

# Potentials for Taking a Strategic Role for Sustainable Sociability

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*The core thesis of the article is that we are undergoing a shift from employment-based economies to work-based societies. Major consequences are outlined around four issues, namely (I) employment and work, (II) contracts and treaties, (III) nations and cities and (IV) resources and living regimes. While presenting a real utopian vision, the work is methodologically grounded especially in the theory of regulation and the social quality approach.*

**Keywords:** work, employment, capitalist regulation, real utopia as alternative.

*To study the meaning of man and of life – I am making significant progress here. I have faith in myself. Man is a mystery: if you spend your entire life trying to puzzle it out, then do not say that you have wasted your time. I occupy myself with this mystery, because I want to be a man (Dostoyevsky 1839)\**

## Introduction

It is already a long time – and occasionally forgotten – that we are confronted with the need to clarify if we are talking about employment crisis or crisis of employment (see contributions in Matthes 1983). The thesis I put forward on the occasion of an international conference on employment issues, organised by the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics in Moscow, had been that we are facing a shift from employment-based economies to work-based societies (Herrmann 2015). In some way this is just about (another) utopia – however, it is the one that tries to follow a very simple methodological principle – this can be introduced with reference to a little story told about Leonardo da Vinci's very young years.

*'Now,' Toscanelli went on, adjusting the violet velvet cap on his head, 'it may be that in some remote future men, yes, I say men, will take to the air, but this will never happen because of any spells but by their learning certain mathematical laws which are still unknown to us. It is only those who are blind to the truth who can see magic nature,' added Toscanelli and returned the little bird to the shelf.*

*As he sat down again, he saw the light in Leonardo's eyes.*

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\* Personal correspondence (1839), as quoted in Dostoevsky: His Life and Work (1971) by Konstantin Mochulski, as translated by Michael A. Minihan, p. 17; Quoted from: [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Fyodor\\_Dostoyevsky](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Fyodor_Dostoyevsky); 25.12.17.

*'Why, what's the matter with you? Did I shock you by saying that men will fly one day?'*

*Leonardo answered, his voice hardly more than a whisper:*

*'Messere, ever since I was small, I believed in it. No, it seems more than a belief now. Men shall be free of air some day.'*

*Toscanelli's smile was like a benediction (Almedingen 1963: 81).*

## Methodological Perspectives

The ontological reference is the understanding of the social as production and reproduction of everyday's life, having four dimensions in mind, namely the production of:

- the self;
- the 'alter-ego';
- the alter-differentiae;
- the alter-matter.

Epistemologically I am working with a perspective on a deductively gained determination of the future. However, this deductive perspective is rooted in an inductive understanding of the 'historical presence'. Furthermore, I apply the frequently suggested perspective on the complex interplay of accumulation regime, understood in a wide sense as realisation of value, living regime as matter of translating the opportunities into mechanisms of individual reproduction, mode of regulation, understood as regulative and ideological hegemonic system backing the accumulation regime and mode of life as matter of possible and actually realised life styles, reflecting societal conditions and individual options (see in this context Aglietta 1976; Lipietz 1986).

This offers a framework to analyse reality not by way of a mirror, but by way of detecting the potential for a future development as it is outlined in the historical presence.

A brief look at some presence – making reference to an analysis provided by IGAS (see Timbeau [Coordinator] 2014) – will deliver a point of departure. It highlights – complemented by my comments and interpretation – the following:

- consolidation of regional divergence – seemingly contradicting globalisation and the thesis of a subsequent general convergence;
- rising unemployment – though we should see it more as matter of changing character of labour;
- high concentration of wealth – so unreal or even surreal that it depends on being 'gated' to justify its own non- and antisocial character by stylised consumption, everybody defining him or herself by the obtained gadgets;<sup>1</sup>
- aggregation of poverty – being multiplied by the fact that it is visibly adjunct to the extreme wealth, too often even just the 'justification' of the barriers that forbid entering the gated communities;
- deflation risk – and already its reality: as far as it is about the 'cheapening of goods' a necessity as for many only this way existence is possible, irrespective of quality deterioration, still allowing to make the misery of the world<sup>2</sup> a somewhat distant matter.

<sup>1</sup> And of course expressed by the reflection of the lack of meaning of existence being mirrored by the meaninglessness of the goods obtained and relations in which they are engaged.

<sup>2</sup> Alluding to Bourdieu, Pierre (dir.) 1993: *La misère du monde*, Seuil, coll. 'Points essais', 2007 (1re éd. 1993).

One of the problems remains, namely the neglect of (re-)thinking the issue of value. All issues are fundamentally accepting the current system as ‘natural’ and are also very much based on the assumption that the main issue is actually the redefinition of mechanisms of (re-)distribution.

Looking at the issues mentioned in the IGAS, an additional point is surely missing: the fact that extractive policies are moving to some kind of limits of growth. Taking this thoroughly, and referring with it to extraction of raw materials as well as to the extraction of socio-human potentials (see Wichterich n.d.) and the present *système anthroponomique* (Boccaro). This has also some importance for overcoming the before mentioned analytical weakness.

If not understood mechanically, we see that globalisation is not least a specific form of the before mentioned: the need to redefine ‘economic units’. The following is of special relevance in a methodological perspective – looking at EURASIA, the so-called emerging market societies, so-called developing countries and transition countries:

- it is a space where a supposedly natural national bordering is actually blurring and even bursting;
- it is a time when the supposed ‘end of history’ is in fact marking a new beginning;
- it is a stage where the mode of production is finding a natural limit, *i.e.* a limit of growth in its own terms;
- it is an overall setting that offers unprecedented resources.

In some way we can see permanent crises also as alterations between bubbles, bloating and busting. These are actually four dimensions helping to understand the broader foundation of production as process defined as metabolism with nature.

If we look at concepts or constructs of EURASIA or BRICS, we face the difficulty of dealing with a historically defined ‘hard reality’; but as such it can be used as kind of natural bridge. The question of any bridge is not least a matter of defining its use in terms of direction (*form*), content (*matter*), actor (*subject*) and movement (*process*).

### The Real Challenges Ahead

Some major challenges had been mentioned earlier – while they are crucial in several manifest respects, other dimensions are possibly more important in the long term, characterising subtle and profound changes. They seem to be in some way eclectic, and even opportunistic. In some way they are, however, looking at underlying mechanisms. In any case they are equally helpful to design work within a scenario under which this presentation stands, namely looking for the potentials for taking a strategic role for sustainable sociability.

Referring to the EXPO 2015 in Milan, we can see that one of its Laboratory was dealing with (non-)violation against nature, global equity, food and energy as matter of conviviality and human settlement.<sup>3</sup>

These are major themes – one could surely propose others and one could also suggest different formulations. Furthermore they are open to different interpretations, using various paradigms. For instance, in terms of social quality thinking we may propose close links as they are presented in the following Overview 1.

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<sup>3</sup> See Laboratorio Expo; <http://www.expo2015.org/it/progetti/laboratorio-expo>; 05/04/15; <http://portalevideo.unimi.it/media?mid=348>; 29/12/17.

## Overview 1

**Central Problems and Answers for Sustainable Sociability**

LABORATORY EXPO	SOCIAL QUALITY		
(Non-)Violation against Nature	Cohesion	Recognition	Solidarity
Global Equity	Empowerment	Capacity	Dignity
Food and Energy as Conviviality	Socio-economic security	Personal security	Justice/equity
Settlement	Inclusion	Responsiveness	Equal value

Another connotation, namely between the Laboratory and the altered regulationist approach is presented in the following Overview 2.

## Overview 2

**Central Problems and Answers in a Regulationist Perspective**

LABORATORY EXPO	REGULATIONIST APPROACH
(Non-)Violation against Nature	Living regime
Global Equity	Mode of regulation
Food and Energy as Conviviality	Accumulation regime
Settlement	Mode of life

A further, general approach can be seen in Parsons' AGIL-scheme – while having said general approach, it should be kept in mind that it is adjoined with the consolidation of US-American understanding of modernisation.

## Overview 3

**Central Problems and Attribution to the AGIL-Dimensions**

LABORATORY EXPO	AGIL
(Non-)Violation against Nature	Adaptation
Global Equity	Goal Attainment
Food and Energy as Conviviality	Integration
Settlement	Latent Pattern Attainment

After bringing together the Laboratory Problem Dimensions and the different methodological approaches, the following Overview 4 offers a glimpse into reflections of bringing the methodological dimensions into contact.

## Overview 4

**ARS – Regulationist Agile Social Quality**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accumulation Regime</b></li> <li>• Socio-economic Security</li> <li>• Personal [Human] Security</li> <li>• Social Justice</li> <li>• <b>Goal Attainment</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Living Regime</b></li> <li>• Social Empowerment</li> <li>• Personal [Human] Capacity</li> <li>• Human Dignity</li> <li>• <b>Integration</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mode of Life</b></li> <li>• Social Inclusion</li> <li>• Social Responsiveness</li> <li>• Equal Value</li> <li>• <b>Latent Pattern Maintenance</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mode of Regulation</b></li> <li>• Social Cohesion</li> <li>• Social Recognition</li> <li>• Solidarity</li> <li>• <b>Adaptation</b></li> </ul>

This provides not least a perspective for an understanding of present shifts in society building, confronted with two main general challenges: overcoming methodological nationalism by looking at formations that are based on non-national boundaries of their identity and overcoming methodological individualism by looking for general criteria of socialisation.

### **Towards a Strategic Role for Sustainable Sociability**

Looking at the challenge ahead, in terms of the potentials for taking a strategic role for sustainable sociability, the following areas are of central importance, requiring urgent investigation as well as strategic consideration in policy design. In the light of both, social quality thinking and a regulationist perspective, a central issue is the need to step away from the concept of national(ist) hegemony. As discussed on another occasion under the title ‘New Princedom – Critical Remarks on Claimed Alternatives by New Life Worlds’ (Herrmann 2010, 2012a), we need urgently a new approach that replaces the lead taken by nationality as foundation of hegemonic systems by the principle of global sustainability. One of the crucial turning points today is rooted in the fact that globalisation did not simply undermine the power of nation-states – as the matter of undermining the potential of executing control; moreover, it has to be seen as surpassing the usefulness of the nation-state as a frame of reference for solutions of socio-politico-economic problems. In other words, borders (and the efforts to overcome them) are already following different criteria and standards – multinational enterprises, regional citizenship and others are just giving a hint. Importantly we have to take up the challenge of going beyond ‘integration’ and move towards new ‘mergers’, countering with this the still existing strives for national hegemonies by offering a qualitatively new point of reference for actual action. This had been suggested already and deserves to be emphasised anew: for social thinking the need to overcome methodological individualism and methodological nationalism as mainstream and supposedly only way of analysing realities. Of course, it is easy to understand that nationalism and individualism – even if defined as impossible to methodologically scrutinise – were very much constructions of reality, not really its analysis. And as far as any social understanding is to some extent construction, it requires today approaches that overcome the exclusion that is actually based on nationality and individuality.

Subsequently we have to move towards a concise analysis that clearly differentiates between objective conditions and the political interpretation. Though this seems to be obvious, we find too often and from various political sides the notion of inherent necessities, nowadays often known as ‘*TINA – There is no Alternative*’. Although there are surely mechanisms of independent movements of socio-economic processes – one of the most obvious examples is that of algorithms ‘handling’ and ‘controlling’ stock market exchange – a sober analysis has to understand the complex situation (structure and development), however differentiating between

- determining potentials;
- defining aims and objectives;
- extracting trends and dependencies (*i.e.* hurdles, necessary inputs for change);
- extrapolating ‘change-agents’;
- determining the ‘strategic plan’.

This pattern applies – *cum grano salis* – to many areas, and of course, it means higher efficiency, thus lower cost, the possibility of establishing user-friendly and comfortable use of services and purchase of goods, in selected cases even giving the customer/service user some space for interaction and increased influence, opening roads towards part-

individualised services/goods. All this is going hand in hand with decreasing prices. However, there is a price to be paid, and there are two different charges levied. The one is a – possibly twofold – pressure on working conditions; twofold means that pressure is increased on those who are directly involved as for instance UBER-drivers, foodora-deliverers but also hotels (individual or chains) that are engaging with booking.com (see for the latter for instance Machatschke 2017). The other bill has to be paid by people and strata who are only peripherally concerned – we may even think about the click-workers on click-farms, boosting the image of their customers by making virtual reality to faked realities. The other reason is that the increased freedom and power of the customer/user is in actual fact more illusionary than anything else: one crucial point is that even the attempt to make use of the options requires a pre-empt formulations, making thus sure that ‘the system’ is able to process the data. In other words, increased variety is more qualitative than quantitative.

Though ‘attitudes’ surely play a role, we still have to investigate the conditions from which they emerge. While not arguing from a crude perspective of a mechanical reflection, we have to decode the link between the objective conditions – as matter of the accumulation regime and also the living regime that is founded by it. Not least we are thus concerned with exploring dynamics. In general methodological terms we can differentiate between especially three modes, namely the actor perspective and the dynamic on the level of socio-personal life-worlds, the ongoing and permanent dynamic of a system that works as mechanism to secure the existence of the system itself, comparable with mortar joints of buildings and bridges or elasticity of decks, the ‘liquidity’ of a system by which the conventional agents and structures are redefined. This may be seen as agency-oriented interpretation of Fernand Braudel's interpretation of history in three planes (see Braudel 1963: 80 ff.). These three planes, and these three modes of dynamism have to be seen as dialectically interwoven – although there are certain revolutionary phases, concerned with fundamental changes of the mode of production, during which the lead function shifts, enforcing and ascertaining this way the hegemony of a new formation. Here is not the opportunity to elaborate this in an exhaustive way (see for some more details Herrmann, ongoing [a]; [b]; some of the references had been added by researchgate and are completely irrelevant to the work and/or content would be fundamentally criticised and even rejected. Actually this confirms arts of what had been stated: the complete lack of competence of the algorithm jugglers and the lack of real power of users as those references cannot be manually deleted). For the moment it has to suffice to highlight the following shifts that are considered to be important points around which the development of the liquid modernity floats and developing at some stage to a new pattern of solidification.<sup>4</sup>

1. De-firmation – the tendency of the classical firm loosing its complex socio-economic meaning.

2. De-spacialisation – the blurring and changed intermingling of the different dimensions of ‘meaning’ of space as provision of a fixed reference for inclusion and exclusion.

3. De-classification as matter of shifting and questioning of social classes and strata.

4. De-formation – the tendency of known patterns of ‘educational formation’ loosing foundation and meaning.

5. De-legislation – the decreasing meaning of clear and durable legal frameworks and conditions, including ‘charitiblisation’ of socio-economic securisation and with this the erosion of social rights.

<sup>4</sup> One may add ‘relative’ as any solidification depends on its own flexibility mechanisms and as any hegemonic system is in itself contradictory, never to be understood as complete interpenetration, and even often depending on the existence of its own counter-poles. With some alterations taken from Herrmann 2017.

6. De-identification – by way of digitised standardisation, occurring also as ‘big-brotherisation’.

7. De-personalisation – paradoxically occurring as overemphasis of individualism, taking forms as they are in sociology discussed as Infantilisation, Burn-Out Society, experience society, leisure time society, and the like.<sup>5</sup>

8. De-politisation – as part of a wider process that deals with life-style choices as the real choice, suggesting in the extreme case that the real choice is about withdrawing from politics, suggesting that it is ALDI-nativlos: Bürger entlasten. Wir senken die Preise.’ (A pun: broadly translated as ‘there is no alternative to ALDI as it is ALDI that relieves pressure from citizens by lowering the prices’).<sup>6</sup> Continuing the pun in English language, we see that one synonym for terms such as ‘relieve pressure form’, ‘unburden’, ‘relieving’ is ‘disengaging’. So – even if not necessarily intended, it is factually the orientation on individuals, not bothering about politics and policies as this is declared to be task of the ‘entrepreneur’, also highly individualist and stylised as charismatic personality. Should we say that it suggests the entrepreneur as new ‘father figure of the country’?<sup>7</sup> Oliver Nachtwey speaks of a ‘polis of solutionism coined by ‘do-gooder entrepreneurship’ of the digital elite’<sup>8</sup> (Nachtwey and Seidl 2017)

9. Characteristically, all of them are fundamentally concerning the re-shaping of the economic formation and they are fundamentally re-shaping the four dimensions of Accumulation Regime, Living Regime, Mode of Regulation and Mode of Life. Still, attention is at present especially directed towards the changes of the accumulation regime. Again, we are mainly looking at the ‘allocation of the net product between consumption and accumulation’<sup>9</sup> and even narrower at the process of accumulation itself.

With this we have a foundation that can serve as reference point for an iterative process of looking at the current developmental stage: on the one hand, it allows delineating core issues, on the other hand, we can develop a deeper understanding when we keep the deeper layers in mind when looking at the grand narratives.

## Core Issues

In the following some core issues will be mentioned, the aim is in particular to present the tensions. This will be undertaken by briefly outlining the issues, namely (I) employment and work, (II) contracts and treaties, (III) nations and cities and (IV) resources and living regimes. In the following step, the actual meaning will be briefly presented, but at the

<sup>5</sup> See e.g., Stiegler 2011; Schulze 2005; Han and Byung-Chul 2015



<sup>6</sup> See URL: <http://www.horizont.net/marketing/nachrichten/Aldi-Sued-So-will-der-Discounter-mit-seinem-Frische-Programm-den-Wahlkampf-aufmischen-160663>; 30/10/17; URL: <https://www.aldinativlos.de/#/>; 30/10/17.

<sup>7</sup> A detail, as tiny as it is, is equally telling when it comes to the hegemonic system and looking for anchoring points for populists. It underlines the meaning of ‘entrepreneurial attitude’ and concerns the stylisation of individualist entrepreneurial spirit: presumably the representation of honesty and control. So even enterprises with a long tradition as medium- to large-seized performance advertise themselves as ‘private/family enterprise’.

<sup>8</sup> In German ‘Weltverbessererunternehmertum’ der digitalen Elite geprägte Polis der Solution’.

<sup>9</sup> Alain Lipietz, defining the accumulation regime, speaks of the ‘stabilization over a long period of the allocation of the net product between consumption and accumulation’ which ‘implies some correspondence between the transformation of both the conditions of production and the conditions of the reproduction of wage earners’ (Lipietz 1986: 19).

same time it will be confronted with its juxtaposition, *i.e.* an ‘emergent’ pattern that can be seen (and has to be elaborated) as concrete utopia.

### I. Employment and Work

Talking about employment economies and work-oriented societies, a central point is to redefine issues around the dis-embeddedness of our economies. The central, and widely accepted take on this issue had been grounded in Karl Polanyi's work on ‘The Great Transformation’ (Polanyi 1957). One aspect that is in part dimmed, is the matter of production though this should actually be centre-staged. The centrality of the market is not simply a matter of organising distribution and exchange but a matter of aligning production itself, *i.e.* the definition of what production is about (the determination of value) and the status of producers and the character of labour.<sup>10</sup>

This also means that we have to emphasise that the process of dis-embedding is an expression of the permanency of accumulation by dispossession and the tendency of a permanent over-accumulation, being the actual driver. Fundamentally, ‘[c]ela renvoie à notre analyse systémique néo-marxiste, qui, partant de Marx dans le Capital, distingue dans un système économique comme le système capitaliste, trois ensemble inter-dépendants: la structure sociale, l’opération technique de la reproduction, la régulation, (règles et régulateurs), et non pas seulement la structure des rapports de production et les forces productives’. (Boccaro 2011: 25). As much as the permanency of accumulation by dispossession and the tendency of a permanent over-accumulation are structurally inherent moments of the capitalist mode of production, they are also ‘non-economic’ factors: this can be summarised by focusing on four factors:

- de-valuation of value production in the process of the tendency of the profit-rate to fall;

- de-socialising personalities by separating ‘(e.g., family/re-productive) life’ from ‘production/working life’;<sup>11</sup>

- des-embedding of economic processes as establishing the market society;

- de-socialisation and technisation of the relation to nature – the thesis of commodification in a simplified and mechanical form may require some qualification as ‘nature’, *i.e.* resources are actually to a large extent taken out of the process of the determination of value, although (or because) they are subordinated under the requirements of accumulation. In this context it is also useful to revisit the understanding of nature: if we define resources as

- objective natural conditions;

- labour power;

- objectified environment

we have also a foundation for revisiting the question of analysing the process of exploitation more thoroughly.

Importantly we find with this that the lament about increasing individualisation has to focus on the dissolution of spaces for the social in its traditional understanding of (i) living together or togetherness and (ii) empathy and readiness to care. This means to approach this topic

1. without focusing on subjective values;

2. without focusing on a purely politically induced mode of life; and

<sup>10</sup> The English language has the advantage of possessing different words for the two aspects of labour here considered.

The labour which creates Use Value, and counts qualitatively, is Work, as distinguished from Labour; that which creates Value and counts quantitatively, is Labour as distinguished from Work. (Marx 1996 [1887]: 57).

<sup>11</sup> Importantly, this is not reflected in the debates on work-life balance!



3. without referring on individuals and their life styles, though notwithstanding that all this plays in some respect a key role.

This way we find importantly a dimension of inequality that is put a little bit aside in mainstream debates on inequality: in concrete terms and in respect of labour, des-embedding is relevant as

- overwork versus unemployment;
- wasted work in form of excess-employment;
- wasted resources in form of zero-hour contracts;
- wasted resources in form of soci(et)ally non-valued labour.

Precurity is conceptually and empirically a major issue, highlighting the need of re-considering also the definition of rights (see Herrmann, Bobkov and Csoba 2014).

Overview 5

**Employment and Work**

	PRESENCE AS REFERENCE	CONCRETE UTOPIA
CHARACTER OF LABOUR	Alienation – this is not just a matter of juridical lack of control and ownership; nor is it solely a matter of personal and psychological concern. It is a matter of commodities being alienated from themselves. The increasing separation of the exchange value from the use value means the loss of a sustainable foundation for any economic development. It is important to keep in mind that labour power itself is a commodity, thus alienated from itself and from the relationship to the other commodities (machines, raw material ...).	Integration of life as complement of division of labour: radical shortening of working time; integration of employment and personal development, including the inclusion of ‘community obligation of employment’. Using resources to establish a four-in-one-perspective (see Haug, 2008/2009 <sup>2</sup> ), starting from the fact that ‘[i]n concrete terms the elements of society, societal structuration and politically-strategic development of society are located in four areas, namely employment, reproductive work, cultural development and politics from below’ (Herrmann, 2012, March 8 <sup>th</sup> )
ORIENTATION OF ECONOMY	Export-heavy economies can be seen as ‘variation of the theme’ – it is not only a problem of unstable and inequitable balance of trade; moreover it is a matter of consolidating the dissolution of the social. Production as completely ‘economised’ and ‘marketised’ process is not only disembedded but furthermore only feeding back into the social, <i>i.e.</i> into the production and reproduction of everyday’s life in mediated ways. We can see this when it comes to discussing education being increasingly in an explicit way reduced on vocation-oriented skills training, the ongoing and again tightened link that is established between employment and social benefits in the widest understanding, <i>etc.</i>	Re-focussing on ‘indigenous resources’, re-establishing markets as mechanisms that regulate exchange of soci(et)al production. In particular the latter, <i>i.e.</i> soci(et)al production, has to be seen as part of the aforementioned integrated perspective. If we agree with for instance Michel Aglietta, stating ‘Cela ne dépend pas non plus du type de société, car cela dépasse l’économie marchande puisque l’institution monétaire s’étend à des sociétés où la monnaie représente la grandeur de celui qui fait un don aux puissances tutélaires de la collectivité. Il y a ainsi à la fois une unité de la monnaie en tant que rapport social et une hétérogénéité des sources d’émission, des sources de dette, ainsi que des formes de souveraineté qui confèrent à la monnaie son acceptabilité générale. On a donc un problème non seulement de quantité, de valeur, mais aussi de qualité’ (Aglietta, 2015: 1). This means not least that orienting on re-embedding has to look closely into the question of the debt-holder, <i>i.e.</i> it is about developing the awareness of being indebted to our selves.

## II. Contracts and Treaties

Contractualisation is a process that can be seen throughout history – and in fact it is an important part of a secular development at the centre of which we find the securitisation of rights. However, as it is undeniable a contradictory process, feeding into the second modernity, it opens importantly a window towards a ‘third modernity’ that is neither geared towards exchange nor towards pure individualism (for the critique of the latter see Herrmann and Dorrity 2009). Instead it offers fertile ground for an understanding of productive processes where the underlying understanding of production goes beyond commodity production and seen as matter of socialisation.

It is important to acknowledge the shift in management strategies, taking increasingly account of ‘socio-personal development’, focussing on employees as potential, combining (i) a strategy of developing human capital and (ii) the orientation on corporate social responsibility. Of course, this opens a wide space for critical debate. One cornerstone of such debate is the limitation of the human capital approach by its fundamentally individualist orientation,<sup>12</sup> the other cornerstone of this debate is the non-obligatory character of the understanding of responsibility and also the inherent arbitrariness of defining scope and reach. Be it as it is, we are surely facing new patterns that need to be scrutinised in a wider perspective.

Overview 6

### Contracts and Treaties

	PRESENCE AS REFERENCE	CONCRETE UTOPIA
REACH OF RIGHTS	Individualisation of rights – especially within the framework of a capitalist exchange system (the ‘market society’ as presented by Polanyi) – relationships, even social relationships, are for the good or for the worst reduced on relationships between individuals and even larger entities are defined as legal person. Paradoxically this means also the opening towards a major subjectivation and orientation on scope of discretion, depending on individual interpretation.	Definition of rights within a global discourse that concludes from an inclusive process – this has to be based (i) on substantial rights, <i>i.e.</i> a complex consideration of processes of social production and include (ii) objective rights, namely the ‘rights of those without rights’, <i>i.e.</i> those who and that cannot claim rights directly ( <i>e.g.</i> , children and ‘nature’).
MEANING OF RIGHTS	The subsequent de-substantialisation of rights, going hand in hand with tightly linking them to employment on the one hand and the residence principle on the other hand. By and large rights are reduced on formal means of securing a formally defined status. Substantially it means the application of the ‘suggestive power of communicative average’ (Weimer, 2012: 19).	Rights have to deal actively with the tension of standing between generalisation based on the rules of formal conclusiveness and individual appropriateness. While the former is very much a matter of executing hegemonic power, the latter can be used as space for questioning this power by discursive means. Procedural changes may include (i) strengthening the dimension of common law and importantly applying it especially to business questions, (ii) utilising the adversarial rules, (iii) and at the same time changing them by developing a strengthened participatory dimension, and (iv) also reversing or qualifying the role of the plaintiff and the defendant.

<sup>12</sup> I leave the even more fundamental critique aside, namely the problem of denying the special character of labour power as commodity and assessing it as capital instead.

**III. Nations and Citizens**

Though the concrete historical emergence and definition of the nation state can easily be contested,<sup>13</sup> it will not be contested that it is essentially bound to the overall process of modernisation, being now strongly welded with the industrialist capitalist market system. A main point is the reference to strict borders – the definition of borders as more or less reliable points had been the core of the Westphalian Peace Treaty. While this had been on the one hand limiting the scope in some ways, this does not mean that we find closed systems. On the contrary, we are dealing with a world-economic system of which nation states, imperialism, colonialism trade-regulation – the latter may be a regulation of free trade – are part. Part of this system had been the definition of citizenship, providing a specifically defined framework for labour and social and welfare rights.

Overview 7

**Nations and Citizens**

	PRESENCE AS REFERENCE	CONCRETE UTOPIA
<b>BORDERING</b>	Though societies today are generally considered to be functionally differentiated entities, <sup>14</sup> and even administrative patterns are double-structured, following on the one hand, requirements of the manifestation of national bonding, on the other, pure small-scale administrative rule ('legitimation by procedure' – Luhmann), we find at the same time centrally the prevalence of nationality as principle foundation of economy and politics.	Simply, there should not be any borders, the highest principle is the search for externalities in order to secure not only their inclusion but to develop the integration of the factors that are potentially allowing externalisation.
<b>INTEGRITY</b>	The definition of the nation state as hegemonic system is given by the fundamental and permanent tension: on the one hand, it is defined as household economy, on the other hand, it is defined as exchange economy. Whereas the first is a somewhat closed system and establishes a high degree of integrity, the second evolves as matter of an endless circular process. <sup>15</sup> The development of the dominance of production as process of market-competitive accumulation provides the foundation for an increasingly 'closed, self-referential system', culminating in financialisation as utmost perversion. The advantage is the (at least temporary) production of some forms of abundance, (i) allowing forms of distribution characterised by the 'affluent worker', but (ii) also by extreme inequality. In principle though, it is affluence based on externalisation.	In particular the development of the productive forces is sufficiently developed to replace the extension of the trade markets by re-establishing real-economies, limiting the need for self-referential trade. One aspect is about the need for massive redistribution; another essential aspect will be that a new 'citizen-based' system will require peer-oriented and commons-based exchange systems, dissolving the principle of the nation state and providing spaces for new forms of direct exchange and participative markets.

However, this had never been a static system, seeing changes of internal borders, but equally important changes of 'meaning'. To mention only one aspect, we may refer to three changing perspectives in terms of citizenship: (i) shifts as consequence of mass-

<sup>13</sup> Likely poles are the Peace of Westphalia in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, on the one hand, and the constitution of the new non-clerical states, emerging as part of the process of unification in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand.

<sup>14</sup> Personally I prefer to speak of segmentary, stratificatory and functional differentiation going hand in hand, featuring historically different combinations of complementary patterns.

<sup>15</sup> 'Nicht Haushaltführung, sondern Handel war am Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts zum paradigmatischen wirtschaftlichen Ereignis geworden. In der Haushaltswirtschaft endet der wirtschaftliche Impuls immer dann, wenn die Versorgung mit den angestrebten Gütern erreicht ist. In der Handelswirtschaft sind die Operationen dagegen zirkulär angelegt (Hutter 1999: 48).

migration, (ii) alterations due to ‘enterprise’ or ‘professional’ quasi-citizenship and (iii) the overlap of citizenship of national bonds complemented by the citizenship of supranational bodies (e.g., EU-citizens who may occasionally have multiple national passports and the EU-citizenship).<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. Resources and Living Regimes

We can find a general *Zeitgeist*, suggesting the need for changing life, life styles and living. The political and ideological camps are diverse, and so are the suggestions. They range – roughly speaking – from pleas, calling individuals to change their behaviour to authoritarian proposals ‘enforcing reason’ and also orient on using indirect force, in particular taxation and other systems of incentives and disincentives.

This goes – to some extent strangely – hand in hand with a take on things that suggests some more or less uncontrollable, at times even indefinable ‘systemic forces’, the closest definition and suggestion of controllability given in formulations as we find them, for example by Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen who suppose ‘that in certain historical phases, and building on a coherence between norms of production and of consumption, a hegemonic – or in other words – broadly accepted and institutionally secured mode of living can emerge that is deeply rooted in the everyday practices of people and safeguarded by the state, and it is further associated with certain concepts of progress: computers must be ever more powerful and food ever cheaper – regardless of the social or ecological conditions under which they are produced’ (Brand and Wissen 2012: 549).

In general terms some of it can surely not be denied: the existing hegemony going hand in hand with germs of counter-hegemonic strives. However, it is important to elaborate the issues in analytical terms, adopting the regulation-theoretical concepts in a less intuitive way. In order to get a clearer understanding, I proposed earlier the different dimensions of accumulation regime (realisation of value), living regime (translating the opportunities into mechanisms of individual reproduction), mode of regulation (regulative and ideological hegemonic system) and mode of life (possible and actually realised life styles). An elaboration along this line will allow developing a clearer understanding: (i) of the objective determinants (the productive forces), (ii) the process of accumulation as objective determination of second order, (iii) the role of power (in terms of control) and (iv) the personal responsibility. In a further step it allows localising strategies between the supposed poles of the use of resources (not least the use of resources within the process of production) and the emergence of new living regimes. In the way Brandt and Wissen present the matter, it reminds in parts a version of the proposed Culture-Matters-thesis, promoted by Lawrence Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (Harrison and Huntington 2000) and in the version of the Imperial Mode of Life even further subjectivised. This, thought consequently to the end, lacking an elaborated sound economic analysis, brings the thesis of an Imperial Mode of Life (Brand and Wissen 2017) despite all sympathy it may evoke, in close proximity to Lawrence Harrison’s ‘liberal’ approach, suggesting that Underdevelopment is a State of Mind (Harrison 1985).

<sup>16</sup> Of course, even more complex cases like the citizenship of the pope as ‘function-related’ (Regierung der Oberpfalz, Pressestelle n.d.) or the multiple citizenship of Daniel Barenboim (Argentine, Israeli, Spanish, Palestinian; see URL: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel\\_Barenboim;07/04/15](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Barenboim;07/04/15)) which is at least in part a political statement [see URL: <http://www.danielbarenboim.com/journal/dual-citizenship.html>; 07/04/15; some similarities may be seen if compared with the understanding of being ‘Ebreo senza patria’, i.e. ‘Hebrew without fatherland’ – thus a characterisation of Marc Chagall in the film shown on occasion of the exhibition CHAGALL. LOVE AND LIFE; 16/03/2015 al 26/07/2015 in the Chiostrò del Bramante, Rome.

This has to be linked to what had been mentioned above about the specific character of development and the different layers or planes of dynamics and history and their interwoven character.

Overview 8

**Resources and Living Regimes**

	<b>PRESENCE AS REFERENCE</b>	<b>CONCRETE UTOPIA</b>
<b>DIGITALISATION OF THE WORLD</b>	<p>Suggestive power of communicative average (Weimer 2015) – increasing automatization as matter of enhanced control by: (i) profitability and effectiveness and (ii) machine-requirements; obliteration of work opportunities through flattening processes of production going hand in hand with some enhancement of flexibility also of mass production (lowered costs of setup/adjustment, allowing production in small series, or even ‘made to individual measure’). Relocation of parts of the labour and cost on the customer, limiting the creative control through customers. This means not least the further tightening of the link between the extension of production and the utilitarian use of resources, <i>i.e.</i> the subordination of ‘nature’ (including alienated human nature) under profitability.</p>	<p>Change of the ‘material dimension’ of goods: information goods, knowledge goods, and de-materialisation of generating value and also of valuation, de-temporalisation, the latter actually allowing developing time sovereignty. This allows not least the emergence of new patterns of sovereignty in a general understanding which, in turn, can be translated into new forms of belonging and ‘citizenship’. Potentially it is about entering a new social process and relationship (as matter of re-embedding). Also, a link is (re-)established between producer and user and between the different dimensions of value, providing a seedbed for reaching an integrated understanding of production in the wider sense.</p>
<b>SOCIALISED INDIVIDUALS</b>	<p>Though the general gist emphasises – rightly – the hyper-individualism, it is easily overlooked that we are in fact dealing with individualisation as a specific form of socialisation. It is remarkable – and remarkably underestimated or even overlooked – that central part of the feature is closely linked to the fact of alienation: earlier reference had been made to alienation and here it can be taken up insofar we find (i) a shift of direct socialisation to spheres outside of and distant from production (the statement that ‘[t]he worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home’ (Marx, 1844: 274) can be translated into <i>the worker is a truly social being where s/he is not pressed into the framework of contractualised employment but remains in his work as feeling as isolated individual, outside of him/herself</i>. However, ‘outside of him/herself’ the link to ‘true’, <i>i.e.</i> social existence, is broken.</p> <p>With the earlier reference to the tendency of the profit rate to fall and the proposed revisiting of the understanding of nature/resources we can actually suggest that the process of capitalist accumulation and the des-embedding is not least a matter of de-socialisation of the living regime, thus providing the ground for a specific mode of life.</p>	<p>Opportunities to develop personally and socio-personality by way of being part of a larger entity and society at large. Condition for this is (i) the ‘re-integration’ of the social dimension into the process of labour and (ii) and the re-emergence of the value dimension of labour as looked at in the context of the ‘digitalisation of the world’.</p>

### Actor Perspectives

The determination of actor perspectives is difficult not only because some of the traditional points of reference seem to be blurred or even 'broken'. More important is the fact that we are entering with increasing complexity and multi-level interpenetration a stage where centres do exist and are probably more pronounced than during earlier eras, however, localising them is increasingly difficult. The institutional frame is less clear,<sup>17</sup> and also the linkage between the different layers is in itself confusing: institutionalised regulatory systems are too often characterised by their explicitly 'soft character', opening spaces for discretionary realms and also difficult-to-understand institutional paths; 'princely powers' are commonplace amongst policy makers and main economic players; personal union is prevalent, etc.

Leaving this aside, we may briefly look at the orientation of trade unions as one of the major players in past and present, and at least for the foreseeable future. Reason for stating such prospective for the future is the assumption that any progression has to start from the current conditions which are still by and large those of industrial capitalism – which had been the seedbed of the trade unions as we know them today.

For the trade unions – and other actors – the proposal made by Ton Korver should be critically reviewed. He suggests,

Proposition 1 is that unions should aim to supply labor, i.e. to influence the conditions of the very supply of labor. Proposition 2 is that anyone performing socially validated work (which is work performed and recognized as a duty to somebody else) is a member of the occupational population. Next, proposition 3 is that unions should organize the whole of this occupational population, not only the wage-earners. Finally, proposition 4 is that the criterion for rewarding socially validated work is the Hicksian income (Korver 2015).

Such orientations are offering important short-term strategies while they remain by and large within the given framework of contemporary societies. The importance of such orientation should not be underestimated. However, it is more important to look for patterns that reach beyond these realms. The overall focus has to be the orientation on the process of production as core of the entire socio-economic and political-economic fabric. Taking up a formulation quoted earlier, we are dealing with 'the elements of society, societal structuration and politically-strategic development of society [which] are located in four areas, namely employment, reproductive work, cultural development and politics from below' (Herrmann 2012b). This highlights already the second aspect, namely the importance of seeing production not only as a matter of commodity production or even as production of goods but as process entailing the entirety of life as relational matter, for which products/commodities are only a small, and mediating part. We can grasp the meaning when we listen to the increasingly prevalent lamentations of especially young people, stating that they 'miss the opportunity to develop'.

### Conclusions and Outlook: The Value Question

The question is not least one of linking the value question – with the reference to a 'good life' as we value it, the vices and virtues that stand like the *Skylla* and *Athene* as tempting and guiding pole for our behaviour and action – to the objective dimension – even if we are dealing with 'general values', we have to acknowledge the fact that they are only an

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<sup>17</sup> This does not suggest that the demarcation had been at any stage without question.

expression of the underlying productive forces and as such very much a matter of power and appropriation, each of them in the two dimensional understanding. In particular here we have to develop a new understanding and concept of globality and responsibility – that may be a matter of a ‘future study unit’.

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