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## **Classical Class Analysis and Assessment of Contemporary Eu-Policies - Ontology and Epistemology of Social Policy Debates**

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*Peter Herrmann: Classical Class Analysis and Assessment of  
Contemporary EU-Policies – Some Socio-Philosophical  
Considerations for Current Social Policy Making*

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# **Classical Class Analysis and Assessment of Contemporary EU-Policies – Ontology and Epistemology of Social Policy Debates<sup>1</sup>**

*This universe, which is the same for all, has not been made  
by any god or man, but it always has been, is, and will be, an  
ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and  
going out by regular measures.  
(Heraclitus)*

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## **Abstract**

*The present paper puts the argument forward that social policy analysis today lost very much its ground of systematically approaching its objective. Rather than analysing the objective relations, processes and their foundation political arguments and discourses are very much developed on moral grounds and remain on the level of studying empirical evidence. In this way they fail to provide both, a sound analysis and the development of strategic thinking for policy development.*

*After briefly reminding at some issues brought up by classical analysis of class structures and stratification theories, the text goes on by utilising these perspectives for cursorily assessing some trends in major fields of EU social policy debates. Hereby the ground is provided for looking for principal points of tensions in policy analysis and development, not least reminding critical and left approaches to avoid the trap of a kind of left-intellectual populism.*

### **I. Introduction – The Loss of Ontology and Epistemology**

In general sociology, in particular classical sociological theories plays only a minor role when it comes to debates of contemporary societies and challenges. Even more so, we find a widespread reluctance to think methodologically when it comes to analysing concrete political challenges, for instance expressed in a common orientation on what is called 'critical approach', however the ignorance of critical theory going hand in hand with such claim (*see for instance the more than insincere presentation of different theoretical approaches in Sarantakos, Sotirios: Social Research; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; this is especially worrying as this is a widely used book in teaching, thus providing a guideline for future social scientists*). Rather than understanding the reference to critical theory as plea for that specific approach, it is only meant to provide an example for much of current social research: at most, misaligned pieces of theories are taken to deal with extracts from the real world – extracts that are seen as problematic and subsequently requiring solutions – though it is barely systematically presented what the problematique of the situation actually is about nor is it reflected

what the criteria for the solution are. As much as theory is used as eclectic conglomerate of intuitively plausible explanans, the eclecticism is only reflecting a not less intuitively plausible explanandum. The reality itself seems to dissolve in over-complexity.

Sure, the world as such is getting somewhat more complex – and surely we have to face the paradox: it is not least scientific work that contributes to what *Max Weber* calls the de-mystification of the world and with this the hypercritical need of assessing seemingly everything. It is not least academia that, not despite but based on this de-mystification seems to make everything possible, but equally makes acting and changing so difficult. The latter is a consequence of the increasing complexity (everything seems to be in need of qualification); but it is as well a consequence of the supposed loss of value-statements and partisanship. Apparently, what cannot be measured, does not exist – and what does not exist cannot be changed – and we end up with a scientifically proven condemnation to remain inactive and oblige ourselves to perpetuation. The space for action is reduced on a technically defined space.

However, all this is itself based on partisanship; and all this value based – though disguised behind the fallacy of methodological individualism and its recourse on ‘bounded rationality’.

To a large extent we can see this as well as reluctance of social science to look at contradictions and their dialectical character. The actual challenges for social science are mentioned by *Immanuel Wallerstein in his Presidential Address on the XIVth World Congress of Sociology in 1998 and concern*

- \* the understanding of rationality,
- \* the question of Eurocentrism
- \* the question of “multiple realities of time”
- \* coming from outside of social science: the challenge of dealing with complexities
- \* the challenge by feminism and in particular its epistemological meaning
- \* the challenge of acknowledging that “modernity, the centrepiece of all out work, has never really existed.”

*(see Wallerstein, Immanuel: The Heritage of Sociology, The Promise of Social Science. Presidential Address, XIVth World Congress of Sociology, Montreal, 26 July 1998; in: International Sociological Association [ed.]: Current Sociology 1999; 47; 1: 1-37; the quotes from pages 14 and 19 respectively ; <http://intl-csi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/47/1/1>)*

Especially the last point is of importance as the presumption of modernity suggests – as paradox outcome of modernisation – a tendency of standstill, of lack of agency, being replaced by rational, objective rules, being expressed in structures, existing outside of or without agency. Subsequently we find the orientation on structuralism and instrumentalist reason on the one hand; and on the other hand we find new fundamentalism, voluntarism and subjectivism as a counterpart. This means that an engaging ontological and epistemological debate is barely developing.

In consequence, today's political debates and analysis is focusing on empiricist research undermining – paradoxically by emphasising its instrumentalist action-orientation – strategic action aiming on changing societal structures. This strongly contradicts an approach that is criticised by *William E. Collins*, writing

*The primacy of epistemology thereby treats the ideas of subject, objet, presentation, and knowledge as if they were already fixed in their range of application. The attraction of this perspective resides in its claim to bypass issues that might otherwise contaminate, derail, or confound the operational self-confidence of human sciences.*

*The primacy of epistemology turns out itself, of course, to embody a contestable social ontology. The empiricist version, for instance, treats human beings as subjects or agents of knowledge; it treats things as independent objects susceptible to representation; it treats language as primarily a medium of representation, or, at least, a medium in which the designative dimensions of concepts can be disconnected rigorously from*



*the contexts of rhetoric/action/evaluation in which they originate.*

*(Connolly, William E.: The Ethos of Pluralization; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995: 6)*

## **II. Defining the Social**

Following from here, it is not surprising that political debates on social structures are barely taking into account that the meaning of social structures is fundamentally going beyond empirically identifiable groupings that can simply be seen in statistical manifestations and correlations. Empiricist approaches, as we find them in mainstream debates, do not only lack at least vague orientation around the constitutive process of class formation. Furthermore, a lack of providing a comprehensive understanding of what the social actually is about, can also not be denied.

To begin with, we have to overcome the fundamental difficulty of current mainstream thinking in social policy research and practice, namely the fact that it operates with the basic and unquestioned assumption of an undefined subject area. Although the term policy as set of rules for action, aiming on a rational outcome, is generally defined and accepted, moreover: although the policy areas themselves seem to be more or less uncontested – making reference to social policy in areas as migration, elderly care, youth or defining these as social policy issues, seems to be taken for sure without need for further consideration. Although any list of proposed topics seems to be more or less unquestioned (in any given society), such lists are not exhaustive either. International developments, exchange, historical processes may contribute to change – one example is migration, which had been historically to a different extent and with different perspectives on the agenda. However, what is missing in the entire debate is a clear understanding of the social. This can be understood from the historical development: analytically not being an issue as the living together of people and also its regulation followed spontaneous patterns – though regulation took place and was in an individual

perspective a conscious process, it emerged as increasingly problematic with three developments, namely

- \* taking *Elias'* language: the lengthening chains of interdependence
- \* taking *Maine's* terminology: the development from status to contract and
- \* taking *Marxist* analysis: the emergence of antagonistic structures within an accumulation regime that depends by definition
  - on formal equality on the one hand and
  - a commodity-lead reductionism of understanding calculability on the other hand.

This interpretation – based on an approach of historical-dialectical materialism – paves as well the way for any rethinking as it had been mentioned before with reference to the challenges put forward by *Immanuel Wallerstein*. A fundamental issue is the analysis of the dialectical character of processuality and relationality. Reference can be made to *Ananta Kumar Giri* who writes:

*Realization of non-duality in a world of duality is an important challenge before us both ontologically as well as epistemologically, i.e. what ever reality we try to understand has a non-dual dimension and our method of understanding it ought to embody this non-dual sensitivity. As we shall see, an ontology and epistemology of non-duality is neither one of total absorption nor uncritical holism nor monism as it is sensitive to disjunction and antinomies between different dimensions or parts of reality.*

*(Giri, Ananta Kumar: Creative Social Research: Rethinking Theories and Methods and the Calling of an Ontological Epistemology of Participation [pre-published version received from the author]; Chennai: May 2008: 19)*

This is reflecting the fact that

*[s]ecurity issues in an age of globalized interconnectivity are bound to be relational and thus inseparable from social and*

*cultural processes shaping interests and perceptions about 'Self' and 'Otherness'.*

*(Truong, Thanh-Dam: Human Security, Gender and Globalized Interconnectivity; forthcoming in: Munck, R./Fagan, H. [eds.]: Globalization and Human Security: An Encyclopaedia; Praeger Security Press 2008: 1)*

For contemporary political debates this means not least to draw attention to the issue of redefining productivity and competitiveness – as elementary moments of capitalist systems – by dealing explicitly with their meaning of going beyond their commodity-striven interpretation, emphasising the meaning of the production as social relationship. In the words used by *Karl Marx*:

*In the process of production, men enter into relation not only with nature. They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their relation with nature, does production take place.*

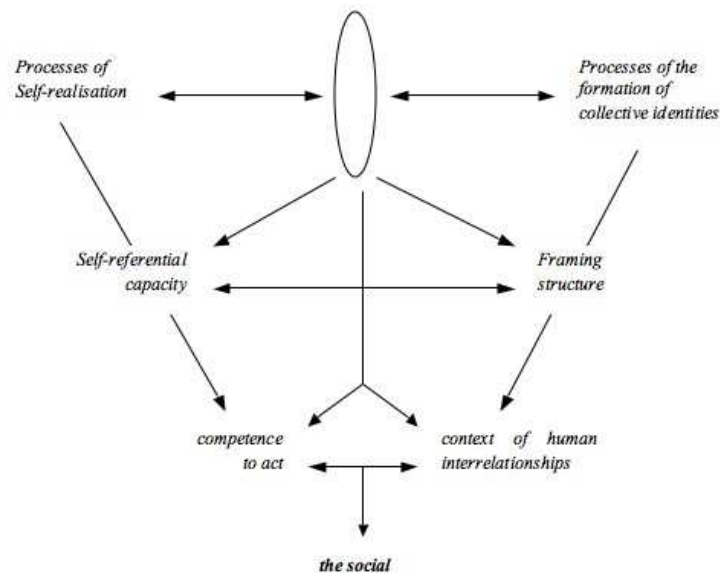
*(Marx, Karl: Wage Labour and Capital [1847/1849]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works. Volume 9: Marx and Engels: 1949; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1977: 197-228: here: 211)*

However, this is only the first step, showing the need of elaborating an understanding of the social as point of reference – the *Marxian* statement only indirectly referring to it. Here it is proposed to define it

*as the outcome of the interaction between people (constituted as actors) and their constructed and natural environment. With this in mind its subject matter refers to people's productive and reproductive relationships. In other words*

- \* *the constitutive interdependency between processes of self-realisation and processes of the formation of collective identities*
- \* *is a condition for 'the social', realised by the interactions of*
  - ! *actors, being – with their self-referential capacity – competent to act*
  - ! *and their framing structure, which translates immediately into the context of human relationships.*

*The following graph may clarify the references:*



*(from an internal working paper of the Foundation on Social Quality, Amsterdam 2007)*

This has to be located in a twofold dialectical tension, namely

- \* the tension between communities and institutions and
- \* the tension between biographical development and societal development.

This is a translation and specification of issues concurrent throughout social science, in recent debates not least issued as matter of structure and agency (see different approaches as for instance Juergen Habermas' work on

*Communicative Action, Giddens' Theory of Structuration and Margret Archer's work on the Morphogenetic Approach*). Looking a little bit more into details of the concept, we can refer to the following graphical synopsis – taken from the website of the *European Foundation on Social Quality* ([www.socialquality.eu](http://www.socialquality.eu)).



Taking the *Marxian* perspective serious, we subsequently see that the productive moment of labour is equally split as the value of commodities is split. As we find in the second case the split between utility value and exchange value, we find in the case of the production the split between the production of commodities and the establishment of sociability in form of market exchange on the one hand and the establishment of immediate social relationships. This statement has to be qualified in two regards: First, 'immediate' does not mean the 'peer interaction' or face-to-face relations – it refers to mechanisms of direct, un-mediated regulation of issues of personal development. Second, it is of course as well relevant that the distinction between the different areas is not necessarily distinct in the strict sense but to some extent mutually depending on each other. In other words, rather than seeing the market-regulated structure of exchange as being colonising all other relationships these are as well spaces in which all other relationships are taking place – for the good or for the worse. Although we have to acknowledge the overwhelming power that evolves with the emergence of

systems as regulated, and 'rationalised' or better 'instrumentalist' moments of the living together, it has also to be acknowledged that these 'systematic powers' are by now means independent, self-regulating in a strict sense; rather, they depend on powerful human action and are as such – to lean on *Max Weber* – geared by meaning. This is as well true with regard to economic systems. In *Weber's* words

*No matter how calculating and hard-headed the ruling considerations in such a social relationship – as that of merchant to his customers – may be – it is quite possible for it to involve emotional values which transcend its utilitarian significance.*

*(Weber, Max: Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology [1921]; Edited by Guenther Roth/Claus Wittich; Berkeley et altera: University of California Press, 1978: 41)*

Subsequently, within the 'system world' we find the commodification of the entire life and social relationships; but it is here as well where we find an evolving space, allowing going beyond 'gated communities' of market relationships as far as the power relationship, which is inherent in a specific mode of accumulation, can be overcome. – However, the latter is only put forward as side remark, requiring further elaboration and qualification. It seems to be at least a point that may allow throwing some new light on the debates around the supposed silent revolution – it may be a revolution that, turned from the head onto the feet – is much more piercing than it seems in the light of being a matter of a changing superstructure.

Subsequently and in particular when looking at the need for a theoretical reflection for action it is imperative to look for a sound theoretical reasoning in order to understand the social structure as condition for equality, inequality and the ways of overcoming the latter. Here, equality is only used as tentative concept, aiming on guaranteeing universality with regard of availing of what the social quality approach defines as the four conditional factors, namely

- \* socio-economic security
- \* social cohesion
- \* social inclusion
- \* social empowerment (*see already the graphical synopsis; this will be taken up as well below*).

Important as a general matter is the fact that the *Social Quality Approach* does not aim on establishing a ‘status of good quality’; rather, it is about establishing a public space, allowing the development of

- \* social processes
- \* in conjunction with social relationships.

These seem to be principles that can be very much acceptable as universal principals – equally emerging from and compatible with different world religions and at the same time going beyond them (*see Herrmann, Peter: Social Quality – Looking for a Global Policy Approach. A Contribution to the Analysis of the Development of Welfare States; Hong Kong/Taipei, forthcoming*).

Such an *approach* is developed not least from a systematic analysis, discussion and critique of other approaches. The following table provides an overview – understanding – broadly speaking – ontology as study and ‘characterisation’ of the actual being and epistemology as origins and ‘character’ of knowledge.

<i>Ontology</i>	<i>epistemology</i>	<i>advocates</i>
<i>Mechanic-utilitarianism</i>	<i>positivistic methodological Individualism</i>	<i>Vilfredo Pareto Friedrich Hayeck</i>
<i>Constructive-voluntarism</i>	<i>hermeneutic methodological Individualism</i>	<i>Max Weber, Schumpeter Jurgen Habermas</i>
<i>Dialectical materialism</i>	<i>relational collectivism</i>	<i>Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Bertell Ollman, Uno</i>
<i>Structural functionalism</i>	<i>positivistic collectivism</i>	<i>Emile Durkheim, Boswell Talcott Parsons</i>

Without going into detail, it is important to criticise current policy making by the fact that

*what is notable about most of this legislation (i.e. equality legislation in particular by the EU) is its concern with combating discrimination rather than with trying to achieve greater inequality in the conditions of people's lives. At its best, it calls for positive action to help members of subordinate groups to access services and to compete in the labour market. But it does not challenge the inequalities of reward, power and prestige of different jobs and does little to change the social structures that produce inequality.*

*(Baker, John et altera: Equality. From Theory to Action; Houndsmills et altera: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004: 11)*

In other words, it is by theoretical reflection – and only by this – that we can develop a sound practice that goes beyond incrementalism. Neither the standards – the overall goals of policy making – nor the way to reach them can be developed without gaining an understanding of the underlying power structures and mechanisms of allocation that are present in any given society.

Looking at the chart, from this perspective, the shortcomings of the presented approaches are, that any one-sidedness orients towards reification of existing praxis rather than orienting towards overcoming present structures and practices. This clarifies as well the need of analysing given social policies by way of detecting their underlying understanding of class.

### **III. The Social, Classes, Stratification and Groups**

Class definitions and even definitions of stratification are rarely used – may be due to the developments of real socialism and the subsequent rejection of *Marxist* or even 'critical' social science, may be due to the blurring borders and mis-conceptualisation of theoretical analysis and political practice around post-modernism or may be as consequence of the dominance of positivist and socio-technical orientation which made a final brake-through with the orientation to what is called knowledge-based society. Be it as it is, such rejection is somewhat surprising as we find at the same time an increasing social inequality – in many cases admittedly seen as part of the growth



strategy and the strive for competitiveness or at least being seen as going rather inevitably hand in hand with the current course (see e.g. Liddle, Roger/Lerais, Frédérick: *Europe's Social Reality. A Consultation Paper from the Bureau of European Policy Advisers*; [http://ec.europa.eu/citizens\\_agenda/social\\_reality\\_stocktaking/docs/background\\_document\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/social_reality_stocktaking/docs/background_document_en.pdf); 02/06/08; 11:44; Begg, Ian/Draxler, Juraj/ Mortensen, Jørgen: *Is Social Europe Fit for Globalisation? A study of the social impact of globalisation in the European Union*; Centre for European Policy Studies/European Commission. Directorate-General 'Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities').

The class definition as put forward by *Karl Marx*, has to be seen against the background of an industrialising and 'capitalising' society. Class belonging is defined by the

*relative positions to the means of production, that is, by their differential access to scarce resources and scarce power*

*(Coser, Lewis A.: Masters of Sociological Thought. Ideas in Historical and Social Context; San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977: 48).*

On this ground three classes are defined:

*The owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and landowners, whose respective income are wages, profit and ground rent, in other words, wage labourers, capitalists and landowners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production.*

*(Marx, Karl: Capital. A Critique of Political Economy; Vol. III [1894]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works. Volume 37; London: Lawrence&Wishart; 1989: 870)*

Important is that the class analysis is by its nature relational and processual – taking again the words of *Karl Marx*:

*These social relations into which the producers enter with one another, the conditions under which they exchange their activities and participate in the whole act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production.*

*(Marx, Karl: Wage Labour and Capital [1847/1849]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works. Volume 9: Marx and Engels: 1949; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1977: 197-228: here: 211)*

Although this lays the ground for a very differentiated picture – which *Karl Marx* himself only started to hint upon in the final chapter of the third volume of *The Capital* (*Marx, Karl: Capital. A Critique of Political Economy; Vol. III [1894]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works. Volume 37; London: Lawrence&Wishart; 1989: 870 f.*) – the really important aspects in our context are that the class position

- \* is derived from the of peoples' objective positioning in regard to the means of production – with this it is as well relational in terms of the positioning to other groups in society
- \* is processual as it emerges from the process of production as a social relationship and
- \* it is a processual relationship in terms of its emergence from the way the objective conditions are determining the living situation ('class for itself') and in a further step the progressive consciousness ('class for itself').

In the words of *Karl Marx* in his work on *The Poverty of Philosophy* we read that

*[e]conomic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The domination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have pointed out only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends*

*becomes class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle.*

*(Marx, Karl: The Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels: Collected Works; Volume 6: Marx and Engels 1845-1848: London: Lawrence&Wishart: 1976: 105-212; here: 211)*

In any case, we are dealing with a historical process of active engagement.

In contrast, *Max Weber* provides a definition that – instead of focusing on the relative position in the process of production and its means – is nowadays closer to what is commonly known as theory of stratification. As such it

*is based on their consumption patterns rather than on their place in the market or in the process of production.*

*(Coser, Lewis A.: Masters of Sociological Thought. Ideas in Historical and Social Context; San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977: 229)*

In *Max Weber's* opus magnum – *Economy and Society* – we find a differentiation marked in the following way:

*'Class' means all persons in the same class situation.*

- a) A 'property class' is primarily determined by property differences,*
- b) A 'commercial class' by the marketability of goods and services,*
- c) A 'social class' makes up the totality of those class situations within which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical.*

*(Weber, Max: Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology (1921); Edited by Guenther Roth/Claus*

*Wittich; Berkeley et altera: University of California Press, 1978: 302)*

It is important to note again that in *Weber's* view the definition is typically not a matter arising from the position in the process of production; rather it is based in power structures that are not clearly defined in terms of any causality.

We have to direct attention towards *Max Weber's* concept of 'open and closed social relationships' (*Weber, Max: Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology [1921]; Edited by Guenther Roth/Claus Wittich; Berkeley et altera: University of California Press, 1978: 341-43*). The decisive moment is that openness and closure – though aiming on monopolisation – are in *Max Weber's* understanding related to the superstructure: the monopolisation of opportunities – rather than the monopolised disposal of property of means of production. Consequently, he – though using as well the term class – is actually providing at most a theory of stratification, a theory of status rather than a class theory.

Paradoxically, although 'meaning' and 'social action' are two central categories for *Max Weber's* sociology – and with this for his approach towards social stratification – there is also an inherent structuralist tendency. Any social action is bound to institutionalisation and institutions. And as institutions have the tendency of developing their own rules – taking over power as institutional systems, where meaning is not primarily part of a process of individuals and classes, consciously developing a stance and relationship to processuality of society; rather, meaning is – following the rules of methodological individualism – reduced on engaging in relations. Arising from here a most important difference between *Marxism* and *Weberianism* is as follows: The said difference between theory of stratification and class theory translates into a difference between social action – the meaningful activity of the individual – whereas the objectively based class theory translates into a theory of practice. It is a notion, we can even find issued by *James S. Coleman* who writes in his essay on *Social Theory, Social Research, and A Theory of Action* that with

*social theory ... moving to a functionalism that remained at the collectivity level, the main body of empirical research was abandoning analysis of the functioning of collectivities to concentrate on analysis of the behaviour of individuals.*

*On two grounds, then, the empirical research that became the dominant mode in sociology came to be of limited usefulness for social theory. First, it was lacking a theory of action, replacing 'action' with 'behavior' and eliminating any recourse to purpose or intention in its causal explanations; second, it focused on explaining the behavior of individuals per se, seldom moving up to the level of a community or other social systems.*

*(Coleman, James S.: Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action; in: The American Journal of Sociology; 1986. Issue 6: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, May 1986: 1309-1335; here: 1315 f.)*

This gets as well clear when we refer to the stage that is seen by *Max Weber* as 'rational capitalism' (see *Swedberg, Richard: Max Weber and the Idea of Economic Sociology; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000: 99 ff.*) – a form that, strictly speaking, is based on a very specific equilibrium in which interests are actually faded out and 'passed on' to a system of a formal equilibrium.

This important perspective is getting clear by looking at the legal dimension, presented for instance by *Lotti Ryberg-Welander* who emphasises the following three aspects

- \* an agreement based on free will between two free and formally equal parties*
- \* mutual obligations*
- \* mutual benefits*
- \* strictly limited on the obligations expressed in the contract*

*(Ryberg-Welander, Lotti: Legal Technics. A structure of legal rationalities. Presentation University College of Cork, Department of Applied Social Studies; 15.1.2007).*

Taking such legal perspective means as well to sharpen the view on the fact that the problems are not a matter of the sphere of circulation but a consequence of the individual's position in the process of production.

This opening up of a legal perspective is especially interesting as it allows assessing not only the superstructure of contemporary society; moreover it reflects the change of the economic structure, i.e. the accumulation regime.<sup>2</sup> Linking an approach that is informed by regulationist theory and taking a sociological perspective – influenced not least by the work of *Norbert Elias* – we can show the paradoxical character of the process of socialisation. For this a rough reference is made formally to the system of production and in substantive terms as dealing with relative 'distance to production'. More in detail, the following scales are suggested.

\* For the formal dimension, ranging from a familiaristic system to a socialised system:

Household production and 'commons economy'	Systems of enforced socialisation	Systems of market exchange based on formal equality	Interventionist market economies	Systems of planned production and exchange	Socialised production
possible intermediary functions and forms:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communitarian production</li> <li>• Cooperative production</li> <li>• Communitarian exchange</li> <li>• Cooperative exchange</li> <li>• Mutuality and Solidarity Economy</li> </ul>					

<sup>2</sup> Usually the term 'accumulation regime' is used in the 'régulation théorie' (see for a general presentation for instance *Régulation Theory. The State of the Art*; Eds.: Robert Boyer/Yves Saillard; London/New York: Routledge, 1995) in a limited way, as tool with view to analyse capitalist systems. It requires further debate, but here it is proposed to use *cum grano salis* a regulationist approach – and with this the term accumulation regime – for a general analysis of socio-economic systems. Further debate has to consider not least how this links into the earlier theories of formation as for instance brought forward in *Ökonomische Gesellschaftsformationen. Theorie und Geschichte* (ed.: Institut für Marxistische Studien und Forschungen; Frankfurt/M. 1981)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abolition of property</li> </ul>	
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\* For the substantive dimension:

Production for immediate consumption and simple exchange	Production for 'simple exchange'	Production for market exchange and partial separation of services from production	Increasing outsourcing of services. Most importantly: emergence of a distinct financial market	Prospective coordination of needs and production	Production for market exchange on the basis of need satisfaction rather than needs creation (profit orientation)
possible intermediary functions and forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communitarian understanding of justice</li> <li>• Cooperative solidarity</li> <li>• Communitarian understanding of justice as matter of redistribution</li> <li>• Cooperative solidarity</li> <li>• Societal solidarity</li> <li>• Abolition of property and the state</li> </ul>					

#### IV. Social Quality – Defining the Social as Complex Relationship

There are, of course, two dimensions as briefly outlined before towards the presentation of classical approaches of class analysis. On the concrete level it is rather easy to criticise them, neglecting their centrally important historical dimension: *Karl Marx'* reference to three classes could not take into account that in today's society the finance capital would play such an important role and that the entire process of wealth creation would be reshaped in such a way that we probably have to look at a distinct class, being characterised by patterns between those who productively accumulate and invest capital and 'rentiers' who gain their income from owning land. And equally the reference made occasionally by *Max Weber* to the Elbian Junker is historically out of place.

However, another momentum is grounded in the methodological dimension – and as important as it is to highlight the different aspects of unemployment, increasing inequality, the withholding of social rights etc., the current debates usually lack a systematic analysis of social situations, let alone that they allow developing a theoretically sound class-analytical perspective.

On other occasions, an approach is proposed that is in the meantime more or less known as theory of social quality or Social Quality Approach, referring to the work by the *European Foundation on Social Quality*, now in The Hague, The Netherlands. The basis definition brought forward is that social quality is

*the extent to which people are able to participate in the social-economic, cultural, juridical and political life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potentials for contributing to societal development as well.*

*(Herrmann, Peter: Social Quality and the European Social Model. Opening individual well-being for a social perspective; in: Alternatives. Turkish Journal of International Relations 4/4; Published and Edited by Bulent Aras; Istanbul: Faith University. Department of International Relations, Winter 2005: 16-32; here: 21 – <http://www.alternativesjournal.net/>; <http://www.alternativesjournal.net/volume4/number4/herrmann.pdf>)*

This is based on three interrelating sets of factors, as listed in the following table.



<b><i>CONDITIONAL FACTORS</i></b>	<b><i>CONSTITUTIONAL FACTORS</i></b>	<b><i>NORMATIVE FACTORS</i></b>
<i>socio-economic security</i> <i>social cohesion</i> <i>social inclusion</i>  <i>social empowerment</i>	<i>personal security</i>  <i>social recognition</i> <i>social responsiveness</i>  <i>personal capacity</i>	<i>social justice (equity)</i>  <i>solidarity</i> <i>democratic based citizenship</i>  <i>human dignity</i>

In order to overcome subsequent problems of grasping the current social situation and determining social problems, it is proposed to introduce – when dealing with social quality as standard for assessment – a dimension that can function as pendent. In other words, rather than speaking simply of high social quality versus low social quality, it is suggested to introduce social precarity as pole standing against ‘high social quality’. In other words, when it comes to the analytical concept of social quality, it is translated now into an axis spanning from:

- \* social quality as a high degree of people’s ability to participate in the social-economic, cultural, juridical and political life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potentials for contributing to societal development as well,
- \* social precarity as a lack of people’s ability to participate in the social-economic, cultural, juridical and political life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potentials for contributing to societal development as well.

Before looking cursorily at some issues of current European (social) policy making, a quick look can make the theoretical perspective clearer. The taken perspective is fundamentally geared to defined social situations not by locating people, their performance and their situation in the sphere of circulation and consumption. Instead, a strong reference is made in the overall approach to the meaning of appropriation and control. Whereas *Karl Marx*, looking at the critique of the then existing society, rightly sees power as control of one class over another,<sup>3</sup> and whereas *Max Weber* sees power – amongst others – as matter of people enriching themselves, in this document reference is made to the centrality of empowerment and with this: the mechanism of appropriation. In this context it has to be emphasised that real empowerment can only be achieved if the different dimensions of appropriation converge. This means that empowerment is bound to the condition that control is a matter of legal ownership and also one of ‘ability’ – a reformulation of the fundamental contradiction – the antagonism – of capitalist societies.

#### **V. Precarity – Poverty, Deprivation, Disadvantage or Something Else?**

Of course, European Union policy is by no means geared towards overcoming capitalism. But leaving this aside, one can probably say that many of the politicians and actors on the EU-policy-making field are honestly ‘good willing’, aiming on improving people’s wellbeing – various approaches could be mentioned as proof:

- \* The establishment and work of the Social Protection Committee as entity that focuses on combating social exclusion, and to some extent pursuing the French code in as much it starts from the assumption that it is not least society that excludes individuals and groups rather than dealing with poverty and exclusion as matters of individual deviance and lack of resources.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This perspective changes when it comes to *Marx*’ view on the future society in which he sees the existence of (antagonistic) classes as something that is obsolete.

<sup>4</sup> The concept as it has been explicated in particular by *Réne Lenoir* in his work *Les Exclues: Un Français sur dix*; Paris: Editions de Seuil; 1974/1989 (2nd ed.), not least reflecting the tradition of Jacobinism.

\* The initiative of '*Going Beyond GDP*' (<http://www.beyond-gdp.eu/>), an international conference held in November 2007, being organised by the *Directorate General Environment of the European Commission* and the *European Parliament*, during which *José Manuel Barroso* stated that

*[s]o in this rapidly changing, globalising world of the 21st century, we find ourselves with a sea of data, but, in some cases, lacking the tools we need to take swift, well-informed and effective decisions that promote the well-being of individuals, of societies, of the planet itself.*

*(Barroso, José Manuel: Opening Speech on the conference Going Beyond GDP, 19/11/2007; [http://www.beyond-gdp.eu/download/barroso\\_speech.pdf](http://www.beyond-gdp.eu/download/barroso_speech.pdf))*

However, doesn't this quote as well say that we are lacking a systematic approach and the readiness to face systemic contradictions of interests? Is the approach that is discussed, more than an expression of good will and more than applying a subjective definition of what is felt to be a good life?

The ex-ante celebration of a presentation during a conference on the elaboration of the social policy agenda suggests that such a concept does not exist. On the contrary, what had been presented by *Ben Page* (*Managing Director, Public Affairs and Chairman, Social Research Institute*) on a recent conference '*Responding to New Social Realities. Developing a EU Agenda for Opportunities, Access and Solidarity*' (*Brussels, 5-6 May 2008*) provided a sad example<sup>5</sup> of an entirely individualist conceptualisation of social policy, dealing with 'happiness' as point of reference, thus implicitly following the *Benthamian* notion of the greatest happiness for all, which is derived from and translates into misleading methodological individualism as it is very much underlying both, the conceptualisation of *Weberian* class analysis on the one hand and the understanding of different rights by *T.H. Marshall*.

In political terms we can see another time that it is not a lack of social policy but a rather consistent understanding of it – social policy as part of a capitalist

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<sup>55</sup> This is especially meaningful as it reflects very much the conceptualisation that is behind the Eurobarometer-work.

system that systematically redefines not only citizenship but more in principal: the redefinition of the meaning of social life courses. Citizens are, in principle, not defined as part of a demos-based society. Rather, the focus is laid on a coordinating function of fundamentally individualised actors. In other words, the structural evolution of what is now the EU follows a pattern that is purely based on methodological individualism, the three major steps being:

- \* The coordinating role that stood in the beginning of the entire enterprise of the process of integration<sup>6</sup> was first and foremost geared to the financial market rather than to a broad understanding of economic policies – a look at *Articles 3a, Title II* and as well *Article 102* of the *Treaty of Rome* may confirm this. Important are the two aspects: the definition in terms of the content of the measures (finance policy rather than economics) and the orientation on coordination – such limitation of the competence is realistically a means of undermining the emergence of any kind of ‘social practice’ (it may even be questionable to talk of ‘social action’).
- \* this translates in very concrete terms into a hierarchical order of the monetary union standing factually at the beginning, being followed by the single market, being concerned with consumption and only concluded by European citizenship as add-on.<sup>7</sup> There are three important implications:
  - It is remarkable that the establishing of a single market of production is somewhat undermined – rather than finding a sound basis for a future ‘made in Europe’ we find the orientation on the ‘made by [branch name]’, i.e. the establishment of the global players as real reference.<sup>8</sup>
  - Furthermore it is remarkable that this hierarchy suggests at least some similarities with the pattern that *Tom H. Marshall* suggests in his analysis as development from civil to political and then to social rights.

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<sup>6</sup> If we look at the early Treaty and leave aside the general political declaration of intent although they surely have had an honest meaning after the experiences of the two world wars.

<sup>7</sup> As usual, the Common Agricultural Policy deserves with its exceptional status special attention which cannot be given here.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance the statement by *Juergen Schrempp*: ‘We plan globally, we produce locally – to a world-wide standard of manufacturing excellence. The words ‘Made in Germany’ used to be the ultimate stamp of approval on the quality of the cars we made. Today, it is simply ‘Made by Mercedes-Benz.’ (quoted from *Jost, Irmintraud: Made in Germany. Does “Teutonic” sell in America?; in: The Atlantic Times, February 2005 - [http://www.atlantic-times.com/archive\\_detail.php?recordID=116](http://www.atlantic-times.com/archive_detail.php?recordID=116) - 25./05/08; 11:05)*

- Finally, we can see at this point as well the reflection of the shift of law. Taking as a path breaking work the *Ancient Law*, laid by *Henry Sumner Maine* before the public in 1861/1864 we have to point on the fact that his notion of ‘status’ was by no means meant to be concerned with a ‘lawless society’. *Maine* points on very early examples and writes that

*until philology has effected a complete analysis of Sanskrit literature, our best sources of knowledge are undoubtedly the Greek Homeric poems*

*(Maine, Henry Sumner [1864]: Ancient Law. Its connection with the Early History of Society, and its Relation to modern Ideas; Tucson: University of Arizona Press; 1986: 2)*

And equally important, *Henry Sumner Maine* refers to the early Roman twelve tables, still being present in current systems (*cf. ibid.: 1*).

The latter point is as well captured by *James S. Coleman* in his work already quoted before. There he states

*An especially unfortunate consequence of the loss of a theory of action was the loss of contact with that one discipline that arguably should have the strongest intellectual links to social theory: common or constitutional law. One might even argue that law, as a set of rules having a high degree of internal consistency, as well as principles behind those rules, has as strong a claim to constitute social theory as does any alternative body of principles offered up by sociologists. All case law is based inherently on a theory of action. ...*

*(Coleman, James S.: Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action; in: The American Journal of Sociology; 1986. Issue 6: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, May 1986: 1309-1335; here: 1312 f.)*

And then, more importantly in our context, he continues:

*In central Europe in the Middle Ages, this was not the underlying theory of action: guilds, households, and other social units were the responsible, purposive, interested actors with rights; the law had little to do with the individual person per se. Similarly in the case of informal law governing relations between nomadic tribes or clans: the common prescription, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' refers not to individual retribution but to a clan retribution visited on any member of the offending clan.*

*(ibid.: 1312)*

And of course, investigating law and rights today we always have to remind ourselves of what *Frederick Engels* wrote in his study on *Duehring*, where he states:

*We know today that this kingdom of reason was nothing more than the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie; that this eternal Right found its realisation in bourgeois justice; that this equality reduced itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the essential rights of man; and that the government of reason, the *Contrat Social* of Rousseau, came into being, and only could come into being, as a democratic bourgeois republic.*

*(Engels, Frederick: Anti-Duehring. Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science [1876-1878]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works; Volume 25: Frederick Engels: Anti-Duehring. Dialectics of Nature; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1987: 1-309; here: 19)*

## **VI. Some EU-Policies**

From here – though it seems to be a huge leap – we can easily make out some fundamental points of reference for analysing EU-policy making. Before

approaching some concrete issues, a few general moments will be pointed out.

\* Although the European Commission put forward a concept of social quality as a kind of guidance for social policy, it is important to highlight at the outset the lack of criteria for properly defining what is meant by it. In the Commission's understanding, social quality is located in one of the corners of a policy triangle – in the meantime a policy quadrangle – and represents one of the policy outcomes,<sup>9</sup> there is no distinction between the actual meaning in terms of what the social quality approach defines as distinct: conditional factors, constitutional factors and normative factors as systematically linked dimensions of a socio-biographical field.

However, in the European Commission's understanding social quality is just another expression of introducing a subjective understanding of wellbeing in an individual perception, standing in the tradition of natural rights/natural law. Subsequently such an approach systematically neglects the definition of any social rights as matter arising from class relationships, i.e. the mode of production. In other words, happiness and 'social rightness' are located over and above social quality as matter of social rights; an abstract understanding of justice is suggested as being a sufficient regulator of injustices arising from an in itself socially contradictory accumulation regime – we can take this as concrete example of the statement by *Frederick Engels* on the 'kingdom of reason' as it had been quoted before. The individualisation of rights waters down the utopia of social rights.

\* Consequently the definition of poverty remains somewhat vague. It is based on a strong reference to a lack of resources and social exclusion is then approached with reference to such lack in connection with defining some vague kind of people's ability to take part in 'social life'. However, the 'social life' itself remains 'subjectivised', a matter of aimless togetherness, lacking any objective foundation. It is the reduction of the social being on the

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<sup>9</sup> Side by side with social cohesion as outcome for social policies and competitiveness and dynamism as outcome of economic policies and full employment and quality of work as outcome of employment policies (*see as well Herrmann, Peter: European Social Model – Existence, Non-Existence or Biased Direction; in: Herrmann, Peter: Social Policy in Context; Amsterdam: Rozenberg, forthcoming*)

existence defined by its exchange relationship (*see as well below the quote taken from Gerben Bakker*).

- \* Taking this assessment serious we can see that the reasoning behind it is actually not simply a helpless or representing an unconsidered approach. Rather we find a methodological restriction.
  - First this is due to the reference to utilitarianism and consequently to welfare economics, based on the Pareto-efficiency, stating that this is given if in the move from social state A to social state B at least one person prefers B and no one else opposes. Such an approach is then based on utilitarianism as moral obligation to produce ‘the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people, happiness being determined by reference to the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain’ (*Sweet, William: Jeremy Bentham [1748-1832]; in: The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy; <http://www.iep.utm.edu/b/bentham.htm>; 02/05/08; 15:02*).
  - Second, this restriction is due to applying methodological individualism, understanding collective action as matter of rational action of individuals who are striving for maximising their utilities.

From here a brief look at some concrete policy areas follows – not providing a detailed analysis but aiming on highlighting some trends for further analysis, trying to clarify some general analytical issues. At the end it is only to do with highlighting some moments that allow a deeper understanding of policy trends, though commonly remaining without sufficient reflection and easily supporting the development of diverted policy making.

*Anti-Poverty Policy, Policy to Combat Social Exclusion*

In the context of one of the early European programs in the field of tackling poverty the following definition had been leading.

*The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families, and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State in which they live.*



*(Medium-term Community Action Programme to Foster the Economic and Social Integration of the Least Privileged Groups. Commission Communication and Proposal for a Decision transmitted to the Council on 21 December 1988. Council Decision 89/457/EEC of 18 July 1989 (OJ C 244, 2.8.1989). COM (88) 826 final.: 6 - [http://aei.pitt.edu/6197/01/003353\\_1.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/6197/01/003353_1.pdf))*

Important is of course the orientation of the definition as one going beyond the crude orientation on measuring material resources, instead including the notion of cultural and social means. Furthermore it is important to acknowledge the fact that the definition includes as well the dimension of exclusion (*see the reference above*). However, it is actually exactly this point that is linked to a specific problematique of the entire approach. The following two points can be seen as fundamental shortcomings.

First, it remains unclear in which way appropriateness of non-exclusion is defined. Looking at the work which had been done in the framework of the program – or to be more precise: looking at how the work had been reflected in the Commission's deliberations – defining appropriateness is based on a normative approach. On the one hand, this can be interpreted as applying the – consumption based rather production founded – definition of class status. On the other hand we are confronted with a de-socialisation of the life situation – at first glance contradicting the notion of including 'social capital' in the definition. The matter which is usefully raised is the separation of individual (or group) and social relations. In actually fact the definition – and the subsequent official policy reflections – confront the individual and society, the first being excluded by and from society. This is problematic, as it does not sufficiently reflect that society – and societal contradictions – are nothing else than the outcome of individuals' interaction in their productive and reproductive roles. This aspect is not reflected in the *Weberian* analysis of class relationships nor is it in any way considered as relevant in the approach pursued by the Commission's policy development. Instead, we find the said institutionalist approach of a resource oriented policy design which is not capable to rethink its faulty basis.

*Work-Life Balance Policies*

In this context it is as well interesting to look briefly at policies on the one hand geared to work-life-balance and on the other hand being concerned with 'activation' of people who are distant to the labour market and striving for the extension of working life for older people. Sure, the latter could crudely be seen as workfare in the one case and delay of retirement age in the other case. There are surely good reasons for discussing these policies in this direction. However, aim of the current reflections is different – the interest is to look at the question of the meaning of work in the EU-policy processes and also to look again at the underlying understanding of society and the question of class. An important aspect of this – especially with respect to the question of work-life balance – can be seen in the momentum of alienation. Putting forward the question

*What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?*

*Karl Marx states in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

*First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself, but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself.*

*(Marx, Karl: [Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works. Volume 3; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1975: 229-346; here: 274)*

Thus, the entire policy on work-life balance actually confirms Karl Marx' analysis, equally and clearly pointing out that policies aim on changes within the system, but definitely do not aim on changing the system itself. In other words, the productive process is at least with regard to the issue of the work-life balance faded out in the sense that it is tacitly accepted that 'real life' is located outside of the productive relationship. This is indeed and openly

reflecting the fact that work is alienated and characterised by the fact of the separation of the worker from the means of production. However, we see the reintroduction of the central role of work in form of employment. In other words, on the one hand life world is seen as a value and objective in its own right. On the other hand, it is linked to the sphere of production as the role of the consumer is highlighted: life world as objective of the single market as far this life world is not populated by employees but by consumers. It is important to highlight the role of the process of individualisation: consumption as individual act is an economic factor but as well a factor of producing and reproducing an individualist mode of life. In this sense 'life time' plays an important role as means of producing society: It is simply about reproduction of off-spring (the future worker), also about recreation but all this under the terms and conditions of the isolated – i.e. alienated – individual. In other words, policies of work-life balance are not aiming on workers rights and increasing social quality. Rather, they aim on the solidification of alienation and exclusion by confirming and tightening of individualism by the self-sufficient consumer. The materialisation of the definition of the individual – so to say a neo-Cartesian re-definition claiming 'consumo ergo sum' – is transformed into the linchpin of the capitalist definition of the human (the employer) as factor of production, arbitrarily exchangeable, as

*in its human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal.*

*(ibid.: 275)*

With this kind of individualisation participation is logically reduced on the one hand on consumption and on the other hand on employment. In other words, policies claiming to be there in order to provide more freedom are paradoxically consolidating the tightening of the limitation of citizens rights which can only exist as rights that are genuinely social.<sup>10</sup>

On a side remark is worth to mention that much of this is as well reflected in the debate on the fundamental rights, having their origins in securing rights for

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that in many cases so-called social rights are nothing more than rights of individuals to access socially provided means and services.

workers and not at all being concerned with fundamental rights but only aiming on securing those rights that had been essential for maintaining the mode of production.

### *Flexicurity*

Flexicurity – in this explicit form more or less a recent concept – is of special interest as it marks some explicit issues in the context of class analysis. There are two tensional lines involved in the conceptual framework,

- \* the one being the tension between flexibility as matter of the economic process (in terms of the productivity function), standing against security as matter of the ‘social’ or wellbeing dimension;<sup>11</sup>
- \* the other is the tension between the different interests within the social relationship, namely the different meaning of flexibility as ‘social form’ or part of the ‘mode of regulation’ and ‘mode of life’ on the one hand for the entrepreneur (emphasising the meaning of flexibility for the ‘mode of regulation’) and on the other hand for the employee (emphasising the meaning of flexibility for the ‘mode of life’).

Decisive for the present discussion is that in the political debates the unreasonable split and unclear differentiation between political and economic sphere leads to confusion. Thus, the arguments of the political debates are actually following the class-lineage of exactly the pattern that is discussed when it comes to the assessment of civil society (*see below*). For the ruling class, flexicurity is a matter that reflects well the close relatedness of control over the means of production and the control over life situations and life courses; for the dependent classes, however, the lack of control over the means of production means also that the control over the life courses cannot be taken for granted. We can even say that the powerlessness that is from the workers perspective inherent in flexicurity, is not only the actual lack of security. Moreover, it is the lack of conceivableness of alternatives (*see in this context the discussion of different concepts of power in Lukes, Steven: Power. A Radical View; Houndsmills et altera: Macmillan, 1974*), at the end not least

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, such a confrontation is in itself problematic as it is based on the dichotomisation or segregation of economic and social policy realm rather than seeing the tension as one being specific to the capitalist mode of production.

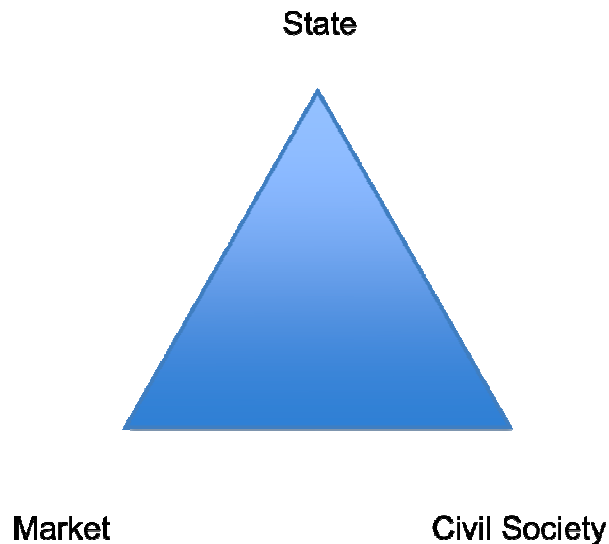
a matter of alienation of those who lack property not only of resources but as well over the means of production. – This is not least an example of the material force behind education that is withheld, education understood as mediation of real ability to act (which has to include the practical recognition of the convertibility of the world (here: the personal live situation and life course)).

### *Socio-economy*

Looking again at the question of class definitions and class relationships, it is useful to briefly discuss as well a fundamental problem of the ‘triangulation’ of society, conceptually introduced by *Adalbert Evers* and *Helmut Wintersberger* in their presentation of the ‘welfare mix’ (see *Evers, Adalbert/Wintersberger, Helmut: Shifts in the Welfare Mix; Boulder: Westview, 1990*).

When looking at the given mechanisms of providing social services, this seems to be in an institutionalist perspective a useful heuristic tool. However, important is to look at the structure behind such division, reflecting a very specific pattern between private and public and more importantly the differentiation of the society from economy.

The most common paradigm is to propose a division between state, market and civil society – the latter being left without specific definition (sometimes being seen as something near to *Gemeinschaft*, status-regulated entity or similar), sometimes being focused around NGOs/NPOs or including peer groups, neighbourhoods and kin-based relationships (families), sometimes defined by negation (not state, not market).



However, this leaves aside that these institutions are themselves, though in different ways, part of the hegemonic concept of the one, and only one mechanism of reproducing the class structure. Rather than applying this concept as one of service provision, it would make sense to use it as heuristic concept of analysing the mode of regulation, thus giving as well a sound perspective on analysing the provision of social services.

Subsequently, we find a gradual disentanglement of processes of social reproduction from the economic sphere – and equally a reduction of the economic processes on mechanisms of commodity production and exchange. In any case we are concerned with the mutilation of the two sides: the desocialisation of economic processes and the de-economisation of the social. Important is to recognise this as real process rather than being a matter of interpreting real processes in a specific way. In terms of interpretation, however, it is for instance the lead ideology of non-governmental providers of social services and political bodies as for instance parts of the European Commission alike. In subsequent policies, service provision is taken out of the context of class relationships and transformed into a charitable realm. Moreover, an immediate problem in policy terms is the artificial separation: with the one-sided (reductionist) link of economy and market that can easily be attributed on the basis of this analytical framework we find in policy making the actual paradox of defining social service (delivery) – and as well the entire social economy – as part of the market

economy (*this is what can be seen in both, the current debates on Social Services of General Interest* [[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/ssgi\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/ssgi_en.htm); 04/06/08; 10:20] and as well earlier debates on the so-called Third System [[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/empl\\_esf/3syst/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/empl_esf/3syst/index_en.htm) 04/06/08; 10:16], but as well already in the debates on the White Paper Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century (COM[93] 700, December 1993). The actual problem is not the alleged identification – as we find it supposed in official policies – nor the simplifying rejection by non-profitable service providers. An alternative must consider ways of redefining economy and actually economics alike (*for further considerations it may be useful to ventilate for example debates as they are undertaken by the Association for Social Economics – see <http://www.socialeconomics.org/>*).

#### *European Policies – An Outlook*

By and large we can see that the class analysis is still a useful instrument allowing pointing on the contradictions of European (social) policy making. A decisive moment is that such orientation allows going beyond a moral assessment of class hegemony. Instead, taking such perspective allows most importantly to get a clearer understanding as well of the limitations of policies that are built on short-term temptations. It is getting from another side clear that any 'social policy' – be it concerned with general issues of 'societal politics' or with concrete measures of program development – that remains on the political level itself falls short, being reduced on

- \* redistributive corrections rather than structural changes
- \* regulating the relationship between social groups rather than allowing for the systematic development of public spaces.

In substantial terms we find a development that follows in increasingly the pattern of a regulationist approach. The forgoing analysis of some examples has hopefully made clear that the actual problem is not this pattern as such. The real problems are the following. First, it remains regulation of distributive

processes, not affecting the core issues of the productive system – one important issue is here that we are actually confronted with a regulated process of de-regulation. Second, the regulation is in itself not claiming to regulate distributive processes; rather, the realm of regulation

## VII. Conclusions A: Outlook on a Traditionalising Society

On different occasions throughout this paper it has been highlighted that any ‘systemic policy development’ is bound to objective conditions and at the same time the fact has to be appreciated that any systemic momentum cannot be reduced on its structuralist dimension. Looking at the dominant economic (or more precise: econometric) side, the fundamental shortcoming of mainstream social thinking – but also of some derivations of *Marxist* thought – neglects the crucial fact that all economic activity is part and expression of a wide range of ‘social’, i.e. relational processes. We can equally say: the relationship between structure and agency translates into some form of such relational processes. This is reflected in the definition of the social as it had been presented above *as the outcome of the interaction between people (constituted as actors) and their constructed and natural environment. With this in mind, its subject matter refers to people’s productive and reproductive relationships.*

This strongly opposes concepts of what *Mark Granovetter* calls ‘under- and oversocialized views’ and on which he comments that despite the apparent contrast between them

*we should note an irony of great theoretical importance: both have in common a conception of action and decision carried out by atomized actors. In the undersocialised account, atomization results from narrow utilitarian pursuit of self-interest; in the oversocialized one, from the fact that behavioral patterns have been internalized and ongoing social relations thus have only peripheral effects on behaviour.*

*(Granovetter, Mark: Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness; in: The American Journal of*



*Sociology; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Vol. 91, No. 3, (Nov., 1985): 481-510; stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780199>; accessed: 21/04/2008, 00:44: 485)*

Later, *Granovetter* rightly states that

*[a] fruitful analysis of human action requires us to avoid the atomization implicit in the theoretical extremes of under- and oversocialized conceptions. Actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy.*

*(ibid: 487)*

However, embeddedness should not be understood as opening a fluid, vague space of vast and indefinable complexity. We have to keep in mind that embeddedness is a matter of concrete systemic linkages of spaces of and for practice. Thus it is important is thus to understand the class structure not as a simple relationship of groups with different living standards or different access to instruments and mechanisms of power. Important is, instead, to understand the underlying form of capitalism: the accumulation regime and the mode of regulation.

This opens up an interesting perspective as well on theories of stratification as ideology – the wrong reflection of reality but as well the correct reflection of an ‘diverting practice’. In other words, the reference made by *Max Weber* – and more in general by post-Marxist social science and as well by policymaking – can be very much linked to a changed capitalism. In very broad terms we can see this as a twofold shift:

- \* A shift that actually ‘privatises’ more and more genuinely social practice and paradoxically increasingly socialises previously private realms. We can see this most pronouncedly by looking at the development of the family. Being a genuinely productive entity, the productive aspect has been taken away from the family – in this way the family had been privatised, and what is

allocated as 'family duty' is only a residual role: production and reproduction are now increasingly matters of a precarious balance within a 'privatist social space'.

- \* At the same time, however, many previously private acts are now 'socialised' and taken out of the realm of the family: it is now consumption that is very much a social act in which as well 'realisation' of people takes place and shape.

Sure, the latter seemingly contradicts the stance brought forward by *Zygmunt Bauman*, namely that consumption is an entirely individual act. In this respect he writes

*Consumption is a thoroughly individual, solitary and, in the end, lonely activity; an activity which is fulfilled by quenching and arousing, assuaging and whipping up a desire which is always private, and not easily communicable sensation. There is no such thing as 'collective consumption'.*

*(Bauman, Zygmunt: Work, Consumerism and the New Poor; Berkshire: Open University Press; 2005/2007<sup>2</sup>: 30)*

However, the contradiction is actually not necessarily a real one if we try to capture the process as one that is actually concerned with shifts in socialisation. Finally, *Zygmunt Baumann* writes as well that

*resourcefulness means the freedom to pick and chose, but also – and perhaps most importantly – the freedom from bearing the consequences of wrong choices, and so freedom from the least appetizing attributes of the life of choosing.*

*(Bauman, Zygmunt: Liquid Modernity; Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000: 89)*

From here we can try to develop a review of the process of globalised and globalising socialisation, starting again from the SQ-quadrant, presented above.

At this moment of reflection, it is important to translate this into its meaning for different ranges and stages of socialisation – the latter broadly taken with its sociological meaning of increasing control by individuals by interpenetration of control and the establishment of chains of interdependence.<sup>12</sup> This links as well closely to what the author put forward on another occasion (see *Herrmann, Peter: Gesellschaft und Organisation. Zur soziologischen Theorie von Organisationen; Egelsbach/New York: Hänsel-Hohenhausen, 1993; Herrmann, Peter: Die Organisation. Eine Analyse der modernen Gesellschaft; Rheinfelden/Berlin: Schäuble, 1994*), namely that societal development is concerned with a specific constellation of processes of appropriation and related different forms of property. In this perspective, the Social Quality quadrant (see above) can be re-read in a first step as follows:

	Politics	
Production		Peering
	Reproduction	

At this stage we find socialisation within the different fields – a kind of enclosure. Actually, we can find these enclosures in materialised form during history as real process of privatisation: with the emerging capitalism the commons had been destroyed by sealing-off parts of the hitherto communal land for further private use and exploitation. However, the thesis here is that these enclosures, as much as they had been matters of privatisation, they also had been processes of socialisation in the sense of opening production now for a market beyond producing for immediate collective consumption. In other words, action is privatised in terms of being individualised; but equally it is socialised as it gains – as individualised action – a wider reach. In this sense, we can actually agree with *Gerben Bakker* who points indeed on an important moment, writing

*[i]f a hard-working, inventive farmer managed to get a bigger harvest, most of the gain would trickle away to other persons in the feudal system. Thus, nobody had much energy to make*

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<sup>12</sup> This definition refers to various sociological approaches, in particular the Marxist historical-dialectical materialism, Elias interpretation of the process of civilisation and *Critical Realism* as for instance discussed by *Roy Bhaskar* and *Margaret Archer*.

*effort to get a higher yield. The only way left to cope with an increasing population was to develop the wastelands.*

*(Bakker, Gerben: The Enclosed Economy. How Public Goods Splinter Into Private Properties; EUI Review; Ed.: The European University Institute; Florence: Spring edition 2001: 20-26; here: 20)*

It is an expression of socialisation as much as the people concerned are directly linking into the chains of interdependence – here the chains of market exchange – rather than being limited by the direct ‘exchange by consumption’. In other words: it is socialisation of a kind by which the individual is not immediate part of the social entity but has to gain access ex post – from the standpoint of a private individual. However, it means as well that individuality is reduced: cutting his/her immediate link to the social entity also means that the social character of the individual and his/her action is amputated. Again in the words of *Gerben Bakker*:

*A shift in the social atmosphere is taking place, in which people shiver about things that cost nothing, are free. The economic ideology has enthroned productivity. Everything has to be made productive to the limit. Things of no money value, be it a dead poet or a rain forest, cease to exist. The Protestant ethic, according to Weber the mother of capitalism, has come a long way. Idleness is the devil's bolster, and that holds not only for people, but also for blood, satellite lanes and works of art. The new god is productivity, and her saviour is the property right.*

*(ibid.: 26)*

Then, the mentioned shift in the social atmosphere equals also a change of the structures of personalities.

However, this interpretation overlooks two important aspects of this process:

First, the increase of productivity is not sustainable – the limitations being given by the fact that – as frequently quoted from *Karl Marx*

*[a]t a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters.*

*(Marx, Karl: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy [1859]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works; Volume 29. Marx: 1857-1861; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1987: 257-417; here: 263)*

Second, it is important to see that the limitation arises from the limited range of socialisation – and this is not only true for the economic realm. We can find an increasing socialisation within the different areas, however at the same time an increasing limitation of this socialisation by the specific character of the private character of this process: It is a formal process, without a factual extension of the respective substantial appropriation. Overcoming these limitations would require the extension of the control beyond any specific realm as it is marked by one of the fields of the quadrant, the political control of production, the control of production by reproduction etc.

Of course, we find incremental and fractional shifts of this kind, visible in various policies as for instance the claim of corporate social responsibility, the establishment of consumers' rights and others. However, as important as such measures are in terms of given political realities, they avoid a fundamental question.

Such shifts are concerned with the change of – in both cases – capitalism itself – and subsequently the change of class structures and their meaning. Looking in simplified terms – and using the contemporarily used idioms – at the development of increasing 'modern times enclosures', we are concerned

with finance capitalism and a consumerist-based economy. Here, it is not the place to discuss the underlying economic dimension of this process. What is of interest however is the specific societal retreat as it is inherent in such developments. With the increasing socialisation within the realms of economy, politics, peering and reproduction in their solitary form we find at the same time the perversion and retardation which can easily be interpreted as matter of re-traditionalisation. Heuristically we can refer to *Richard Swedberg's* confrontation of what he calls in his discussion of the works of *Max Weber* the traditional rent-oriented economy on the one hand and the modern profit-making economy on the other hand.

### TRADITIONALISATION OF SOCIETY

	THE TRADITIONAL RENT-ORIENTED ECONOMY	THE MODERN PROFIT-MAKING ECONOMY
ECONOMIC PRINCIPLE	householding, leading to economic traditionalism	profit-making, leading to constant economic change
MAIN TYPE OF INCOME FOR THE DOMINATING ECONOMIC GROUP	rent (based on wealth)	profit (based on capital)
CLASSES	property classes (rentiers, middle classes, unfree)	commercial classes (entrepreneurs, professionals, workers)
CONFLICT LEVEL	little dynamics; status groups are strong and there might be class struggle	much dynamics; class struggle, possibly of revolutionary kind
POLITICAL SYSTEM AND PRINCIPLE OF LEGITIMATION	Repressive political system; traditional domination	separation of political and political power; possibly legal domination
<i>(Swedberg, Richard: Max Weber and the Idea of Economic Sociology; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998: 52)</i>		

By looking at this presentation we can see the previous analysis confirmed. In other words we are confronted with a process of concentration and centralisation of power, however equally with spreading externalities. Also, these externalities take in other areas again perverted forms as they are detached from their originally integrated meaning – this is reduced as inappropriate form of appropriation or in other words a formal control which lost its substantial dimension.

We can also see an inversion of the development. However, it would be wrong to understand this as 'return to an earlier historical stage'. Rather, we find the ever-increasing culmination of one of the trends inherent in the capitalist accumulation regime – expressed as postmodernity as answer on a failed or incomplete modernity. The tendency of political traditionalism is in other words the victory of the bourgeois over the citizen. And paradoxically it is only the citizen who is able to cope with it in the form of an inner emigration; and at the same time it is the citizen that loses the ground for reproduction, being forced into the procrustean bed of instrumental reason.

### **VII. Conclusions B: Methodological Outlook**

Of course, this is a complex process. At least it is possible to offer some reasoning on the different dimensions involved in this process. We have to start from the production and reproduction of daily life which – taking a fundamentally historical perspective – emerges into a differentiated system. It is important to see this as multiple process: the socio-economic process of class formation goes hand in hand with the emergence of institutional systems and specific lifestyles. The concrete forms are depending on various historical conditions shaping the mixture of governance. Thus, governance, though being more recently a focus of policy debates, defined as set of

*rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence*

*(Commission of the European Communities: European Governance. A White Paper; Brussels, 25.07.2001 . COM[2001]428: 8)*

is not at all a new topic. Cum grano salis, the five points mentioned in the *Commission's White Paper*, namely

*openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. Each principle is important for establishing more*

*democratic governance. They underpin democracy and the rule of law in the Member States, but they apply to all levels of government – global, European, national, regional and local*

*(ibid.: 10)*

are characteristic for all systems of 'legitimate domination'. Specific is not that these means are applied as means of establishing and maintaining a system of hegemonic power; rather, specific is the reference made to a specific mode of regulation as given by the modern state – the concept that will be briefly presented in the following. Of Crucial importance is that this system is – despite the principles mentioned before – concerned with a hegemonic system of power, hegemony by *Antonio Gramsci* seen

*as a complement to the state-as-force and as a contemporary form of the 1848 doctrine of 'permanent revolution'.*

*(Gramsci, Antonio: The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935. Edited by David Forgacs; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1988: 195)*

For developing this further, two points of reference are useful, the first being concerned with the state, the second being concerned with the understanding of the demos – potentially but not necessarily part of it.

With regard to the first point, a useful heuristic definition of the state can be taken from *Michael Zuern* and *Stephan Leibfried*, given in the framework of the work of the *Collaborative Research Center Transformations of the State*.

*We define the modern state in four, intersecting, dimensions. The resource dimension comprises the control of the use of force and revenues, and is associated with the consolidation of the modern territorial state from scattered feudal patterns. The law dimension includes jurisdiction, courts, and all the necessary elements of the rule of law, called 'Rechtsstaat' or constitutional state in German-speaking countries where it is most closely identified with the widely held concept of the*



*state. Legitimacy or the acceptance of political rule came into full bloom with the rise of the democratic nation-state in the 19th century. And welfare, or the facilitation of economic growth and social equality, is the leitmotif of the intervention state, which acquired responsibility for the general well-being of the citizenry in the 20th century.*

*(Leibfried, Stephan/Zuern, Michael [eds.]: Transformations of the State; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005: 2 f.)*

In other words, the state

*had evolved four dimensions and fashioned them into a tightly woven fabric – a multi-functional state that combines the Territorial State, the state that secures the Rule of Law, the Democratic State, and the Intervention State, and which we connote with the acronym TRUDI.*

*(ibid.: 3)*

Without discussing this in detail, the limitation of the definition is given by the fact that it is by and large a political definition. Although the authors make explicit reference to the modern nation state, as it is product of the enlightenment they neglect the fundamental economic dimension that was underlying this process. Consequently they do not sufficiently consider the dialectical entity of the economic and political system, ending in the seduction of the *Hegelian* curtailment of celebrating civil society as

*the whole sphere of civil Society is the territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune, and where waves of every passion gush forth, regulated only by reason glinting through them. Particularity, restricted by universality, is the only standard whereby each particular member promotes his welfare.*

*(Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Mit Hegels eigenhaendigen Notizen und den muendlichen Zusaetzen; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Werke 7; auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832-1845 neu edierte Ausgabe. Redaktion Eva Moldenhauer/Karl Markus Michel; Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1970: 340 [as the English translation is somewhat problematic, see the German original in the footnote<sup>13</sup>; English translation from <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/prci vils.htm>; 03/06.08, 14:52; see as well Tocqueville, Alexis de [1835/1840]: De la democratie en Amerique; Paris : Levy, 1864)*

However, it should not be forgotten that, as *Karl Marx* and *Frederick Engels* highlight already at an early stage of their scientific work

*[t]his conception of history thus relies on expounding the real process of production – starting from the material production of life itself – and comprehending the form of intercourse connected with and created by this mode of production, i.e., civil society in its various stages, as the basis of all history; describing in its action as the state, and also explaining how all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, morality, etc., etc., arise from it, and tracing the process of their formation from the basis; thus the whole thing can, of course, be depicted in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another).*

*(Marx, Karl/Engels, Frederick: The German Ideology. Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to its*

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<sup>13</sup> Indem die Besonderheit an die Bedingung der Allgemeinheit gebunden ist, ist das Ganze der Boden der Vermittlung, wo alle Einzelheiten, alle Anlagen, alle Zufaelligkeiten der Geburt und des Glueks sich frei machen, wo die Wellen aller Leidenschaften ausstroemen, die nur durch die hineinschneidende Vernunft regiert werden. Die Besonderheit, beschraenkt durch die Allgemeinheit, ist allein das Mass, wodurch jede Besonderheit ihr Wohl befoerdert.

*Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to its Various Prophets; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works; Volume 5: Marx and Engels: 1845-47; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1976: 19-539; here: 53)*

Later they elaborate on this topic, writing,

*The term 'civil society' emerged in the eighteenth century, when property relations had already extricated themselves from the ancient and medieval community. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organisation evolving directly out of production and intercourse, which in all ages forms the basis of the state and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure, has, however, always been designated by the same name.*

*(ibid.: 89)*

As such it is one of the mechanisms of control of social integration.

*In the seventeenth century, a civil society had grown up between the kinship and state relations of traditional society, a society whose rights Thomas Hobbes described as 'the war of all against all'. All the rights pertaining in civil, or bourgeois society, are derived from what Hegel calls 'abstract right', the right of property. The ethical system expressed by this abstract right was systematised by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill as Utilitarianism.'*

*(<http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/r/i.htm#right>)*

More important is that with such understanding of the state the power structures of the entire system are merely definable as the entire approach tends to remain attached to an institutional approach. Fundamentally class analysis remains in the current authors opinion the only way to really tackle this shortcoming. However, it is not seen as being necessarily contradicting

such perspective if we take a broader approach, making reference to the demos, being characterised by

*at least five substantive components.*

*Rights: The members of a demos acknowledge each other as autonomous individuals, each with a right to personal self-fulfilment.*

*Trust: The members of a demos accept that once an obligation has been entered into, it must be complied with.*

*Public spirit: Members of a fully developed demos also show a sense of collective identity if their preferences as individuals include a concern for the well-being (or the suffering) of the collective. In its weak form, such a sense of collective identity (public spirit) is a precondition for public deliberations about the right solution for the community as a whole.*

*Public discourse: Public spirit can be transformed into public discourse if most of the members affected by the decision have a capacity to communicate publicly.*

*Solidarity: In its stronger form, a collective sense of identity provides the basis for (re)distributive processes within a political community. Solidarity is the willingness of individuals to give up things they value for the sake of the collective, and the acceptance of re-distributive policies is the best indicator for this.*

*(Zuern, Michael: The Social Pre-requisites of European Democracy: in: Governance and Citizenship in Europe: Some Research Directions; Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities; Conference Proceedings; 1999: 39 f.;*

*ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/improving/docs/g\_ser\_proceedin  
gs\_citizen.pdf*)<sup>14</sup>

These criteria are, of course, also intersecting. An interesting aspect is that with such an approach towards defining citizenship against the background of a definition of *demos* the borders between social and societal integration are as well somewhat blurring, bringing *Dimitris N. Chrysochoou* to the statement that

*citizenship also symbolizes an internally oriented relationship  
tht the demos shares with the institutions of the polity to which  
its member belong.*

*(Chrysochoou, Dimitris N.: Theorizing European Integration:  
London et alra: Sage, 2001: 182)*

Of course, such theorising – and as well by the underlying reality of specifically reshaping the class question – is pushed aside and moreover even the ‘social question’ is pretty much disguised behind a drape of supposed general interests. However, two issues have to be mentioned.

The one is that it requires further consideration if and to which extent we can speak of such danger as being inherent in the notion of *demos* as such. Another option is that the question of *demos* has to be seen in connection with and as expression of blurring borders in other areas. So we can at least point on the following patterns in concrete policy analysis, in many cases, as for instance in Turkey, heavily overlapping with each other and seemingly blurring existing borders. The main patterns of dividing lines are as follows:

- \* ‘nationalists’ versus ‘integrationists’ (the latter with regard to the role and orientation towards the EU), the global question behind this not least being concerned with the role in the carrousel of world powers in the game of world systems;
- \* religious/faith based orientations versus secularists (in this confrontation, of course, neglecting that each of the notions is widely differentiated in itself);

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<sup>14</sup> Although *Zuern* develops this against the background of the question of Europeanisation, the made stances are *cum grano salis* as well applicable in a wider sense.

- \* orientations of a general traditional character versus modernist orientations;
- \* and of course the class divisions – including questions of ‘secondary class belonging’ (general wealth, consumer status ...).

Another point is that we can turn this as well into a positive stance for – if not general interest and overcoming of the meaning of classes – the establishment, development and maintenance of different forms of public spaces. We can again draw from *Dimitris N. Chrysochoou*, who provides the following figure as ‘typology of civic governance’:

Civic competence

		Latent	Institutionalized
Civic identity	Nascent	Civil society (Functionalist demos)	Civic space (Interactive demos)
	Formed	Public sphere (Deliberative demos)	Civic community (Organic demos)

(*ibid.*: 189)

If these spaces are not seen as general spaces, concerned with an abstract general interest but bound back to the class structure and the clashing collective interests and practices, they can well be seen as fields of societal re-constitution. This would bind them as well back to the objective processes of production. This may be seen as way of overcoming certain ‘deficits’ of current political systems, expressed by notions of querulousness, democratic

deficit but as well by notions of e.g. the ‘need to bring the EU closer to its citizens’, expressing a supply-based understanding of citizenship in which democracy is reduced on representative democracy and – if at all – only little space is left for participative forms.<sup>15</sup>

In any case the general development of capitalist production has an inherent tendency of counteracting a specific facet of capitalist production which Karl Marx analysed as mechanism of combination, when he develops in particular in *Chapters 26 (The Secret of Primitive Accumulation)*, *31 (Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist)* and *32 (Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation)* the emergence of modern capitalism as process fundamentally changing the mode of production by the redefinition of

- \* the private and public character
- \* the role of the individual and the social mechanisms of control,

the important part not being the emergence of a ‘new sphere’, but the recombination (see *Marx, Karl: Capital. A Critique of Political Economy; Vol. I [1867]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works. Volume 35; London: Lawrence&Wishart; 1996: 870*).

Looking at the recent and current development of the mode of production, we find very much a tendency pointing insofar in the same direction as we are again confronted with a redefinition and recombination of

- \* the private and public character
- \* the role of the individual and the social mechanisms of control,

an important moment now being the de-combination of workforce, in other words: the increasing individualised mode of socialisation – this had been pointed out above.

– This should be reflected as well when discussing the question of civil society and the so-called welfare mix as it had been mentioned above.

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<sup>15</sup> Current debates on governance should definitely not be overestimated – see in this context for instance Herrmann, Peter: *Ruling between God, Government and People; William Thompson Working Papers, 2*; of course, it is important to discuss in this context as well the question of the *Hegelian* understanding of civil society and the critique by *Karl Marx*. The decisive point is the reflection of the processuality and relationality of any approach towards citizenship.

Neglecting the difficulties of such an approach in addressing fundamental questions of class structuration has the decisive advantage of opening a perspective on grasping the state and political structures more precisely by way of going beyond the institutional system, opening a perspective on political culture.

Looking at state, demos and social quality, we arrive at the following synopsis.



STATE	DEMOS	CRITERIA FOR LINKING THE ASPECTS OF STATEHOOD AND DEMOS	SOCIAL QUALITY DIMENSIONS (objective factors)	MEANING AND DIMENSIONS
Territoriality	Trust	Mutual knowledge and understanding	Cohesion	Public – private, including determination of the characterisation of the social and individual
Rule of Law	Rights	Rights as translatable into law	Inclusion	Underlying philosophy of law: contract, constitutional/canon, common/conventional, (contract)/criminal law
Democracy	Public Discourse	Democracy as reflection of consensus reached by power struggles and discourse	Empowerment	Political system (mode of regulation as reflection of the accumulation regime, life regime as reflection of the mode of life) as part of which social support mechanisms)

Intervention	Public Spirit	Intervention reflecting public responsibility	Socio-economic Security	Economic-political system (accumulation regime as determinant of the mode of regulation, mode of life as determinant of the life regime); part of it mechanisms of support social support mechanisms
(Modern State)	Solidarity	Crosscutting, relating especially to territoriality and intervention; however equally important is the defining character of solidarity of the other dimensions of the concrete demos	Social Quality/Social Precarity	As cross-cutting issue, solidarity is going through the different aspects as a cohesive force but equally as line of differentiation. As such it is defined by organic factors of sub-cohesiveness and equally by political hegemony which are established as part of the class struggles.

In this light, the institutionalist approach towards the state, as it is presented before as heuristic tool is, able to reveal some form of rationality in form of a claimed general interest. In other words, it is a means of capturing contradicting processes in a form of a temporarily established equilibrium of power – equilibrium here understood as (relatively) uncontested fundamental consensus. This brings together state as institutional system (structure) with demos as relational action and practice (process).

This means as well that making reference to demos – and with this most importantly to relational processes – is of special importance as it is reflected in the broader legal system (or we can say: the philosophy of law as it expresses the fundamental character of the political system). It is within this framework that class struggles can find their expressions – and in which they also find their limitations. It is from this framework as well that two important factual definitions are arising: (a) the definition of power and (b) the definition of responsibility in its private-social dimension.

An important aspect of the entire analysis is to elaborate then a succinct ascertainment of lines of differentiation (*see in this context Simmel, Georg: Über soziale Differenzierung. Soziologische und psychologische Untersuchungen; Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890*).

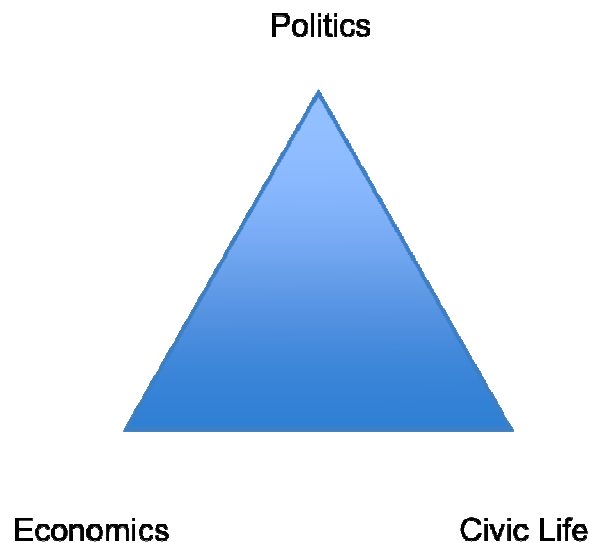
This allows analysing as well different welfare systems in a much more precise way by

- \* going beyond the institutional system, combining a relational and processual dimension in analysing socio-political systems
- \* capturing the contradictory character of different systems
- \* understanding the intersection of
  - objective and subjective dimensions and
  - the transformation of action into practice.

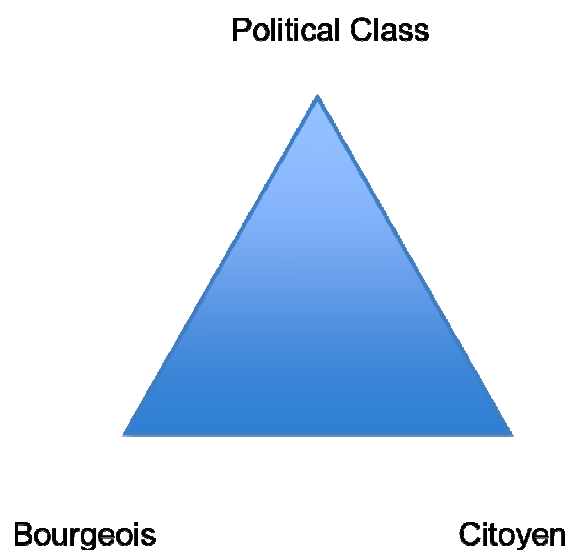
Now we can return to an issue that had been looked at before, namely the triangle of the welfare mix as presented in particular by *Adalbert Evers*. The subsequent debates were reduced on specifying the respective character of services on the one hand and the question of service delivery (more

specifically: the characterisation of providers as matter of the specific character of the agents).

However, taking the reach of social science more serious, looking at its analytical rather than the descriptive scope, we can go a step forward, looking at the mechanisms of relating, i.e. the means of regulating the relationships. We then can transform the triangle as follows.



This means we are not remaining on the institutionalist level. Instead, in this first step of reformulation we arrive at the substantial attribution. This allows us to redefine the role of the agents in respect of their contribution within the structure of the accumulation regime. Important is that in this perspective civic life is very much not least part of the accumulation regime. In this perspective we may actually consider the social policy role of civil society organisations, the family and of volunteering as 'flanking policy', having not least a 'productive function'. However, if we further our translation into class positions, we arrive at the following.



This opens different perspectives.

First, we have to acknowledge the ‘relative independence of the citoyen’ as expression of the contradiction within the ruling class. On the one hand we are dealing with the bourgeoisie as ruling class on economic grounds: the individual that defines freedom on grounds of freedom to obtain and use private property, being ‘socialised’ by market exchange that realises value after the private process of production. On the other hand we are dealing with the citoyen, the intellectuals with a secular-humanist canon of knowledge, being socialised on grounds of communication and voluntarism – all this can be well seen not least in the different philosophies of the state as they emerged in the historical context of the Western enlightenment (see *Herrmann, Peter: Social Professional Activities and the State; New York: Nova, 2007*). Whereas the bourgeois has an objective basis for the power position – being equally the private property of the means of production and the twofold freedom of the proletarian – the citoyen depends on the objective advance of education.<sup>16</sup> This reference to education is in itself contradictory as it depends on the one hand as well on the monopolisation of power (hegemony) but it equally depends on the inclusive process of promoting an

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<sup>16</sup> In the meaning of *Bildung* – a term that is difficult to translate into English language and goes further than the general understanding in including in particular the enhancement of personality.

education for all.<sup>17</sup> However, the latter entails not least a trend of watering down the 'humanist approach' towards education and training, leaving the educational sector with the task of producing skills rather than striving for a knowledge based society in which knowledge is not least a matter of knowledgeable personalities.

Second, from here we can make out a kind of congeniality between citizen and proletarian. This has two sides.

\* On the one hand both, citizen and proletarian have an interest in a 'holistic worldview' and an appropriate understanding of the world. The difference, however, is the interpretation of appropriateness,

- being in the case of the citizen directed to an idealised sphere of freedom (*for instance the Absolute Idea in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy or the Categorical Imperative of Immanuel Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*)<sup>18</sup>
- being in the case of the proletarian the materialist notion of freedom as *the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development.*

*(Engels, Frederick: Anti-Duehring. Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science [1876-1878]; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works; Volume 25: Frederick Engels: Anti-Duehring. Dialectics of Nature; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1987: 1-309; here: 106)*

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<sup>17</sup> It is en passant mentionable that the current debate on changes of the educational systems are very much a reflection of this contradiction and that in this light the fundamental opening of the educational system for the working class, as demanded especially in the context of the European political debates middle/end of the 1960s actually never took place – a fact that is not primarily reflected in the statistical figures of non-access (*see Burgess, Paul: Enduring Inequalities in Transitions to Labour: Class, Education and Community Disadvantage in Ireland; in: Herrmann, Peter [ed.]: Between Politics and Sociology: Mapping Applied Social Studies; New York: Nova Science, 2003: 99-119*), but more in the change of the qualitative orientation of the educational system, increasingly geared to instrumental reason (*see Herrmann, Peter/Ryan, Deirdre: Together with Deirdre Ryan: Education – Just Another Commodity. Exposing the Rhetoric of «Human Capital» in the Light of Social Quality, in: Herrmann, Peter (ed.): Utopia between Corrupted Public Responsibility and Contested Modernity. Globalisation and Social Responsibility; New York: Nova Science, 2005: 43-60; Herrmann, Peter: Introduction: Competitiveness rather than Quality – Changing Telos; in: Herrmann, Peter [ed.]: New Modes of Reasoning in the Age of Commodification: The Cases of Third-Level-Education and Research; New York: Nova, forthcoming*).

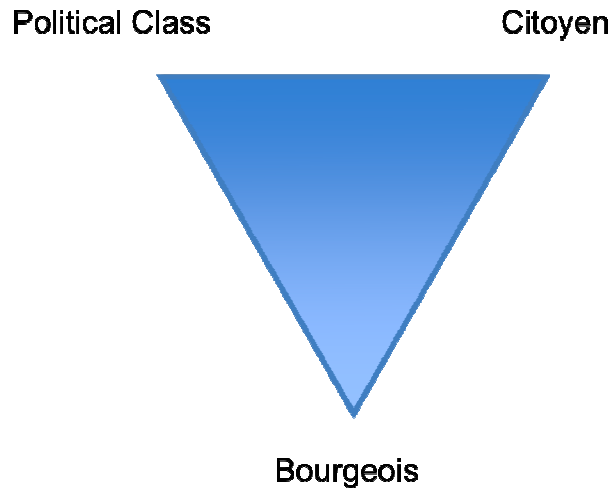
<sup>18</sup> And equally the state-philosophical concepts of *John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau* or *Thomas Hobbes*.

\* On the other hand we find here another dimension of the embourgeoisement.

- Such development of the proletariat is on the one hand founded in the alienation and the ideology linked to it, namely: the ideology (as a wrong consciousness) that availing of property as such (even if not property of means of production) would be a means of overcoming such alienation (the systematic confusion of the individual and social dimension of processes of appropriation due to the loss of the social in the living together).
- On the other hand this embourgeoisement has to be seen as part of the process of hegemony-building and the supposed participative process that is going with it – especially the so-called governance-policies over the recent years (see for instance *Commission of the European Communities: European Governance; Brussels: 25.7.2001 [COM (2001)428]; Herrmann, Peter: Politics and Policies of the Social in the European Union – Looking at the Hidden Agendas; New York: Nova, 2006; Herrmann, Peter: European Social Policy - A Hidden Agenda of Lobbyism; in: Community Development Journal; forthcoming; Herrmann, Peter: Regimes, States and Contracts – How Much Openness is Needed and How Much Openness is Possible?; in: Herrmann, Peter [ed.]: Governance and Social Professions: How Much Openness is Needed and How Much Openness is Possible?; New York: Nova; 2008).*

Third, not least, we find the re-positioning of the citizen. As the economy remains the basic process of any societal development and structuration – and with this the bourgeoisie maintains the role as ruling class – the citizen floats towards the superstructure, rejoining the bourgeois as member of the political class and as well as member of professional groups: social workers, community organisers, lawyers, teachers etc. being typical examples.

This is another building block for ideology and the emergence of the impression of post-modernist claims of the emergence of independence of institutional power, the dominance of politics and the interpretation of life and social relationships as staging. Returning to the graphical presentation we arrive at a triangle that is turned around in the following way.



Of course, this presentation shows as well that – to the extent that the political power really gains overhand – the economic processes – considered the capitalist principles of profit generation remain in place – are losing ground in the sense that the process of mediation undercuts the necessary link to the productive basis. We can prove this by looking especially at the ruling of a seemingly independent financial sector which temporarily overturns the rules of the productive system and in medium terms ends in the perpetuation and/or shift of crisis points – the historical development of the so-called tiger economies cannot be outplayed as ideal example.

In the theoretical perspective of traditional social science this is expressed by *Alain Tourraine* when he looks for sociology's

*central defining principle: the search for possible combinations between the actor and the system, which are always separate, if not in opposition, in modern societies, but which cannot interrupt their relations either without devastating both personal and collective life.*

*(Tourraine, Alain: Sociology after Sociology; in: European Journal of Social Theory; Los Angeles et altera: 2007: 10(2): 184-193; here: 185)*

Important is when he later points on what he sees as pattern where



*[s]ociety is no longer a product of economic organization. And the economy for its part is becoming 'savage', defined more by the market than by economic policies or even strategies of big companies. As for the social and political space, it is increasingly occupied ... by problems that primarily concern the relations of each individual with himself.*

*(ibid.: 187)<sup>19</sup>*

And still, it is nothing else as what *Karl Marx* already pointed out: the capitalist economy as individual processes, being only ex post realised in their social dimension when the individual products are verified in the process of market exchange.

Fourth, as consequence of the foregoing we have to pay more attention to the question how contradictions are shifted from the economic to the political realm. Fading out this fundamental shift, analysing contradictions in the political system without making permanent reference to the fact that the politically ruling class – or even more: the mechanisms of governance themselves – are in principal part and refection of the accumulation regime itself and pointing instead on an abstract 'capitalist ruling class', today's policy analysis is frequently at most scratching at the surface and actually blaming the political systems for failures that are in an elementary form defined by mechanisms inherent in the accumulation regime. This goes of course without saying for even critical conservative reflections – for instance critical studies on the venality of political systems (*see e.g. Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11*) or as well efforts to overcome poverty and economic injustice on grounds of moral-philosophical considerations (*though this needs a more differentiated discussion we can point on Armatya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's concepts*); however, such limitation is more worrying – and sometimes surprising – if brought forward by critical voices from the left, basing their critique on equally on moral-philosophical grounds, reflecting on the moral failure of politicians rather than analysing the underlying economic structures (*e.g. Sennett, Richard: The Culture of New Capitalism: New Haven/London:*

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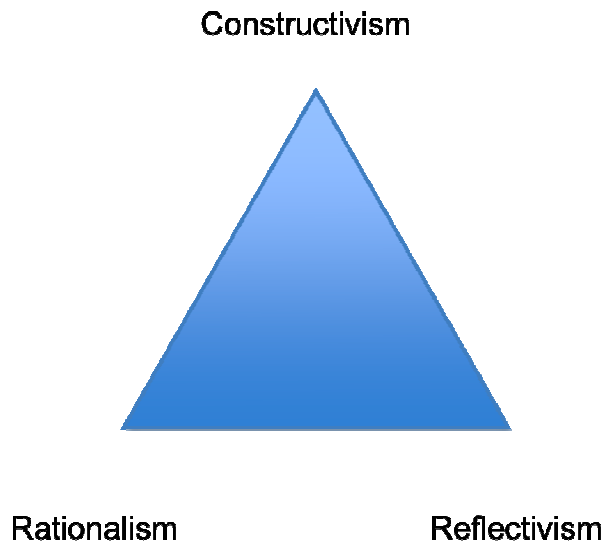
<sup>19</sup> The theoretical expression of *Margaret Thatcher's* notion that there wouldn't be anything as society.

*Yale University Press, 2006; Barry, Brian: Why Social Justice Matters: Cambridge: Polity, 2005).*

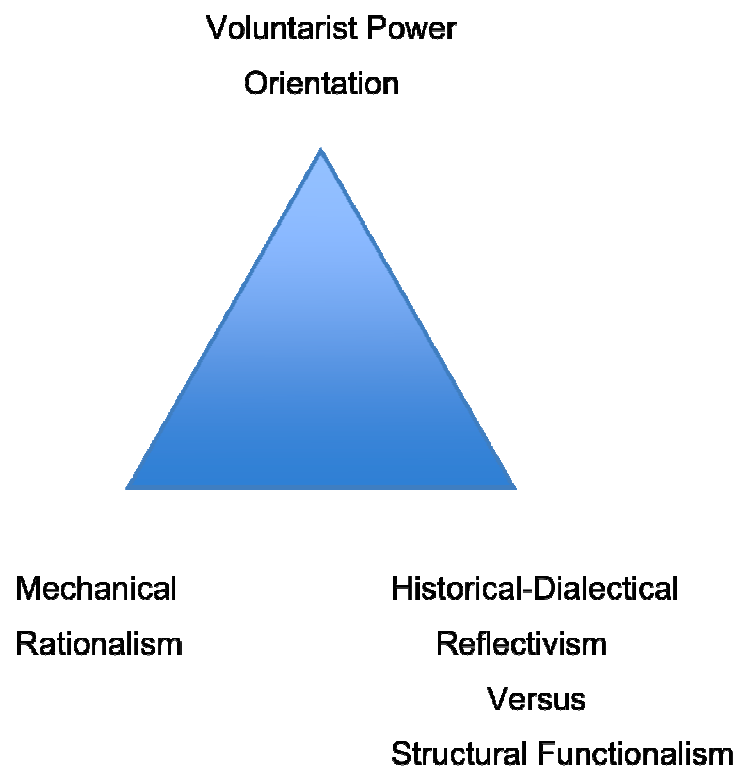
However, it is equally important to make out that the political apparatus in actual fact develops its own laws – not on grounds of voluntary action but on grounds of power perpetuation as an own economic sphere. Acknowledging this allows as well the view on the integration of the powerless, the majority of people who are moving on the stage with minor roles and still being necessary for the show going on: on the individual level performing a position that allows them the illusion of reaching out; on the level of their peers developing a kind of power-pool from which topics can emerge (or remain at least in the agenda) and on the level of the system providing the basic noise to keep the system alive – this goes far further than providing a role of legitimacy only. – Here it may be left open if causing a slight but permanent disharmony can lead to a change of policy or even a change of politics.

Taking the re-definition of the class structuration can as well feed into the considerations of a re-traditionalisation and re-feudalisation of society as it had been put forward earlier in this document.

Finally, what had been said can as well helpfully be applied when looking at different when looking at methodological issues and their specific relevance. In particular to three methodological perspectives can be applied giving specific grounds for different perspectives. A tentative reference is proposed by looking at the work by *Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen* and *Antje Wiener* in their Introduction to the book on *The Social Construction of Europe* (see *Christiansen, Thomas/Jørgensen, Knud Erik/Wiener, Antje: Introduction; in: The Social Construction of Europe; edited by Christiansen, Thomas/Jørgensen, Knud Erik/Wiener, Antje; London et altera: Sage, 2001: 1-19; here: 5*). They point as follows on a triangle of approaches.



Going a step further, looking at the epistemological dimension, this translates into the following graph which provides a useful background tool for class analysis of contemporary (at least Western) societies.



In regards of the methodological development, it should be clear that a shift is not simply needed towards a more interdisciplinary mode of reflection; instead, more important is a shift allowing developing an intersystemic

perspective that reflects contradictions rather than aiming on fading them out of reality. To come to a conclusion, we need to emphasise the need for a conception of history and more in general of social science that

*[h]as not, like the idealist view of history, to look for a category in every period, but remains constantly on the real ground of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice, and accordingly it comes to the conclusion that all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism, by resolution into 'self-consciousness', or transformation into 'apparitions', 'spectres', 'whimsies', etc., nut only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave the raise to this idealistic humbug; ...*

*(Marx, Karl/Engels, Frederick: The German Ideology. Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to its Various Prophets; in: Karl Marx. Frederick Engels. Collected Works; Volume 5: Marx and Engels: 1845-47; London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1976: 19-539; here: 53 f.)*

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*Editorial Note*

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- i The William-Thompson-Working-Paper-Series is edited by the European Social Organisational and Science Consultancy for University of Cork, Department of Applied Social Studies and meant to offer a space for publications of occasional documents. One aim amongst others is to offer a space for publication of work by colleagues of the Department of Applied Social Studies at University of Cork.
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