

# Mary Murphy Maynooth University

**Building a world of equality while working in the world of today  
---- the challenge of transitioning**

Alliance Against Poverty  
Marseille, May 26<sup>th</sup>

# Unsustainable economic model ....



Commodification of land labour and money --- social and environmental - Polanyi, Marx

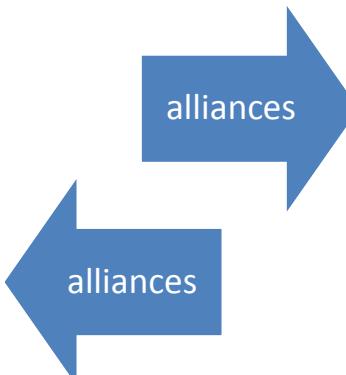
# Doreen Massey

- while there'd been a massive economic implosion with the financial crisis, there had been no political crisis, and the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism had been very quickly reinstated as the unquestionable common sense. An economic crisis is not enough. You also need a fracturing of the ideological and the political.

# Degrowth as ‘seedbed’ for alternative mode of production and society

- Degrowth and ‘eco-socialism’ as transformational **strategies** to redistribute power from the market to the state and society
- Yes But ---implications
  - Produce and consume less - impact on employment
  - Gender, care, social investment, equality not inevitable!!
  - Impact on revenue generation
- Yes and - possibilities
  - Redistribute time for care and democratic participation
  - New political alliances – triple movements of care, ecology and redistribution (Fraser 2014).
  - Find language to develop both imagination and alliances.

# Challenging basis of contemporary model

- Ideas within the framework of capitalism and the movement to a more socially, politically and environmentally sustainable capitalism
  - Ideas developed as incompatible with capitalism and focus on providing the seedbed for an alternative mode of production, an alternative society
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Challenge of moving from post crisis ‘growth- mania’ to ‘degrowth’

Degrowth - potential for reflexive societal processes conducive to collective action and institutional change - Perez-Carmona -

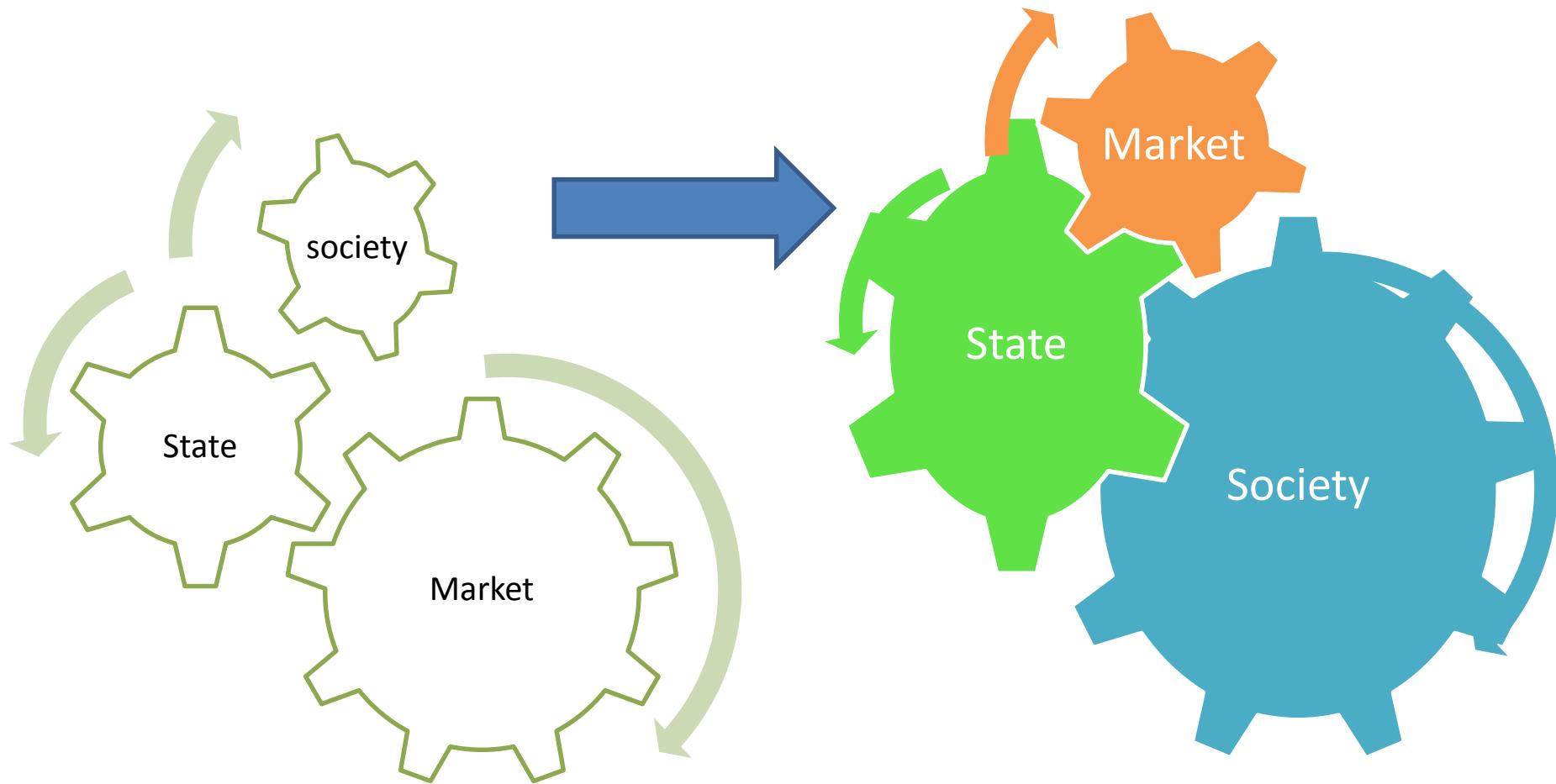
# *Strategies* of transformation (Wright, 2013)

- Some prospect over the long term to erode capitalist power relations and build alternative(s) --- **no long term?**
- *Ruptural* transformations envision create new emancipatory institutions through a **sharp break** with existing institutions and social structures.
- *Interstitial* transformations seek to build new forms of social empowerment in the niches, spaces and margins of capitalist society, **sites of struggle and demonstration of alternatives**
- *Symbiotic* transformations deepen the institutional forms of popular **social empowerment** while simultaneously helping **solve certain practical problems**, ‘non-reformist reforms’

# What alternatives? Degrowth

- Can't go back?
- Thin change - social democracy – defensive and limited, pro-growth
- Thick change - Marxist class struggles – weak contemporary relevance and credibility – growth focused - not taking ecology seriously (Ungar 2009)
- Nature of root problem (Burawoy, 2003, Cock 2009)
- Polanyi- opposing new forms of commodification of care/love (labour), environment (land), finance (money) (Fraser 2014)
- New forms of social power (social - ‘isms’) (Ungar 2009, Wright 2010)
- Real limits of ecosystem – incentives to move to a radically new configuration of social, state and economic power

Consumption & production should be minimised in developed world  
Re-shape economic power  
Enlarge and deepen society and state and weaken market

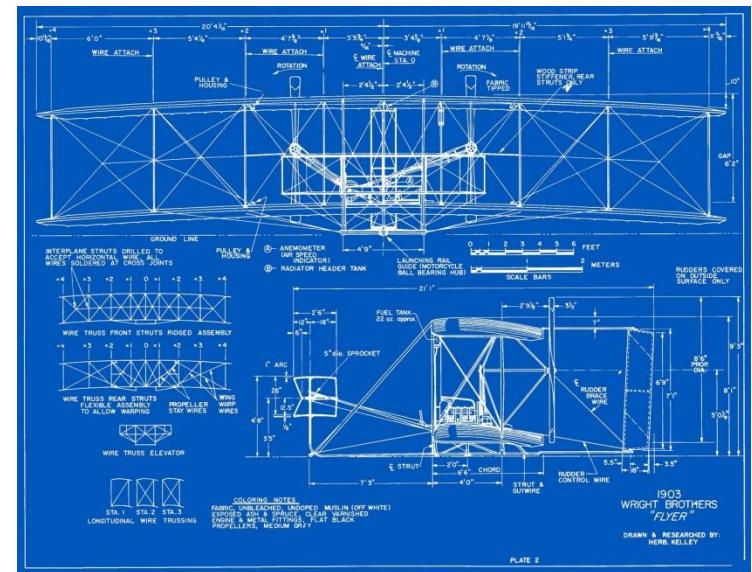


# Blyth – critical junctures ideational theory



Ideas as  
Weapons  
Blueprints  
Cognitive locks

Degrowth a symbolic weapon or  
“missile concept” (Aries 2005)



provoke thought about  
alternatives. (Fournier 2008)

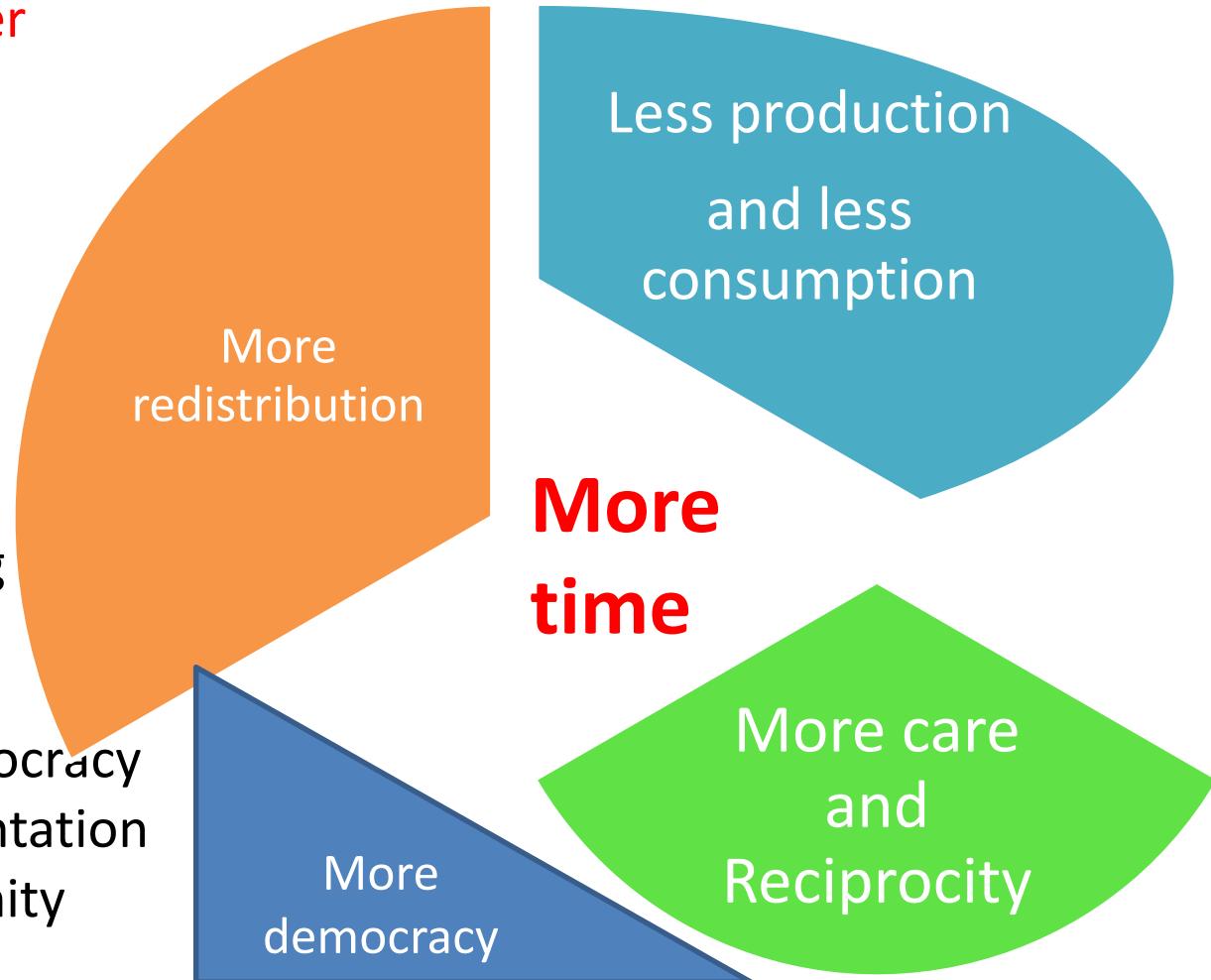
Not a blueprint



# Degrowth: New ways of producing, consuming and relating to each other and making decisions (Cock 2012)

- Living well .... not better
- Production
- Reciprocity
- Redistribution
- Power/democracy

Solidarity economy  
Working-less/work sharing  
Care - more time in care relations/reciprocity?  
Eco-municipal – local democracy  
Participation and Representation  
More society and community capability for resilience



**Re-imagining our economic relations and identities in different terms**

# Work and employment



## 21 hours

Why a shorter working week can help us all to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

# working-less and work sharing.....

- Fear of large-scale unemployment - change in type, quality & distribution of work
- **Type** of employment - shift from producing to maintenance, care & local provisioning
- Happening - Galbraith – only 17% jobs productive oriented, Davis (2009) post industrialisation - IT enabled manufacturing - minimal workforce, Walmart employs same as 15 largest US manufacturers ..... But ↓ consumption????
- Realism - publicly supported decent and useful green jobs that meet social needs (local food and renewables - climate, unemployment and food security (Cock 2014, SA, SMW).
- Job loss fear - impacts alliance building – Transition Supports (Global Adjust Prog)
- Flexicurity – Flex-Insecurity - distrust (ReInVest)

# Working shorter to live longer

- Distribution and Quality :
- Shorter working week, job quality, autonomy, creativity, flourish, LLL
- 30 hours (EuroMemo 2013)'  
21 hours - 1,092 hours
- Swed. France, Germany, NL, Denmark – shorter hours possible and plausible
- BUT ...WHO – class analysis
- Precarity traps
- Low pay -low hours – poor quality
- Women, migrants, youth
- Even with regulating for decent part time work, guaranteed hours/income
- ... Reinforce existing inequality

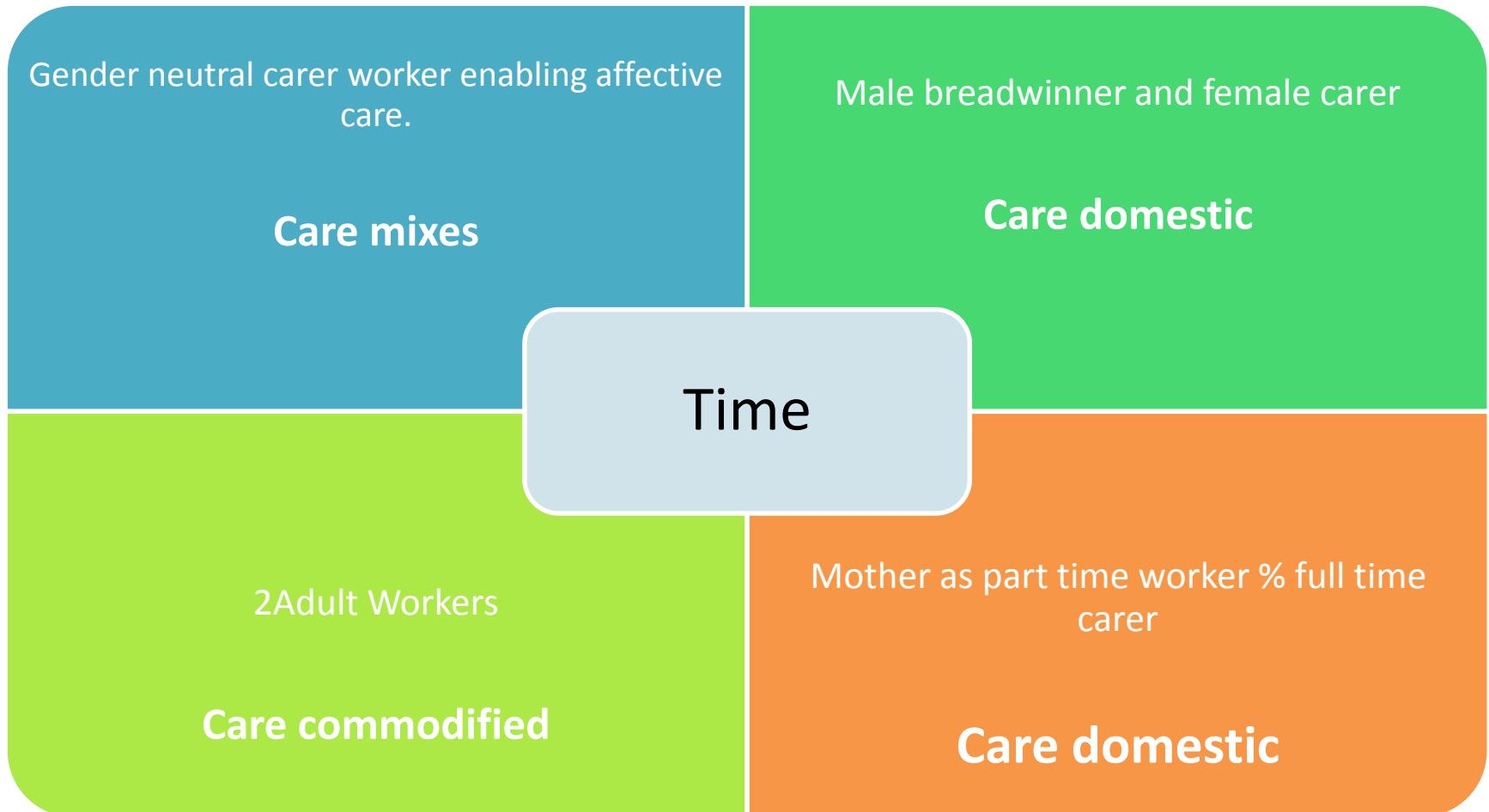
# South Africa

National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA)

- NUMSA (300,000 members – extractive work in MEC)
- Just Transition - climate change in context of class struggle
- The goal should be to expand democratic control over major investment and production decisions and over financial institutions and transactions, while asserting a new set of social and economic conditions on private capital for the good of workers and the environment. This could ..drastically slow the rate of ecological damage, while establishing a platform for an even deeper restructuring of economic life over the long term”. (Sweeney, 2012:13)

# Gender equality, paid work and care?

2/13



# Gender equality and social reproduction

- Women's Budget Group (UK) - PLAN F: A Feminist Economic strategy for a caring and sustainable economy
- A caring and sustainable economy is based on mutual support and respect for rights. It is oriented to the broad and inclusive aim of improving our well-being in ways that reduce inequalities, not only today, but also for future generations. It prioritises **care** for **people** and for the **planet**
- Social reinvestment – European Social Investment Package, Annual Growth Surveys, European Semester, CSR's –
- Social damage of over pre-occupation with 'shovel ready' investment

# Quality Care and Quality Work

- **Social investment & policy mix – significant impact:**
- 1.5 million jobs - UK 2% GDP in care industries (750,000 construction)
- 7 OECD countries - 2% GDP in public services of care would create almost as many jobs for men as investing in construction industries in the UK, US, Germany and Australia ..... but would create up to four times as many jobs for women
- **Designing care/labour market/social security regimes for equality**
- Treatment of part-time work .... Quality
- Concrete social institutions and processes – 1.5 jobs or .75 each (Daly 2010)

# *Taxes pay for us to be in school*



# Impact on state - revenue capacity

- Shift in composition and distribution of employment impacts on taxation
- Possible public costs could reduce in context of .... ‘living well’
- **But**
- State role is necessarily expansive and has to be resourced
- How to pay for welfare goals without growth
- Over focus on labour taxes means widening of tax base

# Expanding tax base and compensating for regressive impacts

## New sources

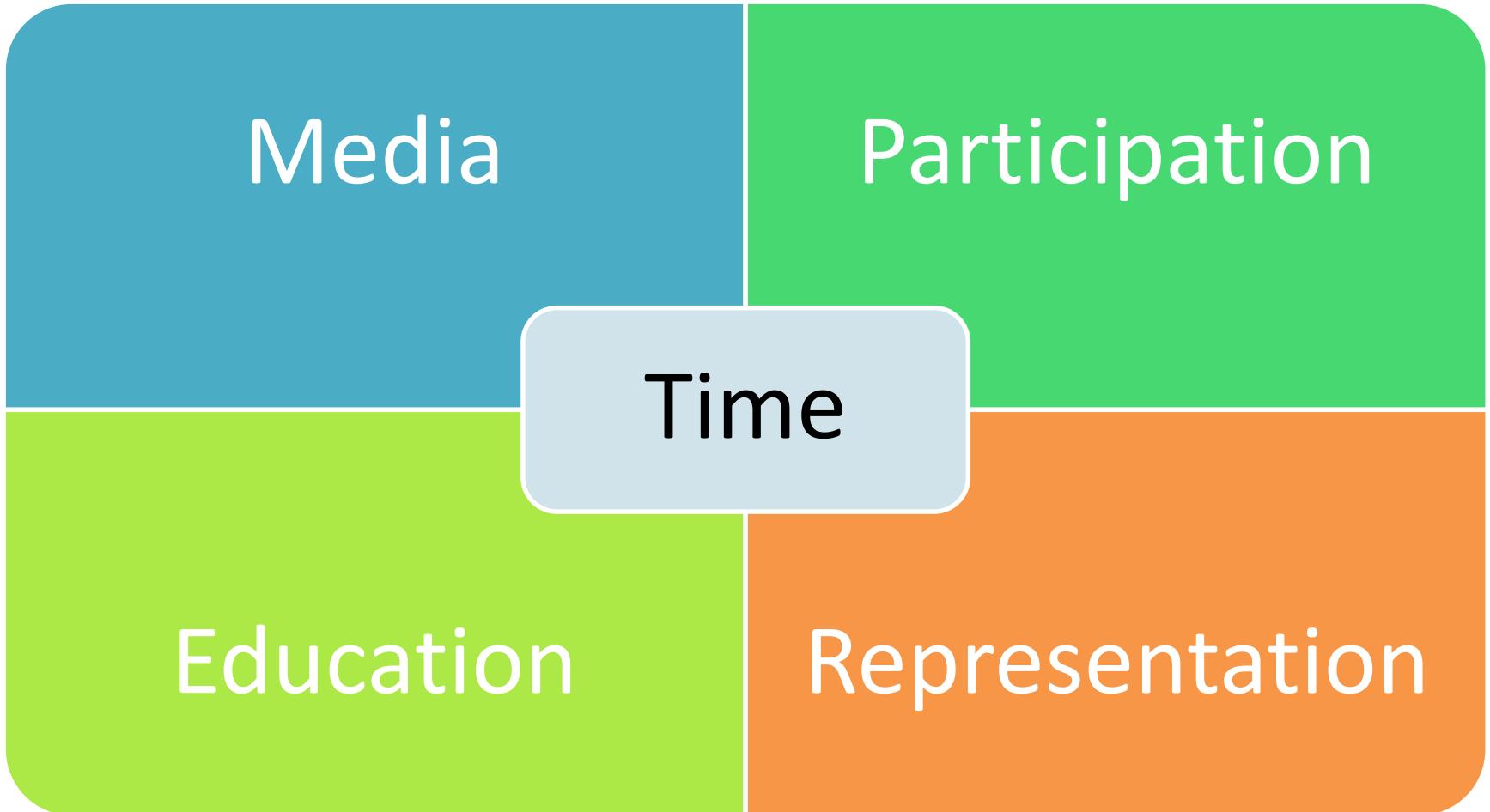
- Financial Transaction Taxes
- Corporate taxes
- Wealth taxes,
- Production and energy taxes (Herman Daly)
- Consumption taxes
- ‘Want-stimulating’ advertising taxes

## Distributional analysis (class, gender, age)

- Avoidance/Evasion \$32tn
- Regressive on poor
- Eco-social policy necessary to compensate (Gough 2014)
- Trust – social contract
- Democratic power – participatory budgeting

Debt management requires growth/inflation

spinning in the overwhelm keeps us from having the time to imagine a way out of it' (Schultz 2013).



More time means possibilities for deeper democracy

# Language triple movements and alliance building

(degrowth electoral suicide)



Slavery, patriarchy, smoking – once reasonable propositions - new common sense – how much time

# Possibilities of alliance building

	Tradition	Pivotal actors	Strategic logic with respect to the state	Strategic logic with respect to the capitalist class	Likely trajectory
Ruptural	Revolutionary socialist or communist	Classes in political society (small and fractured)	Oppositional protest politics, unlikely to enter government	Confrontation	Continue in small fractured clusters but some growth
Interstitial	Anarchist	Less involved in distributional and status issues but vibrant in ecological, urban and gender politics	Non state-oriented	Ignore	Some creative alliances with both ruptural and symbiotic
Symbiotic Reformist	Offensive Social democratic	Distributional, employment and status issues, equality and rights frames	State-oriented, civil and social dialogue	Engage	Contribute to narrative of alternatives but in comfort zone of social dialogue
Symbiotic Reinforcing	Defensive Social democratic	Protecting vulnerable and often focused on services and life contingencies	State oriented, civil and social dialogue	Collaborate	Co-opted in maintaining status quo.

Growth

