



in the  
Dialectics

Academia

of  
Diversity

Bolette M. Christensen CASA 2004

# A place for academia in the fight for social change?

*Knowledge, theory, research, and intellectuals  
in the movements of diversity*

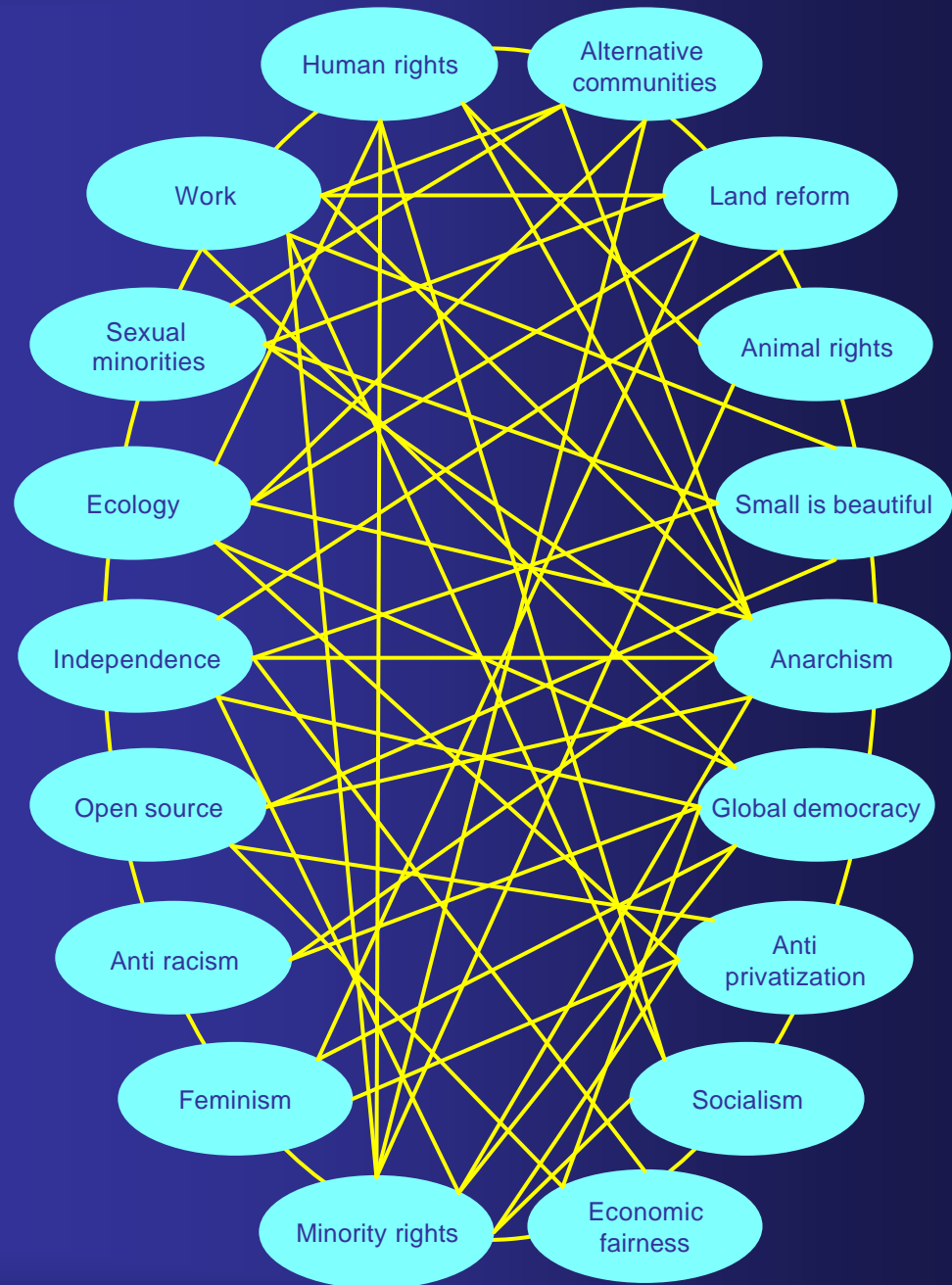
## Outline

- The movement field: Dialectics of Diversity
- The movements within network society
- Pressures and proposals
- The power of Knowledge
- The use of theory
- Academia and academics within the dialectics of diversity
- Some kind of conclusion

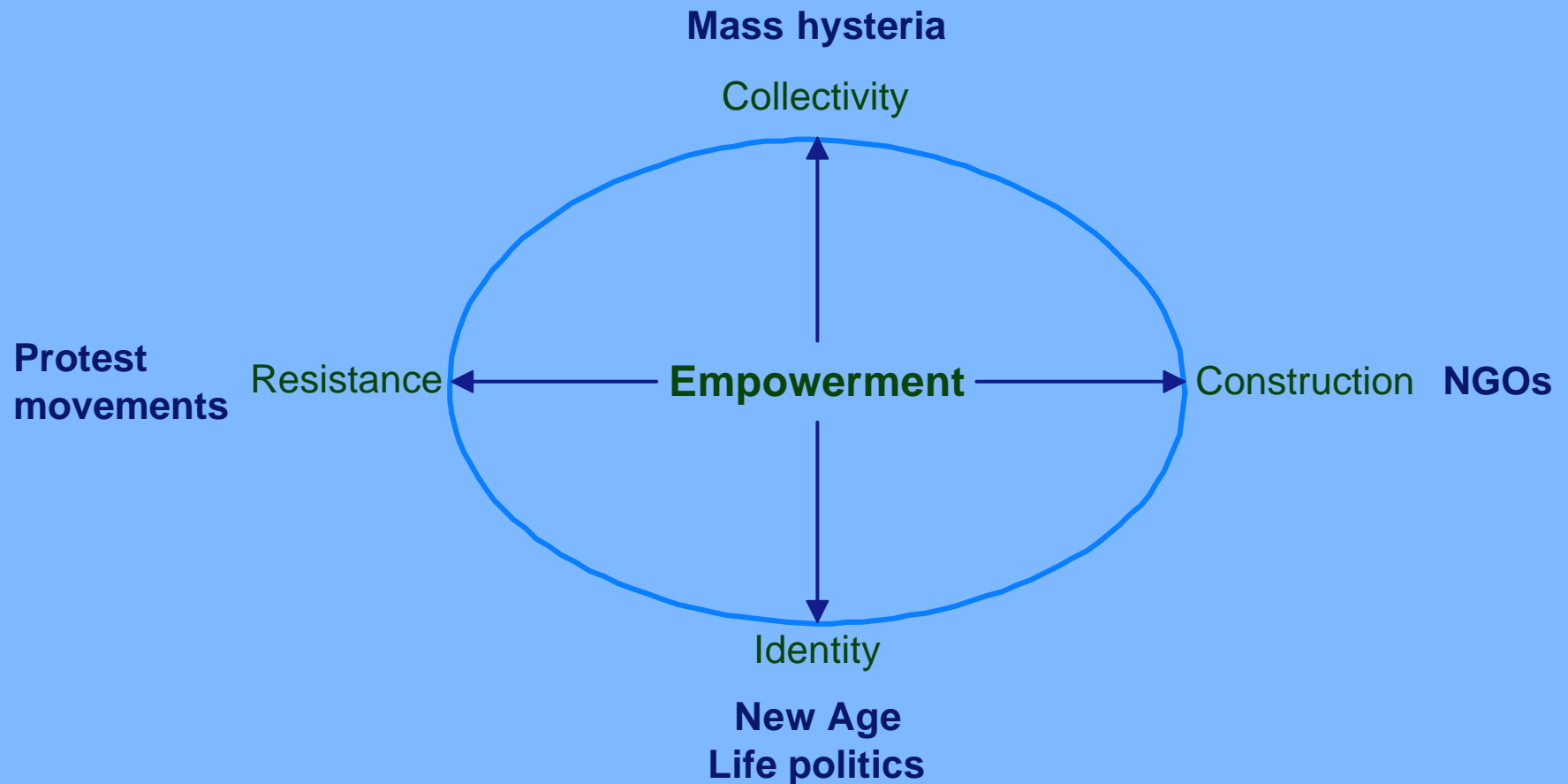
# Multitude

## A field of movements

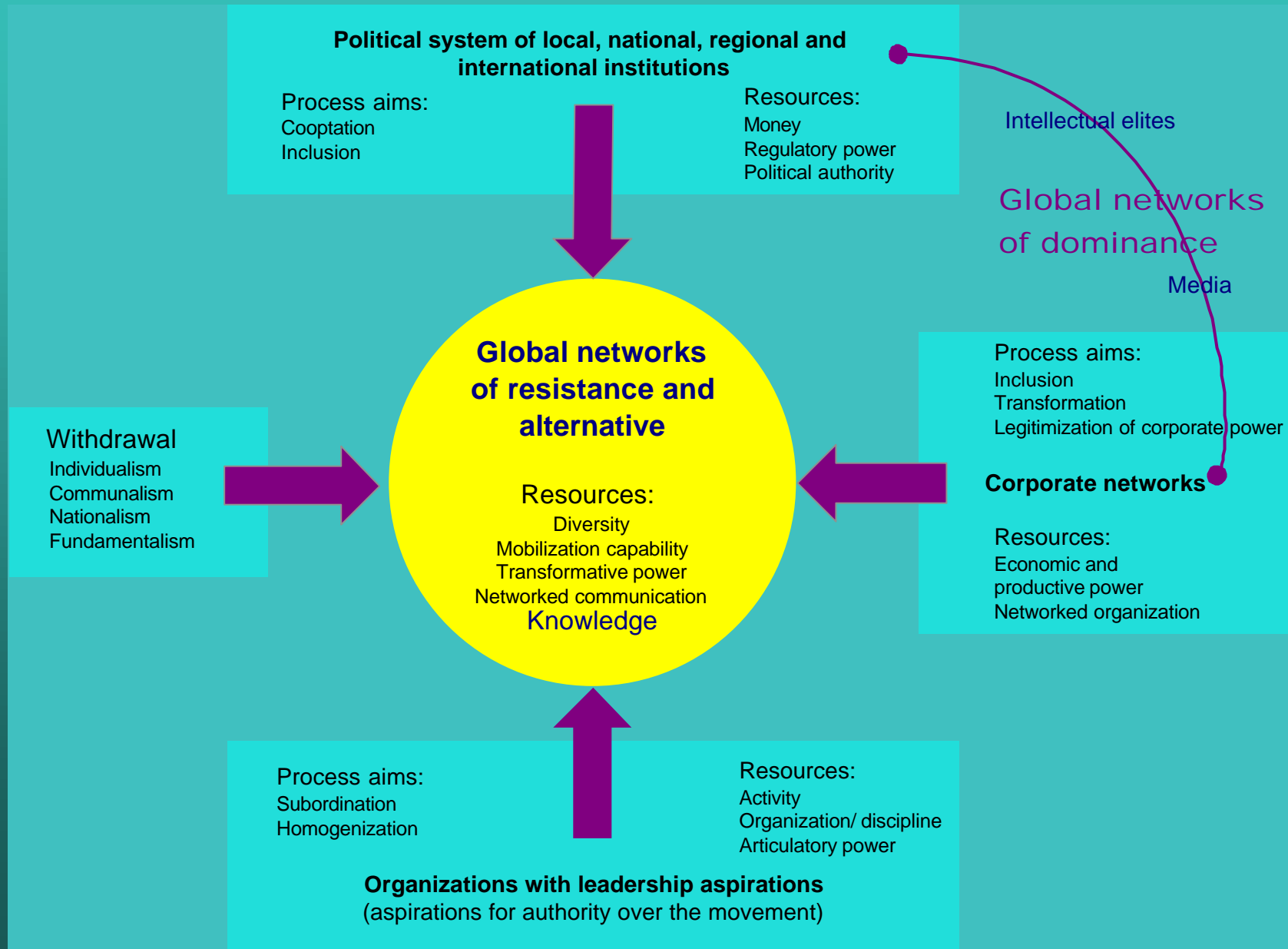
## Networks of diversity



# Dialectics of Empowerment



# Pressures and proposals



# The global political system

Local, national, regional, and international institutions & networks of political power

## Resources

- Funding
- Regulatory power
- Political authority
- Military & police

## Needs

- Mobilization capability
- Knowledge
- Transformative power
- Creativity & innovation

## Process aims

- Cooptation
- Inclusion

# The global networks of corporate power

## Resources

- Economic strength
- Networked organization
- Productive power
- Expansion

## Needs

- Legitimization
- Knowledge
- Transformative power
- Creativity & innovation

## Process aims

- Cooperation
- Inclusion
- Transformation
- Utilization

# Governance

Global networks of political, corporate, media, cultural and intellectual elites

## Recourses

- Political authority
- Funding
- Regulatory power
- Military & police
- Economic strength
- Productive power
- Expansion
- Networked organization

## Process aims

- Inclusion of creative & innovative powers
- Exclusion of opposition



# And some tendencies from below

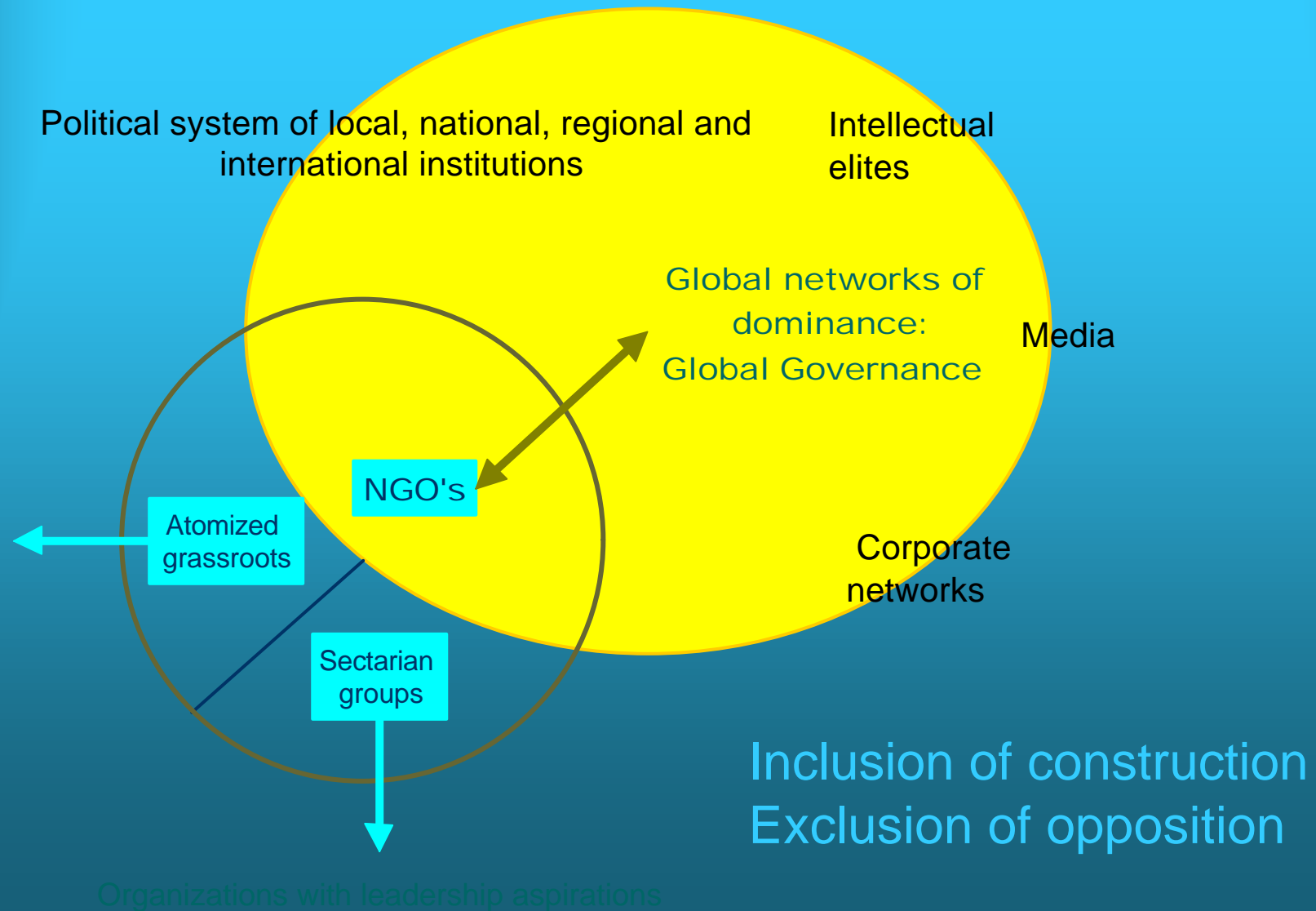
## The quest for hegemony

- Leadership aspirations
- Organizational unity: A global organization
- Ideological & strategic homogenization
- The idea of a new International

## Withdrawal/ Resistance Identity

- Alternativism
- Communalism
- Nationalism
- Ethnocentrism
- Fundamentalism
- Individualism
- Reflective consumerism (life politics)

# Worst case scenario



# The power of knowledge

*Knowledge: Information making sense: Context*

- Knowledge as political practice: Articulatory power
- Knowledge as external strength •  
Claim for authoritative knowledge
- Knowledge in the dynamics of self reflection •  
Claim for critical & creative thinking connected to  
practice
- Decentered knowledge of practice is produced and  
distributed within the networks of diversity
- Knowledge is embedded and articulated within  
practical and theoretical contexts

# A place for theory

- Conceptual discourse  
Conceptual representation of a certain domain of social practices from a certain perspective (Fairclough)
  - Conceptual articulation of reflective understanding
  - Based upon abstraction & concretion of experience
  - Enabling to learn from experience
  - Concepts: Linguistic tools for abstraction & concretion
- 
- Relevance depends on practical context
  - Diversity of practices is reflected in theoretical diversity
  - All theory is reductive
  - Eclecticism is better than theoretical purity

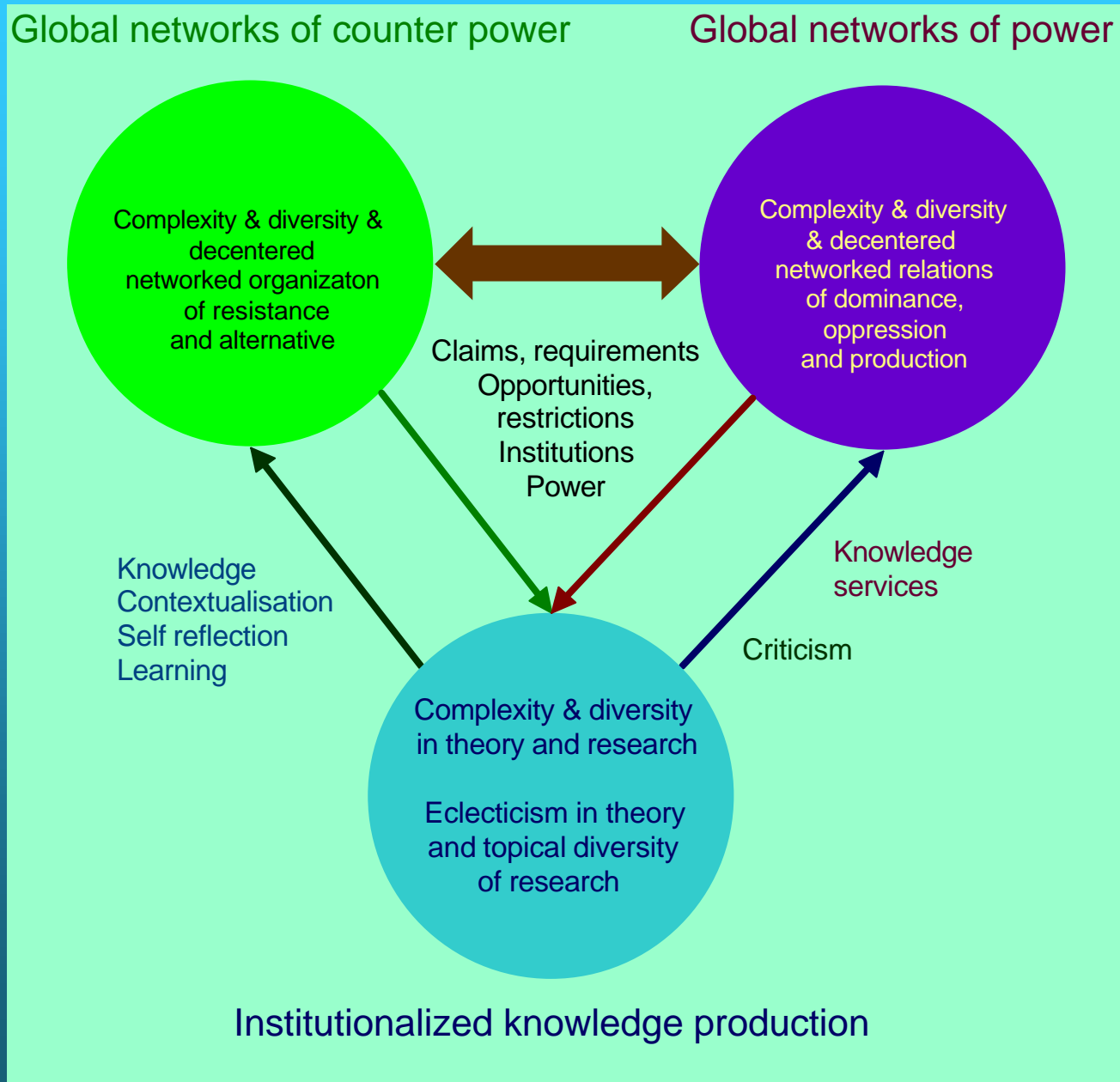
# Academia

- The institutional setting
- producing institutionalized knowledge
- socializing/ normalising individuals
  - shaping subjectivities
- A central institution of governance

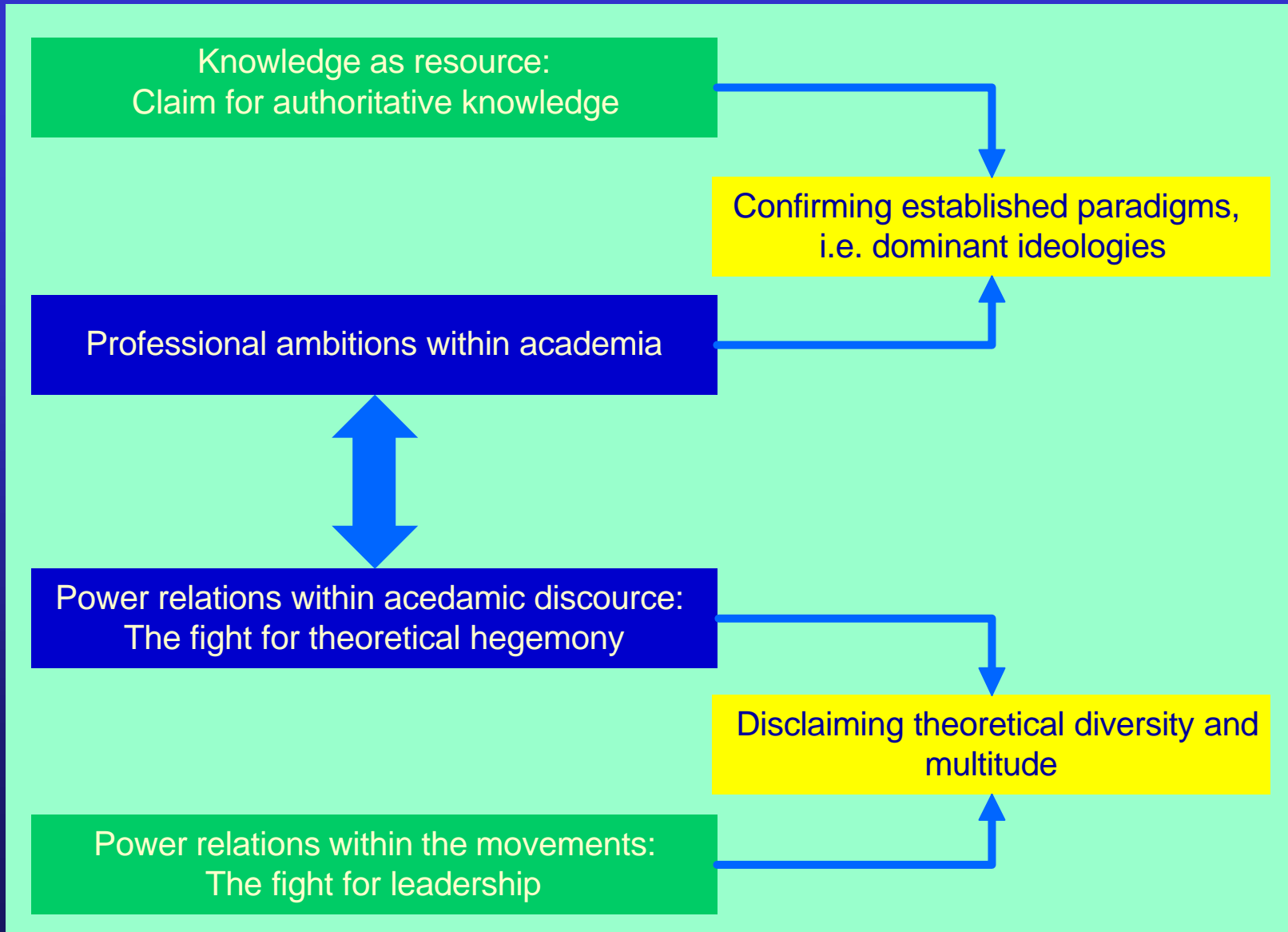
# Academics

- Individuals socialized within Academia
- Students, theorists, researchers, professionals
- With or without actual affiliation to Academia

# The claims on knowledge, theory and research



# Pitfalls



# The academic intellectual

- Wants recognition
- Wants a career
- Wants to be right
- Wants to win the fight about truth
- Identifies with all embracing concepts & theory
- Feels uncomfortable with ambiguity
- Tends towards reductive abstraction
- Wants to demonstrate intellectual superiority

Is familiarized with the fight for power  
using the techniques of academic discourse



# The place for academics within the dialectics of diversity

- Academics are activists
  - Deliver opposition, criticism, alternative knowledge
  - Articulate counter discourses
  - Produce the dynamic resource of knowledge
    - as professional
    - as independent intellectual
    - as participant
- Contribute to the continual dynamics of decentered & networked self reflection on experience and action

## In order to do that ...

- Give up the privilege of authoritative knowledge
- De-academization of knowledge
- Abstain from the quest for theoretical unambiguity
- Abstain from the wish for hegemony
- Abstain from the claim for absolute truth
- Accept theoretical diversity, lack of clarity, eclecticism, diversity of research topics, diversity of perspectives, internal contradictions

You are neither to be a consultant or the exclusive knower of “What’s to be done”

## The task

The task of knowledge, research and theory as self reflection within the movements is to sustain the dialectics of diversity contribute to the dynamics of the field take part in the continual re-contextualisation of experience and practice aiming at social change

Open new horizons for  
resistance and alternative ...



Beyond globalisation