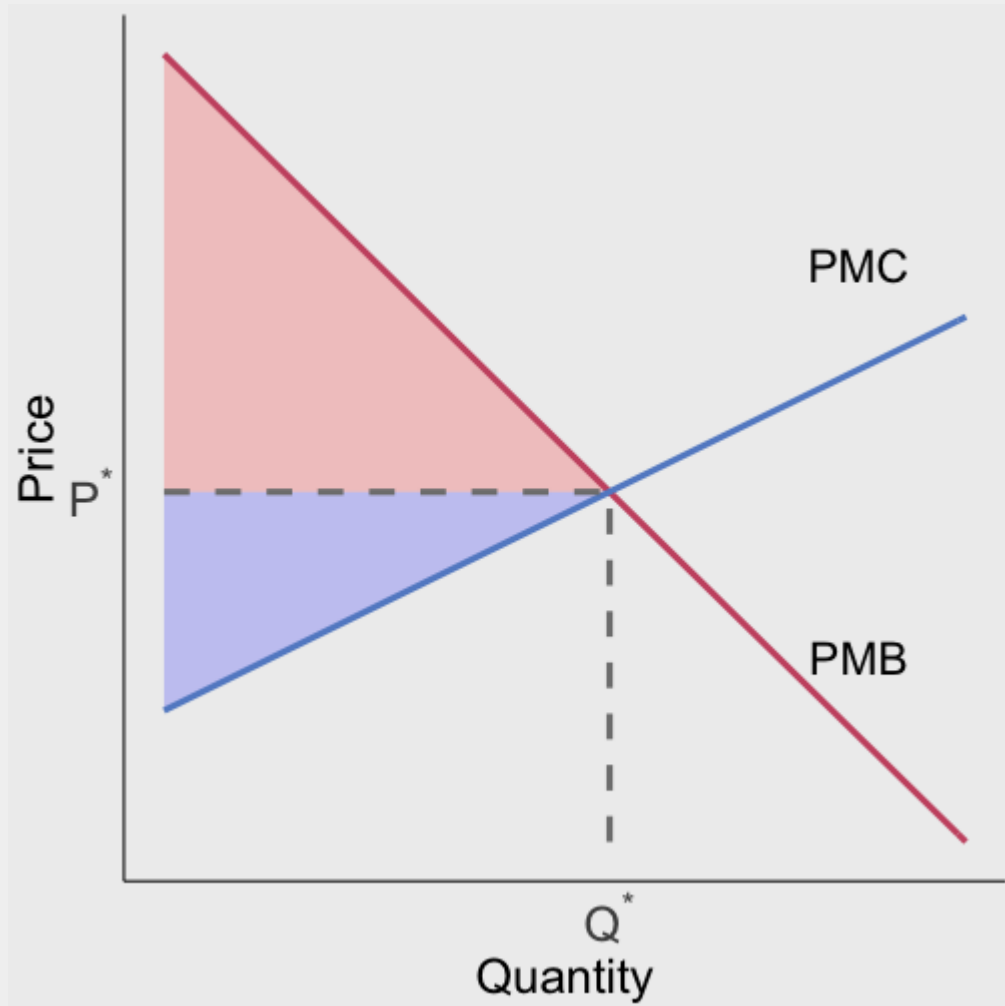


**Consumer surplus** is the difference between willingness to pay (demand) and price

**Producer surplus** is the difference between price and marginal cost (supply)

**Total surplus** is the sum of CS and PS

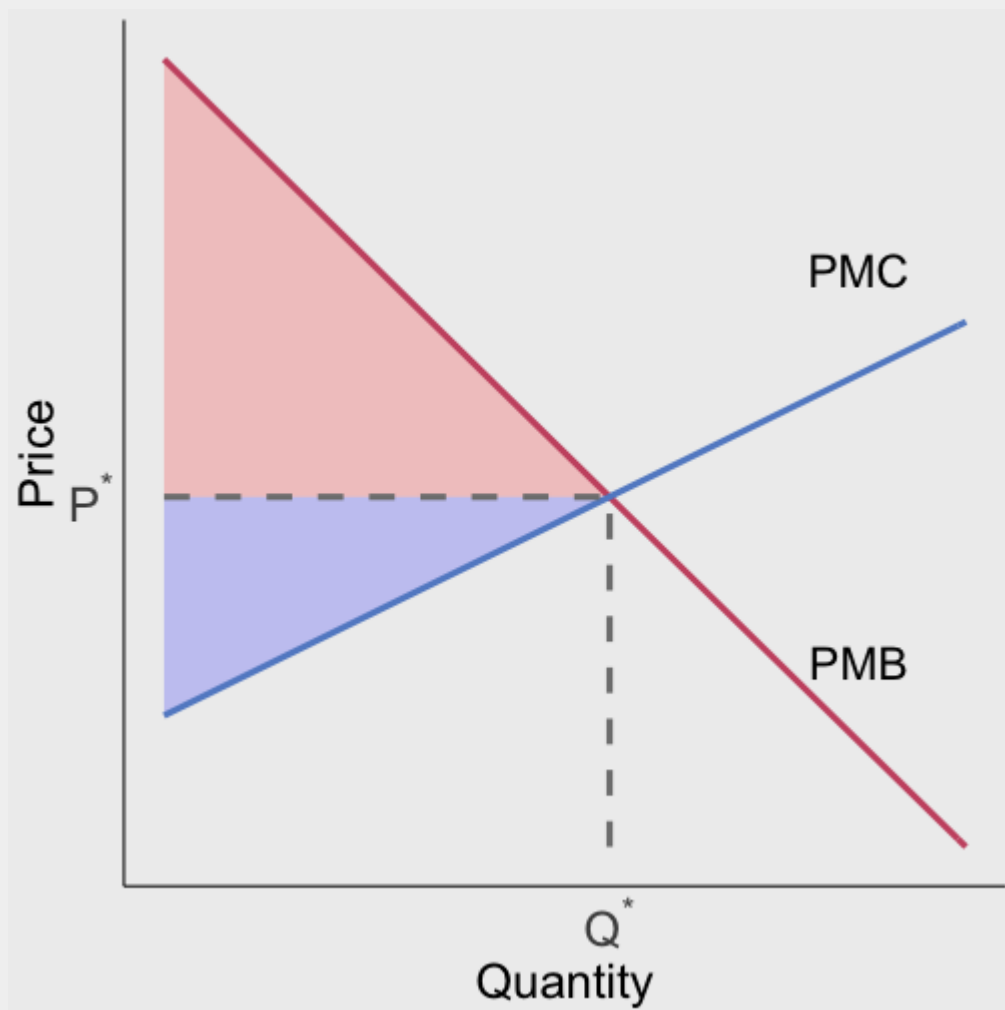
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What does this mean about the market allocation?

# Market equilibrium

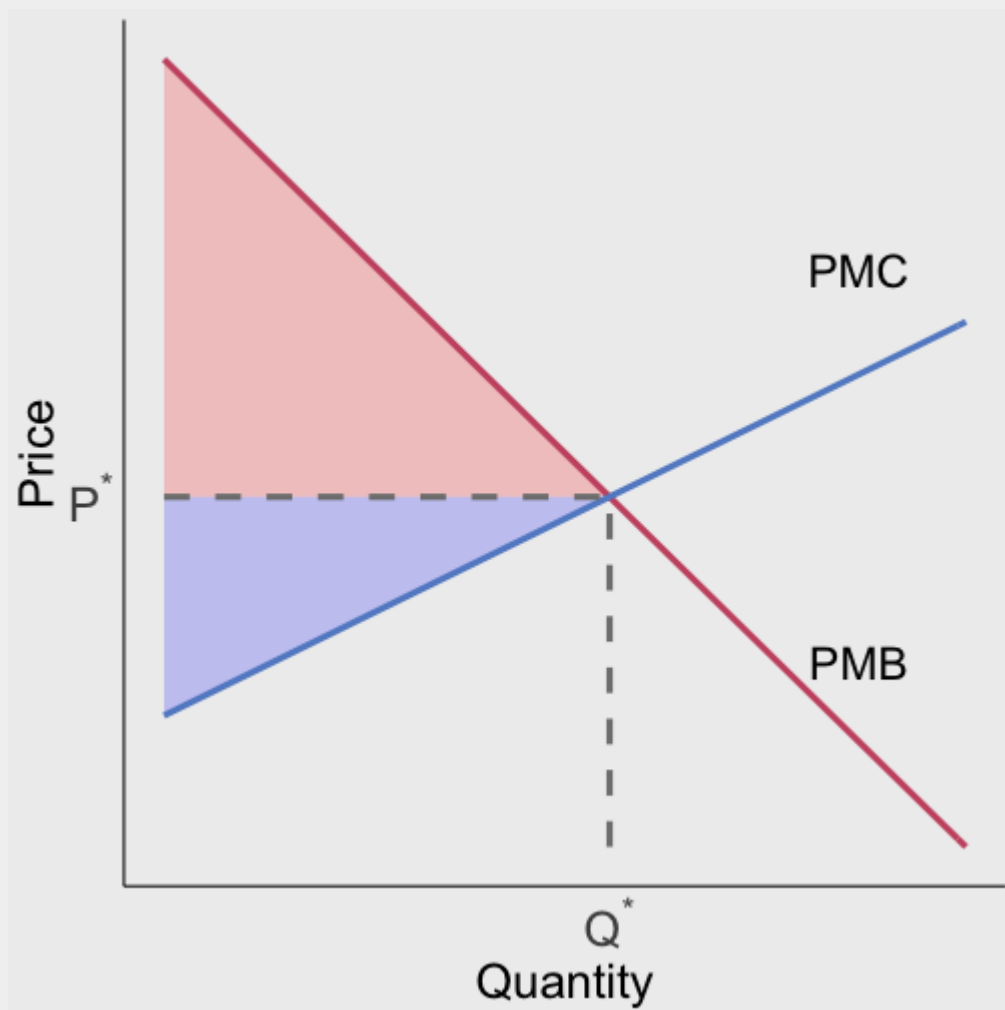


The market allocation is **efficient**  
because  $SMC = SMB$

Why?

Consider deviating from  $(P^*, Q^*)$

# Market equilibrium



Cost of next unit after  $Q^* >$  benefit

Benefit of last unit  $\geq$  cost of last unit

Competitive market allocations are efficient for private goods

# Externalities

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In the real world we have **externalities**

An externality exists whenever an individual or firm undertakes an action that impacts another individual or firm in an unintended way for which the latter is not compensated (a negative externality), or for which the latter does not pay (a positive externality)

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Markets rely on prices to reflect value and have people make good decisions



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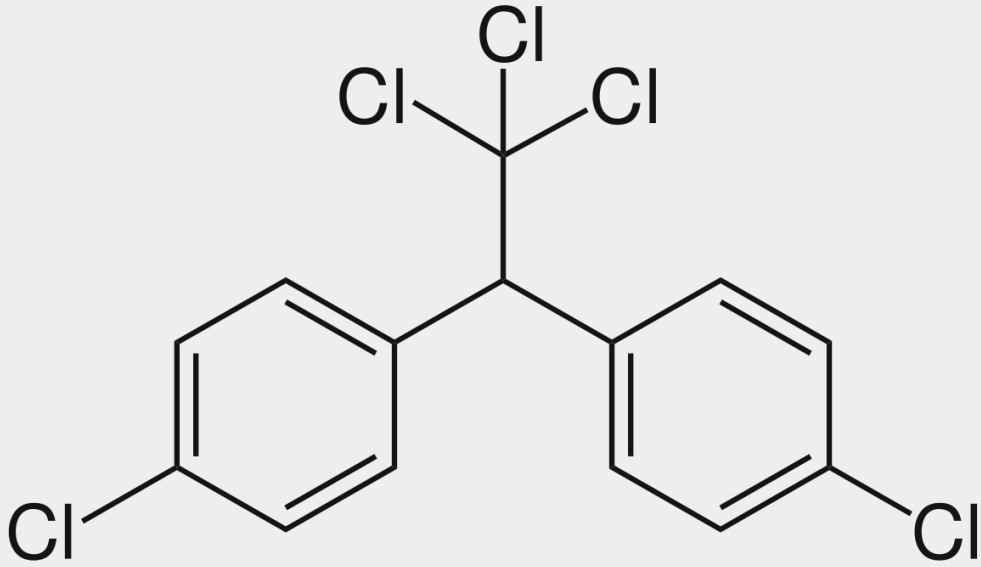
**Negative externalities:** imposes external **costs** (e.g. pollution)

**Positive externalities:** imposes external **benefits** (e.g. vaccination)

# Negative externalities: what is this?



# Negative externalities: DDT, shockingly bad for you

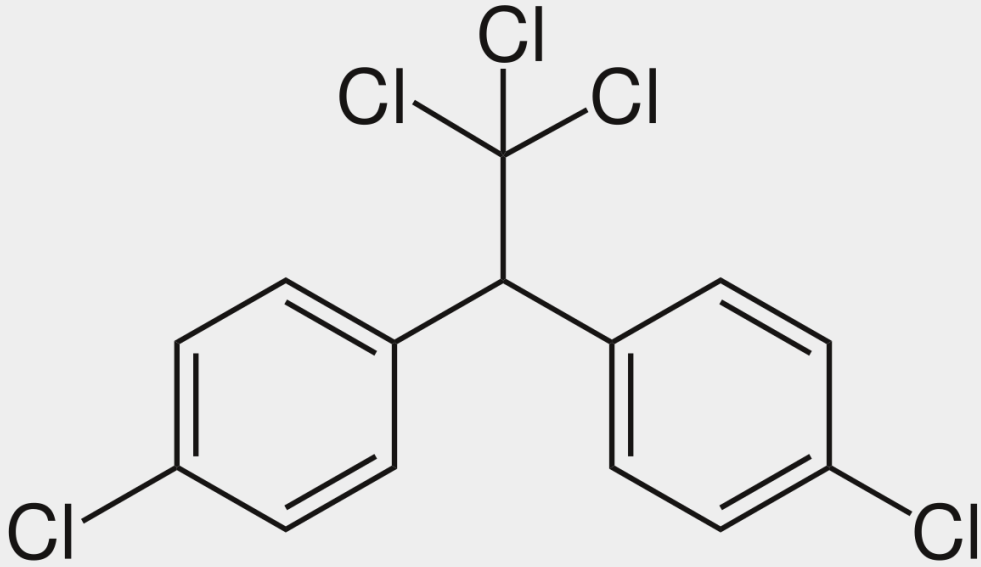


DDT is a chemical that was widely used as an insecticide in the early-mid 1900s

Widely used to eradicate Typhus and Malaria

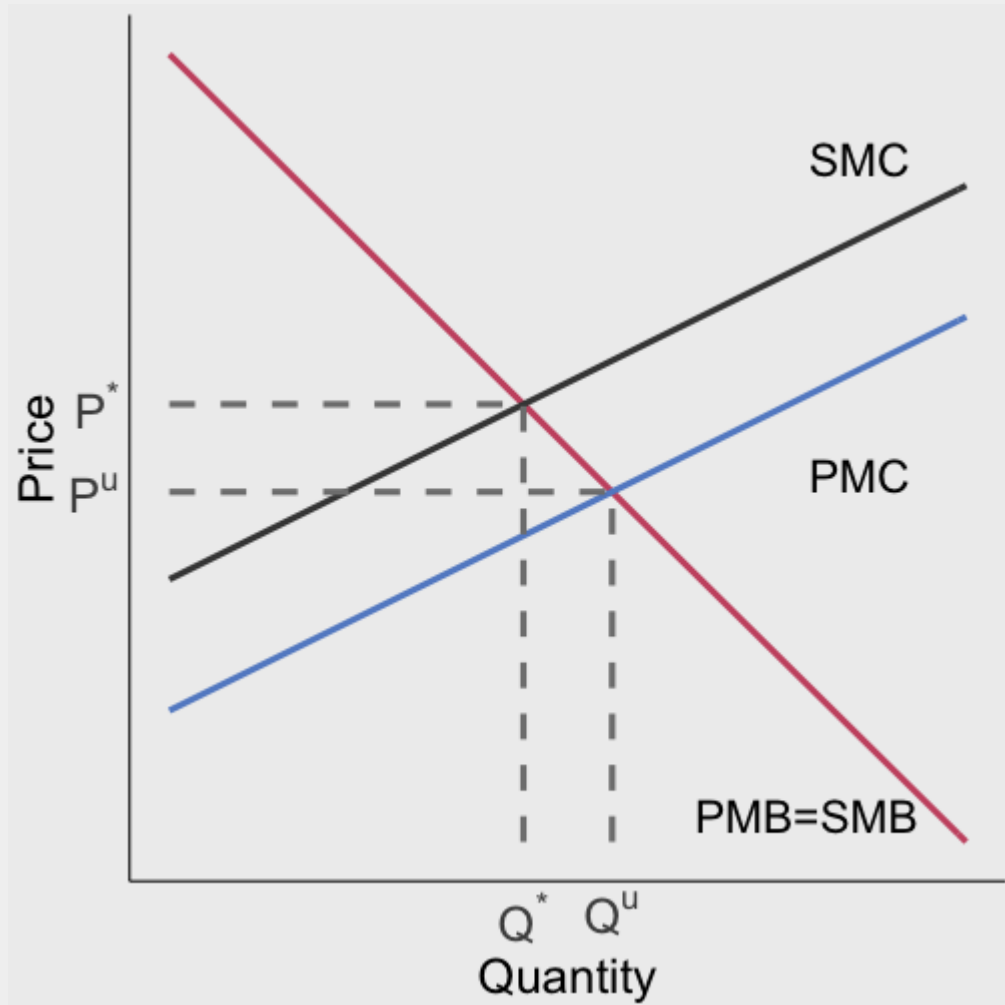
Used to treat lice

# Negative externalities: DDT, gives you cancer



A relationship between DDT exposure and reproductive effects in humans is suspected, based on studies in animals. In addition, some animals exposed to DDT in studies developed liver tumors. As a result, today, DDT is classified as a probable human carcinogen.

# Negative externalities: graphical

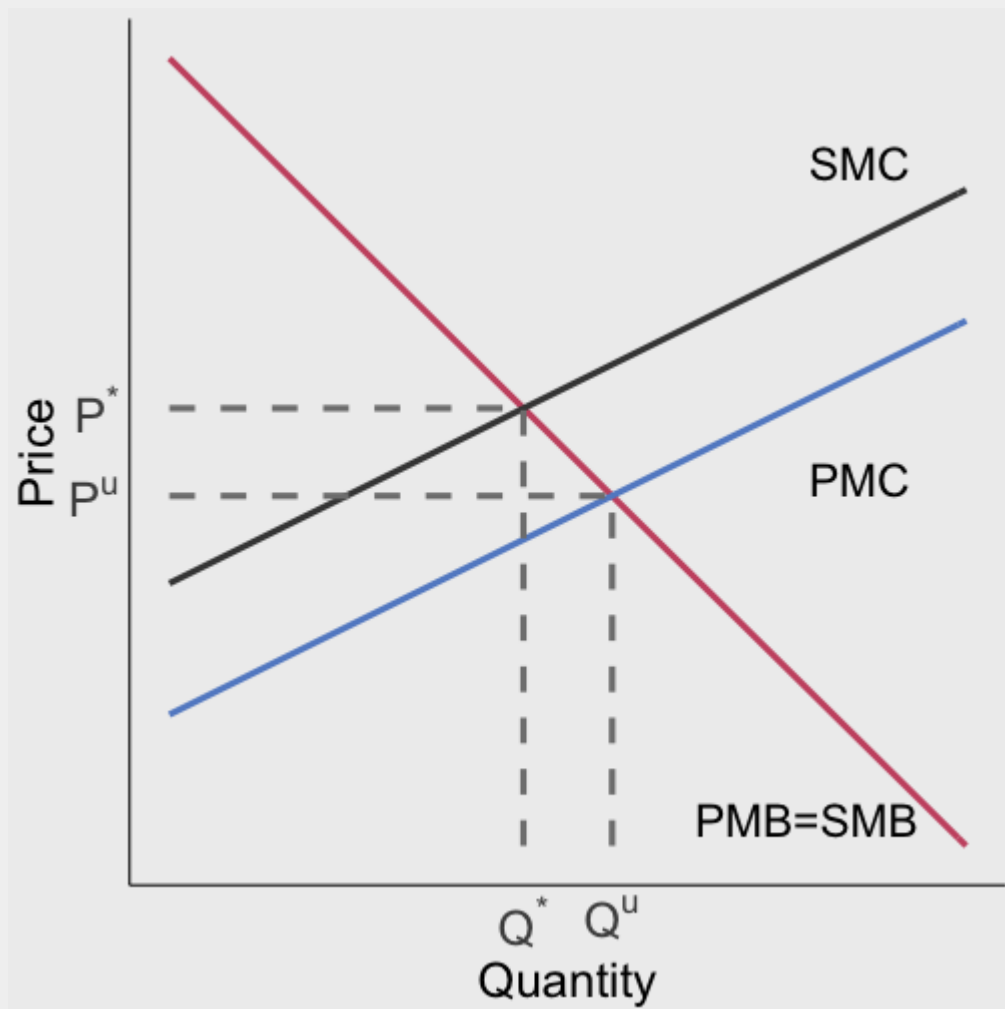


**Social marginal cost (SMC)** is the sum of private marginal cost (PMC) and the external marginal cost (EMC)

The PMC curve only reflects the **private costs** of making the DTT

It does not account for the external health and wildlife costs

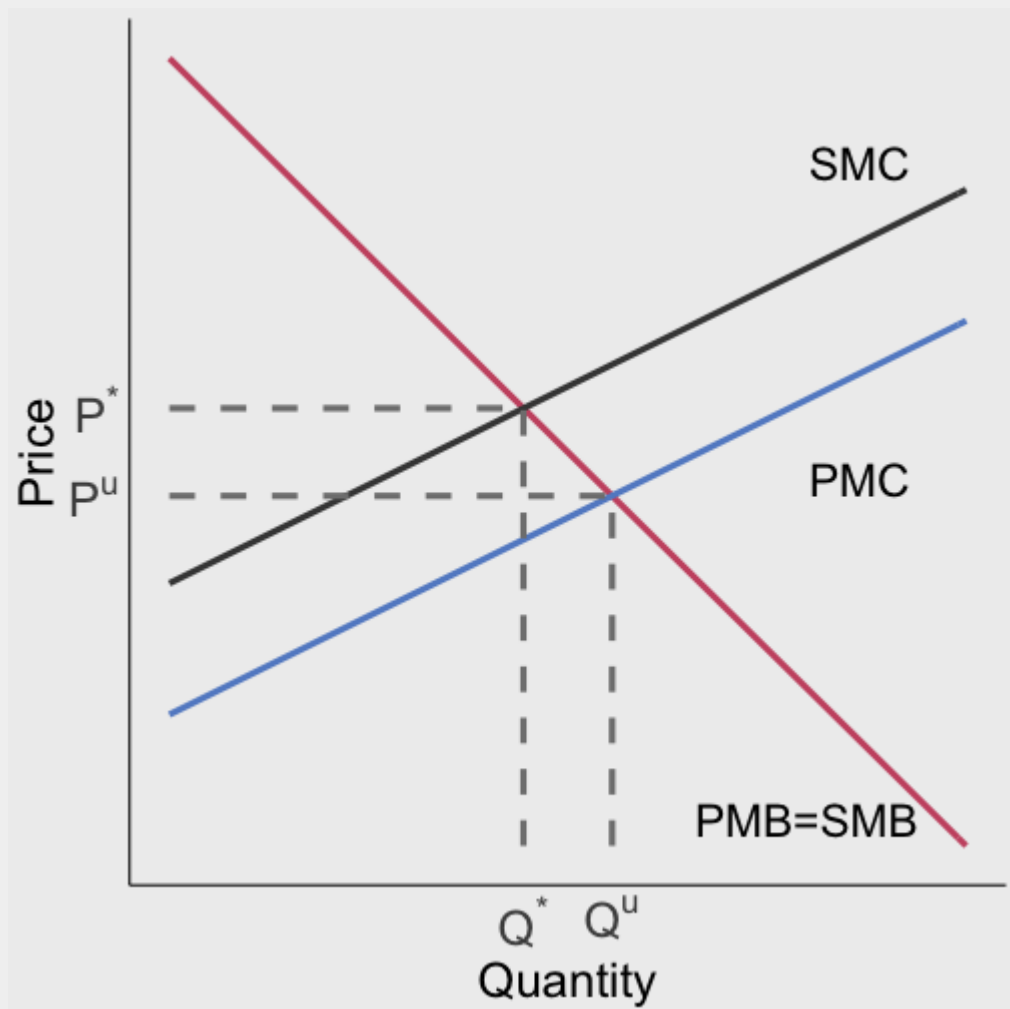
# Negative externalities: graphical



Adding the private and external marginal costs together gives us the SMC, what we care about from the social planner or regulator's perspective



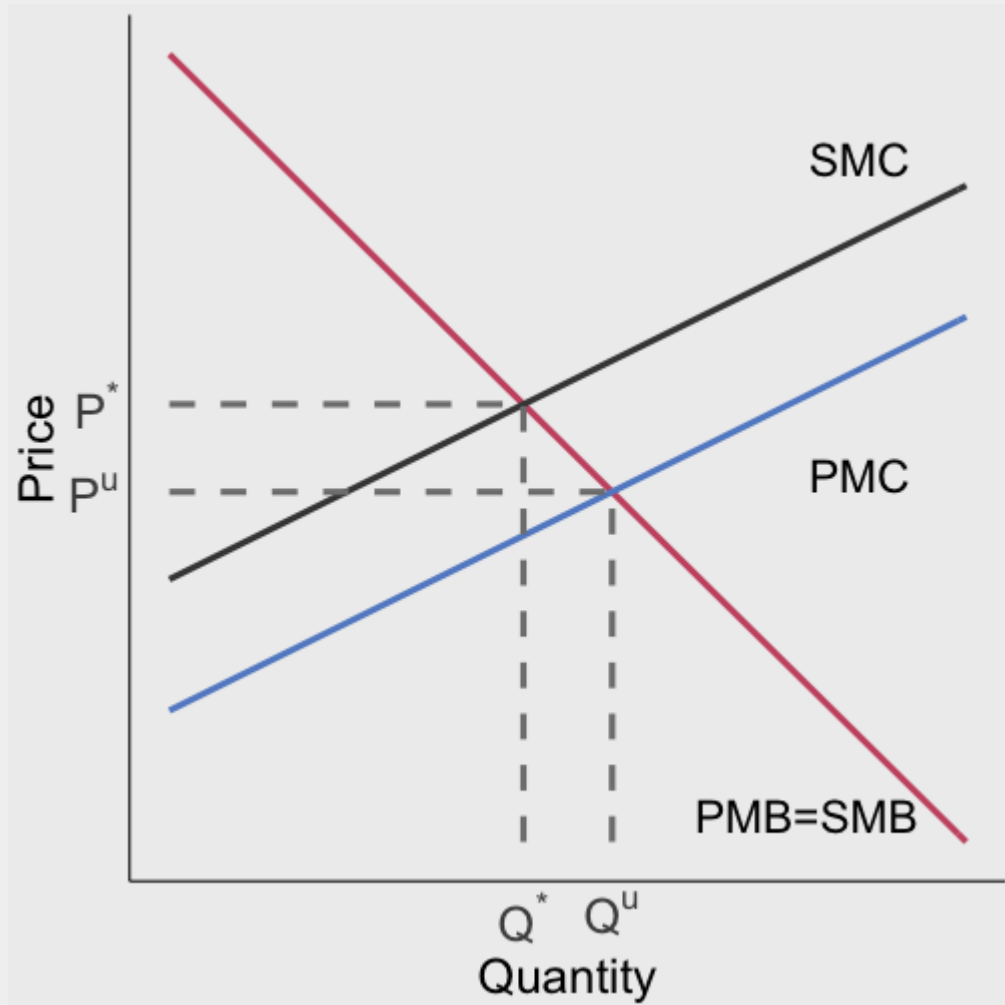
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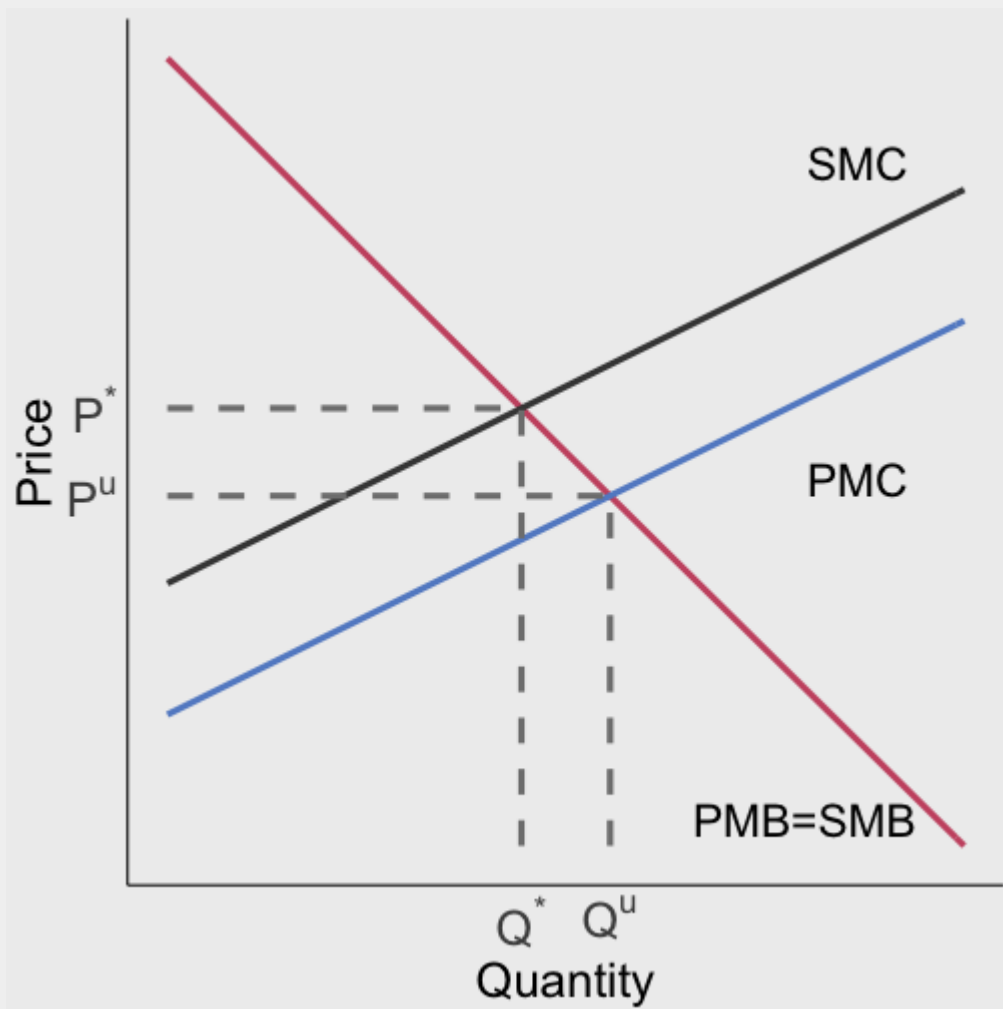
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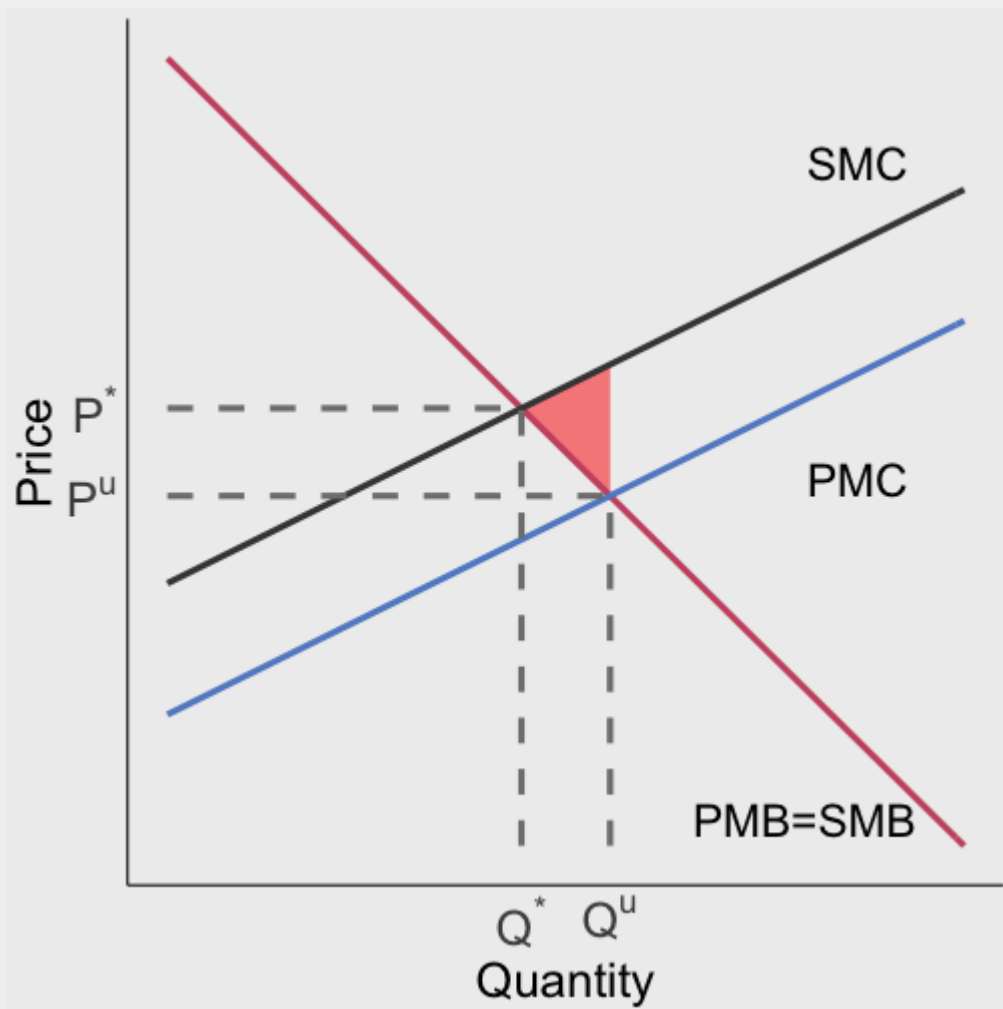


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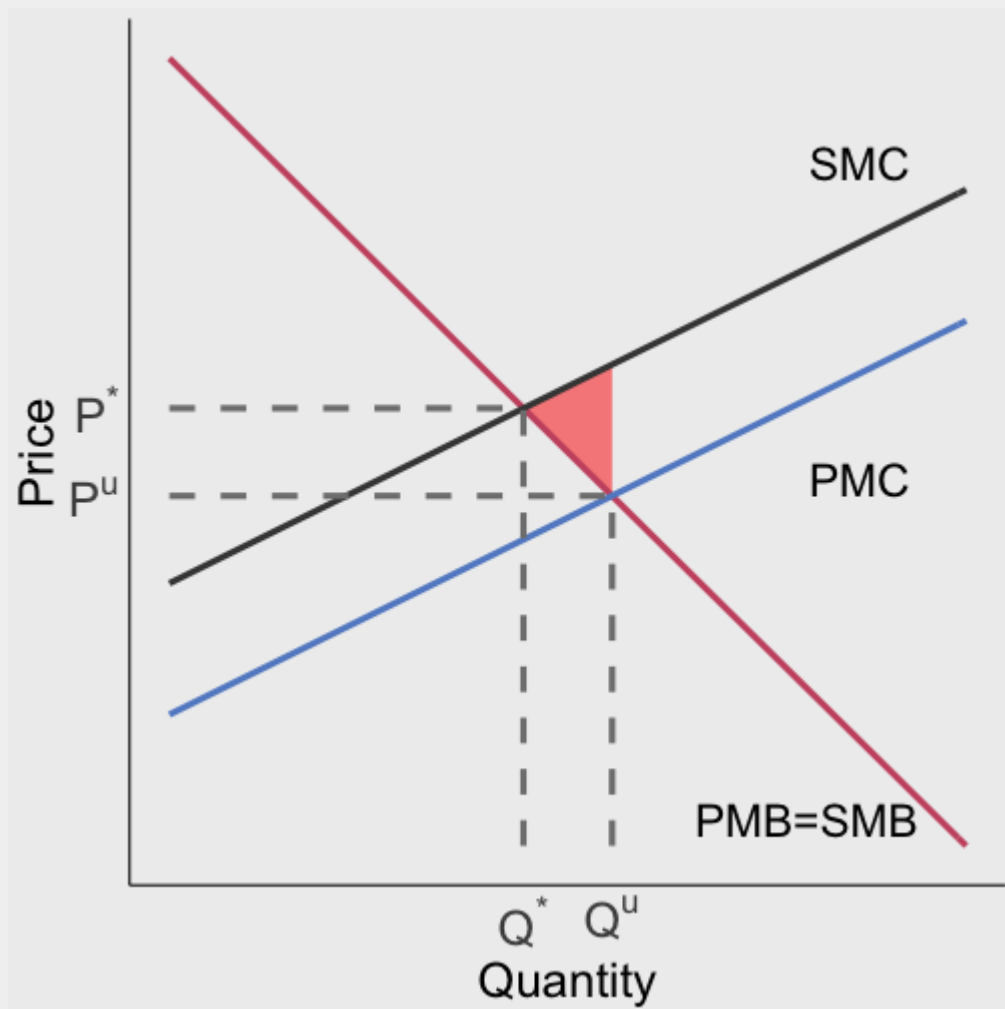
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Negative externalities generate deadweight loss equal to the **red** area

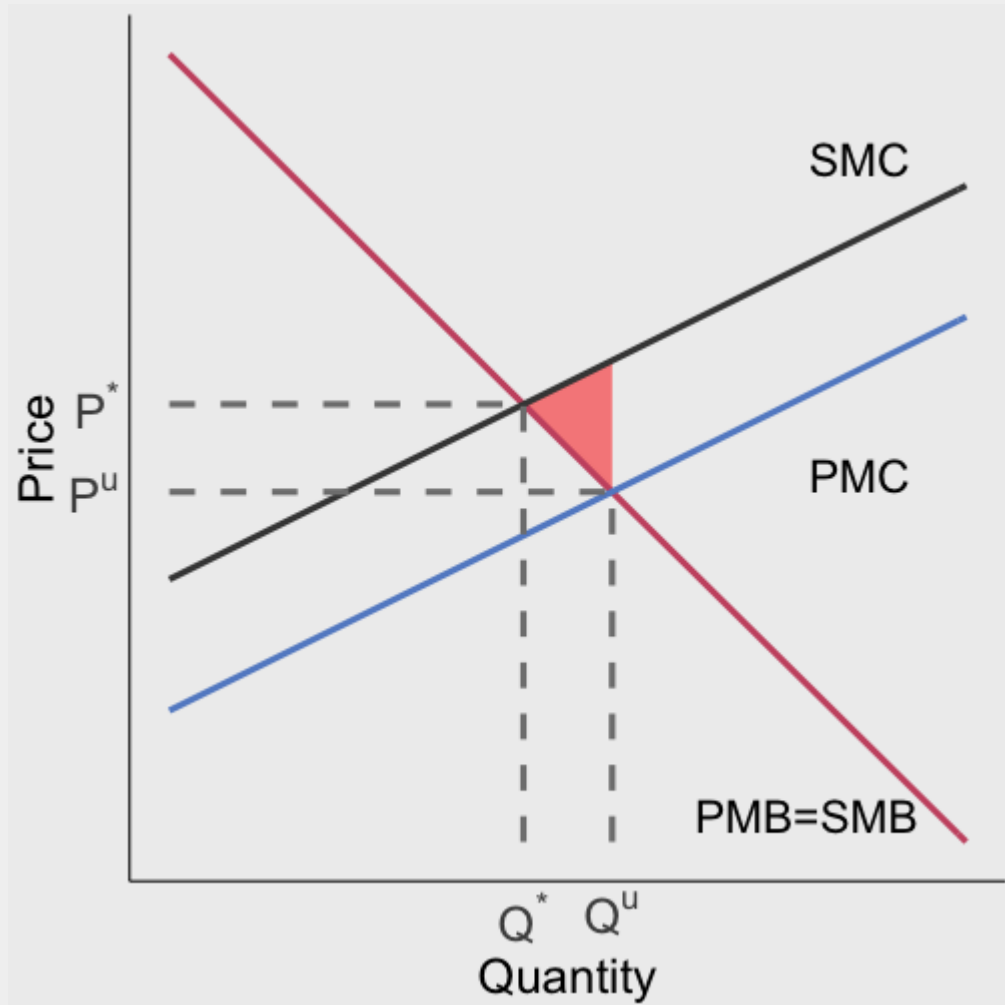
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This is the difference in SMC and SMB for units bought/sold where  $SMC > SMB$

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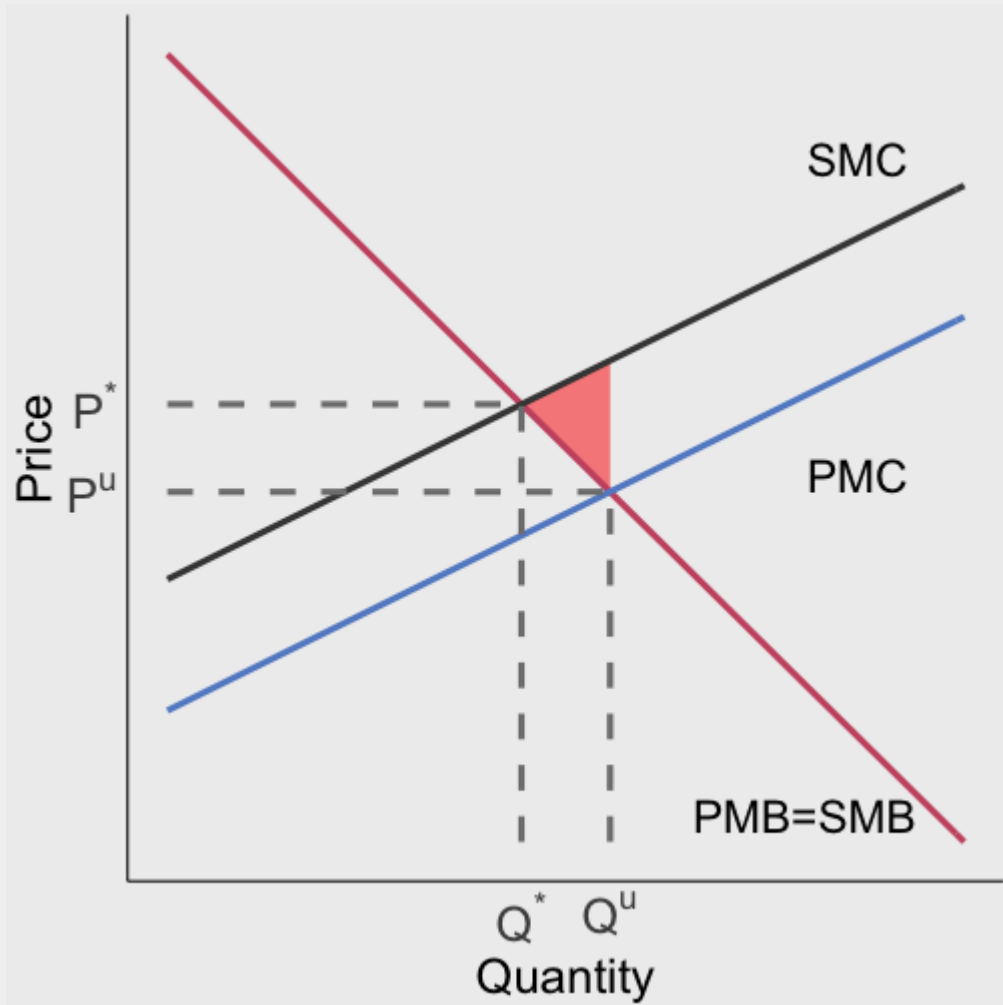


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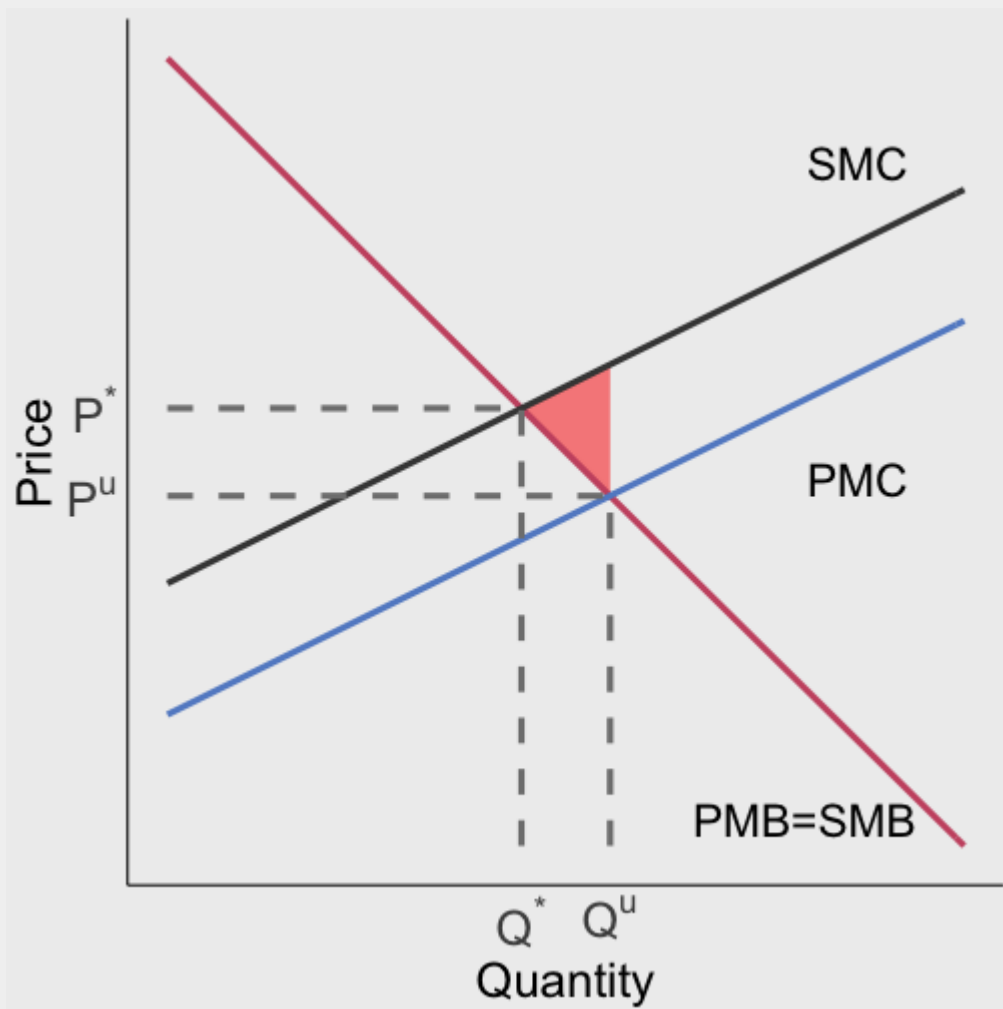
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Key takeaway:

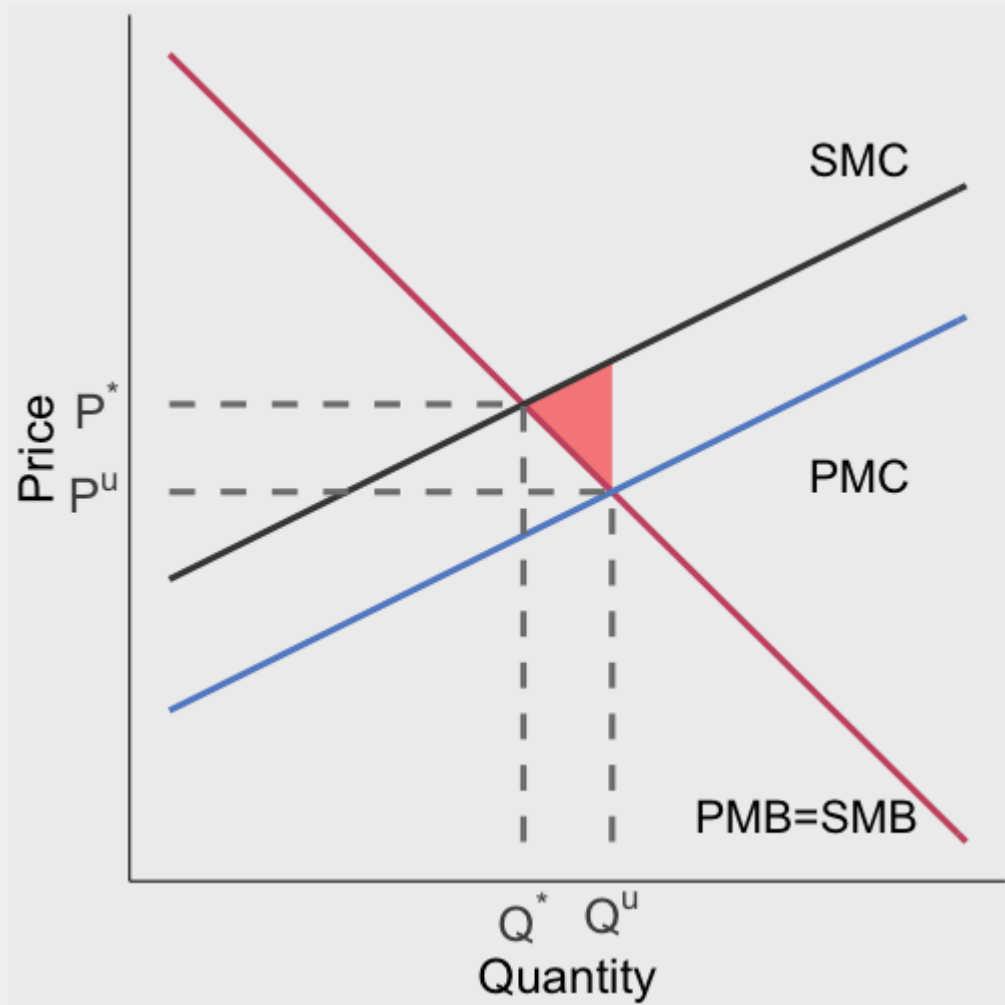
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The private actors are not accounting for the **external costs** they are imposing on people who are not in the DDT transaction (e.g. third parties whose health is being affected)

# The birth of the environmental movement



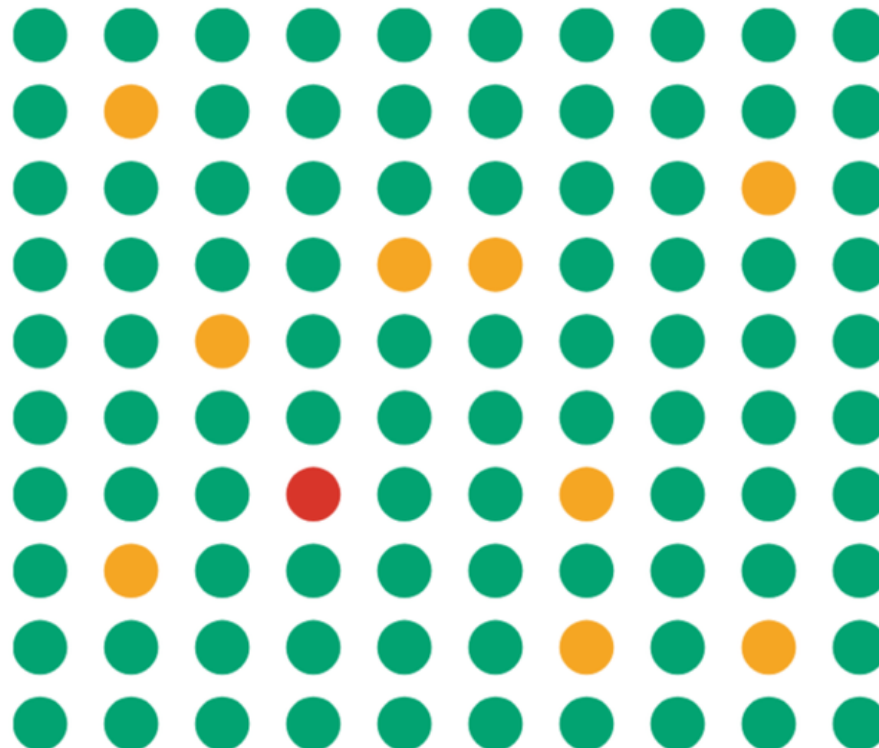


# Positive externalities

## Visualizing herd immunity

If enough people have immunity, the virus is less likely to spread because the few who aren't immune are less likely to come in contact with someone who is infected.

■ Immune ■ Not immune ■ Infected



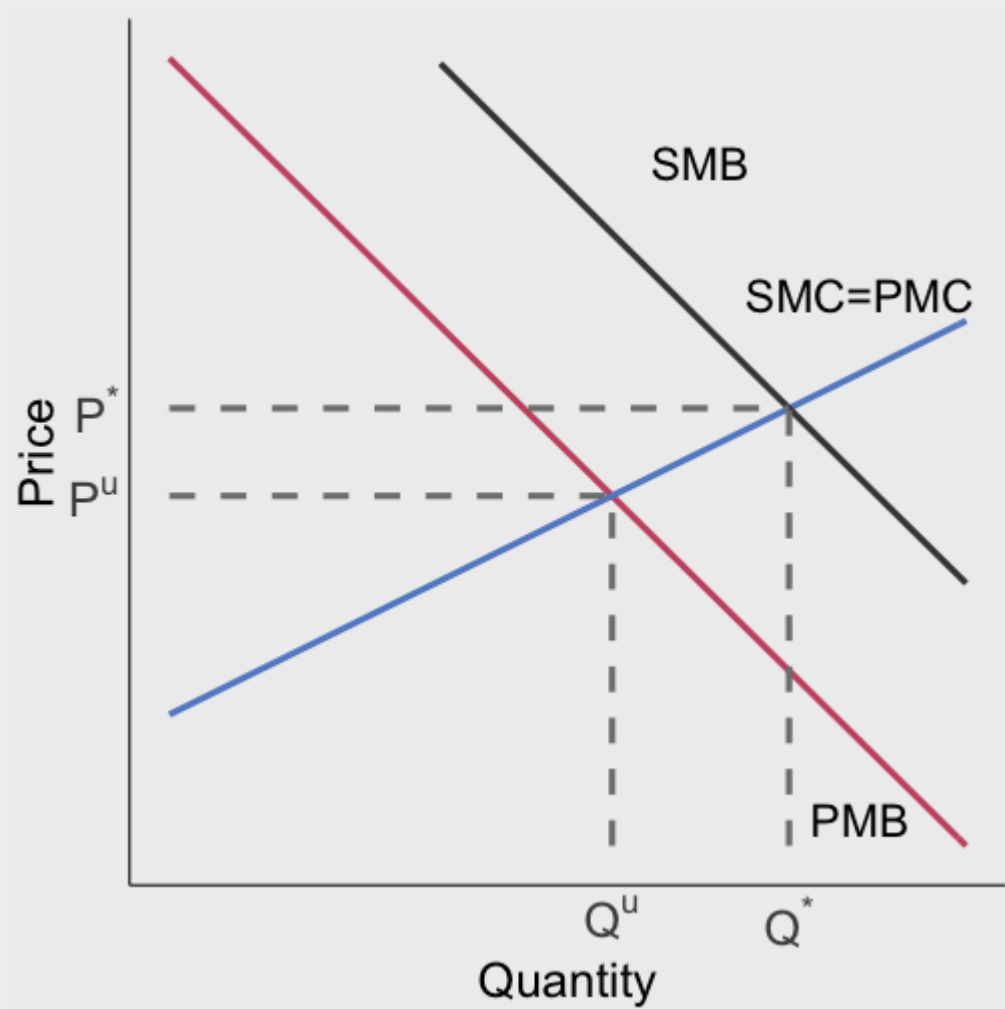
# Positive externalities



Vaccines and masks are examples of good with positive externalities

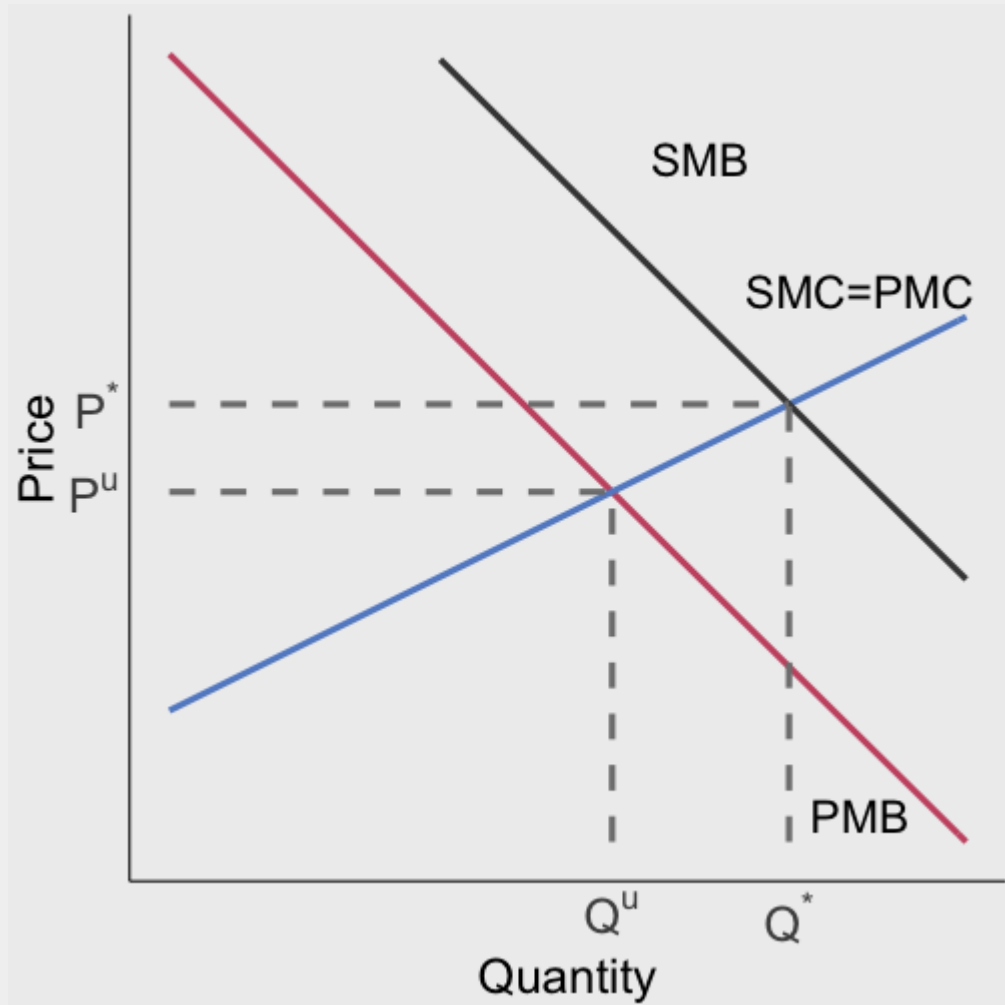
You getting or using them has benefits for other people not involved in your vaccine or mask transaction

# Positive externalities: graphical



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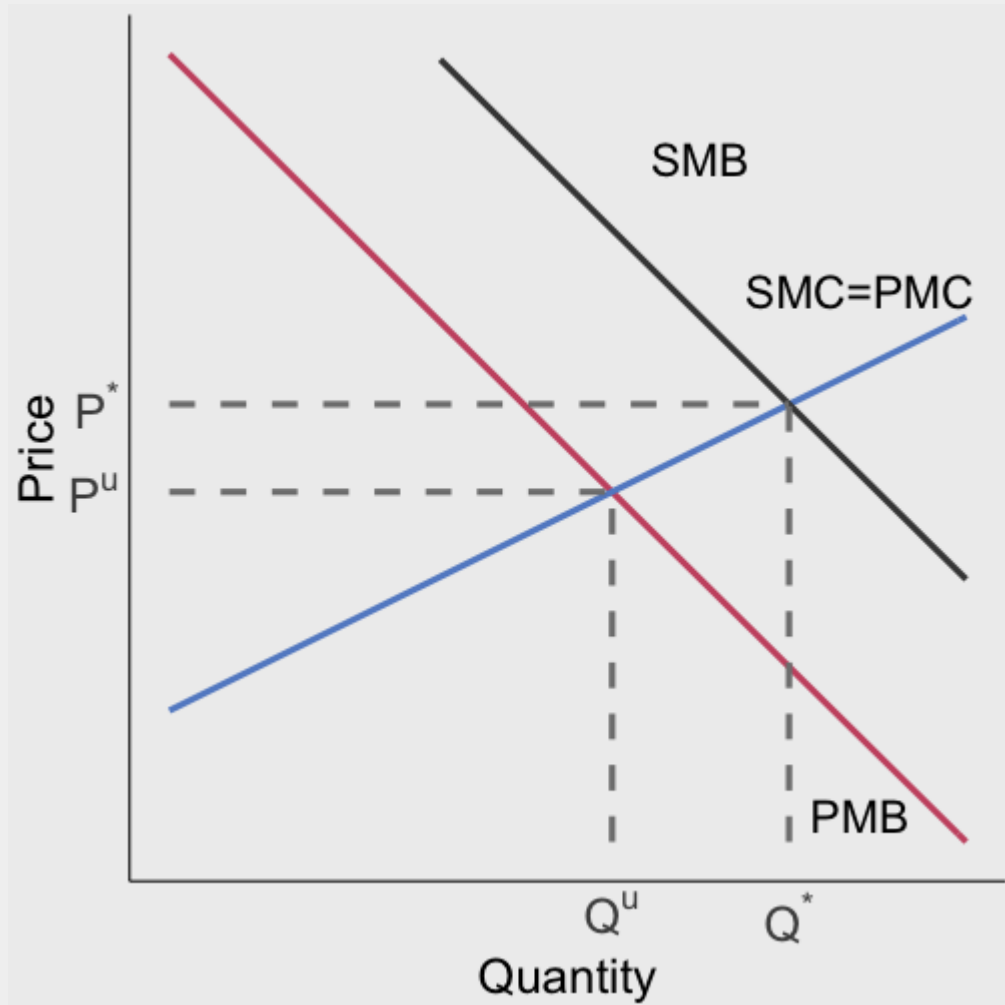
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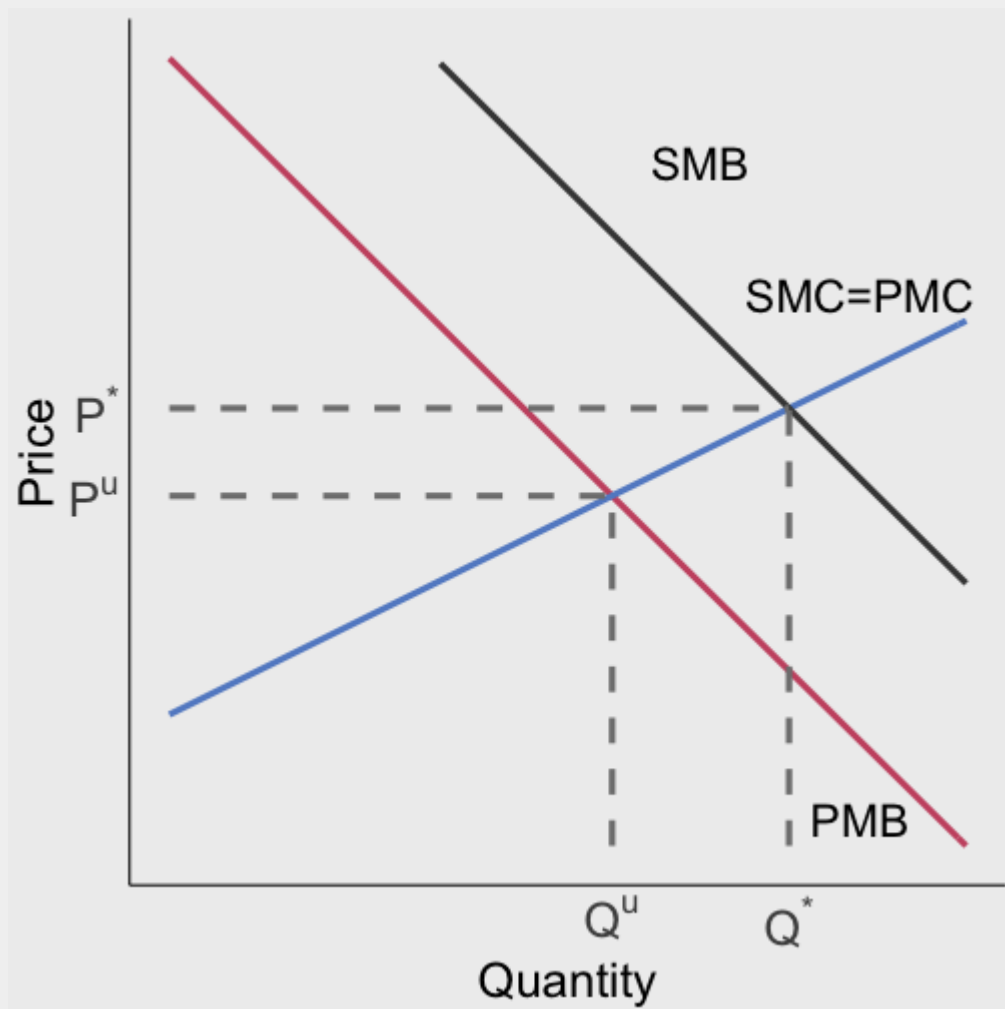


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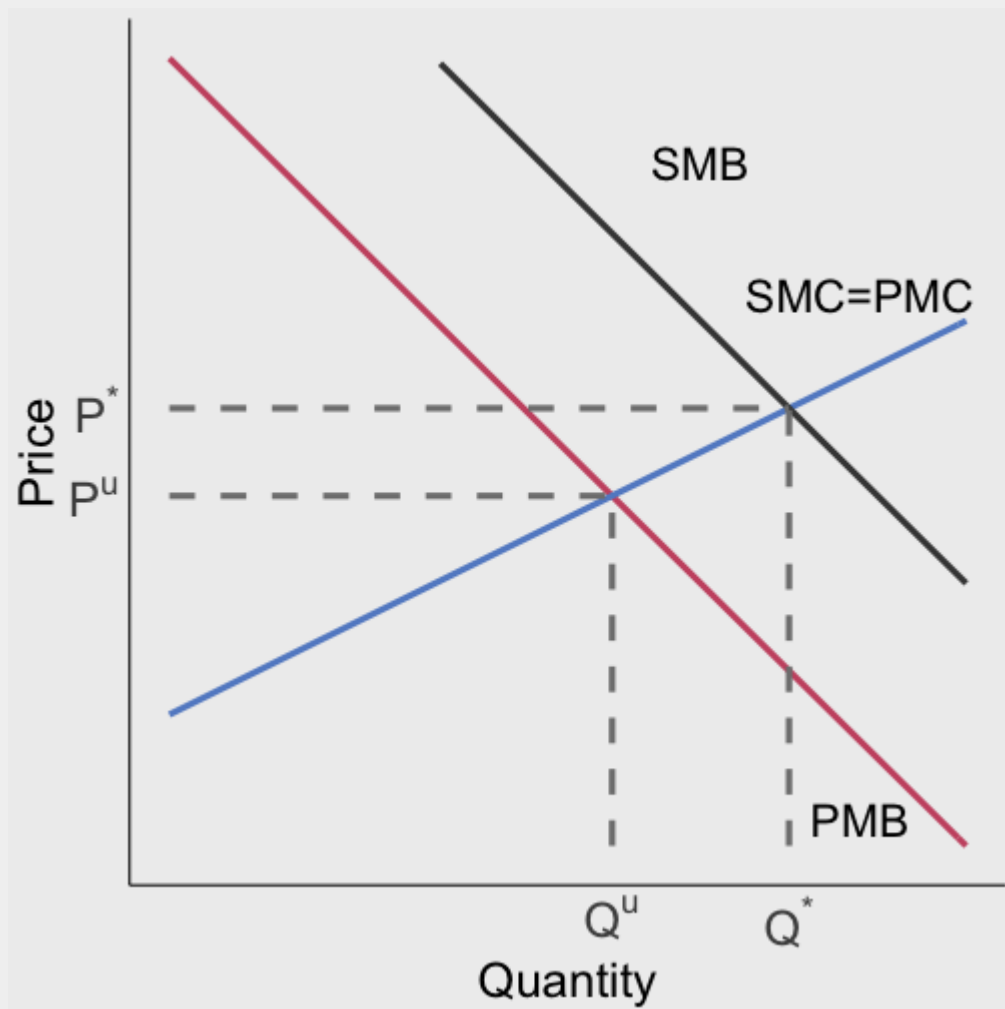
It does not account for the external herd immunity benefits

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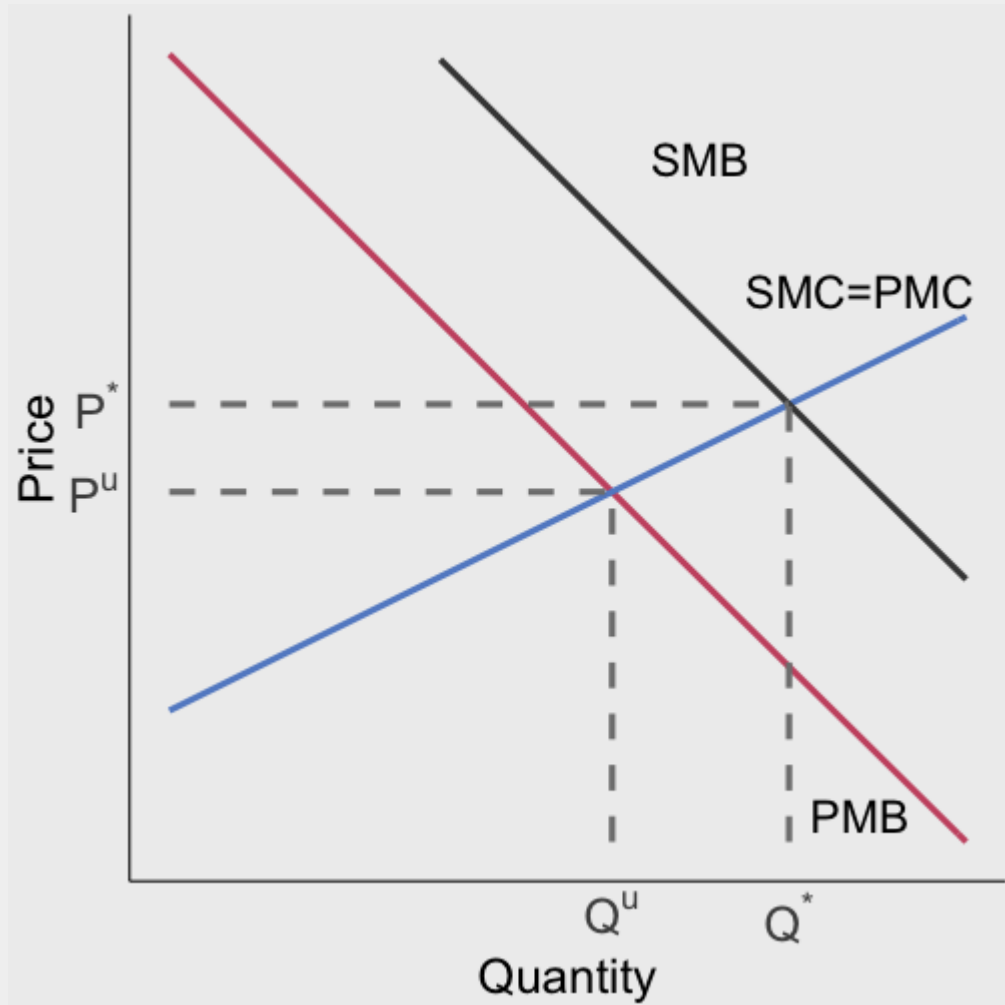
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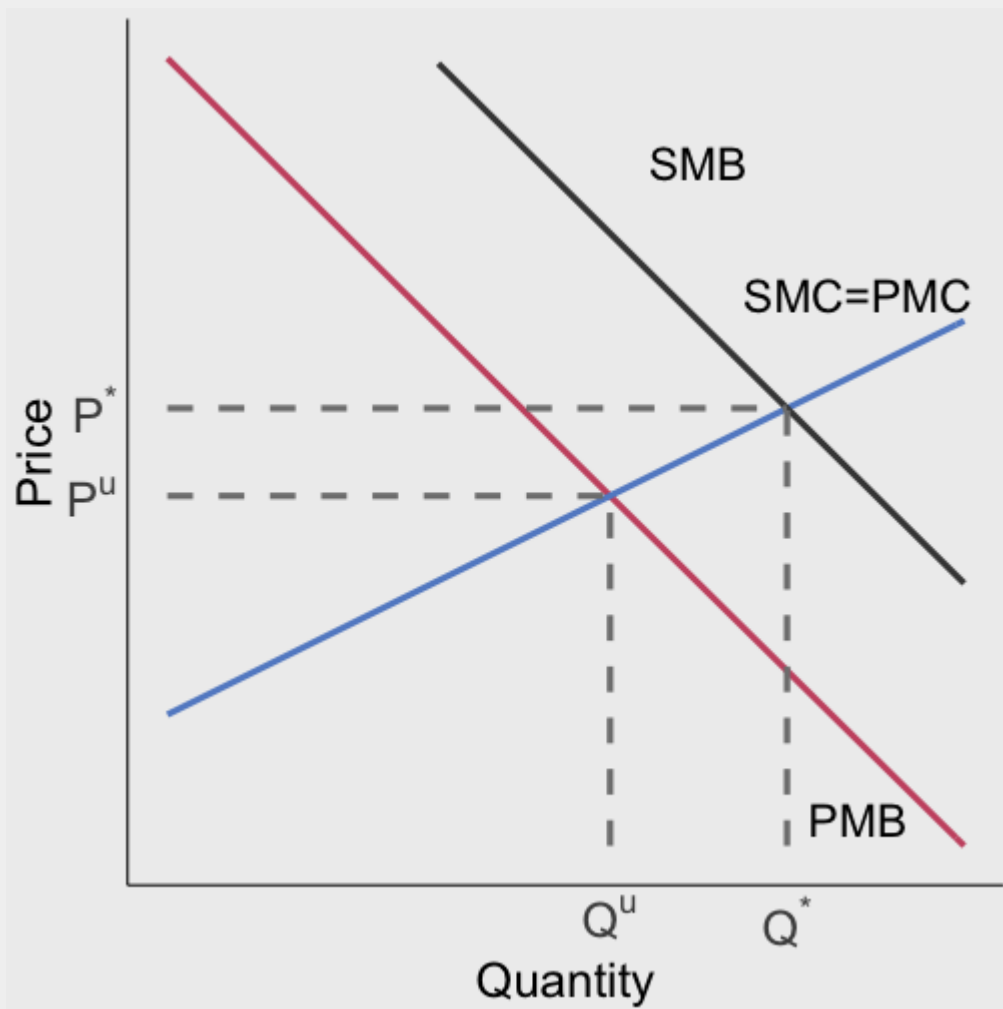
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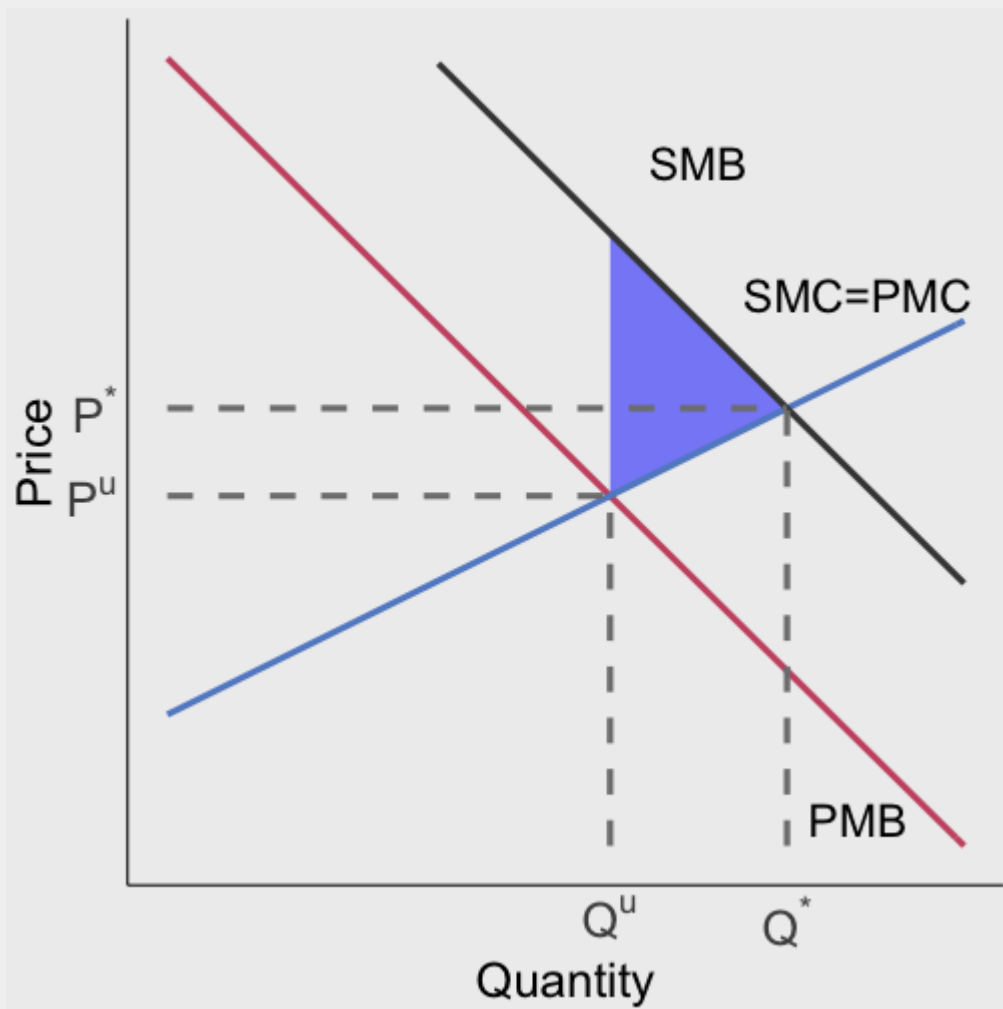


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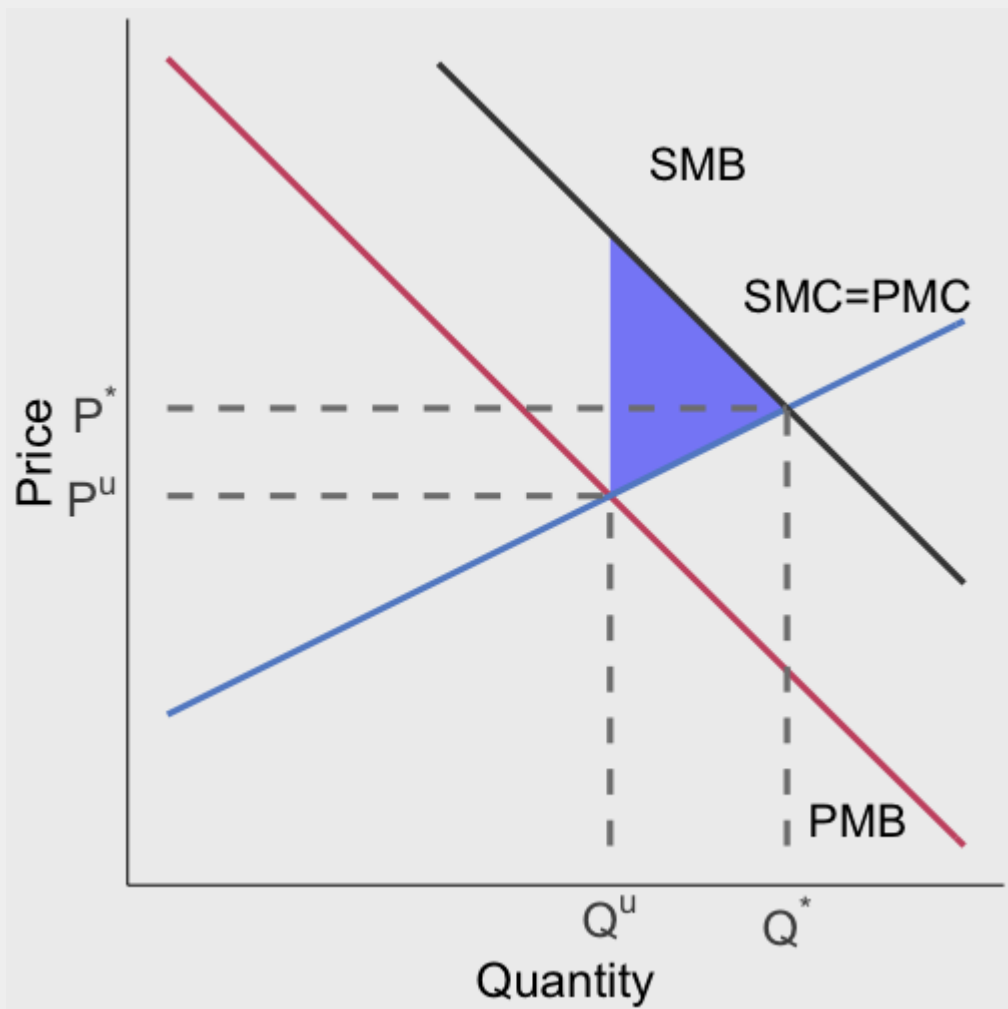
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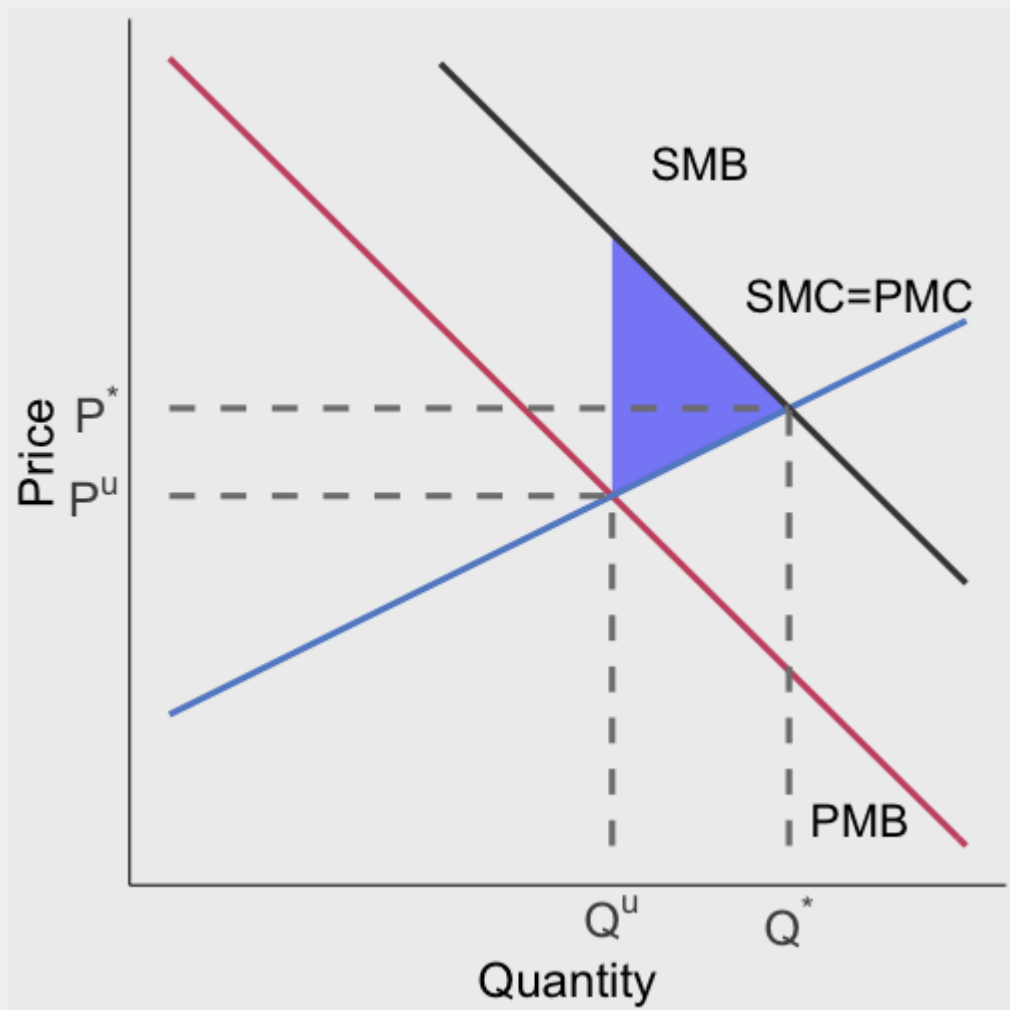
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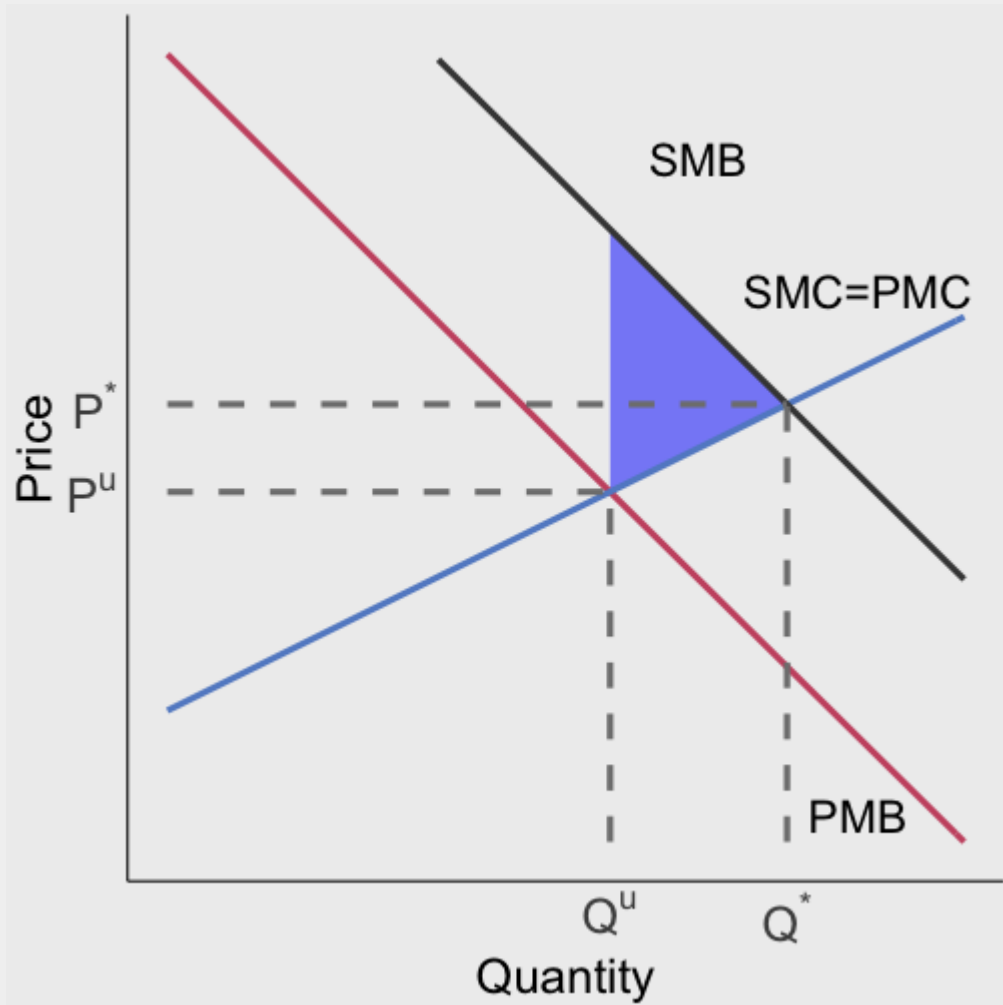


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The private market produces too few vaccines

The private actors are not accounting for the social benefits they are imposing on people who are not in the vaccine transaction (e.g. third parties whose health is being affected)

# Why do externalities arise?

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1. Poorly defined property rights

- Who owns the right to the air?

2. High transactions costs

- Hard to bargain over desired air quality with millions of people

Lets conceptualize a model of efficient bargaining using an Edgeworth Box



# Why do externalities arise? Edgeworth Box

- Two individuals: A and B
- Two private goods: X and Y

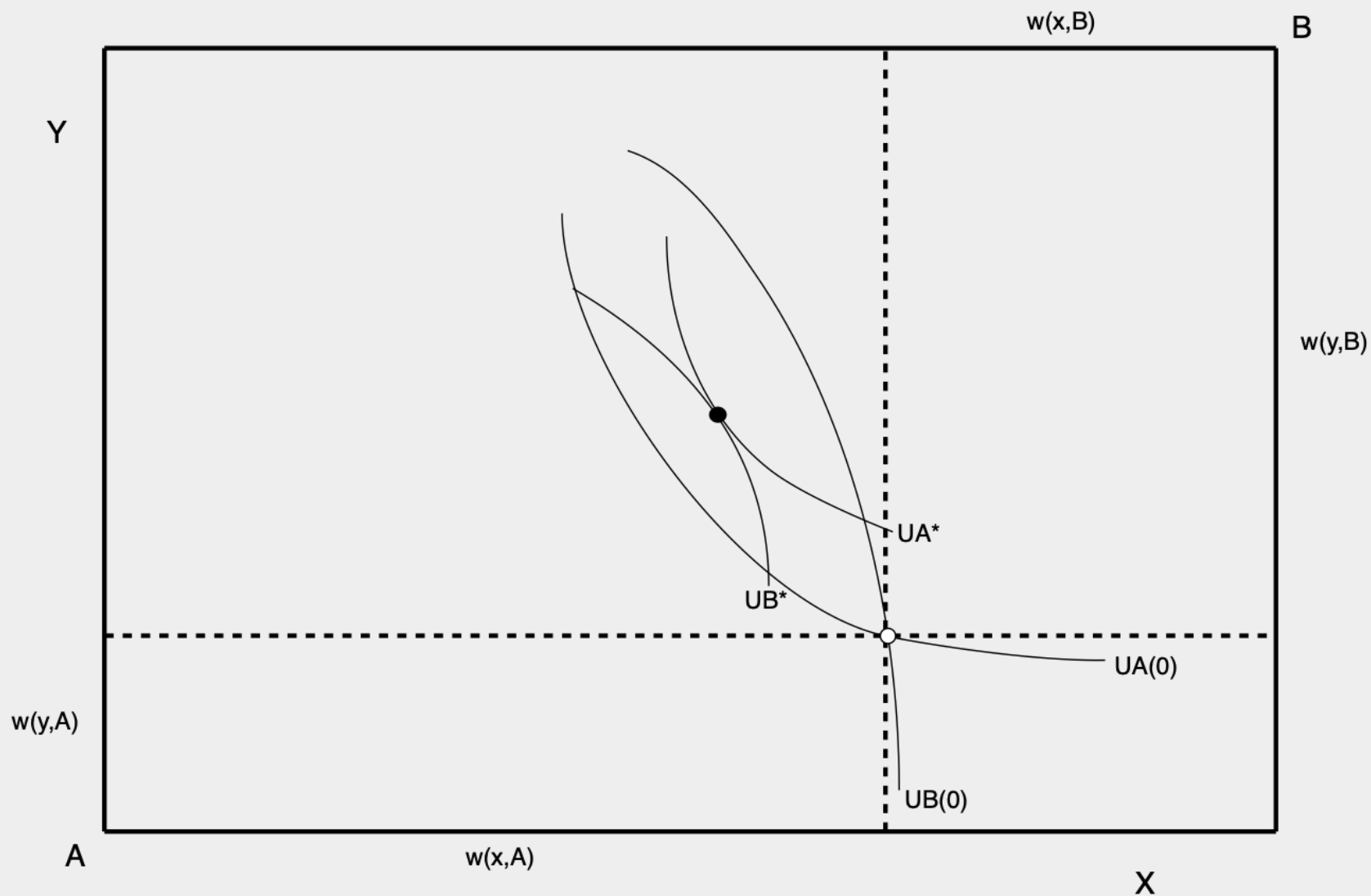
Each individual begins with an initial endowment of each good:

- $A : w_X^A, w_Y^A$
- $B : w_X^B, w_Y^B$

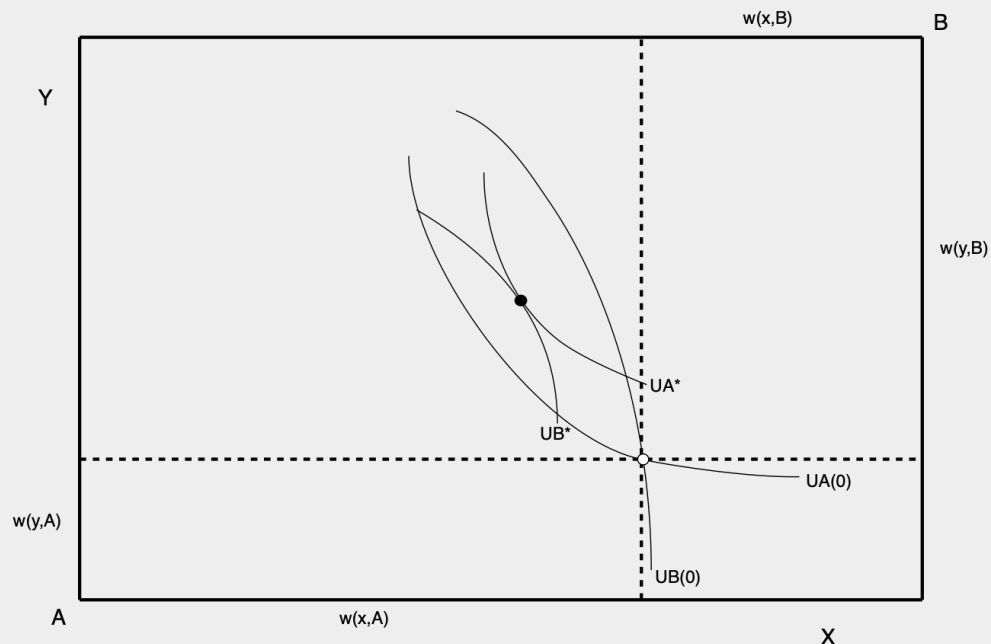
This gives us a total endowment:

- $W_X = w_X^A + w_X^B$
- $W_Y = w_Y^A + w_Y^B$

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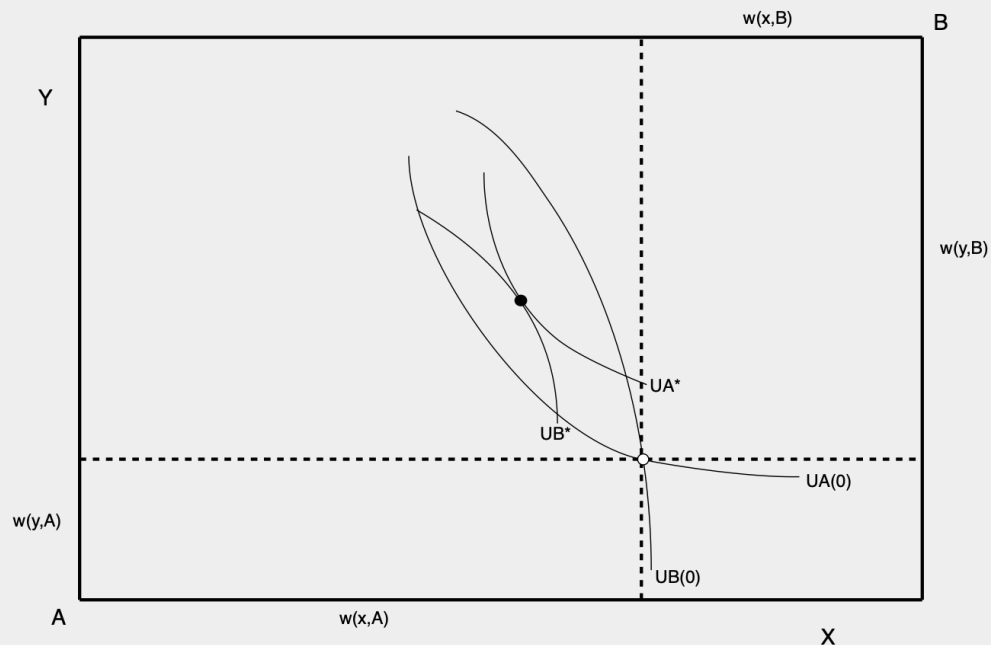
Total vertical distance is  $W_Y$

Total horizontal distance is  $W_X$

Initial endowment is given by the empty circle

Initial indifference curves for A and B are  $UA(0)$  and  $UB(0)$

# Why do externalities arise? Edgeworth Box

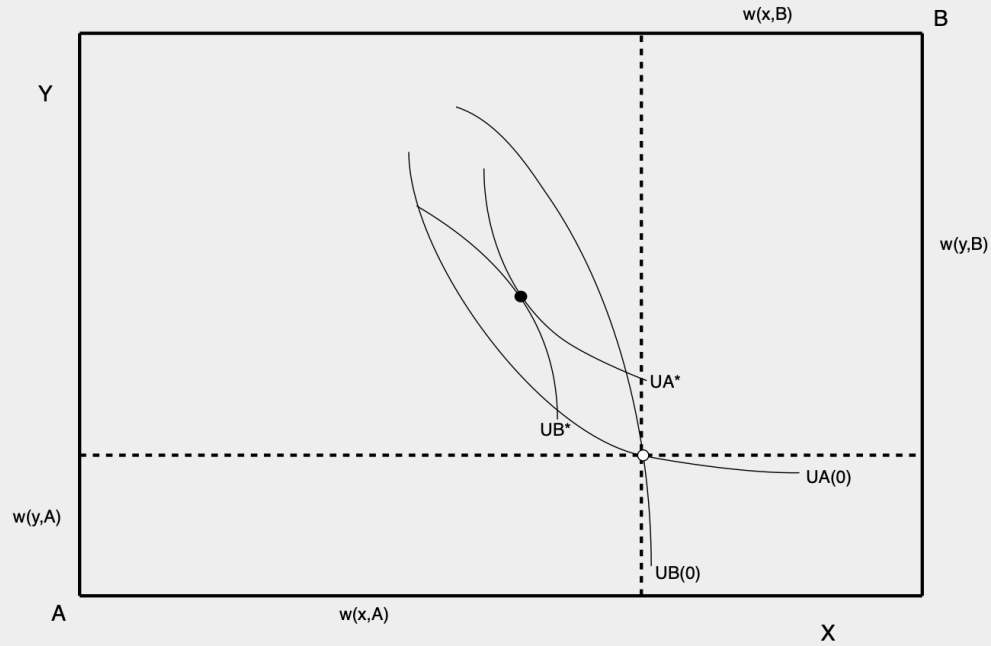


Is there a possible Pareto improvement?

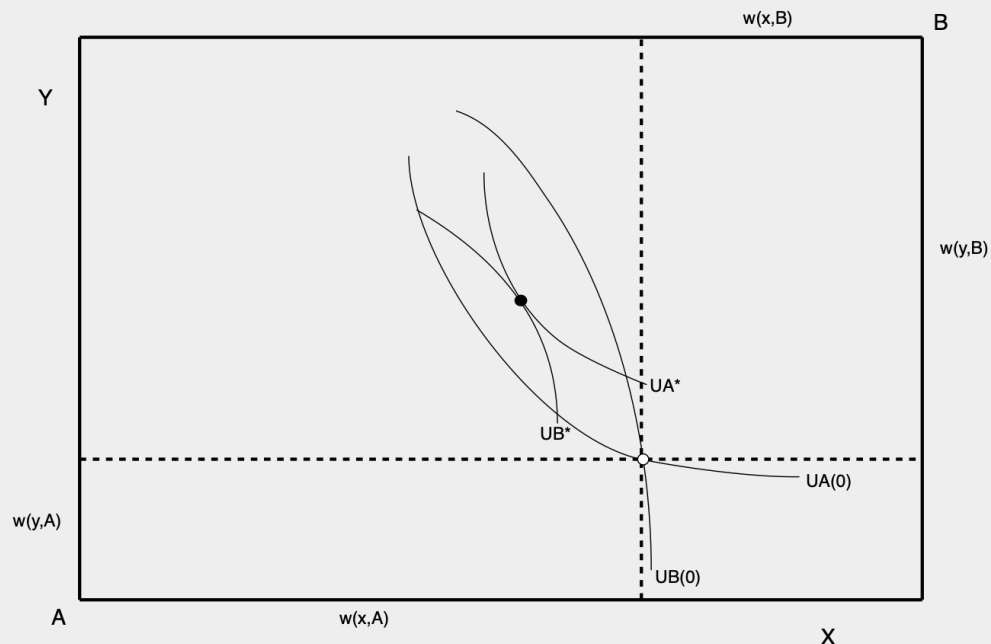
e.g. can we make both A and B better off?

# Why do externalities arise? Edgeworth Box

Yes!



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Yes!

If we move anywhere in the lens of their initial indifference curves we have a Pareto improvement

If we move to an allocation where their indifference curves are **tangent** to one another (e.g. the filled-in point), we have a Pareto optimum

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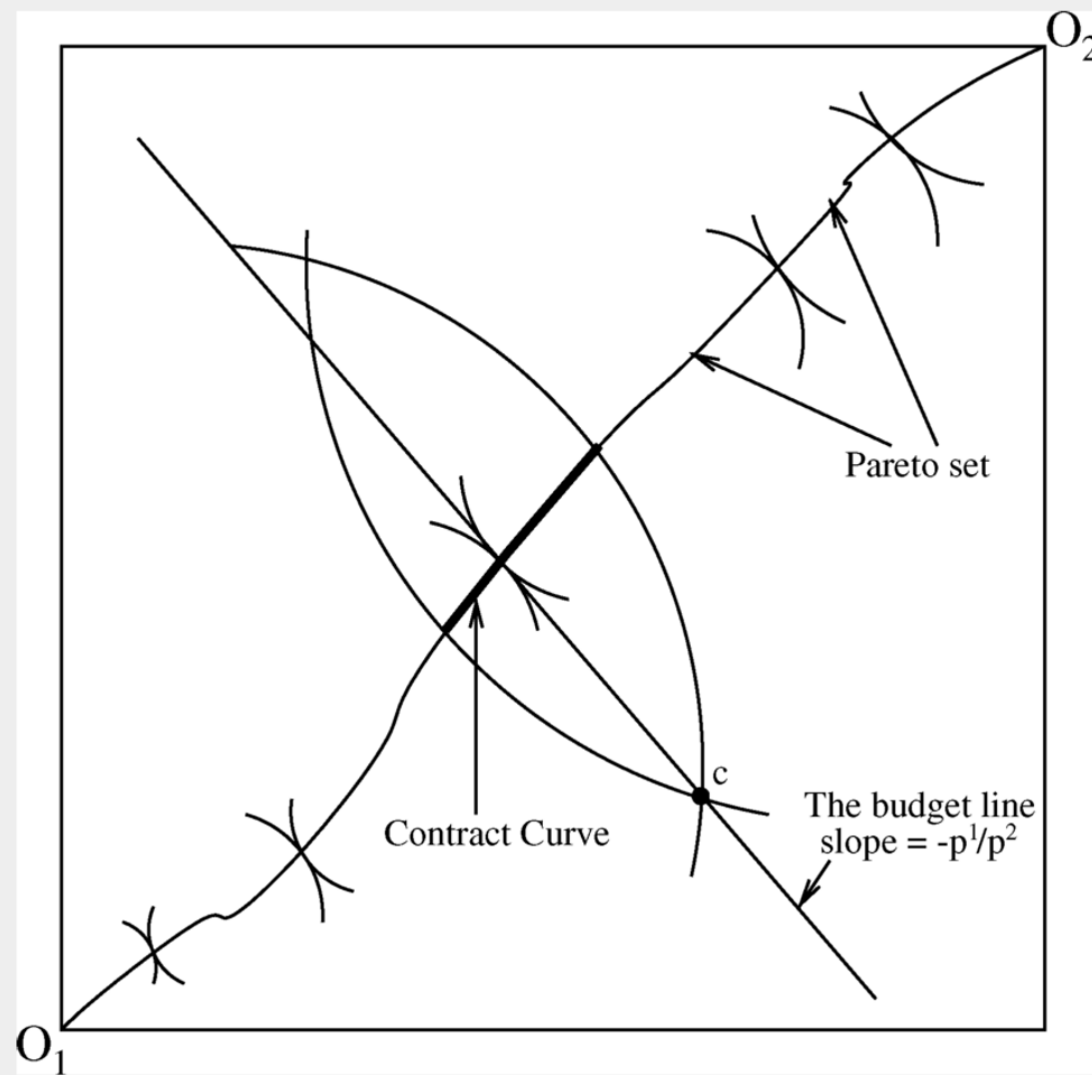
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- The endowment point is well-established
- A and B can trade X and Y to some Pareto improving point
- They continue trading until they achieve a Pareto optimal allocation
- This allocation lies on the **contract curve**: the line consisting of all Pareto efficient allocations

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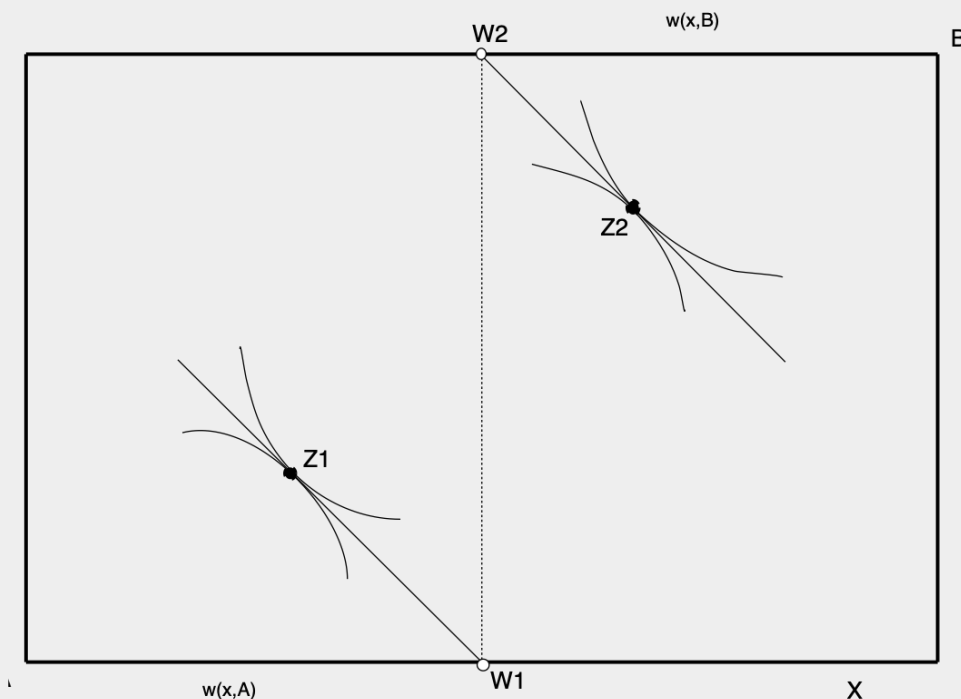
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Suppose both start off with the same quantity of  $X$



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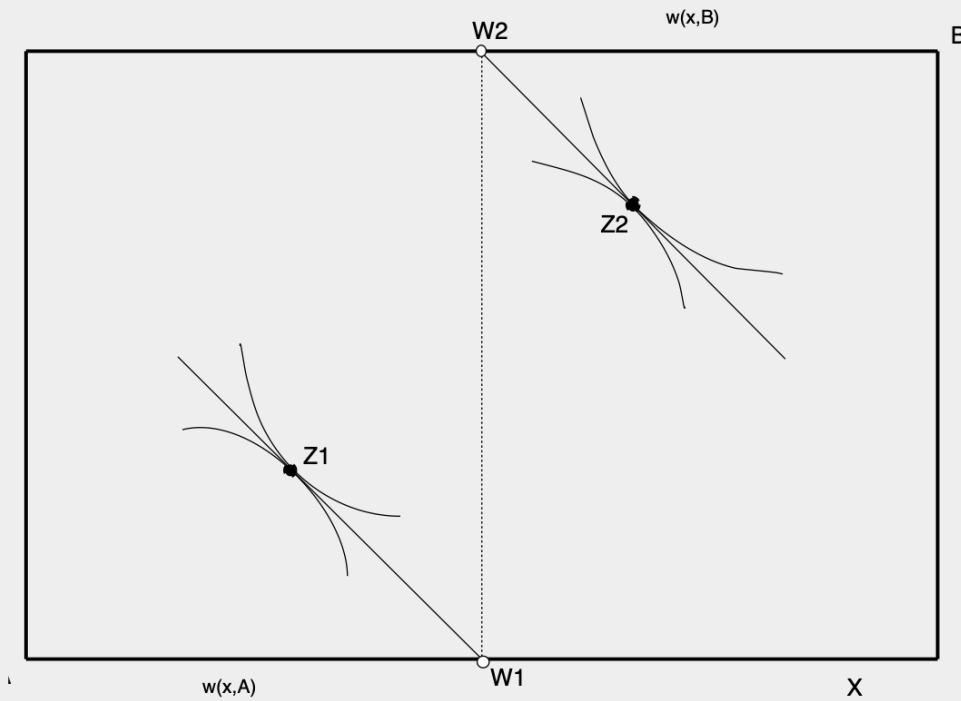


Depending on who has property rights, we either start at:

- $W1$  (B has property rights)
- $W2$  (A has property rights)

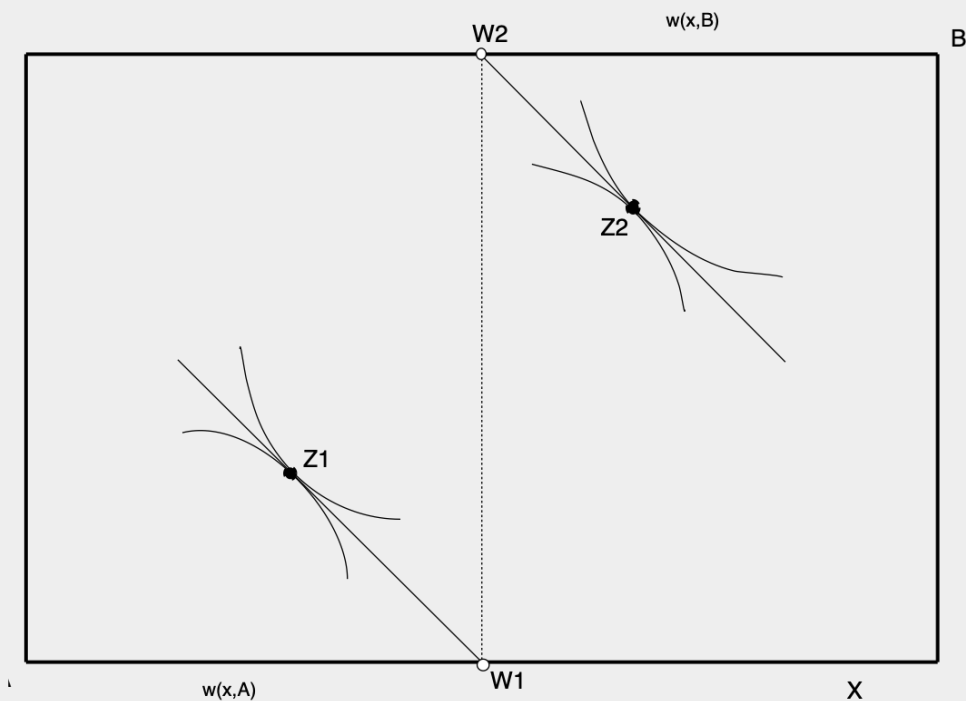
Think about why these are where we must start

# Why do externalities arise? Edgeworth Box



Suppose we start at  $W1$ , what happens?

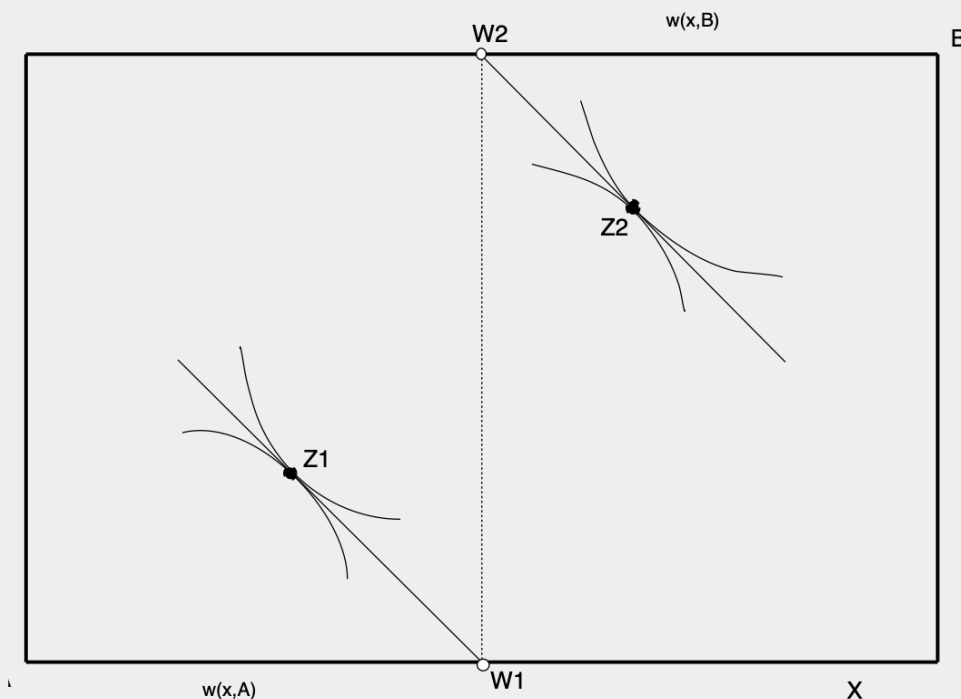
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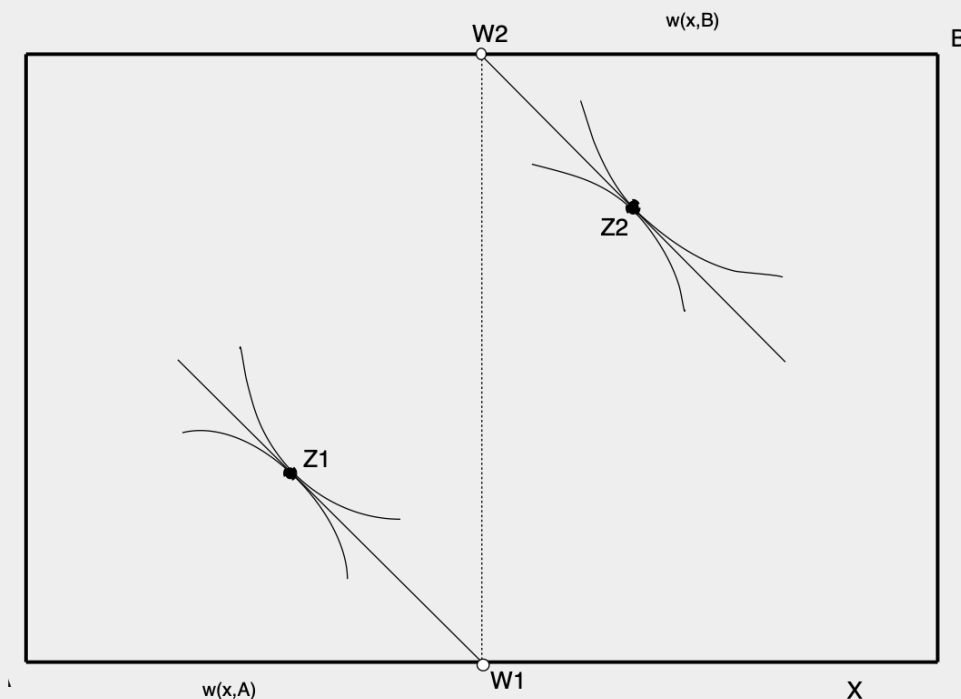


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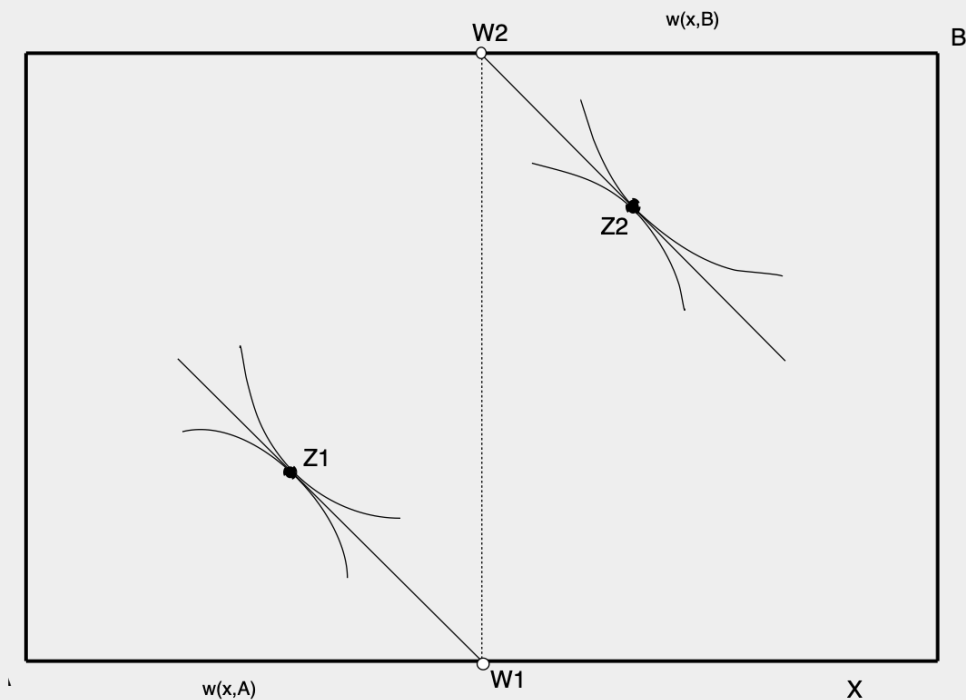
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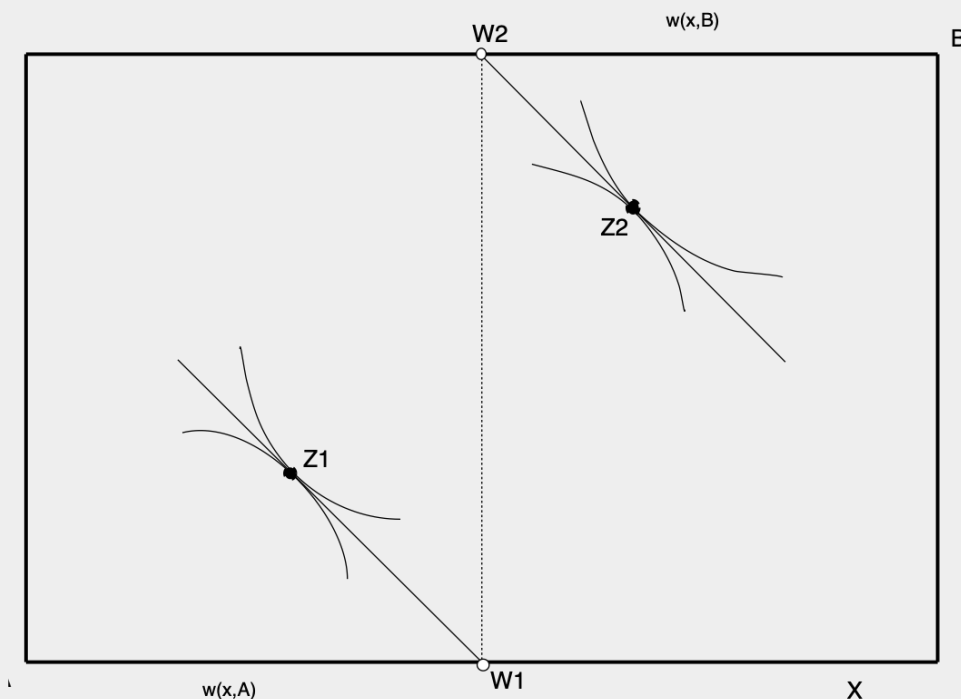
A pays  $B$  in units of  $X$ , move to  $Z1$ , Pareto optimum

# Why do externalities arise? Edgeworth Box



Suppose we start at  $W2$ , what happens?

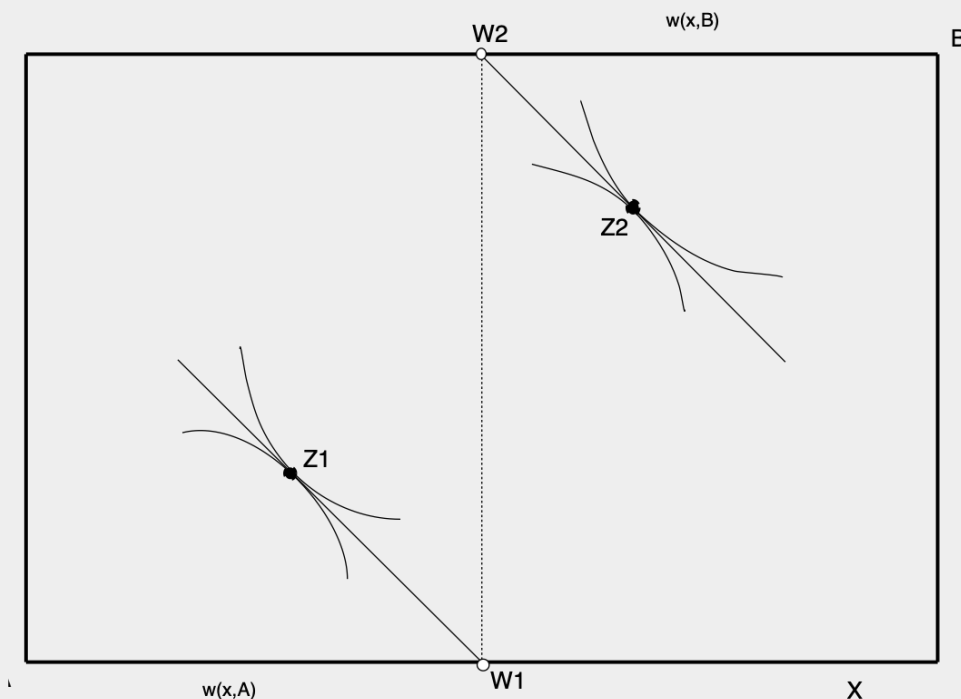
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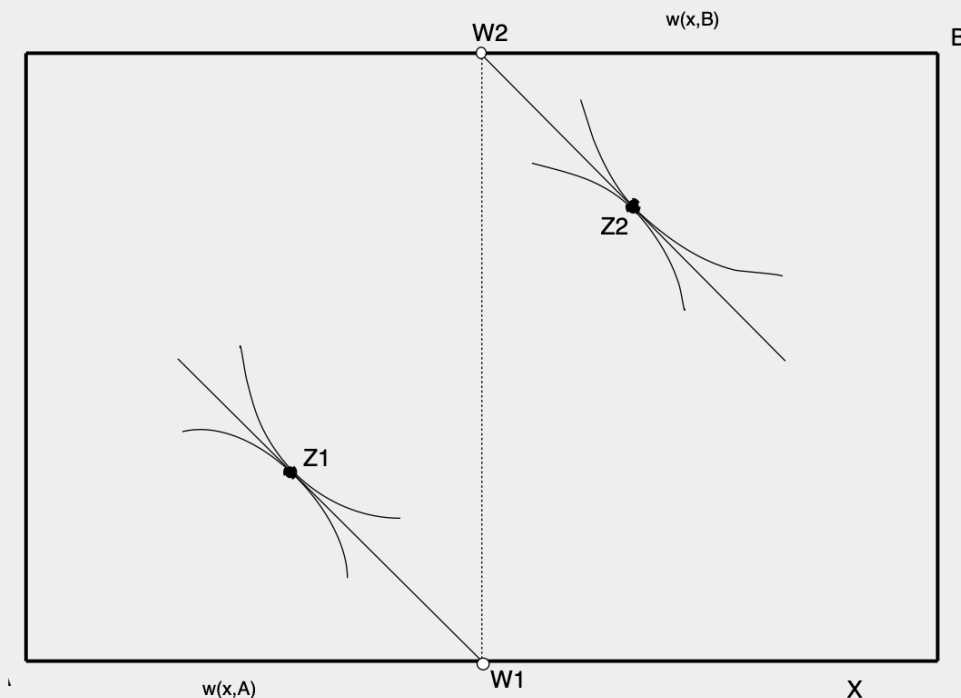
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B pays A in units of  $X$ , move to  $Z2$ ,  
Pareto optimum

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Why?

1. Property rights were assigned to either A or B
2. Transactions costs were low (didn't have to pay a fee to trade X)

# Property rights and externalities

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We'll talk about a few ways that we can assign property rights

# Transactions costs and externalities

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- Negotiating over how much  $X$  each person gets

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The costs of bargaining may exceed the benefits and we end up stuck at  $W_2$

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Road noise: drivers implicitly have property rights to noise around roads

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Even if you prefer quiet, you can't negotiate a payment with every loud car that might pass pay

# The free-rider problem

Externalities and public goods/bads often exhibit many of the same features

Both are subject to the **Free-Rider Problem**

A type of market failure that occurs when those who benefit from resources, public goods (such as public roads or hospitals), or services of a communal nature do not pay for them[1] or under-pay

e.g.

- people don't pay their taxes for publicly-provided services
- non-smokers will wait for others to pay in order to reduce smoke

# The provision of public goods

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# Public goods

How do we efficiently provide public goods?

We know:

- Private goods:  $PMB = PMC \Leftrightarrow SMB = SMC$
- Goods with negative externalities:  $PMB = SMC \Leftrightarrow SMB = SMC$
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Suppose we have a public good, e.g. depth of a river for public use

How do we decide the socially efficient depth?



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What are the SMB and SMC for a public good?

Think about the characteristics of a public good, one of them is critical:

**Non-rival:** multiple people can use the same unit of a good (one person using the river doesn't 'use up' its depth)

This means multiple people can derive benefits from the provision of 1 unit of the good

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e.g. the free market underprovides clean air, national defense, etc



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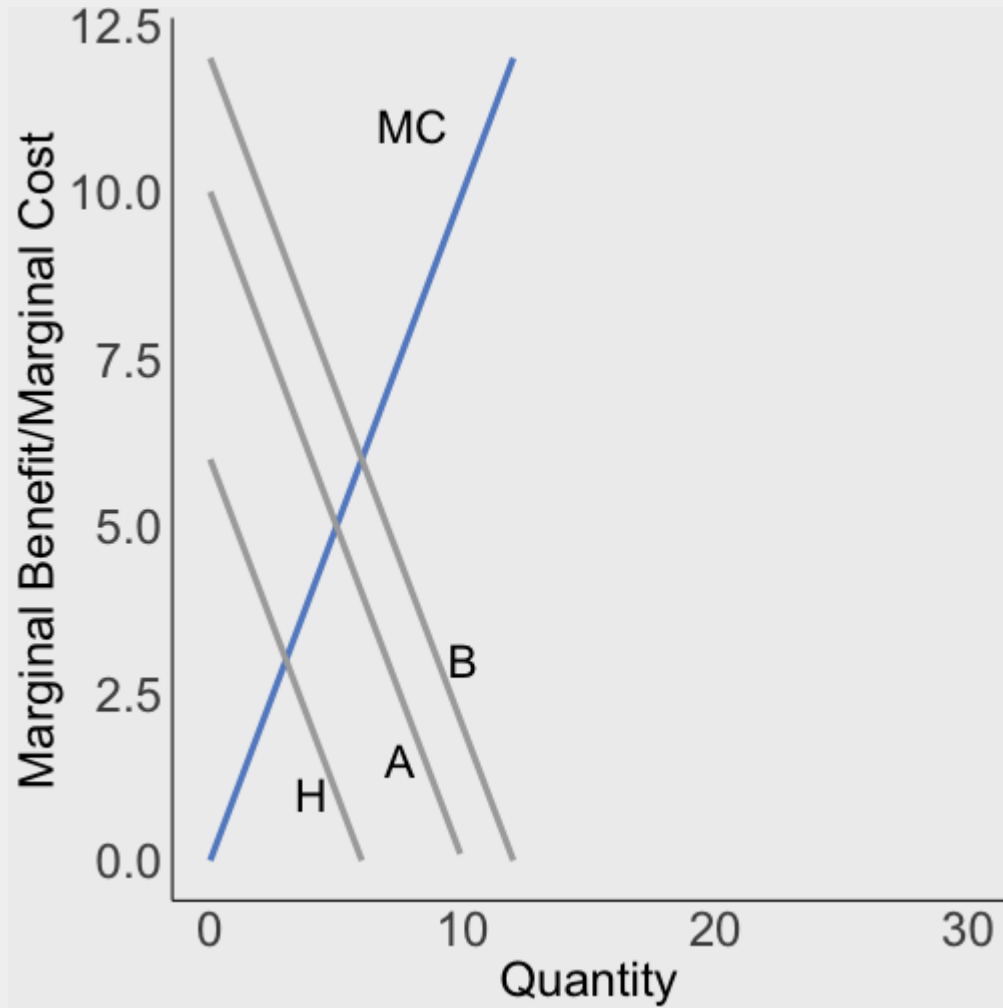
Public goods are non-rival, multiple people can consume each unit

At each quantity, what is the total marginal benefit?

At each quantity, we need to add up PMBs/prices

Public goods: we add demand curves vertically

# Public goods: graphical

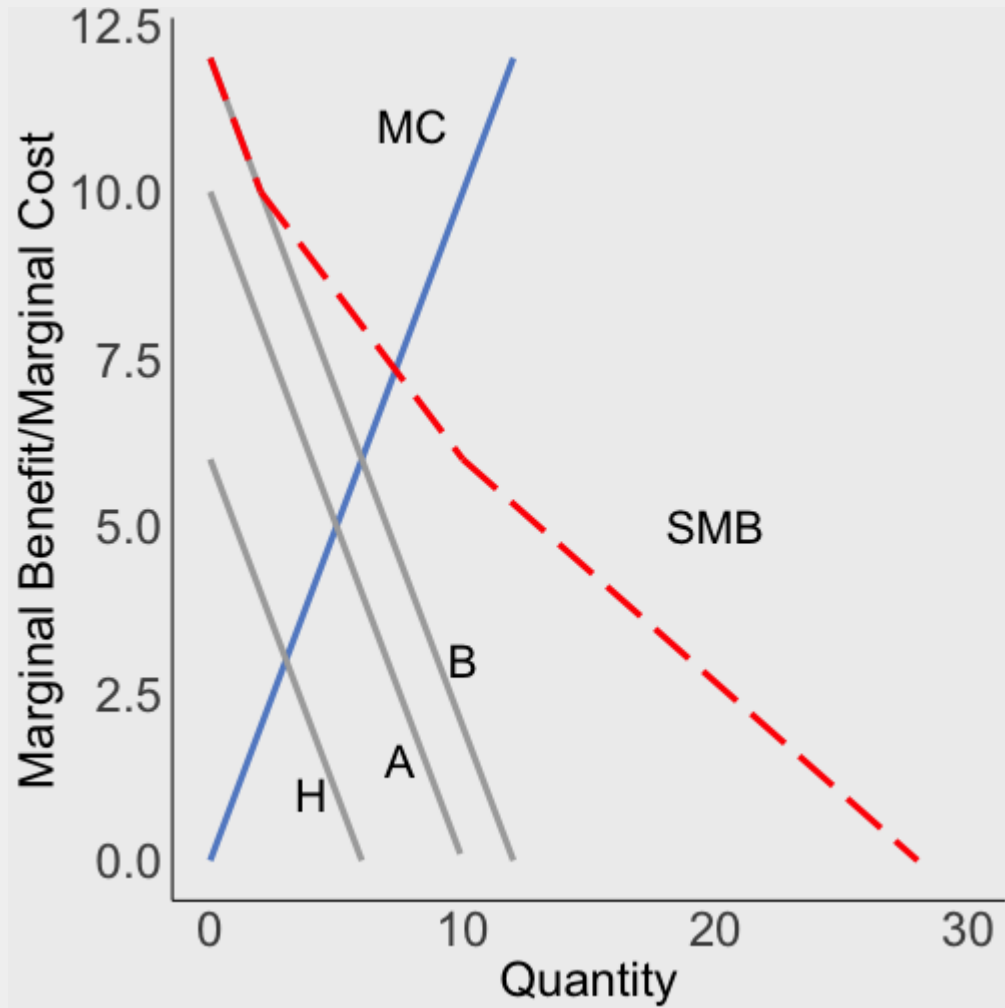


3 different groups: boaters (B), anglers (A), and hikers (H)

Each has a different marginal benefit for water depth:

- Boaters:  $MB = 12 - Q$
- Anglers:  $MB = 10 - Q$
- Hikers:  $MB = 6 - Q$

# Public goods: graphical

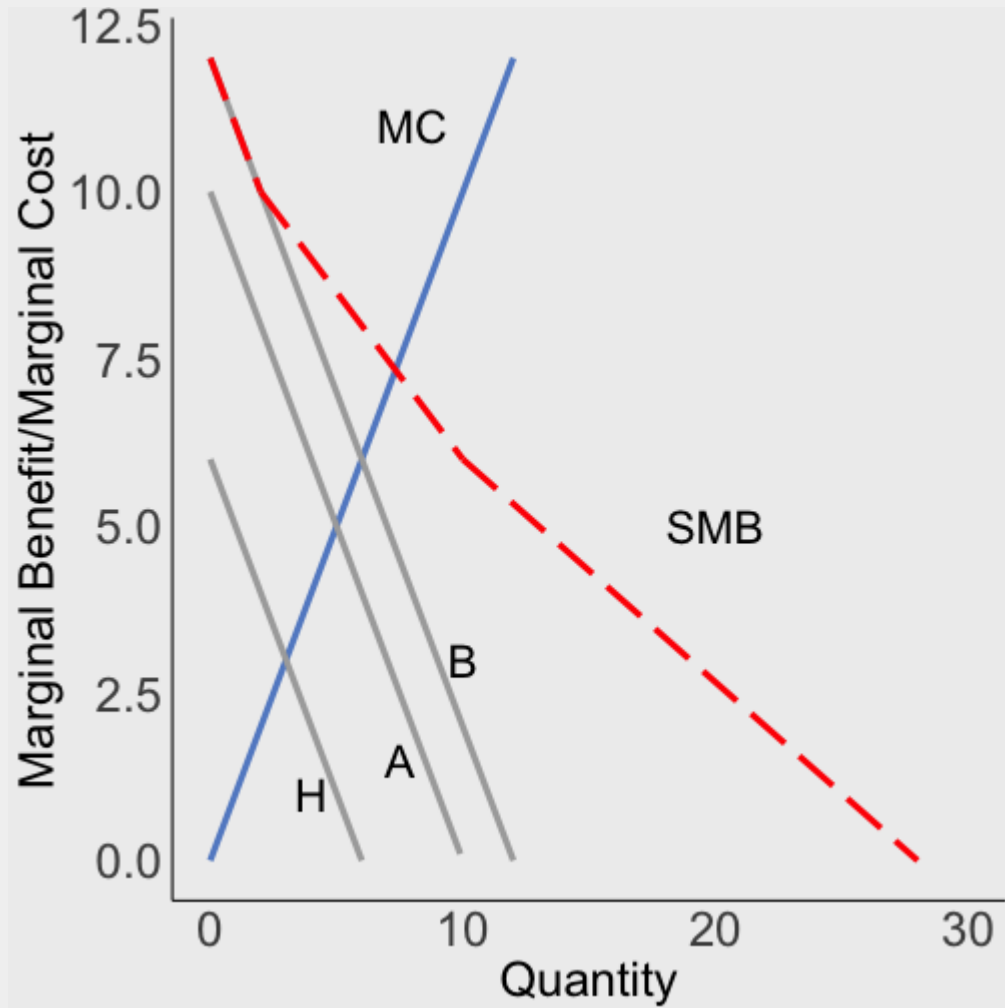


Now we need to aggregate them to get the **social marginal benefit**

We do so by adding up the demand curves horizontally:

At each price: sum the Qs that are demanded

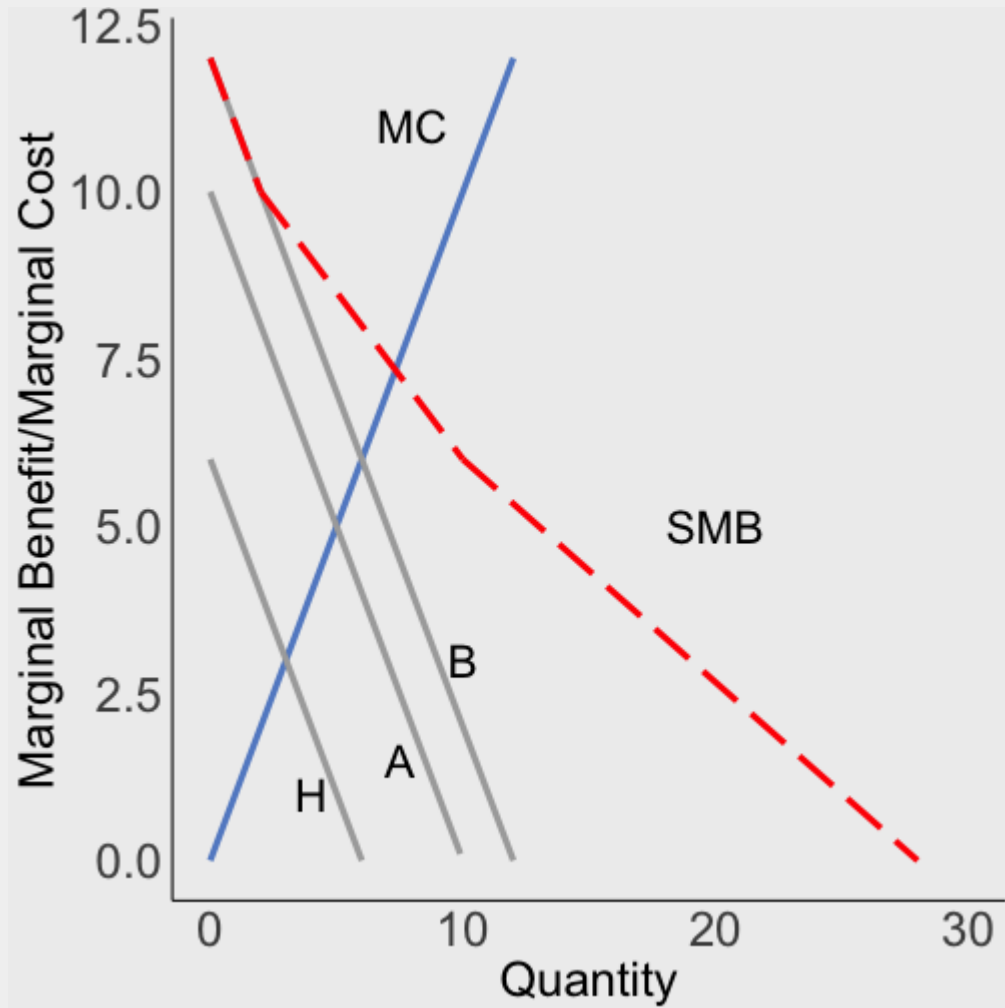
# Public goods: graphical



Why is the aggregate demand curve kinked?

Because at each price, only certain groups are willing to pay to use the public good

# Positive externalities: graphical



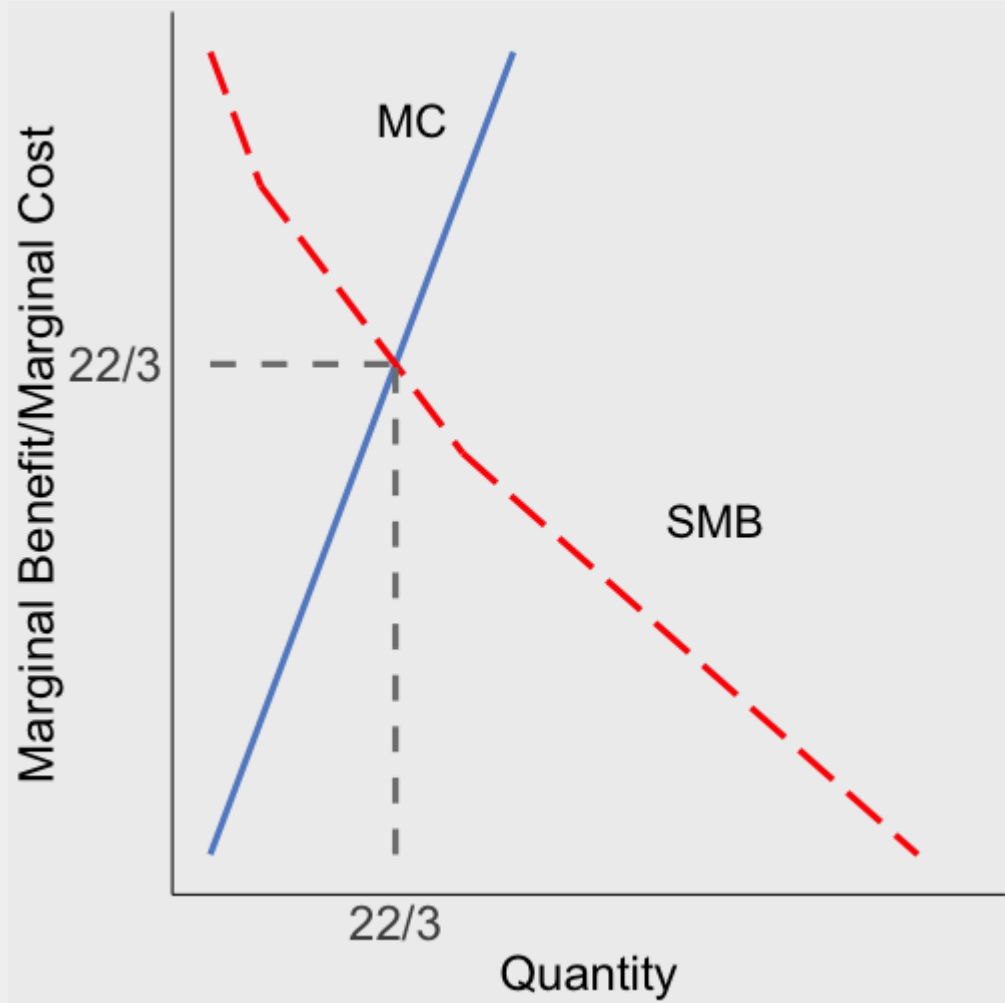
At prices  $> 10$ , only boaters are willing to pay

At prices  $> 6$  and  $\leq 10$ , only boaters and anglers are willing to pay

At prices  $\leq 6$  all groups are willing to pay to use the river



# Public goods: graphical



The optimal provision of the public good is where the MC curve crosses the SMB curve

The optimal quantity of  $22/3$  is greater than the quantity any individual group would be willing to purchase

# Public goods financing

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If the government is able to provide the good, how does it finance the cost raising the river depth above zero?

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Since the good is non-rival, this is enough to finance the cost

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It requires perfect information on behalf of the regulator