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Skills for Just Transitions

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- ❖ Work in progress drawing on two   projects:
 - ❖ VET Africa 4.0 <http://www.vetafrica4-0.com>
 - ❖ Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures
<https://tesf.network>
- ❖ An attempt to develop a better theoretical grounding for the VET - sustainable development relationship
- ❖ Developing a provisional research agenda for TESF on skills for sustainable futures



(cf. Swilling, 2020; Tikly, 2020)

- ❖ Complex
- ❖ Realist
- ❖ Postcolonial
- ❖ Relational
- ❖ Contextual
- ❖ Capability-oriented



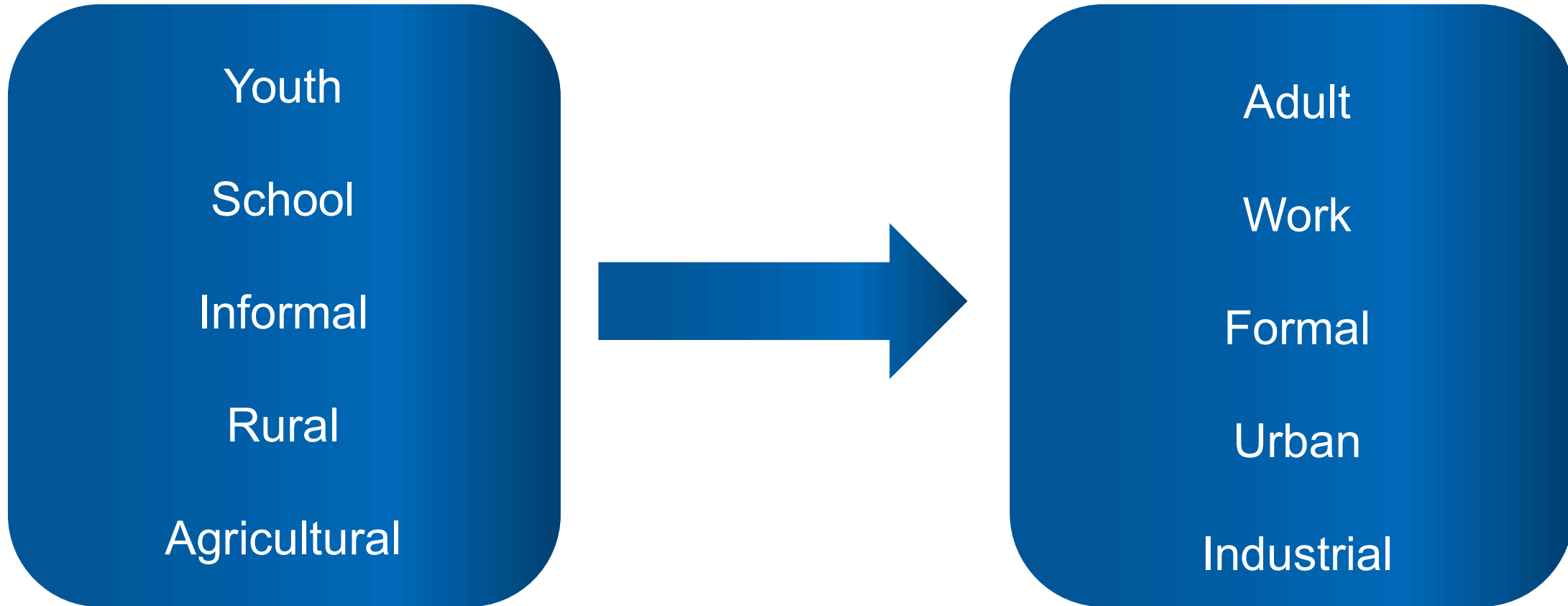
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What's Wrong with VET?



Teleology of transitions



cf. du Toit and Neves, 2014; Ferguson and Li, 2018



- ❖ Carbon capitalism
- ❖ Colonial extractivism
- ❖ Colonial and post-colonial pacification
- ❖ Reproduction of power and inequality



Vocational school fallacy redux

- ❖ Economists' approach is grounded in the false teleologies; VET for a now that does not exist and a future that never will
- ❖ Sociologists' approach tends towards critique over improvement; and an implicit teleology of "Come the Revolution"
- ❖ Environmentalists' approach contains teleological danger in its language of transformations and transitions



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Transformations and Transitions



The educational double transformation

- ❖ VET must be transformed and contribute to wider transformations (UNESCO/McGrath)
- ❖ Education and training must be socially and environmentally just and capability-generating in itself as well as contributing to broader just transitions (TESF/Tikly)
- ❖ Education cannot lead but it can play an important role
- ❖ For VET, like all other aspects of education, the challenge is massive



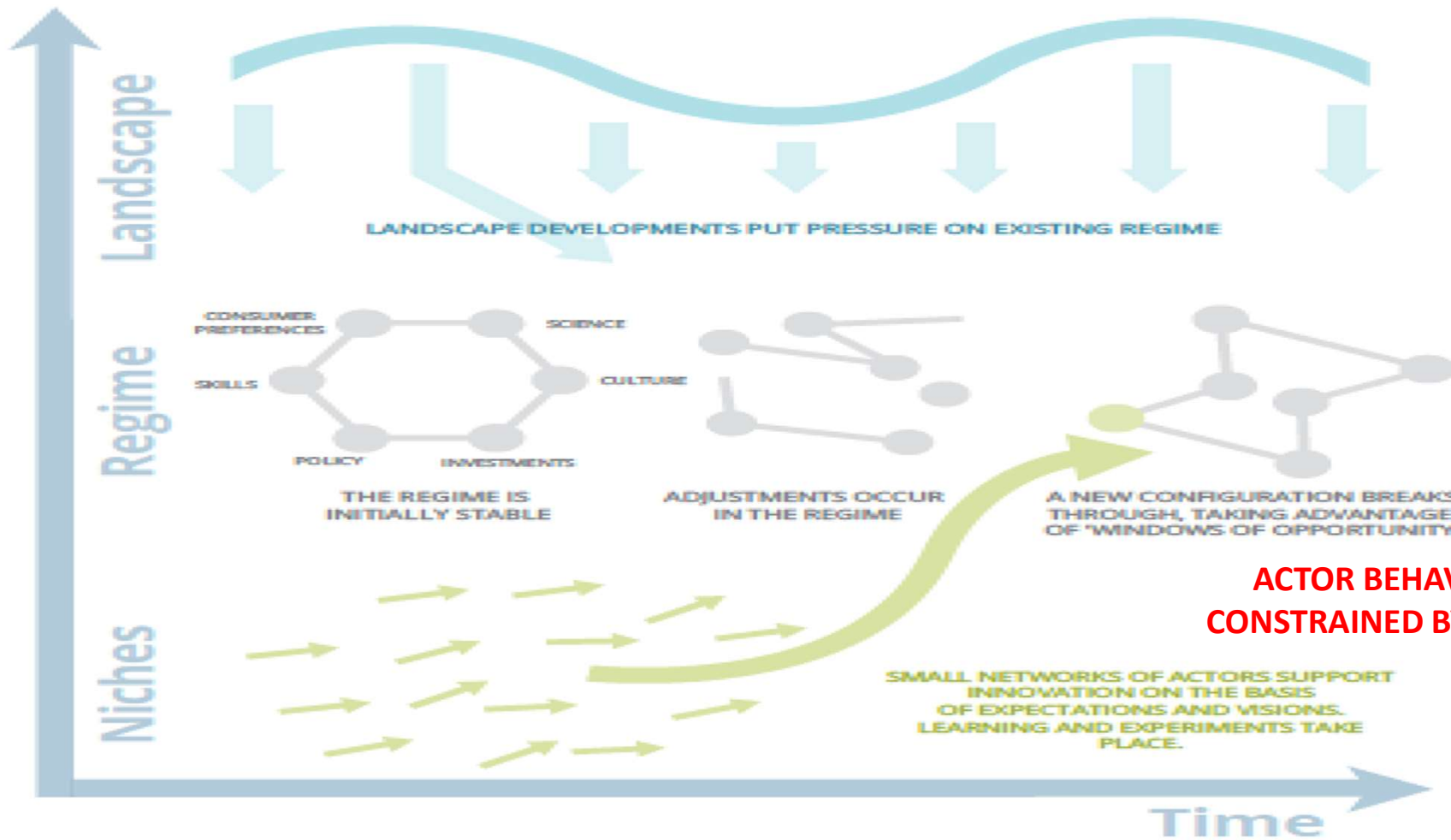
What is a just transition?

“A just transition is a process of increasingly radical incremental changes that accumulate over time in the actually emergent transformed world envisaged by the SDGs and sustainability. The outcome is a state of well-being founded on greater environmental sustainability and social justice (including the eradication of poverty). These changes arise from a vast multiplicity of struggles, each with their own context-specific temporal and spatial dimensions.” (Swilling 2020: 7)

- ❖ Dangers of business-as-usual till too late and / or unjust transitions



A multi-level perspective



Ramsarup
(2020)
after Geels

**ACTOR BEHAVIOUR
CONSTRAINED BY 'RULES'**



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Theorising Better



- ❖ Need to consider how change comes about; what obstructs it; and what can be done to remove/overcome barriers
- ❖ Need to think about path dependencies and emergences across domains and identify key agents –
 - ❖ Theory of the state- “sustainable developmental state” (Swilling 2020)
 - ❖ Role of networks and intermediary structures- evolutionary economics
 - ❖ Citizen-led transformations (Scoones 2016)
- ❖ Need for “radical incrementalism” (Swilling 2020)



- ❖ Work is not simply productive
- ❖ No longer in "the century of the labouring man" – need to address informal and subsistence activities, and sustainable livelihoods perspective
- ❖ Reproductive work – caring for family, community, society
- ❖ Multishifts and portfolios – gig economy and zero-hour contracts
- ❖ Many don't have linear career pathways
- ❖ Work as unjust, indecent and precarious
- ❖ Future of work debate
- ❖ Goal of supporting just, decent, sustainable work and livelihoods



- ❖ A multi-level political economy of skills approach - an African social skills ecosystem account that incorporates informal and rural livelihoods better
- ❖ A critical capabilities approach to VET that focuses more on multidimensional poverty, aspirations and VET's broad social purpose
- ❖ A green skills approach that seeks to understand trajectories and blockages within labour markets regarding moves towards green and just work



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Towards a TESF Research Agenda for Skills for Sustainable Futures



1. A youth focus

- ❖ How do youth in the four TESF countries imagine their sustainable futures?
- ❖ What are they actually learning about skills for these futures?
- ❖ What new skills are they creating through their learning?
- ❖ How can this be enhanced?
- ❖ What are their, often complex and bi-directional, transitions between learning and work?
- ❖ How can we help them navigate these better?



2. Looking beyond formal sector employment

- ❖ How do we help those already in the informal sector or entering it to access the skills they need to enjoy sustainable livelihoods?
- ❖ How can this be done in ways that improve inclusion?
- ❖ Given the longstanding challenges to occupational health and safety present in much work in the South, what can education and training do to promote work that is decent and safe?
- ❖ How can we best support agricultural skills development that promotes sustainability, that is grounded in local knowledges and that is inclusive of all scales of agricultural production?



3. A social skills ecosystems approach

- ❖ How sustainable and inclusive are urban and rural skills ecosystems? How can they be enhanced?
- ❖ What skills are needed to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable? How can these be delivered better?
- ❖ How can informal sector skills and enterprises be included in skills ecosystems in ways that build more effective learning and better work without undermining existing strengths of their own ecosystems?
- ❖ Given resilience is a key attribute of successful ecosystems, how can we support the development of further ecosystemic resilience to better deal with shocks such as are likely to emerge from further pandemics and from the worsening climate crisis?



4. Transitioning skills and work

- ❖ What can be done within learning systems to mitigate the negative effects of the greening of work and build towards just transitions for the most marginalised?
- ❖ How can we build on existing greening initiatives in formal learning and work institutions to better support the acquisition of green skills for sustainable livelihoods?
- ❖ What can be learnt from existing environmentally sustainable non-formal vocational training traditions?



Thank you for listening

<http://www.vetafrica4-0.com>

<https://tesf.network>

TESF background paper “Learning for sustainable livelihoods” -

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4022328>

VET Africa 4.0 literature review -

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13636820.2019.1679969>