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Proposals for a better society

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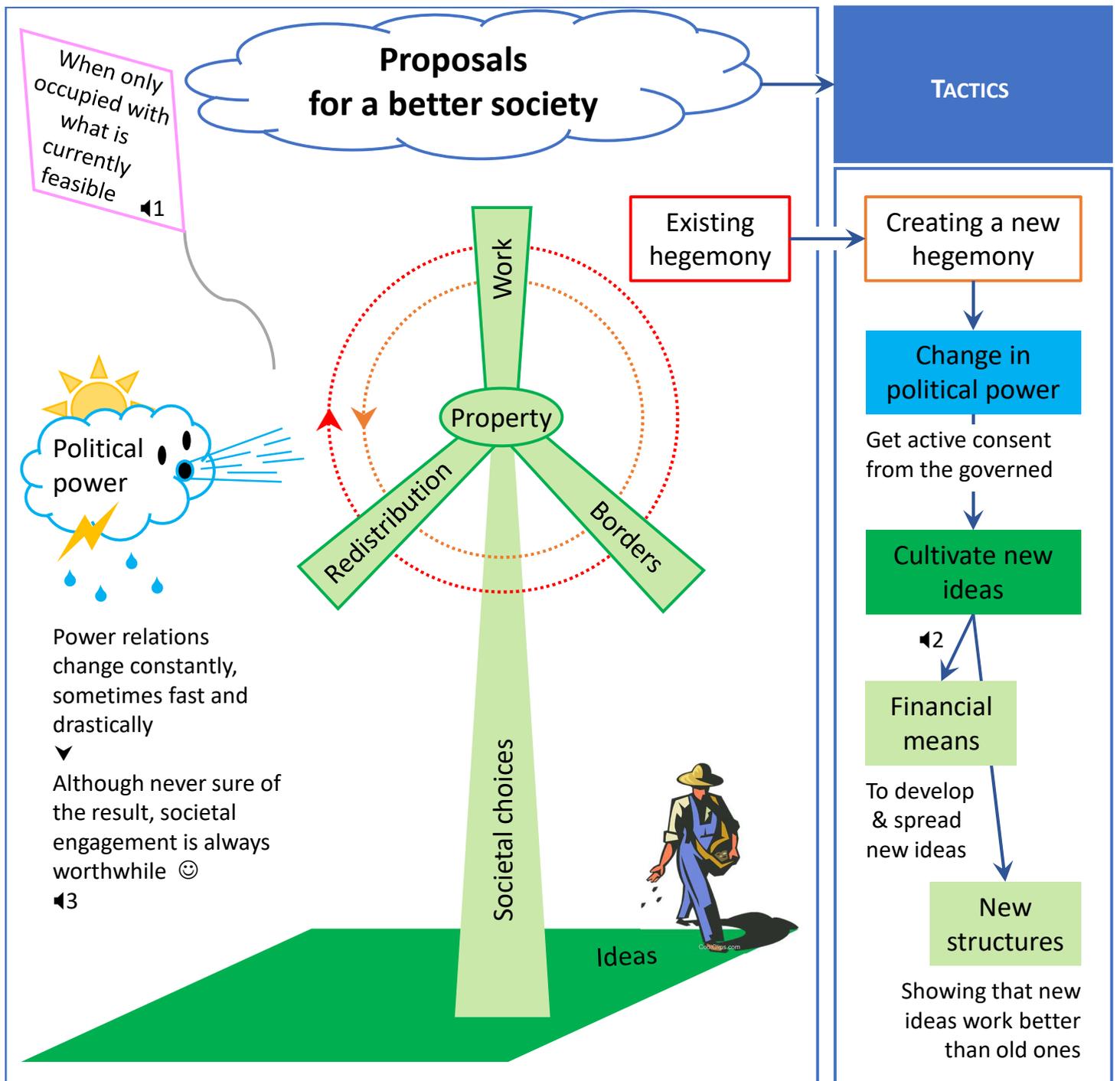
Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Global Timber Tracking Network View project



VLIR-KMFRI View project



HOW CREATE A NEW HEGEMONY?

= a dominance of a cluster of ideas (a story)

International networks



◀6

↓

↓



3 Agreement

2 Persuasion

1 Politicisation

When not (clearly) defined
 ➤ Confusion
 ➤ Powerlessness

= fight over a conflict → Goal is winning, it's not about reaching a compromise ◀4

- Politicisation forces you to:
- Clearly identify what you are against
 - Clearly identify your goal, and how to reach it

Through training, education, the media ◀5

NOTES TO PONDER

◀1 Public opinion changes constantly. There is a need for a utopical long term vision (next to short term focus on the real issues of people) to **keep in view the society we wish for** & our well-defined ideological goal.

◀2 Developing and spreading new ideas is not easy. Citing Noam Chomsky: "The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to limit the spectrum of acceptable ideas, but to allow a lively debate within these boundaries".

An example of what is needed to break with the consensus is given by the adepts of the free market who were marginalised after World War II. Their ideas were not taken seriously. There was a consensus about the welfare state and the need for an active role of the state in the economy. However, they established a society (*the Mont Perelin Society*) to discuss and further develop their ideas. Sprouting from the society were (i) several think tanks, (ii) a global network acting as an umbrella organisation (*the Atlas Network*), (iii) a research institute (*the Institute for Economic Affairs*), and (iv) various universities spreading their ideas. **What united these research organisations was their overarching goal of promoting the idea of a free market** (spread via magazines, scientific papers, books, public lectures, participation in debates, ...).

◀3 Every world improver struggles sometimes with existential questions. Societal engagement is situated between resignation and hope, cynicism and idealism, fear and determination. **Maybe it is this attempt to keep on striving for a better world that makes us human.** *Man is the only creature that refuses to be what it is*, wrote Albert Camus in *L'homme revolté*. Progress is the realisation of utopias, looking beyond the here and now.

◀4

Politics

We vs. them

Recognising conflict

Fight

Management

Keeping everyone aboard

Avoiding conflict

Dialogue

◀5 We obey to laws and follow prevailing norms, not out of fear for punishment, but because we are convinced of their necessity and their importance. We are convinced of the ideas of what is accepted as normal, and what is unacceptable, through training, education, and the media. **There are no quick wins in politics.**

◀6 **If we want to realise fundamental changes, international networks need to be created.** Living conditions are local, but their underlying causes are often global.

By Nele Schmitz

Adapted from:

Dit is morgen by Thomas Decreus & Christophe Callewaert, 2016

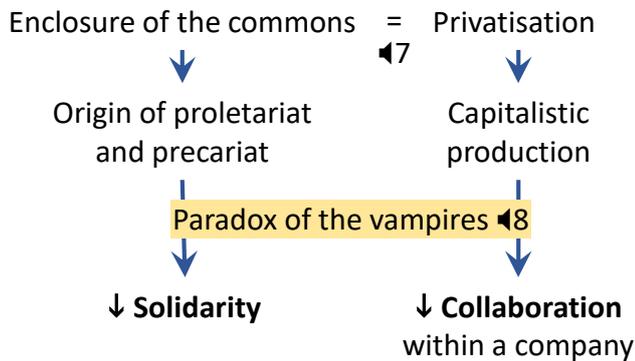
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SOCIETAL CHOICES

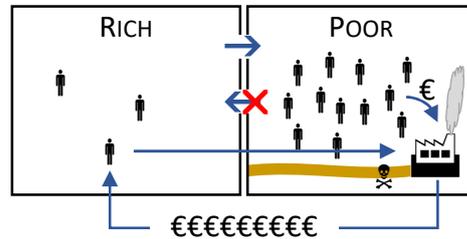
Property



Borders

No free travelling people ↔ Free trade & capital

Paradoxes in global border policies



Absurdity of the world order

More commons, less privatisation ◀9

International policy for a fair world, good working conditions worldwide ◀10

Lack of social & sustainable globalisation

Privatisation

No redistribution

↓ Solidarity

Endless productivity growth

Proletariat
Precariat

Servants
Bullshit jobs
Un- & over-employment

Work as a need of society, and not as a need for an individual to belong to society ◀11

Maximum wages, abolishment of tax havens

Work

↑ Productivity without
↓ Working time or redistribution ◀12



Disbalance in 21thc.

- ▶ People living in **chronic uncertainty** (precariat) are bad democrats. Great inequality and democracy don't go together ◀8
- ▶ **Long working days** stimulate passive consumption instead of active participation

Redistribution

Inequality in the world is at a record height

3,5.10⁹ of the poorest = 62 of the richest have as much wealth as ◀13

- ▶ Even EU & US not willing to stop **tax havens** although possible via international networks ◀14
- ▶ **Salaries determined by auction**, not based on what the top managers can bring to the company but what they can earn elsewhere ◀15

NOTES TO PONDER

◀7 Enclosure politics are about land **grabbing for self-enrichment** (*cfr.* for centuries forests have been the safety net in times of scarcity or crop failure). The pace of land privatisation is at a record height. But enclosures are also about f.ex. scientific research results behind a paywall, with no free access, although being products of the community.

◀8 **The great inequality in the world is a political choice**, in democracies hence also supported by the disadvantaged. Nevertheless, being rich also means being powerful.

Commons enable capitalism but capitalism disables commons. Within a company the work environment is very similar as in a commons, companionship or team building is encouraged. The logics of private property would be unworkable: colleagues sharing nothing with the team, but instead selling their ideas internally.

◀9 The state can act as a tool to privatise commons. The state can prevent privatisation of the commons. For the realisation of the commons a classic political fight will still be needed. **If commons are called a trend, capitalism is a short-lived fashion.**

◀10 **Local living conditions often have global causes.** Good working conditions include the absence of superiority of certain groups. Racism is an ideology established after introduction of the human rights - with their radical ideal of equality - to justify the existing inequality. Even when the concept *race* was abolished, it returned under the name of *culture, values, civilization*. Nevertheless, ideas are changeable and can be changed, for example by developing civic education curricula. It is not globalisation but a lack of social globalisation that puts the existing social security systems under pressure. International policies are essential.

◀11 A basic income and reduced working hours would complement each other to **decouple social security from paid work**. Four conditions for the implementation of the basic income: (i) it should be high enough to prevent it from becoming a wage subsidy to employers, (ii) it should sprout from the current social security, not oppose it, (iii) independent bodies monitoring compliance with employee rights, and (iv) profit redistribution.

◀12 While working time was reduced with 50% from 19th to 20th century, productivity growth from 20th to 21st century didn't bring a further reduction in working hours. **We collectively agreed to the 5 day work week as if it was a law of nature**, which it is not. In 1930 the 30h week was introduced at *Kellogg's* company. Only 2 years later employees were paid for 40h while working 30h a week. In 1980 they suddenly reintroduced the 40h week although productivity had exploded. Ideas change.

◀13 Only 1/3 of the 400 richest people in the *Forbes* list (a ranking of the wealthiest Americans by the business magazine *Forbes*) have their fortune thanks to their entrepreneurial skills. **Accumulation of wealth, rising importance of inheritances.**

◀14 **Tax havens can be stopped** through taxes, increased custom tariffs, and disclosure of the bank secret. These are anti-crime measures as they prevent stealing from the government.

◀15 The American NBA (National Basketball Association) has a maximum salary to keep competition exciting. The idea of a maximum wage for everyone is an idea we have to get used to (again). Until 1960 the highest tax rate in the US was 90%! People were used to **the idea of a maximum income**. It could transform work from an activity to earn big money to an activity to deliver value for society.