Make Capitalism History

A Practical Framework for Utopia and the Transformation of Society

Simon Sutterlütti · Stefan Meretz

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Preface

I do not demand voluntarism nor do I preach an automatism; I rather intend to demonstrate the objective possibility of change and its preconditions. I neither want to paint a utopian picture nor forbid utopian thinking; my aim is to unfold well-founded hope. I neither want to be desperately waiting for the better humans nor seal history's horrors with man's evil nature; I rather take humans seriously in their history and their potential. I neither want to waste my life in a never-ending struggle nor bow my head before the overpowering. With confidence in existing potential and certainty of well-founded hope, I want to realise human possibilities.

For 300 years, capitalism has been turning cooperation into competition, work into exploitation, nature into the insignificant other; it strengthens racism and patriarchy, puts profit before people and, therefore, impedes peace, justice, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Today, when we are facing the risk of a climate crisis, the economic foundation of capitalism makes an ecological restructuring of society impossible. It is time to make capitalism history.

To make capitalism history we need an alternative. We cannot demand the end of capitalism without having at least a vague idea of what a solidary, free society may look like. This book talks about societal alternatives, which we call utopias, and discusses different ways of how we may reach them. The end of capitalism is a "great transformation" (Polanyi), and such a societal transformation usually involves three aspects: something comes to an end (abolition), something continues (preservation) and something is raised to a qualitatively new level (development). So, for

example, compulsion to make profit must be abolished, certain produc-
tion processes can be preserved and the global disposal over our condi-
tions of life should tend to everyone's needs. The concept of "sublation"
contains these three aspects, hence the German title of the book "Sublate
Capitalism" (*Kapitalismus aufheben*). However, as in English, sublation is
quite a philosophical and abstract term, the English title emphasises what
this book is about: abolish capitalism, create a good life for all.

We consider ourselves as part of a movement heading for a liberated
solidary society. Emancipatory movements have experienced a long his-
tory of reform and revolution, fighting for acceptance, fair distribution
and participation. As of the 1970s, new movements have begun paying
more attention to everyday power structures, such as class discrimination,
sexism, racism, self-subjugation and so on. Politics entered everyday life
and started to change our relationships. Thus, we now have a wide range
of experiences as far as authority, critical practices and knowledge about
forms of domination in many areas are concerned. However, a common
perspective on how we can overcome capitalism and where we want to go
is largely missing. Maybe the situation is even worse: a discussion about
utopia and transformation is hardly part of our practice. Since the failure
of Real Socialism, no replacement has filled the gap. There are a lot of
exciting emancipatory projects; however, they are only remotely con-
nected to an overall societal change. This book intends to offer a space in
which to rethink and rediscuss the aim of, and path to, a freed society. One
that goes beyond—but learns from—the old concepts of reform and revo-
lution, the planned economy and democratic socialism.

As the subheading points out, this book should be a practical frame-
work, an invitation to people who wants to change the world. But how do
we intend to perform such invitation? The book has two parts: in the first
part, we would like to develop a framework for utopian theory and a trans-
formation theory that focuses on the constitution of a new society (trans-
volution). In the second part, we would like to present our own theory of
utopia and transformation. This framework is designed to enable a differ-
ent perspective and, thus, a different theory on utopia and transformation.
Within it, ideas which contradict, improve or surpass ours are possible. We
can imagine the theoretical framework as creating a room in which indi-
vidual theories outline their ideas and place their own furniture. Certain
pieces of furniture might not fit the room: they might be too big or better
suited for the garden, other items might go well together and yet others
might seem not to match. This book intends to be an invitation, to

provide such a room without specifying the furniture but only placing some—particularly nice—items.

With this book we do not aspire to proclaiming truths. As you will find out, our concepts of utopia and transformation are incomplete. We do not claim to present comprehensive answers to issues as big as the free society and the path that will lead us there. For that purpose, we need more ideas, thoughts and practical experience so as to deepen, criticise and develop our thinking. This book is intended as an invitation to participate. We can unite in this common search.

Before we start, we would like to add some remarks about the book and ourselves. A book is a bridge into the mind of another person. Another person's ideas follow individual rules and paths which can create a sense of unfamiliarity. We would like to mention some of our mental paths in advance. We are both passionate about precise terms. Therefore, you will often discover we attempt to clarify terms in order to use them with a precise meaning. A clarification necessarily excludes other meanings of the term. Secondly, this book includes very few quotes. This might easily give the impression that we pride ourselves on being the source of everything. This is not the case. We rest on the shoulders of many others. However, it is easier for us to express ideas in our own words. Often, these words are simply other people's insights expressed in a different way; sometimes, there might actually be something new.

There is yet another idea, which does not solely pertain to us: the logic of exclusion, of asserting oneself at the expense of others; it is all around us and has penetrated theory and its debates. Theory often appears as a battle of theories in which one side thrashes the arguments of the other, until nothing else remains but to concede defeat and defect. This is no fair ground for the interests and ideas of the theoretical opponent to be taken seriously. Thus, they are likely to remain misunderstood. We attempt to distance ourselves from this belligerent and destructive modus of theory. Despite our efforts, this dynamic is deeply imprinted in all of us and is likely to surface in this book. We cannot exonerate ourselves from this influence; nevertheless, we desire theoretical debate to be actually built on inclusion and, therefore, on understanding the position of the counterpart.

Here are some words about the book itself: Quotes from (German) Wikipedia are referred to by the keyword only, while other online sources are referenced in full. We begin the first part of the book with an introduction (Chap. 1), including a presentation of the relationship between emancipatory movements on the one hand and utopia and transformation

on the other. The chapter closes with reflections on theory and definitions, as well as a short criticism of capitalism. After that, we deal with the concepts of reform and revolution (Chap. 2), criticise their mistakes but preserve their insights. This is the basis of our suggestion of a new theoretical framework, transvolution (Chap. 3). We close this section with thoughts on a categorical theory of utopian possibilities (Chap. 4). During the following three chapters, we fill the framework with our concepts. Firstly, we present our theory of the individual and society (Chap. 5). We then develop our utopia of an inclusive society based on the commons (Chap. 6). This is followed by thoughts on transformation, that is, on how to overcome capitalism (Chap. 7).

We are very happy to present the English translation of our book three years after the German edition was published. Three years of interesting critique and further discussion have developed the theory. Critics pointed out many problems in the book, two major ones being the lack of a developed critique of a state-coordinated society and the overlooking of existing property relations and social struggles. Therefore, this translation includes additional—but still very limited—parts, such as an expanded critique of state-coordinated societies (Chap. 1, 3.4), new ideas about commonist planning (Chap. 6, 3.7) and a new scenario of transformation (Chap. 7, 3.4, p. 219: Commons and social struggle). We are pleasantly surprised by the fact that, all in all, much of the content remains promising to us, and people tell us and show us how thought-provoking this book is. This is especially true at a time of climate crisis.

The book does not have to be read from cover to cover for our ideas to be understood, and knowing other theories is not necessary. We have added some diagrams to illustrate significant lines of argument. Another feature are our boxes, which serve to expand on certain terms or ideas. An arrow indicates a →keyword explained in a box.

We wish you a lot of fun reading and encourage you to actively debate your views on the website *commonism.us*, where you can also find additional information on this book.

Bonn, Germany   Simon Sutterlütti
                                                        Stefan Meretz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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About the Authors

Simon Sutterlütti is an economist, sociologist, active at the Commons-Institute and at the *Netzwerk Utopie* ("Network Utopia").

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1 Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, the Day After Tomorrow

We say goodbye to traditional Marxism. For a long time, its utopia of a free society was linked to a concrete practice of transformation. This age and its accompanying hopes have passed. However, emancipatory movements have not rested. They exist in abundance: interventions critical of racism, queer-feminist free spaces, ecological practices of daily life, antisexist struggles, political demonstrations, antifascist education, campaigns against transphobia and homophobia, reflections on ableism and ageism,[1] cooperatives, commune and housing projects, eco-villages, international solidarity, trade-union struggles and so on. Emancipatory movements detect and reflect on many new forms of domination and discrimination—and search for practices to overcome them. They disengage from statist (plan-) utopias and their hopes based on the "state as an instrument". However, they have found neither a new utopia nor a new theory of transformation. Although some movements—above all that of 1968, as well as the environmental and women's movements—have greatly influenced society as a whole, a new consistent idea on how to overcome capitalism has not been developed. Lip service has very often been paid to reform

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[1] Ableism and ageism refer to discrimination against handicapped and elderly people respectively.

and revolution—the old concepts of transformation. However, their promise of emancipatory change under the conditions of party structure, of taking power and changing the state is no longer convincing. Therefore, emancipatory movements have often retreated to daily practices. Many forms of domination such as sexism and racism, ableism and ageism, transphobia and homophobia have been tackled at the interpersonal level. Changes of societal norms, of politics and culture have also been brought about. The environmental movement has raised awareness on transgenerational problems: we are destroying our conditions of life and those of future generations. Individual alternatives are practised—different eating habits, different consumer behaviour, energy efficiency, no-flight policy—thus achieving political change. Ever so often, applied societal alternatives raise the issue of whether criticism of underlying power relations can be elevated to an overall societal level in order to reach beyond minuscule changes within the framework of capitalism. Again and again, disillusionment prevails, the feeling that the structures of domination and exclusion within capitalist society cannot be overcome. An extended perspective of surmounting capitalism remains vague.

We intend to utilise the insights and concepts of emancipatory movements and re-establish a utopian goal. Thus, we try to create a connection between diverse practices of everyday life and making capitalism history. In the course of recent decades this connection has become shredded, it seems fickle and loose. Our emancipatory practice appears to have outgrown the old forms of party, state and seizure of power, without having found new forms for an overall societal transformation. Many of us are looking for new answers, and this book intends to contribute to this search. New answers to the problems of utopia and transformation contribute to the establishment of new criteria for practice. At the end of this book (Chap. 7, 4) we would like to suggest some ideas; however, we are convinced that each one is best qualified to find one's own criteria in the context of a theory of transvolution. We are also convinced that emancipatory practice requires reflection on utopia and transformation. It must regain a theoretical framework exceeding capitalism if it is to develop its full potential.

1.1   Hopelessness

The point is to overcome capitalism; however, how should we do it? Today, this issue leads to hopelessness, and this hopelessness is due to

three aspects: first, apart from the all-pervading power of capitalism, the main historical adversary of capitalism—communism—experienced a catastrophic defeat in the twentieth century. Any serious perspective of transition must learn from this defeat. Second, there is no well-founded and systematic theory of a societal alternative. Followers of Computer Socialism (Cockshott and Cottrell 2012), of Parecon[2] (Albert 2003), of the twenty-first-century Socialism (Dieterich 2006) and other concepts simply revive socialist ideas. Others see the freed society only as "the other", indeterminable and completely different. Third, the concepts of transvolution are patchy, the question of how to develop the free society rarely finds an answer and most of the answers that are given remain bound to the political concepts of revolution or reform, which aim at the state.

Communism has lost its innocence. A hundred years ago this book would have been one of many filled with hope for a better world, with faith in an emancipatory future of the revolution, with trust in human possibilities. That perspective of trust and hope capsized in the storms of the twentieth century. Revolutionary faith cracked when the Russian Revolution opened fire on the Kroonstad sailors,[3] their antiauthoritarian revolutionaries, in 1921. Faith disappeared when Stalin proclaimed the "Great Terror"[4] in 1936, when German antifascists fleeing their country were extradited to the Nazi state by the Soviet Union, when Mao justified the consequences of the "Great Leap Forward",[5] when the Red Khmer drove the intellectuals to the countryside.[6] Hope for a better world was deprived of its images, its paths were destroyed; confronted with reality, hope had gone crazy.

Hope became hollow and, as vain hope, it either stuck to the existing socialist alternative until 1989 or—in a reformist wait-and-see

[2] Parecon (Participatory Economics) is a concept of an economy with comprehensive participation.

[3] With the slogan "All power to the Soviets—no power to the Party" the rebellious sailors turned against the dictatorial rule of the Communist Party of Russia. The island fortress Kroonstad, occupied by the sailors, was taken by the Red Army. Many rebels were executed or interned in camps.

[4] The "Great Terror" was a campaign of persecution against suspected opponents of Stalin's rule from autumn 1936 to the end of 1938.

[5] The "Great Leap Forward" was a campaign in China from 1958 to 1961 initiated by Mao Zedong, which resulted in a severe famine.

[6] The Red Khmer were a Maoist-nationalist movement in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 who forcibly tried to establish a form of agriculture-based communism. The expulsions involved are today considered as genocide.

fashion—made itself comfortable within a lack of direction and path. The prospect of a bright future lingered on as a spark. However, it lacked the substance needed to ignite. Those who are still concerned with practically overcoming capitalism and establishing a free society must justify themselves to history, they must trace past atrocities to their source and analyse them; only then can they fill the void of hopelessness (cf. Adamczak 2007).

1.2   The Old and the Empty Utopia

It is impossible to consciously achieve a goal that is vague. Thus, the old communist movement also had a concept of utopia. It was essentially dominated by the idea of what to abolish: privatisation of the means of production, capitalist domination, war, alienation and so on. A positive specification of utopia was a hot potato due to the danger of extending the existing into the future. That is why Karl Marx avoided saying anything about it for a long time; until, in a short text, "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (1875), he finally got carried away. In this text, he laid the foundation for the later-stage model Capitalism → Socialism → Communism, and for the first stage (named "first phase of the communist society") he suggested the distribution of commodities according to work performance. The few sentences of the text followed a sad career and still shape many of today's utopias. For example, according to Cockshott and Cottrell (2012), computer socialism attributes the main problem of old socialism to the difficulties in quantifying, calculating and coordinating resources and workload, and sees the solution in modern computers. The principle of work, which only allows for the satisfaction of people's needs according to their work performance, is perpetuated.

> **Power**
> Power is the capability to act individually or collectively. It is the ability to be in command of material conditions or other people (cf. p. 131). It can be determined in a positive or negative way. Power is a means to achieve individual or collective aims but also a means to enforce one set of interests against others (cf. p. 65) and a means to establish domination. Very often, power and domination are incorrectly viewed as the same (→question of domination, p. 49).

Those who want to evade the dangers of a positive clarification of their utopia forbid (themselves from) painting positive pictures and determine the free society as something "completely different". This utopia is as arbitrary and as mystically unattainable as a religious imaginary of paradise. It becomes the open placeholder for all kinds of fantasy wishes. No wonder this religious communism does not take effect in society. The sad thing about the ban on images is that its originator, Theodor W. Adorno, never intended it to become a ban on thinking about utopia (cf. Chap. 4, 1). His texts opposed a detailed "ornamentation" of a future society but, nevertheless, did discuss quite a few utopian aspects. (cf. Adorno 1980).

Utopia cannot aim only at agitating the "masses". It is, however, a necessary component of all transformation theories. *Without a clear comprehension of the goal, neither criticism of the present system nor the path to the one desired can be understood.*

1.3   On Revolutions and Reforms

History has taught most modern anticapitalist movements to distance themselves from centralised organisation. Criticism of the party logic is already the main difference compared to old socialist movements. The daily routine of politics still predominantly aims at gaining political →power (p. 4). This could render revolution feasible or lead to state reforms, which would at least make this world "a little bit better" and possibly prepare for the overcoming of capitalism.

The tragedy of reformism is that its practise has lost all connection to the fundamental changes in society (Chap. 2, 3). It has reached the point of chasing its own tail in political struggle. This destiny is unavoidable, as reformism lacks a true concept of surmounting capitalism. The only vision of the future which radically turns against this lack of concept is revolution. However, the current situation is not revolutionary and, therefore, one hopes, waits and organises. The revolutionary ethos is displayed with apparently radical pathos. Revolution itself—like utopia—is a gap that lacks theoretical processing (Chap. 2, 4). Revolutionaries have also drawn and suffered the consequences of socialist defeats. However, the central ideas of failed socialism—the conquest of state power and the subsequent postrevolutionary reorganisation—have remained largely unchallenged. In essence, many revolutionary theories still see societal change as a single qualitative break.

We prefer to draw different conclusions from the defeat of socialism: in order to conceptualise the overcoming of capitalism in an emancipatory way, reformism teaches us that societal change demands *processes,* and revolution tells us that these processes require a *break*. The concept of "transvolution" combines transformation and revolution and logically binds together insights of reform, revolution and constitution. It conceptualises the transformation process itself as a break with the capitalist form of society.

1.4   *Transvolution and Commonism*

This book challenges hopelessness. But neither indulging in past successes nor calling for a serious approach to revolution this time will give us hope. In this book, we intend to theoretically process—and practically surmise—the basis for an emancipatory overcoming of capitalism in all its complexity and contradictory nature. Our theory is not designed to point out how to achieve and secure political power but how to allow a free society to develop; how the new can be formed within the old and finally overcome the old. In other words: what must a freed society look like, how can it emerge and become generalised? That is what transvolution is about (Chap. 3), and it provides the framework for what we suggest, the seed-form theory (Chap. 7).

A transvolution, however, shall remain vague if its aim is not fully understood, because a transvolution demands that path and aim match. That is why we intend to contrast the futile duality of random "ornamentation" and heavenly "complete otherness" with a justified and possible utopia. The justified—or whatever we decide to call it—categorical utopia overcomes the opposition between a pipedream and the ban on images (cf. Chap. 1, 1.2 and Chap. 4, 1) by assessing human potential at the conceptual and rational level. In doing so, it sets itself apart from ethical and moral pipedreams such as: "This is what a freed society should look like". The point, however, is to explore the objective possibilities of a better world. The categorical possibility utopia provides the frame for what we suggest, commonism (Chap. 6).

Figure 1.1 (p. 7) illustrates the content structure of the book. The introduction's *overview* of the book themes is followed by a *critique* of traditional approaches to transformation which, however, acknowledges all their positive contributions. Next, we suggest a new theoretical *framework*

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│   1. introduction   │ ◁──────  overview
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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ 2. reform and revolution │ ◁──────  criticism
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┌──────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ 3. transvolution │  │ 4. categorical utopia   │ ◁──  framework
│     theory       │  │        theory           │
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│ 5. the individual...        ... and society │ ◁──  basis
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│  6. commonism    │  │  7. seed form theory    │ ◁──  content
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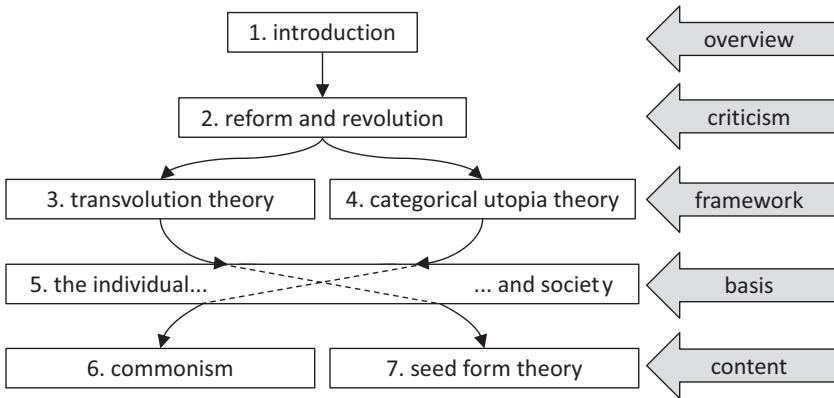
Fig. 1.1 Content structure of the book

for transformational thinking, which we furnish with our theoretical *basis* and the *content* of our utopia and transvolution.

2 THE PROMISE OF THEORY

2.1 Why Theory?

There are good books which reveal the impressive endeavours that individuals are already undertaking within the framework of our capitalist society by presenting motivating examples.[7] Our book is different. Ours is a theoretical excursion, in which we try to explore and redefine the foundations of utopian and transformation theory. It will get theoretical, it will speak of many concepts, minute formations of terms, it will present definitions and delimitations bordering on pedantry. Sometimes our statements may seem remote and abstract. Theory often seems to be up in the clouds, detached from reality, while reality takes place here on earth. It appears aloof but, nevertheless, the theoretical clouds in the sky shape our activity on earth.

Theory shapes the frame into which we fit our daily life. It is the glasses that colour the world pink or brown or multi-coloured. Theories are ideas about reality. If our idea of reality is one of a fragile and unstable society,

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[7] Such is the book "Economy" by Friederike Habermann (2016).

we are likely to detect many practices where individuals try to distance themselves from the capitalist logic and try alternatives. If our theory considers capitalism as a totality that fundamentally permeates and shapes us, even acts of resistance will appear as modifications or innovations within the framework of capitalism rather than transvoluting acts. If we are absolutely positive that women and men are fundamentally different, we will always find daily proof. On the contrary, if we tend to criticise those natural differences as part of a social design, we are likely to detect acts that deviate from this two-gender, man-woman scheme.

We all are perpetually involved in theoretical discussions. We discuss what holds the world together at its core, why people display racist behaviour, what brings out the colours of the rainbow, and whether a woman would make a better boss. In doing so, we reflect on the world—we do not just observe it, we try to understand it. Crystallised patterns of understanding and explaining turn into theories about reality. Now, such theoretical discussions are not limited to direct phenomena—why is the rainbow coloured—but can include other theories: how does Goethe's theory of colour explain the rainbow? Our discussion turns abstract. We are thinking at a meta-level. We theorise about theories, we explain explanations, we try to comprehend comprehension. We ask: what is Goethe's understanding of colour? How does Goethe imagine the connection between colour, light and rain? In this instance, we are dealing with the clarification of Goethe's terms, concepts, ideas; this initially does not seem to be about reality but only about another theory. However, understanding Goethe's theory of colour might enable us to improve or to criticise our own theory of colour, to expand it with his explanations or reject it as stupid. And, maybe, by theorising about theories we can better understand rainbows.

There is a second reason why theories seem abstract: we try to comprehend things we cannot perceive with our senses. We cannot perceive Ancient Rome, surely, but a Roman aqueduct we can imagine or even look at. We even explain invisible things that we find hard to imagine. Physics tries to understand the big bang and the structure of atoms. These explanations become tangible and imaginable with the help of illustrating figures. But some things are hard to display and difficult to imagine, and a prime example is the object of social sciences: society. Society emerges from the relationships between people. From the myriads of interrelations between people emerges a structure, which gives people's activity a frame.

It is a frame that establishes a certain religious ethic or rewards actions on the basis of profit. Therefore, in dealing with the object "society", which is hardly perceivable or representable, our thinking will necessarily remain abstract; this is quite odd, considering we move within this context every day.

2.2   *Concepts Between Play and Precision*

Many parts of this book are about concepts and their content, because concepts are condensed theoretical ideas. For example, we will criticise the concepts of revolution (Chap. 2, 4) In this context, one consideration is important for us: concepts are open. Theoretical discussions are often triggered by words. However, they should not be about words but about their content. Certainly, some people's understanding of socialism can be identical to our understanding of a free society, as their concept of revolution can be similar to our concept of transvolution (cf. Adamczak 2017; Holloway 2010). For all the seriousness with which approach theoretical dispute, we should not forget what the struggle is about: content and not words. Dealing with words, for us, lies between precise content and playful openness. Different words can mean the same thing; nevertheless, the content behind the words, the terms, should be sufficiently clear.

In this book we set out to clarify the content of some concepts and limit their semantic horizon. So, those who consider economy to mean the material re/production of society will be surprised to learn that, for us, the term →economy (p. 14) refers only to capitalist mediation via the market and exchange. Likewise, in contrast to its usual meaning, we will use the concept of work in a negative sense—with which we identify—in reference to the hardship and exertion linked to this word (cf. Wikipedia: work), to activities not self-determined. We tried to give words a definition that is not too narrow, but we often found that the demarcation of the content and the narrowing involved were necessary for a precise analysis. Therefore, we ask you, dear reader, to not "bother" too much about words and to try and focus on the content involved. Theoretical discussions become more productive, as far as content is concerned, by assuming an open-minded and understanding approach, one that views concepts as a game rather than a battlefield.

2.3   *Important Concepts*

In what follows, we shall outline some concepts we consider of fundamental importance, and crucial for the understanding of the book.

Form
The *form* of an object is its particular manner of existence. According to (German) Wikipedia, form is "the way in which something is or changes". Societies, relationships or actions can exist in various forms. Accordingly, capitalism is a particular form of society whereby cooperation is constituted through the market and competition.

Decisive Element
Within a system there can be several elements (aspects, parts, subsystems) which account for its form and dynamics. In this case, the *decisive element* is the one that prevails over the rest and determines the form and dynamics of the whole system. In capitalism we find relations of inclusion in many places, but its overall functioning rests on a logic of exclusion (cf. Chap. 1, 3.2).

Inter- and Transpersonality
We distinguish between inter- and transpersonal relations. An *interpersonal* relationship exists between me and other specific people. It is determined by the characteristics of the other people. Interpersonal relationships exist, for instance, in a school class, in a political group or in a seminar at university. *Transpersonal* relationships, however, connect me with people in general. The important element in this case is not whether the person is special to me but the fact that we are somehow connected; it is not about who has a connection to me but what the connection is about. For example, we have a transpersonal connection with all people of the state we "belong to" or, via the market, with the workers who manufactured the t-shirt we are wearing. Somewhat more vaguely, Bini Adamczak specifies this difference as close and long-distance relationships (2017).

Production* of Living Conditions
Society is a transpersonal system of cooperation, characterised by a special form of *production* of living conditions*. As we mean this in the broadest sense, we must specify. We people produce the conditions we are subject to ourselves. The conditions, however, are not only produced but also

maintained, preserved, cultivated. Moreover, a substantial part is not determined by manufacturing activity but by preservation and nursing: the field of care. These so-called reproductive activities are not just additions but a substantial part of the living conditions we produce and maintain. That is why we talk about *production** with an asterisk or *re/ production* to include the reproductive, preservation field. There is one additional aspect: production* is not restricted to the material production of living conditions (such as our food) but also involves our social relationships and infrastructure—clubs, honorary organisations, churches, circle of friends and so on—which are produced and constantly reproduced. These also include social forms like language, manners of speaking, ideologies, sex practices, table manners and so on. But our identities too—gender, skin colour, culture and so on—are symbolic-social conditions which are re/produced in society. In short: we produce* our living conditions in the broadest sense—in a material, symbolic and social way—and care for them.

Exchange

We regard *exchange* as cooperative activity under conditions: it takes place only if both sides fulfil the condition of parting with something to get something. If one side has nothing, no matter whether the item is urgently needed, it will not change sides—unless the exchange is cancelled and turns into a one-sided gift. Therefore, exchange is not neutral; it is a form of reciprocal exercise of power. The generalised form of exchange is the market.

Mediation

A society is formed by people connected through interpersonal or transpersonal relationships. The way in which they relate to each other is expressed by the term *mediation*. Thus, relationships can be established by force and violence or through contract and exchange in a market. The form of a society is determined by the form of its mediation.

Property

Property, in our view, is a social relationship between people whereby one person (or group of people) can exclude others from material, symbolic or social resources. If I am the proprietor (colloquially: owner) of a guitar I can largely do with it what I want, without anybody being allowed to limit my power of disposition. Property can give exclusive control to one

person (individual property) as well as a group (common property) or a state (state property).[8] We conceptualise →property (see p. 130) as a form of *disposal*, for example, resources or means at our disposal (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2).[9]

Categories

Apart from theories, we use *categories* as a broader type of theoretical term. Categories are meta or framing theories that allow for the development of individual theories. Categories are developed through an explicit scientific procedure. Therefore, scientific procedures as well as the results—the categories—are subject to discussion and criticism. For instance, "mass" is a category used in physics, and the category "exploitation" can be found in Karl Marx's theory. We use this approach for our categorical theory of utopia (cf. Chap. 4). This theory is not a utopia itself, in the sense of a detailed presentation of a future society, but a framework for utopias.

Utopia

Utopia for us is not a "no-place"—as its literal translation would want it—and utopian does not mean unattainable. We believe utopia determines human possibilities, and it is a possible society that people collectively design according to their needs (cf. Chap. 4).

3   Categorical Criticism

To overcome capitalism we must understand what capitalism is in the first place. There are too many theories and practices of overcoming capitalism which, ultimately, only modify and thus prolong it. Too many utopias only perpetuate domination. Our critical analysis of current conditions shapes our ideas about utopia and transformation. Criticism can identify

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[8] We do not use the term "private property" because we think it is redundant: both "private" (from lat. *privare* = deprive) and "property" (German: *Eigentum*) linguistically indicate exclusion. Also, the adjective "private" does not mean "individual" as opposed to "common" or "public", because common property as a form of collective property does not lose its exclusive character. Otherwise, common property would have to be called "collective private property".

[9] While the use of the German word "Verfügung" in this book is unambiguous, the literal translation "disposal" in English has a double meaning: to have something at one's disposal or disposal of waste. We always refer to the first meaning.

phenomena, for example, gender relations, as something cultivated, something that can be changed and, therefore, designed. For us, a theory of capitalism is identical to a criticism of capitalism, "criticism through presentation" as Marx called it (1858, p. 550). Now, there are two ideal-typical[10] forms of criticism: implicit and categorical criticism. An implicit criticism addresses various aspects of capitalism, such as injustice, the destruction of the environment, war, but it does not capture the inherent dynamics that produce them. Therefore, implicit criticism only addresses the symptoms of the capitalist form of society but not its roots. *Categorical criticism*, in contrast, aims at the roots. Its disclosure reveals the dynamics creating the criticised symptoms which, therefore, must be overcome.

3.1   Basics: Capitalism as a Form of Society

Capitalism is not only a certain type of economy, but also a form of society. Society is a difficult concept—so difficult that even some sociologists dismiss it as an illusion (cf. Schelsky 1959; Urry 2000). We perceive society as a form of human cooperation in which individuals act together in an indirect way without necessarily knowing each other. An individual is linked to other people by a division of tasks but does not maintain a direct, interpersonal relationship with them. This societal connection between people who do not know each other is maintained by certain forms of mediation—such as exchange, plan, feudal relationships. A form of mediation is linked to a certain form of production* of living conditions (in detail cf. Chap. 5, 2.2). The different forms of society are distinguished by the forms of societal relationships, the mediation and their matching form of re/production. But beware: re/production is not only an "economic basis" which determines a societal "superstructure" detached thereof, as traditional Marxism believed. The reproduction of human life is not only an economic undertaking; it also takes place at a social, cultural, political and psychological level. It is only in capitalism that a "disembedded" (Polanyi 1944) economy commands the totality of societal re/production. This statement certainly depends on our concept of →economy (p. 14).

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[10] Ideal types, according to sociologist Max Weber (1968), are categories that are "too perfect", so to speak. In reality, nothing effectively corresponds to an ideal type. But the ideal type opens up a field of discussion by presenting an important aspect in an exaggerated form.
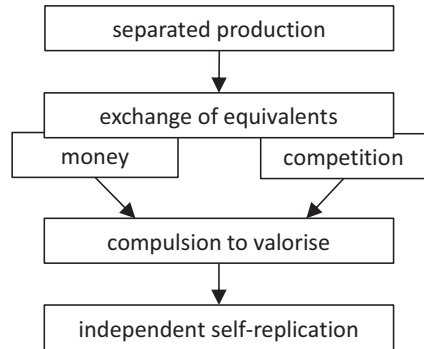
In capitalism, it is the economy—the sphere of production, exchange and value realisation—which, in fact, prevails. Its logic structures and dominates other spheres, such as reproduction, politics, culture and so on. Without these other spheres, however, the economy is not viable. In private reproduction, the strain of working life is cushioned. Politics secure and manage the frame in which exploitation takes place and so on. This splitting of spheres is a significant feature of capitalism (cf. p. 23). At this point, we would like to attempt a presentation of capitalist re/production in its substantial features. We have illustrated the structure of the following explanations in Fig. 1.2 (p. 15). Let us begin with the social relationship of (capitalist) producers.

Economy

According to German Wikipedia, the economy is "the totality of facilities and activities which serve to cover the systematic satisfaction of needs" and involves "businesses", "sale" and "exchange" (German Wikipedia "economy"). There are several inconsistencies in this statement. Firstly, a form of re/production that is generally based on exchange and businesses (separate producers) is not a general form of re/production but a special one, viz. the capitalist form of re/production. This form of "economy" can only be found in capitalism. Secondly, the capitalist form of production does not aim at the "systematic satisfaction of needs" but, unfortunately, at the valorisation of capital (cf. p. 18). Indeed, people strive to satisfy their needs, but that is not the aim of capitalism. Regrettably, to a large extent science—and above all economic sciences—does not accept this structural feature of capitalist economy.

We define the economy in a narrower sense: it is the capitalist form of production. We often come across people who enthusiastically speak of a "free economic system" or a "solidary economy" which still, however, includes exchange and the market. Hence our determined demarcation. Nevertheless, there are fellow theorists who grasp the concept of economy somewhat differently (cf. Habermann 2016). This is understandable given that, in the evolution of the concept through time, "economy" has for a long time meant something other than mediation by exchange (cf. Finley 1977).

Fig. 1.2 From separated production to independent self-replication of conditions


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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     separated production     │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     exchange of equivalents  │
├──────────────┬──────────────┤
│    money     │  competition │
└──────────────┴──────────────┘
        │              │
        ▼              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     compulsion to valorise   │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   independent self-replication│
└─────────────────────────────┘
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Separated Production as Social Relationship

In capitalism, production takes place through separation. Each producer plans, produces and sells on her/his own, since the products are her/his *property*. As property, the products are subject to the exclusive command of the owner. Therefore, a major part of one's needs can only be satisfied by acquiring the property of someone else.[11] This leads to the question of how the mediation of production and consumption can work on the basis of property. No one can offer one's own products to other people unconditionally, as there is no way of unconditionally acquiring the means to cover one's own needs. The form of mediation that can establish a coupled form of give and take between separate producers is *exchange*.

Exchange as a Form of Mediation

Exchange is a form of mediation that can link separate products to one another: the taking is subject to the strict condition of a giving, and nobody gives without taking. The insecurity of the anonymous and

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[11] Subsistence economy, a form of re/production in which people produce a major part of their means of existence on their own in (small) social associations, is also possible in separated production on the basis of private property. In the development phase of capitalism, however, subsistence economy was increasingly and quite literally losing ground because land as an essential means of production was only available via the market and, thus subject to exchange and competition (cf. Wood 2002). Today, "provisioning from outside" (German "Fremdversorgung" Paech 2012) for many people is a rather positive option, even if only possible through exchange. Only a limited few desire autarkic self-sufficiency.

separated producer thus turns into a contractually secured performance on the basis of reciprocity. When I give away my property, I obtain the property of others. Therefore, in separated production the individual producers are not linked through political administration (e.g., plan) or direct social relationships (e.g., subsistence) but through the exchange of commodities. Commodities are goods produced for the mere purpose of exchange. This exchange connects people who are neither acquainted nor have to like each other. By its virtually spooky ability of coordination, market-based capitalism generates a societal →net (p. 163) which today spans across the entire globe.

Exchange of Equivalents

Capitalism knows a specific form of exchange, namely the exchange of commodities of the same value, the exchange of equivalents. Value here is not a subjective attribution but a measure for the average cost of production in society—exchange value.[12] When exchange becomes the decisive form of mediation in a society, it is bound to turn into an exchange of equivalents. Individual acts of exchange are not random but reflect the average effort. To reflect the average effort in society, acts of exchange must refer to a general equivalent.

The Necessity of Money

At the societal level, the many individual relationships of exchange must generate a whole. A coherent distribution of societal costs—human labour, in particular—must take place. It is necessary to ensure that there is enough food, energy or steel for car manufacturing. As people do not design this connection consciously, the correct signals must come from this exchange network—the market—itself.

The market is a stigmergic, hint-based system (cf. Chap. 6, 3.3); it signals and operates via prices. Prices express amounts of work and allow for the comparison of commodities. Amounts of work, however, can only be determined by comparing all commodities in a market. A general comparison is only possible when all commodities refer to an object embodying uniform likeness, a particular commodity which serves as a general equivalent: money. Money in capitalism is not only an instrument or a means, as

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[12] According to Marx, the average cost of production in society depends on the amount of labour needed, which, in turn, depends on its productivity.

it was in the premodern period, but a necessity. It refers all commodities to each other and thus creates a societal →coherence (p. 126), a functioning societal connection. Hence Marx's consideration of money as the "real community" (1858, p. 152). Without a generalised equivalent, a society based on generalised exchange cannot function.

Competition

Competition is a social relationship in which one person can only gain advantage at the expense of others. Her/his gain is the loss of others.

Logic of Exclusion
A social logic is considered a "logic of exclusion" when it encourages people to cover their →needs (p. 113) at the expense of others. Here, logic means rationality or meaningfulness. Excluding actions are rational and make sense to me because they secure my livelihood. Exclusion, therefore, is not a sign of viciousness, greed or hunger for power, but a conduct objectively encouraged and subjectively functional. Such behaviour is not necessarily individual. I can join forces with others so as to prevail as one collective against another. This is called representation of interests (cf. p. 65). The logic of exclusion is not based on intention; it is a manifestation of a structural relationship. I do not want to do it, but I do it (often without noticing) because it is an integral part of the conditions governing our actions.

Competition is part of the →logic of exclusion (p. 17). Separated production turns individual producers into competitors. Individual people all produce in a concrete and particular way—as traditional artisan or modern factory owner, for example—but, when it comes to exchange, the only thing that matters is the production cost of the commodity. All people are equal before the money. Only the producers with the cheapest offer prevail—comparable quality provided. This competition (of prices) is the driving force of capitalism. It is an important drive for innovation and development. However, it also leads to the externalisation of those costs

(cf. p. 22) which are not necessarily required for the production of the goods. Well-known consequences include the mistreating and exploitation of people and nature as well as operational saving through efficiency and atomisation, which robs people of paid labour and, thus, of the basis of life in capitalism. The most important consequence, however, is the compulsion to valorise.

Compulsion to Valorise

The general competition of producers leads to the notorious absurdity of capitalism: money must be invested as capital in order to multiply itself. The science of business administration also states that the major objective of business management is one: the multiplication of the money invested, the valorisation of capital. However, this is not the result of the greed of managers or shareholders; it derives from a structural *compulsion* to valorise that is built into the system. If producers display inferior valorisation, therefore less profit than their competitors, they will be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis advertising, the development or acquisition of new machines, the design of new products and so on. That is why, in the short- or long-term, they will be defeated in competition and vanish from the market. Nestlé, for example, could produce in an ecologically sounder, more social and humane manner, but increased costs would hamper valorisation and endanger its position in the world market. While the actual aim of production* should be the satisfaction of needs, this is not the purpose of production under capitalist conditions. It is the valorisation of capital.

Producers—usually businesses—*must not* prioritise satisfying the needs of their consumers or even of their workers (use value). To survive competition, they *must* first and foremost pay attention to valorisation and profitability (exchange value). In this context, the satisfaction of needs is only a means to an end; use value is only the carrier for exchange value.[13]

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[13] Marx begins his discussion of political economy with the two factors of commodity: a commodity such as a chair has a use value as one can sit on it; at the same time, within capitalism, the chair also has exchange value, which appears as its price. The use value of the commodity is determined by concrete labour; its exchange value is the product of abstract labour. In commodity production, producers are primarily interested in the exchange value of their product, its use value is merely the "carrier" to realise the exchange value. Many Marxists more or less ignored the twofold character of labour, even though Marx places it at the very centre of his analysis and calls it "the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns" (Marx 1890: 56). The former often focus on the question of how to plan and equally distribute abstract labour within state socialism, whereas Marx argues that most effects of capitalism are a result of abstract labour; as labour within state socialism is also paid and, therefore, also becomes abstract and the source of exchange value, it is subject to many of the problems facing capitalism (cf. Holloway 2010).

Independent Self-Replication of Conditions

The compulsion to valorise leads us to the centre of the capitalist logic. Marx and Engels call it "independent self-replication of the conditions towards the individuals" (Marx and Engels 1846, p. 400) or "fetishism" (Marx 1890, p. 87).[14] Within capitalism, people produce and reproduce the societal conditions they are subject to like they used to do with nature. Capitalist conditions have the effect of a "second nature" that is separate from the people (cf. Adorno 1966, p. 347). They possess a logic of their own, an inherent necessity, which we cannot escape within the framework of these conditions. Marx calls this →independent self-replication (p. 155) or fetish, as people in capitalism have created—and are maintaining—something that has a hold on them (cf. Marx 1890, p. 86 f.). People do not act according to their needs but according to conditions. The conditions seem to utilise the people, as if people only serve the purpose of valorisation. This is also proven by the fact that people cannot decide on the aims of the system: while (almost) everyone agrees that it would be better to not destroy the environment, to ensure better working conditions and so on, for market actors it does not make sense to pursue these aims. Likewise, no nation-state can take the liberty of pursuing a truly environmentally friendly way of production as, in that case, businesses would emigrate. The phenomena shaping societal mediation—markets and prices—are not consciously produced by the people but unknowingly materialise "behind the back" (ibid., p. 59) of the people. That is why the "silent pressure of the economic conditions" (ibid., p. 765) in the form of general competition and the compulsion to valorise can only be overcome beyond capitalism and, accordingly, beyond exchange as the form of mediation.

3.2   *Capitalism as a Society of Exclusion*

Our presentation of the basic dynamics of capitalism will now be followed by an analysis of the central characteristic of capitalist society: the →logic of exclusion (p. 17). In capitalist society, people have good reasons to satisfy their needs *at the expense* of others. Thus, Hobbes' statement that

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[14] Marx compares capitalist self-replication to a fetish. Just like ancient societies worshipped wooden statues as gods and attributed them powers only their builders gave to them, so enlightened citizens create in the form of capital a social relationship which rules over them.

"Man is wolf to men" is well-founded in capitalism. This fact, however, is not a manifestation of a naturally exclusive relationship between people but one of a historically specific form of society. Nevertheless, to identify a society as an exclusion society does not mean that there is no logic of inclusion, that there are no conditions implying the inclusion of the needs of others; but it does mean that the logic of exclusion is the *decisive social logic*. For fashion chain *H&M*, for example, it is appropriate to include the needs of their customers by offering clothes as cheap and as nice as possible. However, this inclusion is only practised by *H&M* in order to prevail against other fashion chains and exclude them. Inclusion for the sake of exclusion. But in capitalism there are also social areas seeking inclusion without the metalogic of exclusion. In circles of friendship as well as in families, the inclusion of the needs of others is unquestionable; otherwise these relationships are bound to disintegrate.

Capitalism generates societal conditions that render the satisfaction of my needs at the expense of others *subjectively functional* (cf. p. 121). In an exchange, I try to give as little and take as much as possible. Thus, often unknowingly, I indirectly support and promote dangerous and precarious working conditions. Even when I am aware of this and feel ashamed because of it, it can serve me better (subjectively) to buy the cheaper computer or win the race for a job or an order against competitors. Although the logic of exclusion is a structural relation and not a personal defect, greed, bossiness, and egoism become functional, "rewarded" forms of action. And even without greed or egoistic excess, the mere unfolding of people's daily life already limits the living conditions of others. Inversely, the freedom of others potentially limits my freedom. Societal togetherness is realised through individual confrontation. It is a cooperation in the mode of competition, in Hobbes' words, "a war of all against all".

Precapitalist Societies

Claiming that capitalism is the completed exchange society often raises some eyebrows: are exchange, trading, money, markets not to be found in many societies? What about Ancient Rome and the towns of the Middle Ages?

Indeed, these societies were acquainted with exchange, money and markets. However, exchange was not the *dominant* form of mediation. It had not yet "reached its full potential". Highly collaborative

(continued)

premodern societies saw extended trade and market networks, but they were not subject to the compulsion to valorise. Furthermore, the market was often limited. Thus, town guilds often dictated the prices of handcrafted products in the Middle Ages (Le Goff 2010), or specific traders got tax relief or custom privileges. In many societies self-production (subsistence) played a central role. Social communities such as village, family, clan or farmyard produced most of the food they required. Mediation within these communities was direct and governed by traditional domination. Polanyi (1944) claims that re/production was "embedded" in social relationships in all these societies.

Many historians, like Robert Brenner (1976), emphasise that trade, exchange and market should not be equated with capitalism. Whereas the market in premodern societies was an additional possibility of survival, in capitalism it became a necessity. Historian Ellen Meiksins Wood (2002) places the birth of capitalism in sixteenth-/seventeenth-century England. It was then and there that the exchange logic seized the most important means of re/production of the premodern society, the land, and turned the entire feudal system upside down. Until that moment, land was commonly provided on the basis of traditional and fixed relationships (serfdom, fixed lease etc.). The historian Heide Gerstenberger (2018) places the birth of capitalism in the eighteenth/nineteenth century, when the exchange logic seized the most important means of re/production such as land, factors and labour, and competition became the driving force of markets.

Bottom line: Although exchange, money and markets can be found in many societies, only in the form of society that is capitalism does exchange become the dominant form of mediation.

Privileges

In an exclusion society there are always lines of exclusion which condense, stiffen and structure exclusion. Along these lines, differences are built on a biological or ethnical basis, or merely as a social construction, and are stabilised as privileges. Consciously or unconsciously, exclusion and depreciation arise on the basis of gender, skin colour, cultural affiliation, family

membership, age, disability, class, education, physical appearance and so on. These lines of exclusion pervade capitalism and steer, allow for, and stabilise the general logic of exclusion. In situations where the logic of exclusion is suggested, it tends to be applied quickly and specifically along these lines. All these structures operate by producing otherness, also called "othering", and serve to safeguard the needs of certain groups of people and delegitimise those of others. Thus, a net of exclusion pervades our society, whereby each one of us has an allocated place, linked to the gain or loss of specific privileges.

Externalisation and Exploitation

Another dynamic which is a good indicator of exclusion is *externalisation*. In competition, it is suggested to get rid of costs, to externalise them. Thus, for example, costs attached to the physical or mental well-being of workers or the protection of the environment are often axed (cf. the example H&M, p. 20). The general public might be called upon to help via the state, or future generations might be burdened with the costs. This is accepted, albeit with a guilty conscience, as system failure; such is the case of climate change or the plundering of resources in the global South (cf. Lessenich 2016; I.L.A. Kollektiv 2017; Brand and Wissen 2017). Another element of exclusion is *exploitation*. The only thing many people can exchange is their labour; as a result, they are forced to offer and sell themselves. However, they receive neither the products they make nor a wage equivalent to the exchange value of these products; they are only paid part of it. The difference is collected by the company that hired them. That is, the companies appropriate the labour of their workers, they exploit them. In this case, exploitation is not a moral category but an analytic one. Of course, we criticise this exploitation, but it is an integral part of a universalised exchange society and can only be overcome as a whole.

Principle of Work

Capitalism is based on the principle of work or performance: I only get a share in society's riches if I accomplish something. Thus, I am forced to contribute to society in the capitalist form: labour for wage. The satisfaction of my needs is not fundamentally guaranteed simply because I am human; it rather depends on my individual performance. The better I fulfil the capitalist demands of performance, the more I get. Therefore, capitalism encourages and rewards self-submission. In interpersonal relationships the work principle is cushioned (e.g., in families) and moderated by state-run coverage (e.g., unemployment benefit). The work principle unites

capitalism with real socialism and other state-planned societies. Here too, people can expect a share in society's riches only if they adhere to the plan. However, in capitalism as well as in real socialism, a big part of society's wealth is created beyond the plan or the market. This is highlighted when discussing the problem of the division of spheres.

Division of Spheres
The capitalist form of re/production becomes visible first of all in the sphere of the economy. This sphere, however, cannot survive on its own. The logic of valorisation ("what makes a profit, wins") would disintegrate, as many of its preconditions cannot be brought about through this logic. Children, household and care simply do not work this way. Capitalism is self-mediating by constantly differentiating itself. It creates spheres with independent forms of logic which protect the logic of exploitation from self-destruction. Spheres are divided along various dimensions: work/leisure, production/reproduction, privacy/public, economy/politics, functionality/culture and so on. Two important spheres that are separated from the economy and we would like to present in short are reproduction and the state (in Chap. 1, 3.3).

The *sphere of reproduction* is the world of family, privacy, children, household—and, according to the traditional allocation of roles, of woman. In this sphere, the damages originating in the sphere of production—such as exhaustion, anger, stress, lack of energy and so on—are mended, and deficits like unkindness, coldness, separateness and so on are compensated. "Humaneness" is reproduced and revitalised to meet the requirements of production: competition, cost efficiency, career and so on. For a long time, the epitome of reproduction was the male head of the household, burnt out from work, returning to the safety of his home and finding peace and quiet with the help of his wife's loving attention and the soothing effect of television in the evening. The sphere of reproduction caters for many more tasks, such as looking after people in need of care, repairing the kitchen table, providing emotional support to friends and so on. In capitalism this is not paid for,[15] and that is why it seems to not matter so much. To not consider these activities as a necessary part of the production and preservation of our living conditions and to fail to integrate them into our theory would be a huge blind spot.

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[15] In Germany 56% of all working hours are dedicated to unpaid care work, 8% to paid care work and remaining 46% to paid non-care work (Winker 2021, p. 21).

3.3   State

The state is often considered the opposite of the market. It is frequently seen as the "institution protecting the public", a deliberately designable alternative to the market. In this section, we want to analyse some aspects of the significance of the state in capitalism.

Secured Property and Monopoly on the Use of Force
The economy is based on separate production. Separate production is only possible if the ownership of the means of production and of products is guaranteed. Why should starving people accept being separated from food that is actually available? Why should people accept limited access rights to the means of production? Why should somebody honour exchange contracts and not simply take but not give? What prevents brute force from entering the economy?

Positive Qualities of Capitalism
Criticising capitalism can easily lead to a "litany of horrors". A decent analysis, however, must also state the positive qualities of its object. Let us name some. Material mediation through exchange and money relieves people from being dependent on the goodwill of their social group or their ruler and, thus, makes them freer. That is the precondition for the development of individuality. Through cost efficiency, capitalist production leads to unprecedented productivity and, for many people, its material, sensuous wealth outshines the living standards of earlier human societies. Exchange-related mediation through goods encompasses the entire globe and manages to integrate almost all of humanity in one cooperative association. As a result, harvest failures and diseases could be tackled globally. The mediation of material exchange in an unconscious form takes place without deliberate design, thus hugely reducing complexity. This enables capitalism to deliver its ultra-performance of coordination. What is profitable will be integrated. At the same time, capitalism is extremely adaptable to the most variable cultural backgrounds and state forms. In today's global society, we are part of a worldwide, highly complex and diverse net of division of labour. People pursue their self-interest and produce globally for each other via buying and selling.

The economy is a conflictual, excluding sphere. It only works if its basis—property and, vice versa, the exclusion of the dispossessed—is guaranteed. If this protection were to be organised privately and individually, there would always be a danger of the required means being used to rob the property of others. Consequently, this protection must be guaranteed *publicly* and *generally*. There must be an institution which monopolises all means of violence in order to guarantee the protection of property as much as possible. This public, general institution protecting the monopoly on the use of force is the state.

Freedom and Equality
Compared to →precapitalist societies (p. 20), completely penetrated by personal and direct domination, the state's monopolisation of power constitutes an enormous change. Although, generally speaking, the economy is a relationship of force, its force is effective due to general structures and not through direct personal rule. On the surface of the economy, the subjects seem to meet on free and equal terms. They are free inasmuch as they have themselves and their property at their disposal. In the beginning, this liberty was provided only for white men, and social struggles were required to extend it. They are equal to the extent that the state protects everyone's property regardless of the person. Thus, the state simultaneously guarantees the fundamental inequality in the distribution of assets. Therefore, the freedom and equality the bourgeois are so passionate about is real and, at the same time, historically determined and generally restricted.

Conflicts and the Functions of the State
Why does the state not limit its function to the protection of property? Protecting property guarantees the basis of the economy but not its existence. Therefore, →conflicts (p. 146) in society must be settled in a way that is more tailored to individual needs, as opposed to the economy, where conflict solution is based only on the logic of valorisation. Generally speaking, the economy destroys its own foundations. In the nineteenth century, for example, due to the unlimited exploitation of the 14- to 16-hour workday, many labourers were working themselves into the ground. The economy's human capital was finally protected by the state's

restriction on working hours. Even some entrepreneurs demanded these laws (cf. Marx 1890, p. 262ff). Although they were forced by competition to exploit the workers as long and as hard as possible, they also realised the disastrous consequences. A lot of functions were taken away from the economy and socialised: education and training, regulations relating to health and safety at work, dismantlement of monopolies, infrastructure development, social security and so on.

A Short History of Marxist State Theory
Marx and Engels did not develop a consistent state theory. Therefore, their political reference to the state contains contradictions: they demand both its destruction and its use. Social democracy acknowledges the state as the "only natural foundation […] of the socialist association" (Kautsky 1892), it is the custodian of their utopia. →Nationalisation (p. 50), however, does not lead directly to socialism. Additionally, the proletariat would have to conquer the "state of the capitalists". Only then "will the state stop being a capitalist enterprise, only then will it be possible to reshape it into a socialist association" (ibid.). Lenin's state theory recognises the state as an "organ of class rule" (Lenin 1917). But, in socialism, it could be used to suppress the capitalists and to administer society. The utopia of a free society thus moved from socialism to communism, in which the state should die off (cf. p. 55).

These concepts of the state as a designable instrument are challenged by anarchist and modern theories. Anarchist theorists agree in that the state is an "instrument" of class suppression; however, they consider no liberation is possible within the framework of the state. So, Bakunin categorically demands: "property and the state must be destroyed" (1975, p. 84). Current materialist state theory sees the state as a necessary part of capitalism and not as an "instrument of the capitalists" that can be used in different ways. The capitalist form of production would need a political form, which the state, as an impersonal force, represents historically and theoretically.

Relative Autonomy

The state operates in a sphere of its own which, to a certain point, allows it to act against the imperative of valorisation. This relative autonomy derives from the fact that it acquires part of the produced capitalist wealth not by exchange but through taxes. Thus, the state enjoys the possibility of action beyond competition and valorisation. This autonomy, however, remains relative, as state taxes in turn depend on a functioning economy. The state has no separate power of disposition. Like every other capitalist entity, only with the help of money—that is, economic power of disposition—can it organise its political, legal, infrastructural, police and military actions, among others. Therefore, the economy is the *dominant sphere* encompassing the state.

But what about the state simply printing money? Although this is an option, the creation of money by the state increases inflation if the market does not need this money due to a lack of profitable investment. The state depends on a successful production of goods which will raise enough money to pay for the state's activity. Therefore, it must have an interest in supporting the logic of valorisation: it is not an opponent of the market but, rather, a legislative regulator for successful market activities. This orientation towards valorisation is reinforced by the global location competition: nations try to lure investment capital into the country through a low tax burden, weak social and environment laws and so on. High revenues from low taxes are better than low revenues from high taxes. Offering the lowest taxes eliminates competition from other nations. This logic leads to an international "race to the bottom".

Subjectless Violence

The capitalist state can assume different forms, ranging from democratic to dictatorial. The one thing that is not up for grabs is the protection of property to safeguard a working economy. If there is danger of the state appropriating property, producers do not see any reason to risk their money by investing in that country. Historically, state domination is separated from the individual will of the people which, for example, pervaded the power structure in feudalism. The state goes beyond personal domination and turns into juridified "subjectless violence" (Gerstenberger 1990). Personal despotic domination becomes the rule of law.

Generality

In capitalism, the dominant sphere for the production of means that satisfy needs is the economy. Although production is organised on a societal basis, needs are only satisfied on a private, individual basis. Everyone must look after her/his own needs within the frame of exchange, labour, realisation of value. If I cannot satisfy my needs privately or find it very hard to do so, I must try and step out of my private sphere and claim my needs collectively or commonly. Politics is the sphere trying to establish *generality*. Fascination with politics stems from this generality. If I detest factory farming, I can individually consume in a different way. Or I can try to win a general improvement, for example, through animal protection laws. If I condemn injustice, I can spend money privately or politically advocate wealth tax. This generality is established by an institution which can provide a framework for the economy.

The state, however, does not reside outside capitalism; it depends on a functioning valorisation in the economy and is a necessary integral part of it. It secures the basis of capitalism and deals with necessary tasks which are not profitable. Thus, the state fulfils a double role: on the one hand, it provides the capitalist society with the necessary framework by securing property; on the other, as it operates within the frame of the market and property, it is indirectly subjected to the logic of valorisation. Therefore, there is a fundamental limitation to the "sphere of generality". This is the self-contradiction of politics and the state: they claim a generality that they do not objectively have in capitalism. We experience a priority, a *primacy of the economy*. Via the state, politics can create a regulatory framework for the economy, limit its power and indirectly change it, but politics cannot fundamentally reorganise the economy or put an end to it. If politics and the state want to overcome capitalism and establish the *primacy of politics,* the state will have to change its form. The state can do so because it guarantees the capitalist social relationships and can, therefore, end capitalism. The state abolishes the market, organises re/production itself and claims real generality. If the market's function of coordinating society is abolished, it must be replaced by a structure the state can control and shape: central planning. When the economy is coordinated by central planning instead of markets, a new form of society arises.

Central planning may take different societal forms such as state capitalism, where the means of production remain in private hands, or state socialism, where the state owns the means of production.

3.4   *State Socialism: The State-Coordinated Society*

The relationship between emancipatory movements and the state is long and contradictory. Public opinion identifies the "left" with extending the influence of the state, to anarchists the state is the biggest foe, and the traditional workers' movement considered it as an instrument of emancipation. The positive reference is understandable and logical, since the state conveys a feeling of controllability and formability as opposed to the independent and chaotic market. We believe that such a transgression of present societal structures by politics and the state only generates *different* structures of property and domination but not the abolition of →property (p. 130) and domination. This fact is not due to imperfect leaders or state representatives; it is an effect of the very form of the state itself: statehood.

Statehood

The institution of generality is the *state*. It is the self-legitimised (sovereign) and legitimising centre of the political sphere. Political demands are demands directed at generality. State laws are the form in which they are consolidated and generalised. Only the state can make political changes that are binding for society. It is, so to speak, the door between politics and society, between the private call for political generality and true generality. Indeed, societal changes can take place without the support of the state—an example being the growing acceptance of homosexuality—however, the state can secure such changes with its power, for example, in the form of ending the criminalisation of homosexuality. The state is the condensed centre of politics. As the economy finds its institutional form in the market, so does politics in the state.

But what is a state? A state is not so easily defined. Some scholars define it on the basis of its goals; for example, as an institution that mediates and regulates conflicting particular interests and, therefore, requires superior decision-making powers (cf. Wikipedia: state). Already in this definition we find the central moment of state domination: the power to impose its decisions through force. Therefore, we are in line with: "The most commonly used definition is Max Weber's, which describes the state as a compulsory political organization with a centralized government that maintains a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a certain territory" (Wikipedia: state). Charles Tilly's definition of the state as a "coercion-wielding organisation" (Tilly 1990, p. 2) and Michael Mann's "centre of binding rule-making authority" (Mann 1984, p. 195) are on the same

page. The state usually does not enforce its decisions through physical force because its people acknowledge its legitimacy; however, if it comes to that, the state will do so and is defined by its power to do so.

State Economy: Labour, Exchange Value and Property

Like capitalism, state socialism is a form of society, but whereas in capitalism the market economy dominates societal re/production, in state socialism it is the state economy that does so. In state socialism the state coordinates large parts of re/production and does it like all other things: by enforcing decisions, by enforcing a central plan. The plan rests upon the re/producers (people and enterprises) fulfilling their designated tasks, and the best way to enforce this plan is wage labour and, therefore, extortion: only if factories fulfil their designated tasks do they receive the promised amount of resources, money, support. Only if people work do they gain access to consumption goods. Within a state economy the prices are fixed by the state not by the market; therefore the state economy lacks competition and economic coherent prices and hinders performance-related distribution.[16] Socialist states became aware of these problems and tried to simulate many market effects, such as performance pressure. If enterprises exceed expectations, they receive extra grants. If their production falls short, their resources are cut. And socialist enterprises—at least in later years—used the same principle of performance against their workers. They must fulfil their task or suffer wage loss, extra workload, cutbacks on holidays. Although, all these sanctions were very modest compared to the market. For the state or enterprises to be able to threaten with wage loss, a reduction of the means of consumption and so on, societal wealth cannot be distributed by needs, it must be distributed according to work performance and power. Therefore, the power of disposal over the means of consumption is exclusive—they must be (state) property. The exclusive power of disposal over the means of consumption requires the exclusive disposal of the means of production; otherwise, people would just use the means of production to fulfil their needs, not the state plan. The socialist hope for socialisation becomes de facto nationalisation. Therefore, market and state-planned economies are both based

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[16] Some Marxists argue that "free" price setting is essential for commodity production because it allows coherent price ratios and "value relationships". They argue that state socialism is just an imperfect sub-form of capitalism (cf. Kurz 1991).

on the principle of work. They are both societies of wage labour and, despite their differences, they are quite alike.

The work principle not only rewards self-submission but also leads to a contrast of needs. The individual worker is perfectly entitled to try to work less and gain more. He/she does not do what he/she wants to do but what he/she is paid for: therefore, it is quite reasonable to try and maximise output (consumption possibilities) and minimise the extorted input. Despite state-socialist anthems praising the workers of the regime, just like capitalist workers they, too, must be disciplined and exploited. The same holds true for the enterprises. They will try to receive as much money, goods, and grants as possible (for future stability, personal gain, or whatever reason) and produce minimally, even trade some goods on the black market. They will try to lower production cost and increase the output. And, again, it is perfectly reasonable for them to do so.

The exact same behaviour was observed in real socialism: the state tried to enforce productivity and high product standards, and enterprises tried to avoid these enforcements. Without market competition it was often easy to do so. In the German Democratic Republic this led to so-called "soft plans, i.e. plans whose fulfilment did not require top performance from the enterprises. This phenomenon was also known to the planning authorities, but there were no effective means of eliminating it" (Gutmann 1999, p. 35). Directors of enterprises and combinates "armed themselves against the excessive plan specifications 'from above' […] by concealing their true production possibilities and planning below maximum capacity utilization […]. This left only 'plan poker' as an elaborate regulatory instrument for annual production", in which directors and planners haggled over the plan specifications, "whoever mastered it was considered a successful director" (Roesler 2002, p. 55). Thus, there is a "'game of hide-and-seek' between operations and headquarters […]. The results of the negotiations often served management more as a measure of success than the actual performance achieved" (Hilbert 1994, p. 39). And if they failed, enterprises and workers didn't have much to fear. Sanctions for enterprises were modest and bankruptcy was impossible. Similarly, workers hold quite some power in this "dictatorship of proletariat"—state-socialist leaders feared nothing more than worker strikes—performance sanctions were modest too and unemployment didn't exist. Politically, state socialism was authoritarian; economically, it was much softer than the dictatorship of the market. On the ground of a wage labour society state socialists traded equality against efficiency.

Therefore, in state socialism we can detect the same contrast between use value and exchange value as in capitalism: the production of enterprises and individuals is not need-oriented but exchange-oriented. They are mainly concerned with what they get and not with what they give. This explains planned obsolescence, environmental destruction and so on, in capitalism and poor quality, comparable environmental destruction, lack of productivity gains and so on, in state socialism. The dominance of exchange value "appears only in the form of external state-bureaucratic supervision, that is, no longer in the shape of the 'coercive laws of competition' (Marx). Therefore, it can be deceived, tricked, and perforated in a thousand different ways" (Kurz 1991, p. 104). The next state-coordinated society may be better in enforcing its standards, but the fundamental contrast will not disappear. Allow us to illustrate: a future eco-socialist state tries to enforce "green" production. Individual enterprises try to minimise inputs and maximise their revenues; green production is clearly on the cost side, needing a lot of resources and labour. Therefore, it is reasonable for enterprises or cooperatives to opt for green-washing and only superficially fulfil environmental standards—comparable to capitalist enterprises. The eco-socialist state may tighten regulations, but it fights against the very economic basis it rests upon.

The work principle leads to a contrast of needs: they stand against each other, and they exclude each other. All real socialist societies were structured by this contrast of use and exchange value, with enterprises producing slowly, not enough, in bad quality and so on, and the state trying to force them to perform in a productive, plan-orientated way and deliver reasonable quality. This contrast runs through all individuals: as consumers and human beings, they may prefer environmentally friendly, good-quality goods and services; as producers, they are required to minimise cost at the expense of quantity, quality and the environment. As workers, they prefer interesting, meaningful, not exhausting but well-organised workplaces; as (co-)managers they must subdue the workers, steadily raise pressure and exploitation. In capitalism, production is organised towards valorisation and not the satisfaction of needs, and state socialism faces a very similar obstacle.

Interest Form

The last critique does not focus on the state economy but on the state as a decision-making institution. State planning turns conflicts into contrasts, but even decision-making within the state pits needs against each other. In

the political sphere, many needs compete for generality. But what needs acquire this status? The state is an institution that suggests which conflicts of needs will become contrasts of interests. Needs must refer to their societal options of realisation, and in capitalism and state socialism they structurally oppose each other. Needs can only prevail at the expense of others. In this way, needs take the form of *interests*. An example from capitalism: my need is to live well. In order to satisfy it, I pursue a certain strategy. My strategy must adjust to the prevailing circumstances and possibilities and stay within societal realities. Capitalist realities, however, only allow for the satisfaction of my needs at the expense of others (→logic of exclusion, p. 17). To prevail against others, the need must organise itself as a collective concern (cf. Meretz 2013). Thus, the need for a nice dwelling becomes an interest in more money for social housing, cheaper rents, higher wages and so on. Those interests are faced with *conflicting interests*: landlords want as much rent as possible, other interest groups want less money for housing and better financing of education and so on. Interests are the historically specific societal form to politically advance one's own needs. Their implementation requires →power (p. 4). Thus, the mediation of needs becomes a question of power. The state is a very convenient form for interests and contrasts because it can take universal decisions. The state gathers information, listens to collective concerns and makes a decision. This may seem perfectly reasonable and democratic, but this way the state creates societal conflict. Needs become interests, and conflicts become contrasts.

Anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow study consequences of hierarchical institutions with no power to enforce decisions. The American indigenous Wendat—and many other First Nations—had chiefs, but their people usually possessed the freedom to ignore their commands. A missionary therefore writes: "They have reproached me a hundred times because we fear our Captains, while they laugh at and make sport of theirs. All the authority of their chief is in his tongue's end; for he is powerful in so far as he is eloquent; and, even if he kills himself talking and haranguing, he will not be obeyed unless he pleases the Savages" (cf. Graeber and Wengrow 2021, p. 41). Their power rests not on "state power, rooted in control over rule making and rule enforcing over territory", but on what political scientist Erik Olin Wright calls "social power" which is "rooted in the capacity to mobilize people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions" (Wright 2010, p. 20). Unsurprisingly Europeans were

"surprised and impressed" by their hosts' eloquence and reasonable arguments, "skills honed by near-daily public discussions of communal affairs" (Graeber and Wengrow 2021, p. 39). In contrasts, their hosts often remarked the constant scrambling over each other by Europeans, cutting each other off in conversation, employing weak arguments and behaving not particularly bright. "People who tried to grab the stage, denying others the means to present their arguments, were acting in much the same way as those who grabbed the material means of subsistence and refused to share it" (ibid.).

For conflicting parties, it is neither reasonable nor recommended to reach a general solution; a partial solution where their interests are fulfilled is good enough. They do not have to cooperate for the sake of everybody because the state has opened up another way: enforcement at the expense of others via state power. Conflicting parties can and will try to gain power and influence. Not because they are bad people but because society encourages them to do so. People may still consciously refuse this suggestion, but you cannot escape the logic of the state. Within this exclusion-promoting environment, cooperation is recommended only if it strengthens one's own position. Alliances of interests are formed to prevail over others. The fighting pit is inaugurated. If conflicts are mediated by the state, they turn into contrasts. Needs refer to each other in the form of interests and fight against each other instead of struggle for common ground. The state reproduces and fosters the logic of exclusion because it merges with the economy.

Beyond the Principle of Work

Our critique of the state-coordinated society is short and, therefore, condensed, but we hope some ideas have become clear. Many critics point out that state-socialist economies were part of a global market economy and, therefore, subject to its imperatives and dynamics. This is true, but it only partially explains the dynamics of a state economy and focuses on external mechanism, whereas we argue that a state economy produces many of its historical problems itself. Also, we did not refer to the benefits of state socialism in aspects such as a far (!) more equal distribution of property and labour and heightened possibilities for—if not democratic, at least elite—planning. State coordination is incompatible with criticism of (wage) labour and property. The state coordinates and regulates via enforcement and, ultimately, domination. The resulting principle of work

produces a logic of cost minimisation at the expense of quantity, quality and the environment. Furthermore, historically state capitalism and state socialism have not been democratic. Putting the blame solely on individuals such as Lenin or Mao is too easy. State power increases enormously when markets are abolished. It wields power over production and coordination, career and economic downfall, allocation of resources and goods. Therefore, it is easier and even recommended for it to dominate the people, become authoritarian and concentrate decision-making powers within an elite. Finally, the state suggests the conflicts of needs that are to become contrasts of interests. It reproduces the logic of exclusion and domination instead of solidarity and inclusion.

Societal alternatives depend heavily on the critique of what has to be overcome. Utopias are—so to speak—the children of critique. That is why it is quite important what one criticises as capitalism. We could distinguish four elements:

1. Private property of the means of production: The largest part of the means of production and money—and thus of societal wealth—belongs to a social minority.
2. Market: Re/production is decisively coordinated by the market, which creates a compulsion to valorise.
3. Separation of care work and reproduction: Most care work is done privately and mainly by women. Care work for the environment is essentially not done.
4. Priority of exchange value over use value: Individuals and companies must focus primarily on exchange value rather than of use value, so that individual rationality leads to societal irrationality.

The emphasis on different aspects leads to three major social-ecological utopias: eco-social market economy, state socialism and care-commons and council utopias. Advocates of eco-social market economy do not want to abolish any of these elements. They want to minimise the dominance of the market (element 2), but believe that strong state regulation is possible and sufficient. The failure of state socialism in the twentieth century has convinced them that the market economy is more liberal, efficient and meritocratic. Left-wing advocates of eco-social market economy such as Naomi Klein propose green jobs, welfare state, strong regulation of the market through bans and subsidies, burdening "the rich and filthy", global

redistribution and a questioning of "consumerism" (cf. Klein 2019). Actually, the enemy is always neoliberalism and never the market economy itself. Market socialists like Erik Olin Wright or Vivek Chibber (2022) want to combine a highly regulated market economy with the abolition of private property (element 1) and transfer the means of production into the hands of the workers of the enterprise.[17] State socialists such as Andreas Malm (2021) and Cockshott and Cottrell (2012) want to abolish class rule (element 1) and market (element 2). They argue that the market cannot be sufficiently regulated or that states are too weak to do so in a global market economy. They want to overcome failures of twentieth-century socialist rule computers, better mathematics, democracy and the internet. Cockshott and Cottrell even include market elements such as "clearing prices" and soft competition in their model. By capitalism they mean class relations and market domination.

The extremes of the liberal market economy and state socialism are not divided by a deep gap but belong to a continuum; they constitute two poles that are simply different blends of market and state. Within this continuum, many proposals of a "postcapitalist" world find their place—and many proposals of a "third way", which are usually just a mix of the two. If we start from the free-market pole and progressively add state power, we come across the European social market economy, ideas such as the Green New Deal and eco-socially regulated market economies or market socialism, until the state becomes powerful enough to increasingly regulate prices and replace market competition by state planning; then we find ourselves within state socialism. This continuum is based on one binding element: wage labour and the splitting of care work and the domination of

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[17] After the tragedy of state socialism in the twentieth century, even many revolutionary Marxists aspire to a market economy with a strong public sector and state regulation rather than state planning. Market socialism is not easy to define, but one basic idea seems to be that the market economy is not capitalist per se. Erik Olin Wright uses the formula: Capitalism = market + class structure (2010). Therefore, a cooperative market economy should be fine— or at least one that is not subject to capitalist dynamics. We have argued above that capitalist dynamics are a direct consequence of generalised exchange, the market and its competition. Capitalism is based on the market economy. In a cooperative market economy, workers own the means of production but still have to compete with each other as enterprises and maximise their profits. The difference is that they now have to exploit themselves, which they may do rather reluctantly. But even in this case, very strong state regulation is needed to prevent successful cooperatives from turning into dominant corporatives.

exchange value over use value. Goods and services are not distributed according to needs, but according to money, power and/or performance. In our opinion, a solidary society must overcome this binding principle of labour and all the other four elements. Many emancipatory movements—notably care, commons, indigenous, anarchist and council communist movements—strove for such a society, and our utopia of "commonism" is just a proposal on how to organise such a care-commons-council utopia.

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Reform and Revolution

Transformation theory answers the question of how a free society can be reached from the starting point of capitalism. The answer rests on assumptions. On the one hand, it assumes that a free society lies within the reach of our human-societal possibilities of development. On the other hand, it assumes that there are qualitatively different forms of producing our living conditions, which means there must be qualitatively different forms of society and not just a continuum of differently decorated forms of capitalism.

Millions of people have wondered about such a liberating transformation. Our contribution rests on the shoulders of many theoretical reflections and practical experiments. In this chapter we want to reflect on the transformation theories which, until today, have been important for emancipatory movements. What were their strengths and weaknesses? What can they explain, where is their blind spot? When discussing the overcoming of capitalism today, two strategies still have a prominent role: *reform* and *revolution*. Historically, both theories of transformation have given birth to state-dominated societies with a top-down structure of domination. Did they go about it the wrong way? If we were to do everything right, could we not, nevertheless, build a free society with a revolution or a chain of reforms? We do not think so, and we will try to explain our view in this chapter. However, reform and revolution are not all "wrong". Both theories yield important insights, worth harvesting by every theory of transformation. We want to overcome reform and revolution: there are aspects we

want to keep, others we intend to develop and yet others we want to get rid of.

Now, criticism runs the risk of missing the subject. And, indeed, any criticism of reform and revolution can be contested with "that is not my understanding of reform/revolution. You're barking up the wrong tree." The danger of dismantling imagined trees is high, and it even increases the more variations a theory has. Theories and thoughts about reform and revolution are manifold, and a lot of movements refer to them in a positive manner. So, it is inevitable for our criticism to miss many ideas, at least in parts. We do not intend to disagree with every person who thinks reform or revolution is a good thing, or even to prove them wrong. No; our aim it is to criticise certain core elements, which we connect with theories of reform and revolution. We believe that these core elements prevent us from achieving a free society. Our criticism focuses on content, not on words.

Before diving into the concepts of reform and revolution, we would like to discuss two fundamental approaches: interpersonal transformation theory and transpersonal state-oriented transformation theory; we believe the second is of particular importance for reform and revolution.

1   Interpersonal Transformation Theory

The idea of interpersonal transformation theory can be illustrated by painting the following picture: in the meadow (of capitalist societies), mushrooms (interpersonal practices) occasionally sprout up, slightly changing society. When there are enough of these mushrooms, the meadow (capitalism) turns into a mushroom forest (free society).

Each transformation theory must include interpersonal practices. This is relevant for state-oriented political transformation theories—which traditionally include a party (organised on an interpersonal basis) preparing revolution or reforms—as well as transvolution theories (Chap. 3). An exclusively interpersonal transformation theory believes that the sum of individual decisions will ultimately bring about a qualitatively new society. As an inscription on the Berlin Wall goes, "Many little people doing many little things in many little places can change the face of the earth". If many people—within the limits of their possibilities—behave differently from what is suggested by societal norms, this can bring about a radical change in society. Many people probably turn to these interpersonal practices to

improve their lives and the present world but do not aim at creating a new form of society. In this chapter, we focus only on theories which seriously believe in overcoming capitalism by means of a multitude of interpersonal practices.

The number of interpersonal practices is unmanageable. They include humanist intents ("I am kinder to people I meet") and antisexist activities ("I try to live feminist relationships"). These practices are often aimed at changing individual patterns of thinking and acting and can result in (big) social and individual changes in one's immediate surroundings. Many types of exclusion—for example, racist or sexist—are tackled, and societal standards are overstepped. Even the →economy (p. 14) can be influenced. This is what the →critique of consumer culture (p. 44) and the fair-trade movement aspire to achieve with their emphasis on fair consumption. The general idea is to do what can be done in our own vicinity (and beyond) with regards to the satisfaction of our needs, our self-determination and how we relate to other people, ourselves, our employees, animals, strangers, the environment and so on. What is the scope of such interpersonal practices?

Interpersonal practices can indeed lead to societal shifts. Thus, the "sexual revolution" of the student movement of 1968 or the environmental movement, for example, can be attributed to changes in interpersonal forms of thinking and behaving. This is often referred to as a "shift in values" or "cultural change". This shift in values, however, does not lead to a change in the *form* of society, because interpersonal practices do not bring about new societal conditions for living or acting, or new determining forms of societal mediation. As long as they do not aim at creating new societal conditions but only intend to act differently within the existing framework, they do not overcome capitalism, which is not only a "value system" but a powerful, objective and physical societal structure. Need-oriented actions, under the premise of accepting the present conditions, cannot change it. On the contrary, to conquer capitalism, new conditions must be established, new spaces opened beyond money, paid labour, patriarchy, valorisation, competition and so on. Only under new societal conditions do the courses of action and attitudes that we wish to cultivate in interpersonal spaces find societal support and encouragement. "Survival of the fittest", the transpersonal logic of exclusion, will only be overcome by new conditions.

Critique of Consumerism

The critique of consumerism is a set value in today's capitalism. We are often told that a shopping list equals a "ballot paper". Next to their quality, many products advertise their method of production as being philanthropic and environmentally friendly. Consumption can be a way of improving things. We doubt, however, that capitalism as a whole—or the market economy, which is the positive term used in this context—can be overcome through a change in consumption. The point here is that the basic mechanisms of capitalism, such as exchange, exclusion and the realisation of value, are left untouched. Corporate group Nestlé does not destroy the environment out of enthusiasm; respecting the environment more than the competition does would simply raise the costs. Consumers can cushion this effect of externalisation by accepting higher prices for "fair products", but they cannot cancel it, because the force of valorisation generally prevails. A critique of consumerism may even claim to overcome capitalism. It undoubtedly wants to overcome the effects of exchange, money and competition; but, at the same time, it wishes to maintain the form and the means which cause the destruction. Thus, the critique of consumerism can only address the symptoms, and its repair work merely chases its own tail.

A lot of people organising alternative interpersonal practices—for example, antiracist, antisexist, ecological—are well aware of their limits. Values do not suffice; general societal changes are required. Some then hope to shape the societal conditions with the help of the capitalist forms, via the state. In capitalism the state represents generality (cf. p. 28). An implemented political demand has a much bigger impact than individual changes in behaviour. Reallocation via wealth tax is much more effective than via donations. Looking at the state for help turns interpersonal transformation theory into a state-oriented transformation theory.

The interpersonal transformation theory acknowledges that the capitalist form of society cannot be overcome through a single sphere of responsibility, for example, politics. It must change our lives completely. In order to organise the structures of our life according to our →needs (p. 113), a transformation must also be effective in our everyday life. But a mere change of the values imbuing our activity does not suffice. It is not only our actions that must change but also the conditions of our actions. In

order to overcome the capitalist shaping of our daily life, we must also overcome the capitalist form in our daily life—and this is only possible by way of a transformation that will bring about new societal conditions.

2   STATE-ORIENTED TRANSFORMATION THEORY

State-oriented transformation theory considers the state and its connected sphere of politics especially important in achieving a free society. According to this perspective, transformation must begin in the political and state-oriented sphere and, from there, seize the whole of society. The qualitative change in the form of society should be made possible through a state-oriented political change. Today, state-oriented transformation concepts—like reform and revolution—occupy almost the entire theoretical space of transformation theories. But what do we actually mean by "state-oriented"?

2.1   *State-Oriented Transformation*

The →concept of politics (p. 46) today is ambiguous. When we talk of state-oriented transformation we want to express that the transformation essentially takes place in the *political sphere* or rests on it; the political sphere we described above is characterised by features of generality, state-hood and the interest form. Within the political sphere, the state is the self-legitimised (sovereign) and legitimising centre. We call it the door between politics and society.

A transformation organised in a state-oriented way tries to attain the free society mainly via a change in the state (cf. Fig. 2.1). This approach aims at changing the whole of society and, ultimately, the form of society through a political process of obtaining state power. Therefore, there is a difference between state-oriented and societal transformation. Firstly, a political process (reform or revolution) leads to the transformation of the state: the state either gains societal primacy and coordinates the whole of society ("socialist" mode) or is destroyed ("anarchist" mode). Secondly, state transformation leads to a transformation of society: through either top-down (democratic) central planning or self-organisation. Either way,
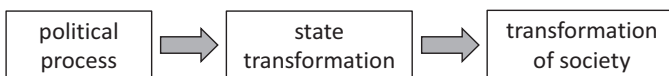

Fig. 2.1   Concept of state-oriented political transformation

the state-oriented transformation uses the capitalist forms and institutions and moves within this frame. Whether the state is intended to be used or destroyed is of course relevant, but many anarchists and state-critical communists give much more thought and energy to political processes and abolishment of the state than what supersedes state (and markets) and building political and re/productive alternatives. Thereby, they negatively reproduce a state-orientation.[1] State-oriented transformation theories consistently focus on the issue of how to gain state power.

> **The Concept of Politics**
> Today's concept of politics is dazzling and diverse (cf. Wikipedia: politics). In the nineteenth century the concept of politics was largely limited to statehood. The concept of politics has since been extended and, according to the motto "the private is political", it has even reached the private sphere. Politics has become interpersonal. Whatever is designable and can "somehow" reach into society is now "political". Every act—conversations, dress, food and so on—can now be political and change societal relations. We avoid the concept of politics, as most people—despite all the efforts to give it a broader meaning—still perceive politics as action aimed at changing the state, when it is a matter of changing general societal structures. In principle, our transvolution theory could also be seen as a political theory; however, we are afraid this could evoke wrong associations.

We postulate that a free society cannot be built *with* or *within* capitalist forms and institutions. We want to prove this thesis by looking at some points.

There are two main answers to the question of how state transformation can lead to a new form of society: either by a *gradual process of restructuring* (reform theory) or by a *qualitative change within a relatively short period of time* (revolution theory). We shall discuss these two theories in more detail below. A crucial question, however, one which affects both approaches equally, is that of the role of the state in the reforming transformation process or in the postrevolutionary process of reorganisation. Is it an instrument, a frame or an enemy?

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[1] When we wrote this book five years ago, the authors' discontent with (and frankly ignorance of) anti-authoritarian concepts of transformation and revolution was greater. Nevertheless, we think that our critics from the camp of reform and revolution as well as transvolution and the seed form theory, contain many interesting ideas.

Can the State Create a Free Society?

Transformation theories are fundamentally influenced by the theoretical concept of the state (Chap. 1, 3.3). The state-oriented transformation theory derives from traditional Marxism, which sees the state as an instrument of class domination.[2] An instrument can be used in many different ways. But can the state be used to build a free society? More recent state-critical transformation theories, as well as anarchism—past and present—have a definite answer to this question: No (cf. Chap. 2, 4.4).

A process of liberation creates new forms of producing living conditions and of overcoming capitalism and leaves old forms behind. If the state is to design this process of liberation, the latter can only take place within a certain form. This form is the legal form, the means are laws, passed and enforced by politics and the state. So, organising new societal conditions is done by way of legal procedure. The process of liberation takes a legal path. Thus, the new conditions are delivered from "above". The state has to enforce the "Good New" by imprinting it on the members of the society it represents as a general demand. This constitutes a fundamental paradox for emancipatory movements that aspire to need-oriented new societal life conditions. It is a contradiction in terms: the other-directing state is expected to bring self-determination.

For the state to be able to enforce need-oriented forms of producing* life conditions, it would have to know what the needs of all people are. On the one hand this is impossible, as only we can know our own needs and, therefore, only we can create forms of relationships, living and activities that correspond to them. The notion of comprehensive knowledge and, thus, of the planning capability of the world is part of traditional Marxist theory. On the other hand, the needs of people have been shaped by capitalism. They can only change, develop and unfold *in the process* of liberation. For that purpose, people need space for self-reflection and self-development.

Only people themselves can create a free society according to their needs, as we shall see in detail below (Chap. 6, 1). Given that they are the only ones that know their needs, it is up to them to find the societal form for their

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[2] As Frederic Engels writes: "The proletariat seizes from state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with. But thereby it abolishes [...] all class distinctions and class antagonisms, and abolishes also the state as state" (1891, 223). The state as an "organization of the [...] exploiting class [...] for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited class in the conditions of oppression" (ibid.), as a "special coercive force" (ibid., 224) is not necessary anymore. For Engels, the state withers when used by the proletariat, the oppressed workers. Lenin started from here and declared that the seizing of power by the proletariat is not enough for the state to die. He then tried to give new reasons for abolishing the state.

fulfilment. No matter how democratic the legislative procedure might be, a new form of society enforced by the state will always be tainted by its political-governmental origins. It has not been created but drawn up, not learned but decreed, not self-organised but administered. A good cause is corrupted by repressive means. This tragedy is evident in many socialist attempts, both throughout history and today. This does not necessarily mean that the state has to be treated as an "enemy". It could provide a space for the self-organised development of new life conditions—the state not as a designer but as someone helping into the saddle? What is important for us at this point is to stress that the state cannot create free societal conditions.

Separation of Path and Goal

State-oriented transformation theories aim at a free society, but the path is blocked by their state-oriented form. Revolution amounts to a sudden seizure of power, reformism[3] is a long march. Both forms of state-oriented seizure of power require the use of means that are not in line with the end:[4] manipulation, oppression or even violence. This follows from the fact that state-oriented transformation does not create new forms of action but has to dwell within its own realm. However, this framework of state-oriented action entails certain forms of operation: convincing the voters, founding and leading a party, gaining positive media coverage, seizing state power, defeating the counterrevolution and so on. A society without violence shall be fabricated by violence, a society without terror by terror (cf. Chap. 1, footnote 4). The political means aimed at gaining state power in political organisations often acquire a life of their own. The clearer the focus on state power within the framework of politics and the state, the more the movement has to concentrate on the means for gaining domination. This orientation defines the structure of the organisation, and often the external instruments for gaining domination hold inside the organisation. Within the framework of politics and the state, the aim pushes the organisation towards using forms corresponding to politics and the state. This can often be seen in the authoritarian structure of revolutionary movements or the dirty power struggles in reformist parties. Step by step, the external logic becomes internalised. Understanding the weak spots of previous approaches enables us to explain what went wrong in the path to implementation, or even the betrayal of ideals that followed their triumph and, ultimately led to the opposite of what was intended. We are bound to

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[3] We use the term "reformism" in the descriptive and neutral meaning, not derogatory (as partially usual).

[4] Or are indeed in line, if emancipation is postponed and domination itself wins the day.

encounter this over and over again: it is linked to the interrelation of utopia and transformation. The goal should mould the form of the path, but it is often the other way around: the path (de)forms the goal. A good goal will be missed if the path is not adequate, if it is shaped by means and methods that contradict the goal. But the goal does not justify the means. A liberating victory over capitalism requires a fundamental clarification of the goal and a corresponding path; otherwise, it is bound to fail.

The Question of Domination

Almost all texts of state-oriented transformation theories deal with the "question of power". In most cases, this refers to the issue of how to conquer state "power". The question of "power", however, is in fact a question of domination. →Power (p. 4) is quite different from domination. Collectively, people can have the power to develop new ideas or build a house. The power of agency does not necessarily include domination. Domination is clotted power; it is the ability to subjugate people. If power is meant to command people, it is domination. The state is not only an institution of power—such a definition would be a euphemism—but an institution of domination: it has power over people insofar as their conditions of life are at its disposal. State-oriented transformation theories aim at state power, at exercising it over people for the purpose of enforcing general objectives. That, however, is domination. State-oriented transformation theories want to utilise this option of domination for the purpose of abolishing domination—for example, by reorganising society or even eventually destroying the state they make use of at the beginning. Talking of the "question of power" disguises the actual claim, to seize power over an institution of domination. We expand on this in Chap. 5, 2.3 "Capacity and Domination" (p. 134).

The separation of path and goal explains the unattractiveness of politics in general and of reform and revolution in particular. Too close to religion, they promise paradise at the end of a long path of sacrifices. Revolution partly drives this self-instrumentalisation to the limit—death: "die for hope". Its mass rejection is understandable.

This is also true in general: it is no surprise that hardly anybody wants to partake in the left project under the motto "fight, fight, fight", demanding the sacrifice of the present for the sake of the future. How many comrades-in-arms became tired of that? How many returned, tired and

relieved, to civil life when "the job was done"? "That's something for young people", they say. Therefore, the growing role of hedonism within emancipatory movements, the increasing inclination towards the immediate satisfaction of needs, should be supported. At the same time, however, it should be criticised as an unquestioned conformation to society. Hedonism must not be simply applied as a positive, need-oriented yardstick for emancipatory-transformative practice; it is separately celebrated in the capitalist pleasure and entertainment industry. In our view, the scale and foundation of transformation should be individual needs. For that purpose, transformation must exit the political sphere.

Nationalisation

Traditional Marxism did not have a uniform understanding of socialisation. A lot of people presumed the state could be a "representative of society" if governed by the workers, and socialisation could come about through nationalisation. Others imagined socialisation as the dissolution of property into the means of production and its transfer into the hands of the workers. But what that really meant and how it should be organised remained largely unclear. In addition, the focus was only on the means of production. The socialisation of the means of consumption in the broader sense, including the results of production, was not taken into consideration.

The socialisation of the means of consumption in the sense of the dissolution of →property (p. 130) was not among the goals of traditional Marxism. This becomes very obvious when looking at traditional Marxist culture, impregnated with its respective work and performance ethic: "The idlers push aside" (line from the German lyrics of the battle song "*Die Internationale*"). Or the criticism of "earning without working" or the demand of "equal liability of all to work" in the Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1848). In 1879 the Marxist August Bebel wrote: "Socialism agrees with the Bible in asserting that 'he who will not work shall neither eat'". Products shall not be freely available but only accessible via wages for work. Consequently, products will have to be produced as private property in separation from the needs of the people. This separation through property must be maintained by force and, finally, by violence, requiring a state. Without the socialisation of products, real socialism did not socialise the means of production and, therefore, did not put into practice the abolition of property. Property was simply managed in a different way. The hope of socialisation turned into the fact of nationalisation.

2.2   *Traditional Marxism*

Traditional Marxism has dominated the theories of emancipatory movements for more than 100 years. The state-oriented transformation theories—above all reform and revolution—have grown on its theoretical basis. In order to understand a subject, it is important to understand how it came about. True to this, we shall continue with a brief—thus, unfortunately, curtailing—presentation of traditional Marxist theory.

What is the utopia of traditional Marxism? The socialisation of the means of production and, thus, the end of class domination. Capitalism is basically understood as class domination, whereby the means of production are concentrated as property in the hands of capitalists, excluding all other people from their disposal. This gives capitalists the power to employ the broad mass of the population as wageworkers and exploit them. The socialisation of the means of production could abolish their unequal distribution and the exploitation resulting from it. Thereby socialisation is often equated with →nationalisation (p. 50), and it does turn into nationalisation if the principle of work and performance is not abolished as well. Lenin (and Marx before him) realised that the end of class domination does not mean the end of domination in general. Many theorists were aware of the fact that reform and revolution alone did not suffice to establish a society free from domination, and this led to the model of stages (cf. below).

Transitional Society

Transvolution can, sure enough, be combined with the traditional theory of conquest: an initial break—via reform or revolution—brings about a (socialist) society in transition. Then the process of transformation begins. The free society is created by generalising emancipatory early forms. A kind approach would be to attribute this view to the state-oriented theory of overcoming. However, one disturbing issue is apparent: the path from the society of transition to the freed society (communism) has hardly been thought through. Lenin leaves the "withering away of the state" to re-education and the development of the productive forces.

But just because the traditional state-oriented theory of overcoming cannot imagine this transition, it does not mean it is impossible. Indeed, the question arises, would it not be easier to put a constituting process into practice in a society dominated by political-state

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structures? As attractive as this idea may seem, in our view there is one crucial flaw: until now, state-oriented attempts to overcome capitalism have often been unpredictable and chaotic. Counterrevolutionary movements add to this instability. It is hard to predict which dominant political-state structure will prevail after the break. Therefore, it remains doubtful whether state-oriented transformation can bring about societal conditions favourable to a process of constituting qualitatively new conditions. In addition, most transition societies are not characterised by a loose integration but by the dominance of a small group (party or similar) with a tight and authoritarian structure which hardly allows for other forms of societal organisation.

These spaces, however, are crucial for the beginning of a transformation process, as the latter often emerges in niches. Surely, there might also be transition societies dominated by political-state structures that are less tightly organised. However, we consider that a society built on plan mediation is inevitably characterised by an integrating-authoritarian logic (cf. Chap. 4, 3.2). That said, the contemplation of societal transformation on the basis of political-state dominance could be rather interesting in counties which (still) have a strong political and state organisation and perceive themselves (nominally) as transition societies (China, Cuba, Venezuela etc.).

In a scenario discussed in the movement of the →commons (p. 143), the transitional state could function as a "partner state" for movements. In that capacity, however, as a stirrup, it would have to strive for its own overcoming. This is conceivable, in principle. But we are afraid that the state has a certain "gravity" that reproduces the structures of the state and keeps new forms of societal organisation under control. This interest in control is understandable, given that production and mediation require a stronger state coordination in this context in order to maintain →societal coherence (p. 126). Also, the new forms have to fit into its coordination, resources and manpower have to be provided and so on. A liberating constitution process would have to defend itself against this "gravitational attraction".

Another scenario could be a constitution process which does not occur in niches but in the transitional state itself. In this instance, the

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transitional state must remodel itself according to needs. Again, we are critical of this path since the goal is not the democratisation of state decisions but an inclusive form of mediation. Therefore, decentralisation and the transfer of decisions to local authorities in Venezuela is a good thing; however, they still rest on central institutions of domination. Further on we will demonstrate that an institution with power of enforcement (→question of domination, p. 49) actually tends to prevent the emergence of inclusive conditions (Chap. 6, 1.2).

Bottom line: Liberating societal forms can only develop beyond the state.

How were the goals to be met? By the "capture of political power" (Marx and Engels 1848). The following sentences from the 1891 Erfurt Programme of the Social Democratic Party are fundamental: "The battle of the working class against capitalist exploitation necessarily is a political fight. […] It cannot effect the transfer of the means of production into the ownership of the collective without having gained political power." Political power means the state. And the conclusion is correct: nationalisation can be achieved by taking political power—state power. Thus, the problem of transformation—how can we establish a free society?—becomes a problem of domination: how can we seize the state? We either follow the path of elections to political power (reform) or fight for it (revolution). That is the basis of state-oriented transformation theories.

Stage Model

Other thinkers within traditional Marxism also came to the conclusion that the "capture of power" is not the direct way to a free society. Their answer was as simple as it was unsatisfying: capitalism is not followed by the free society, communism, but by a →transitional society (p. 51), socialism (cf. Fig. 2.2, p. 54).

In the nineteenth century, there was no significant difference in the use of the terms socialism and communism, they were even exchangeable. However, the stage model turns socialism into a mere transitional society. This implies that a state-oriented transformation cannot lead to a free

Fig. 2.2 The stage model of traditional Marxism
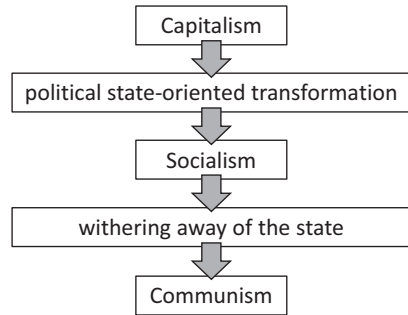
society. Karl Marx laid the foundation for the stage model with a few words in the text "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (1875)[5] where he distinguishes a "first phase of communist society" from a "higher phase". The first phase derives directly from capitalist society and, therefore, is "economically, morally, and intellectually still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society" (ibid., p. 20) Here, work certificates establish a relation between individual performance and consumption, and the work principle remains in place. Naturally, Marx recognises that this principle is a "right of inequality, […] like every right", but "these defects are inevitable in the first phase" (ibid., p. 21). This "first phase" is later called socialism.

The model of the transition society was received with open arms by the workers' movement. At long last, the claim of a consistent design of a postcapitalist society retreated into the background—socialism is allowed to incorporate inconsistencies and mistakes. Furthermore, the state does not have to be abolished but can be used in a sensible way, and eventually it simply withers away. Marxism-Leninism and other socialist theories explain inconsistencies with the socialist "temporary nature". The promise of the communist paradise is postponed.

We would agree to the stage model in what refers to a state-oriented transformation—be it reform or revolution—building up a state-dominated society. The crucial question is: how does the state disappear? Because only then does a free society emerge, only then does the question of transformation find a satisfying answer. In fact, this theoretical challenge has been largely ignored by most theorists of the stage model, past

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[5] In Marx's defence, it should be noted that this stage model only appears in a few of his texts. Nevertheless, it became the basis of what was later on called "Marxism".

and present. Marx did not say a word about the withering away of the state. Only Lenin tried to back it up in the text "The State and Revolution" (1917). But this theory too, in our view, remains incomplete.

Withering Away of the State

Traditional Marxism sees the state as necessary for the establishment of the "first phase of communist society" (Marx 1875) but considers that, when that is accomplished, it gradually loses its functions and, thus, its foundation. This was formulated by Engels and Marx; however, it was Lenin—essentially with recourse to Marx' reflections on the Paris Commune (a socialist 1871 uprising)—who gave it a more consistent shape. He argued that the work principle and civil law are still in force: "Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of consumer goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the rules of law". But when is this "administrative state" going to die? Within "complete communism" it will happen "when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of societal intercourse and when their labour has become so productive that they will voluntarily work according to their ability". Complete communism would lead to "the breaking away from the division of labour, of doing away with the antithesis between mental and physical labour, of transforming labour into 'life's prime want'" (Lenin 1917).[6] The adjustment includes that "people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of societal intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims. They will become accustomed to observing them without force, without coercion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for coercion called the state." Lenin's text is not explicit about the rules, but it seems reasonable to assume something like "do as you expect others to do" and "don't be egoistic, serve the community"—demanding individuals to freely subject to a collective whole.

Although Lenin speaks of "complete democracy" in socialism, the guidelines of development in socialism are set: development of the

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[6] The idea of labour being "life's prime want" was presented very vividly in the following dialogue from Alexander Bogdanow's utopian novel *The Red Star*: "And will never something equivalent to our money be demanded? A proof of the amount of labour spent, or the obligation to do so?"—"By no means. Here labour is free, there is no shortage of anything. The mature social adult only demands one thing: work. We do not need to force him to work, neither in a hidden nor an open way" (Bogdanow 1923, p. 71).

productive forces and familiarisation with moral rules; detractors, or honest people (and, later on, Lenin himself), also speak of re-education. And, even though he claims the socialist state is nothing but an "administrative state"[7] or a "semi-state", it clearly exists as a full state as it remains an institution enforcing its goals in society. His absolute belief in liberation via the development of the productive forces proves Lenin to be a worthy heir of capitalism. He thus replaces "production for the sake of production" with "production for the sake of communism", the promise of a heavenly "higher phase", and justifies all violence and subjugation that people have to suffer along the way. We, however, are of the opinion that a free society cannot emerge merely through the development of the productive forces. We will come back to this in Chap. 3, when dealing with transvolution. Also, the "inevitability of the withering away" seems doubtful to us. A free society is not built by way of familiarisation and subjection but by creating societal conditions according to our needs. The idea of re-education carries some truth for, in a transformation process, the subjectiveness of the people will also change. This, however, is not possible by learning rules, whether traditional and old or new and decreed. An individual and free unfolding requires a self-determined process of creating rules and conditions.

Other theories—neo-Gramscian, for example—put the question of the withering away of the state into practice and assume that an increased transfer of state decisions to local-neighbourhood self-organisation will disperse the state into the society. Nevertheless, a simple democratisation of the state, for example, by an increased participation of people in state decisions, will not achieve a free society. As long as there is a central administrative authority—no matter how democratic its decisions are—domination must prevail (c.f. Chap. 4, 3.2). And it is not enough to dispose of the state completely; it must be replaced by new forms of producing our life conditions and their societal mediation. We shall discuss below the possibility of developing such new forms within a state-planned society in transition.

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[7] Engels refers to these "administrative functions" by saying: "The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It dies out" (1891, 201). The "special repressive force" (ibid., 224), however, cannot die out, since property must still be protected.

2.3   *The Question of Utopia Becomes the Question of Domination*

The goal of emancipatory movements is to build a society free from domination. A transformation theory, to begin with, must determine the substantive provisions of the new society (question of utopia). Only if there is a clear understanding of the new form desired can one think about the way, about how this form can become dominant. The first question asks for the goal, the second for the path. Many new approaches to transformation (degrowth, solidarity economy, transition towns, radical reformism etc.) evade the first question and focus on the path.

State-oriented transformation theories follow the state-oriented path for the emergence of the new form. In traditional Marxist utopia, this is a logical assumption. It intends to build a new society on the basis of conscious state planning, which can be achieved and enforced via gaining political domination. The radical change of the form of society thus becomes a technology of domination: how can social movements or the political party become strong enough to enforce their own interests? The decisive question in traditional Marxist transformation is: "how can we conquer political domination?" It fits the utopia of a state-planned society. An emancipatory movement *not* aiming at a state-planned society has to start from scratch. It has to ask itself which transformation theory fits its utopia.

However, the problem is that many emancipatory movements have lost track of the question of utopia; at the same time, the old state-oriented answers to the question of transformation still linger. This is, certainly, due to the fact that the existing discourse on societal alternatives and utopias is rudimentary. The question of utopia is haunted by the ghosts of the past—and so is the question of transformation. The *Interventionist Left* (a network of many local groups in Germany), for example, claims: "The overcoming of capitalism, in the end, is a question of power" (IL 2014). This highly resembles traditional Marxism's "conquest of political power". Here too, the focus of attention is on state domination, even though the IL is state-critical. There are other cases where the connection between utopia and transformation has not been thought through in detail. In these cases, as it happens, a utopia free from domination and state is combined with a state-oriented transformation theory. But the goal of a utopia without a state requires going beyond the state-oriented transformation

theory. Persistence on state-oriented transformation theories is the outcome of theoretical inconsequence.

Even though we do not share the state-oriented approach to transformation, the primacy of the question of utopia nevertheless applies in this case. If it turned out that this theoretically based utopia could be enforced in a state-oriented way, it could proceed to the question of domination. We have tried to elaborate on why we think this is not possible. Transformation requires a societal process, not just a state-oriented one. It needs power, but the question is *which* power should be gained, *how*, and whether this power turns into domination. This is the particular configuration we shall look into in our analysis of transvolution (Chap. 3).

3   Reform: Climbing the Mountain Step by Step

Reform usually refers to the "systematic reorganisation of existing conditions and systems" which can also include "drastic societal changes" (cf. German Wikipedia: Reform). For reformists, the transformation of capitalism is a mountain to be climbed. A mountain needs to be mastered step by step. Single steps are something distinct, sequential, calculable, plannable, designable. The next step can be discussed and specified once the previous has been taken. You can start with the first step right away, and should you be on the wrong track or be going adrift, the reform process can just take a few steps back. Moving step by step implies a soothing continuity, a reassuring security. And this lack of security is the reformist critique of revolution: revolutions abandon existing democratic decision-making institutions and are, therefore, less controllable and may be subject to antidemocratic and probably violent changes.

Thus, traditional, state-loyal reformism identifies possibilities *within* capitalist structures and the capitalist form. The idea is that gradual changes can slowly overcome capitalism. At a certain number of changes, reformed capitalism tips over into the free society. When the turning point has been reached, enough quantitative changes have accumulated to bring about a qualitative change of the form of society. For example: there can be a progressive rise in CO_2 taxes starting at 60\$ and better health care during the first year; in the fourth year, unconditional basic income and a stricter democratic control of the economy; and in the tenth year all these reforms sum up to a profound societal change. Step by step, capitalism has been left behind. Not all reform theories are like this, some include breaks and levels.

Systematic, general redesign within capitalism links reform theories to the *state*, as it is the legitimate form of societal design in capitalism. The state stabilises changes through laws and enforces changes in society in a general, binding way. Without stabilisation and generalisation, any step-by-step process would always have to start from scratch and would be confined to niches.

Only in the political sphere and within the state can reformism *systematically* design society. The welfare state is an example of this. However, to reach a new form of society, it would have to break with existing structures. A new societal form must be created by a different form of producing the conditions of life. Traditional reformism cannot deliver that. It remodels the state and thereby society, but the state cannot create a free societal form. Therefore, traditional reformism's positive reference to the state binds it to capitalism. Reaching the mountain peak, the mountaineers encounter what they have always been meeting during their hard ascent, only at a different level.

In the next section we shall show that state-loyal reformism in fact believed, and still believes, that the state is not a part of capitalism but a neutral instrument which can be used independently. Then we will deal with a variation of modern state-critical reformism which reveals tendencies to create a new social form, beyond the state, "from below". Here the state is not the organiser of change but rather a mediator, an institution providing spaces for change.

3.1 *Traditional Reformism*

While traditional Marxist tendencies faithfully adhered to revolution, reformist worker tendencies took shape in the workers' movement towards the end of the nineteenth century. They became established within the context of an improved position of the proletariat and the influence of extended suffrage. Thus, the proletariat increasingly began to consider that capitalist society could change within the framework of politics and the state. In the German-speaking world, reformism is connected to its most interesting representative, Eduard Bernstein (all quotes from 1899, transl. M.R.). Friedrich Engels' former assistant declared democracy to be the forerunner of socialism: "With a […] backward working class, general franchise for a long time can appear as the right to choose one's own 'butcher' however, with the workers' number and knowledge it becomes

an instrument to turn the elected representatives from masters into true servants of the masses". He specified general franchise as "(only) a part of democracy, albeit a part that in the long run must entail the others, like a magnet attracts the scattered iron particles".

For Bernstein, this enriched democracy was nothing less than socialism, since democracy is not only "a means for attaining socialism but a means and an end at the same time. It is the means for winning socialism and it is the form for fulfilling socialism". For, without it, the "societal acquisition of the means of production (could) probably only" be enforced "in the form of dictatorial revolutionary central power, supported by the terrorist tyranny of revolutionary clubs". Despite the bright ideas, the positive reference to a (democratic) state remains evident. The state is the instrument for the construction of the new society. The question of utopia becomes the question of domination. The task of societal restructuring is conferred on the state.

State-positive reformism, however, does not vanish with the disappearance of the traditional workers' movement. It can be found in Eurocommunism (a European communist movement of the 1950s and the 1960s, in opposition to the Soviet Union) as well as (partly) in today's reform theories—for example, in the theory of "Socialism of the 21st century" (Dieterich 2006), which was decisive for Hugo Chavez's politics in Venezuela.

3.2   *State-Critical Reformism*

Real socialism experiences lead to criticism of the traditional understanding of the state. Whether the state could be an instrument for emancipatory actions was already questioned to begin with. Recent state-critical reform approaches recognise the state as a sine qua non for reforms; however, their underlying attitude is critical or even hostile. As these theoretical orientations are relatively new, there is no general theory yet. Therefore, our presentation of state-critical reformism will be limited to Joachim Hirsch's concept of "Radical Reformism". This term includes "'Reformism', because it does not aim at the revolutionary capture of power, 'radical', because the focus is on those societal relations producing the dominant conditions of power and domination" (Hirsch 2007, transl. M.R.).

Radical Reformism

Hirsch fundamentally objects to the traditional understanding of revolution "because people (could) not be freed by domination and force" (Hirsch 1995, p. 194). He argues that "attempts to change the fundamental structures of society using state power" have failed, whether communist-revolutionary or social democratic-reformist. Moreover, "states have lost crucial policy spaces" (ibid.) because, he believes, nation-state-based politics is increasingly challenged by multinational companies. Thus, a nation-state-based centre of power has disappeared. He also dismisses ideas of a world-state. He favours a decentralised approach instead: "The point is not to have a new and even more perfect state but to create new, decentralised and cooperatively interconnected structures" (ibid.). After this rejection, however, he once again turns to the state.

"Although (the state could) not be an instrument of emancipatory social change, fights for the state influence the social balance of power and the conditions of political activities" (Hirsch 2002). Thus, "social rights and compromises won at the state level can attain general validity". Historically, radical reformism developed "at first independently and in opposition to the state's domination apparatus" (ibid.). Examples include the 1968 students' protest, as well as the environmental and women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s. They were independent and not state-based, and "their success led to a massive change in awareness and habits" (ibid.). They changed state politics.

Today, Hirsch claims, there are "neither plausible concepts nor sufficient support [...] for the immediate implementation of a non-capitalist society" (Hirsch 1995, p. 194). Therefore, the next step would be to democratise political institutions, so that the "restrictions of the liberal-democratic nation state-based model (can be) overcome step by step" (ibid., p. 198). Hirsch links this to decentralisation and to a federalist, increasing independence of more locally-based institutions and, finally, to an "establishment of a completely new and more complex system of democratic rights of decision" (ibid., p. 202). This system is supposed to specify rules of procedure for the purpose of allowing various groups to participate in "public processes of discussing, negotiating and reaching compromise" (ibid., p. 201), in which "conflicts can be settled in an open and public manner" (ibid., p. 195), excluding majority opinion and including minority protection.

A fundamental requirement for the process of democratisation and the reform of state institutions would be a "politicisation of the economy" and

a "re-politicisation of politics" (Narr and Schubert 1994). Hirsch wants to re-establish a primacy of politics (cf. p. 46). Politics must regain the ability to act if it is to exert real influence on entrepreneurial decisions. Hirsch postulates that the contradiction between politics and the economy "can only be resolved with the help of 'Radical Reformism', i.e., a political fight based on an internationally linked political self-organisation, independent of the ruling institutions and, nevertheless, aiming at successive institutional reforms" (Hirsch 1995, p. 204). It is only through such a fight and the experiences gained that "the concept of a new and freer society, beyond capitalism and socialism, can take a more concrete shape" (ibid.).

Utopia, Weak Spot of Traditional Reformism

With his radical reformism, Hirsch tries to conceptualise a transformation process which proceeds step by step and can still establish the basis of a new society—social agents as well as political and institutional forms. Many insights and ideas here have broken loose from state-positive reformism. A new society is supposed to develop free from state influence, via a broad process of democratisation, providing a frame which allows for the forms and agents of the new social system to crystallise. Now, one can doubt to what extent this extensive democratic "politicisation of the economy" can be achieved by a re-established primacy of politics; however, the main problem in this approach is the lack of identification of what is qualitatively new.

There is no theoretical answer to the question of the new societal form and, therefore, the target society. What social mediation will replace the market, the state and so on? Indeed, Hirsch talks about "alternative forms of life" and new "ways of living", and with the adjective "radical" he claims that his transformation theory changes the fundamental societal relations. However, radicalism is but a negative definition, and the alternative—the quality of the new society—remains unclear. The main weak spot of traditional reformism was its inconsistent formulation of utopia, and Hirsch's theory has the same problem.

The missing utopian theorisation also explains the prevailing inclination towards political-state transformation. The concrete part of his concept revolves mainly around economic democracy and the politicisation of the economy, a shift of the duality of market and state towards the state and the democratisation of the state. Nevertheless, his approach asks the right questions, even though it remains doubtful whether the new "forms" and "agents" constitute early forms of a free society.

3.3   *Reformist Insights*

Reformism stresses processuality, an important element of transformation. New societal forms cannot be simply enforced; they must be built and learnt step by step. We cannot leap out of capitalism; we must struggle our way out. The focus of reformism on transformation of the state, however, infringes on the orientation of the process. Reform theory must reassess the quality of the process by linking the necessary break with the social form to the equally necessary processuality. Transformation cannot simply be a state-based political process, for that would reduce it to modifications of a society based on property and work—be it a reformed capitalism or state socialism. For the process to really go beyond capitalism towards a free society, it must rest on new forms of the production* of living conditions.

4   Revolution: Jumping Over the Gorge

A revolution is a "structural change" which prevails "in a relatively short period of time […] outside the former legal forms"—therefore illegally—and, thus, "seldom in a peaceful way". It differs from a coup or "palace coup" in that it has the "broad support of the population". Therefore, it is considered a movement "from below" (German Wikipedia: revolution).

For revolutionaries, overcoming capitalism resembles jumping over a gorge. A gorge cannot be bridged step by step; it must be surmounted with one giant leap. It is not sufficient to leave the old behind step by step, hoping that a qualitative turnover will eventually take place. Only an abrupt, qualitative change can pave the way towards a new form of society. In order to achieve a sudden, fundamental change, the revolution has to deliver two things: end the Old and build the New. Putting an abrupt end to the Old, however, steers the revolution towards the *state-centred political form*. The New is built as a *postrevolutionary reorganisation*. Thereby, revolutionary theory—as well as reformism—separates state-oriented change from societal change. First a state-oriented break puts an end to the old society, and then a societal process starts, producing the new society. The order is crucial here: it is not a societal conversion which brings about political-state changes, but rather a state-related political conversion that leads to societal change.

4.1   Reactive and Active Revolutions

A revolution's potential depends on its trigger. If the trigger of the revolution is social discontent, its potential is limited. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia was triggered by hunger and war and led to the seizure of domination by a revolutionary minority, the Bolsheviks, who enforced a state-controlled economy. The French Revolution of 1789 bears certain similarities: triggered by hunger and tax pressure, the revolution served a bourgeois minority which replaced the absolutist regime with a modern civil state; thus, freed from feudal bonds, it lay the foundations for capitalist development. In these *reactive revolutions*, social revolt was used to enforce the domination project of a minority.

A revolution can only give birth to a free society if the old society "is pregnant with a new one" (Marx 1890, p. 779). Therefore, the possibilities for a free organisation of the society must be formed to such an extent that the people perceive them as a viable alternative. Then revolution will not be a reactive protest without visible alternatives but an active shift towards a new, tangible form of society. The state break will follow a societal change and not the other way around. This is the value a revolution theory can acquire in transvolution. It can be an *active revolution*. Whether it is necessary for transformation, we do not know; but it might possibly be so.

4.2   Revolution Is Bound to the State Form

Why does an abrupt ending of the old societal conditions have to take place in a state-based way? An abrupt shift necessarily leaves most of society unchanged, since a general change of all societal relations and human relationships requires a lot of time. If society is initially left largely unchanged, then abrupt, fundamental change must use the old societal forms. In other words, it is structurally conservative, hence moves in the old logic. The old societal form of changing society is politics, which wants to implement new conditions with the help of the state. Furthermore, revolution needs power to gain domination, which is necessary in order to enforce pervading societal changes. This power which aims at domination can be built piece by piece (e.g., by a movement headed by a party); however, domination must be won or conquered quickly, within the frame of the old logic. Only one form of public domination in capitalism is centrally organised and can thus be gained in a relatively short period of time: state

domination. It is also a general form of domination, for its gravitational centre—the state—enforces and defends the societal structure.

Therefore, reference to the state can be found in all revolutionary theories. Marx already criticised the state focus of revolution: "Because it (the proletariat) thinks in political terms, it regards the will as the cause of all evils and force and the overthrow of a particular form of the state as the universal remedy […] and however universal a political revolt may be, its colossal form conceals a narrow split" (Marx 1844, p. 407 f.). The focus on the state finds different expressions: traditional Marxists want to seize political domination, which, in socialism, they wish to convert into the proletarian-democratic state. Modern communists and anarchists, however, do not regard the state as an instrument for emancipation (anymore). They seek to destroy the state through revolution. The consequences of putting a political end to the state become palpable in the uncertainties of postrevolutionary reorganisation.

4.3 Interest Form, Domination and Counterrevolution

The interest form of politics (cf. Chap. 2, 2.1) leads to the fact that a revolution supported by a majority of the population only represents partial interests. Therefore, it must prevail against other interests, other people; it must exert power over others, gain domination. An enforcement from the top requires domination. Existing conflicts of interest commonly produce various forms of counterrevolution. The sharpest form is an armed counter-power setting itself against the revolution. This puts revolution in a quandary; it either remains true to itself and desists or else it applies the very means it wants to abolish: suppression, violence, terror. Once the door to violence has been opened, it is difficult to close again; from that point on, it is only a question of definition, of who will be subjected to violence and when. This is also true if violence is "only (applied) for the defence" of the revolutionary achievements. Attack has always been the best defence (enjoy further reading: Adamczak 2007). Therefore, during and after the revolt, the revolution finds itself involved in a battle of domination which prevents many emancipatory processes.

4.4 Postrevolutionary Reorganisation

State power is either destroyed or conquered by the revolution. The day after has begun. Now the build-up of a new society commences. Let us

create this postrevolutionary situation in our mind's eye: production is full of capitalist machinery, the materialised force of the obligation to work, essentially built to submit people to tedious tasks. Capitalist technology is not neutral and thus not to be applied light-heartedly. With the exception of some creative areas and fields of knowledge, the dominant types of labour organisation represent forms of organised enforcement. The people themselves still carry the mental qualities of the old society: trust in domination, sexism, exclusion, performance fetish—internalised domination against oneself and others. And this without even considering the possible traumatic experiences and destructions of the revolutionary process itself. This is a problematic area that traditional Marxist theories, above all, with their purely external concept of domination, cannot grasp. For them, domination usually comes from the "outside", and the disappearance of the latter solves the problem of the former. This is due to the reinterpretation of the question of domination as a mere question of power. Power sounds nicer. While the purpose of domination is clearly the suppression of unwanted impulses, power can be used for both positive and negative purposes. However, a free society cannot be enforced, for enforcement always requires domination.

The issue of what circumstances the previous state upheaval has left behind is crucial. Do these circumstances allow for the construction of a free society? The abrupt state conversion itself does not create a self-organised societal alternative. Revolution interrupts the "normal paths of societal reproduction" (Demirović 2012, p. 36)—what replaces them, however, is not clear. The task is nothing less than the building of a new societal system. Quick solutions are required to guarantee societal reproduction; people must still eat and require all kinds of provisions. The process of reorganisation is quickly overstrained by many simultaneous requirements and abrupt changes. People with know-how in emancipatory projects are rare, the knowledge of different forms of socialisation is scarce and scattered (c.f. ibid.). The risk of conflict and violence is huge. Demirović is correct in expressing: "The expectation that everything will be fixed by the situation itself, that in revolutionary processes the revolution provides appropriate people in sufficient numbers, that they, quasi spontaneously, develop the relevant abilities, is wrong" (ibid.). The combination of overwhelming problems and overwhelmed people who have grown up under capitalist conditions easily leads to familiar authoritarian and excluding solutions. The only societal power with sufficient resources for societal formation is the state. In postrevolutionary conditions,

without the societal construction of an alternative mode of production*, one can expect, at best, a society organised by a democratic state.

Antiauthoritarian approaches and those critical of the state—collective or communist anarchism, council communism and so on—reject state planning but share a fundamental difficulty. The question of how to develop and implement a new societal form remains largely unanswered; either the question is not grasped properly or to reflect on the form of the new society is forbidden as authoritarian. Once state-based domination has been conquered, this reflection is suspended by the pressure to perform. The focus on destroying the old rather than understanding and creating the new has fatal consequences for postrevolutionary reorganisation. In this situation, what is to be done and what the result might be is largely unclear. In doubt, many antiauthoritarian movements pin their hope on spontaneous self-organisation. The obvious mode of organisation for subjects with a capitalist background—that is, subjects used to domination—is exclusion, precisely because they are so familiarised with it.

4.5 State-Critical Revolutionary Theory

Unfortunately, the substance of modern revolutionary theories is scarce, in spite of frequent verbal appeals. In many cases they simply prolong old ideas. At this point, we would like to discuss the decidedly antiauthoritarian revolutionary theory of the communist anarchists.[8] As in state-critical reformism, many elements of transvolution can also be found in state-critical revolutionary theory. Revolutionary anarchists distinguish between a *political revolution*, which corresponds to a mere "change of ruler" (McKay 2012) and a *social revolution*, referring to a societal transformation of the way a society is organised. A social revolution is the "result of years of social fights, not the result of an overthrow of the state apparatus" (deu.anarchopedia.org/Soziale_Revolution, transl. M.R.). The fundamental change is carried out "directly by the mass of the people […] not by political means" (McKay 2012, own re-transl.). Traditional Marxists organise the masses in order to "conquer state power", anarchists do so to "destroy" it (Bakunin 1975, p. 263). In this context, "evolution and revolution (are) not two different and separate things […] revolution is just

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[8] There are other state-critical approaches which we have to omit here due to lack of space, for example, Workerism/Operaism, Post-operaism or the works of John Holloway (2002, 2010, 2016).

the boiling point of an evolution" (Berkman 1928, p. 34, transl. M.R.). The social revolution starts today. The focus is not on "organising the power of the working class" but on the development of a "non-political or antipolitical social force" (Bakunin 1975, p. 262f, transl. M.R.). It is the daily fight which produces "free people and organisations" (McKay 2012, transl. M.R.). Bakunin regarded the First International as a promising organisation, as the "real power, which knows what to do, and, therefore, is able to take the revolution into its own hands" (Maximoff 1964, p. 323). In contrast to Bakunin, modern anarchists rather see this power in libertarian trade unions, cooperatives and so on. But Bakunin also agreed that cooperatives train "workers in the practices of economic organisation and plant the valuable seed for the organisation of the future" (Bakunin 1975, p. 173).

The mere construction of alternatives is not enough for anarchists. Capitalism cannot be "reformed away" or "outcompeted" (McKay 2012). No "ruling group" has ever given up its domination voluntarily. So, in the end, a revolution is necessary. However, the revolution should not incorporate elements of violence or coercion, except for the purpose of self-defence. It would be practised by a "voluntary militia" which, however, would not "interfere with the life of the communes". It is only supposed "to defend the liberty of workers and farmers to self-organise their lives" (ibid.). The true revolution is carried out by the people themselves. During the Spanish Revolution—a focal point of hope for many anarchists— "freed farmers and workers" started to collectivise the land and the means of production. Attempts at enforcing authoritarian organisations would be quenched by "free individuals" refusing cooperation. An internal counter-revolution would be impossible, since the broad mass of the population could never be estranged from the revolution because, in an anarchist revolution, the power would be in their hands (ibid.).

Problems in Anarchist Revolution Theory
Anarchists validly criticise traditional Marxism for its fixation on the state and its orientation towards the state form. Also, they acknowledge the necessity of building alternatives in order to establish a free society. With its rejection of abruptness and the criticism of a revolution without "evolution", this theory resembles transvolution. However, certain problems persist in a number of approaches, whereas other perspectives more or less overcome them.

The classical revolution becomes state-oriented not only by aiming at the "replacement of the rulers" but also by steering towards the abrupt seizure of societal power. Though many anarchists object abruptness, others, nevertheless, favour the idea of a state-oriented liberation and subsequent postrevolutionary self-organisation. The previous building of other societal forms presumably helps in tackling postrevolutionary problems, but the importance of spontaneous restructuring is also often strained. A free societal organisation is something to be figured out and learned. Emphasis on spontaneous postrevolutionary self-organisation tends to socially-romantically exaggerate human potential.

A further possible problem is the inconsistent understanding of pre-revolutionary "evolution". This "evolution" can only allow for a postrevolutionary restructuring if it creates evolving alternatives of a new societal form, as well as promotes its expansion to the extent that it represents a viable alternative to the current form of society. Unfortunately, in most cases the quality of the alternatives is not adequately specified. Often named "libertarian alternatives"—as in the case of "libertarian trade unions, cooperatives"—they do not have the quality of being governed by a different societal, that is, non-capitalist, form of mediation. Although they question the ownership of the means of production, the ownership of the resulting products is not part of the analysis. Usually, cooperatives still produce commodities for the market. At this point the big problem of many anarchist revolution theories becomes obvious: the utopia is not sufficiently specified and, therefore, potentially contaminated by old forms. The content of the new societal forms to be built before the revolution cannot be defined because the form of the free society—despite some tendencies—has not been sufficiently grasped. Mere trust in cooperatives and collective bodies and their "free association" is not enough.

Anarcho-communist revolution theory already displays numerous qualities of a transvolution theory. However, the content-related meaning of "libertarian alternatives" would have to be specified first via a utopia theory, to prove that it really carries a different societal logic. This, in turn, requires at least a basic understanding of the targeted form of society. Secondly, the issue of how far the prerevolutionary "evolution" has to develop and what a "sufficient generalisation" within the old society means should be resolved. This way the revolution will not only reflect social unrest, it will not be a mere reactive revolution; it will rather foreshadow the possibility of a different form of societal organisation, it will be an active revolution (cf. p. 64).

4.6   Revolutionary Insights

Revolution emphasises the societal break. It criticises reformism for simply extending capitalist tendencies. The transformation of capitalism requires a qualitative change of the societal form of re/production. This change, however, must not follow the societal break, or else it will be all too easily integrated into the Old in a situation full of turbulence and ample requirements.

New societal forms of producing* our living conditions must be the starting point of the transformation process; they must design it from the very beginning and grow with it. These ideas are also intrinsic to state-critical revolutionary theories; however, they must be specified in more detail. We will do that in our transvolution theory.

5   Summary

A free societal form cannot be the result of a state-oriented process. It needs a societal constituting process within which to pave the way for a liberation at the individual, collective and societal level:

- We ask state transformation theories: which form of society can they create?
- The approaches of reform and revolution both move in the sphere of politics.
- Reform as a "successive reorganisation" depends on the state as the institution of "generality".
- Due to its abruptness, revolution must—for the time being—reside within old structures and, therefore, in the realm of the state, no matter whether it subsequently wants to destroy it or use it.
- A separation arises: first a state break takes place, achieved through reform or revolution; this should subsequently enable a qualitative transition to a different societal form.
- The state, however, cannot bring about a free society, as that can only be designed "from below", by the people and on the basis of their needs.
- The traditional Marxist aim of the "nationalisation of the means of production" can be achieved on a state-oriented basis. State transformation theories can serve this purpose.

- Reform and revolution are manifested as children of traditional Marxism: they can conceptualise the seizure of power and redesign the state but cannot lead to the development of a free society.
- Focussing on the state alteration changes the question of transformation "How can we achieve a free society?" to one of domination "How can we gain state domination?".
- State-critical revolution and reform theories question the state as an instrument; thus, the development of societal alternatives becomes essential.
- A transformation theory aiming at a free society would have to start by asking the utopia question: what characterises a free society? After reaching a conclusion, the transformation question can be asked: how can we achieve this aim?
- Only a self-organised constitution process can bring about a free society.

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Transvolution

So far, we have dealt with transformation theory in general. Now we want to specify what transformation theories must consider and contain in order to allow for a process of liberation. We apply the term *transvolution* to any transformation theory aiming at overcoming capitalism (cf. Fig. 3.1, p. 74). We do not aspire to present the perfect theory. Our goal is to open up a space for different transvolution theories and to specify "guidelines for transformation," so to speak. Our concepts and terms try to create a playground for many theories to romp about, criticise each other, and improve. Our own suggestion of a transvolution, the seed-form theory, will be presented in Chap. 7.

Why the name transvolution? There are two reasons, one relating to content and the other to tactics. The latter rests on the fact that the term has hardly been used within the transformation discourse and, therefore, its content is still open. The content-related reason is that transvolution combines notions of transformation and revolution, binding together the importance of process, break, and constitution.

In the German book we speak of "sublation" (*Aufhebung*) instead of transvolution, but sublation already seems abstract and quite far-fetched in German; in English, it is even more so. On the other hand, sublation brings together the different notions of transformation. "Aufhebung" (sublation) is a philosophical concept with three aspects: something comes to an end (elimination), something carries on (conservation), and something is elevated to a qualitatively new level (development). This is exactly
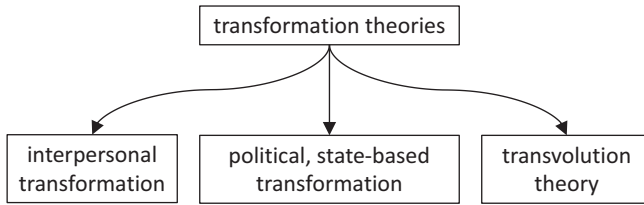
Fig. 3.1 Variants of transformation theories

what happens when a qualitative change of the societal form takes place: the break ends certain elements of the old form of society, for example, the →logic of exclusion (p. 17) and the compulsion to valorise. However, the process of change also preserves certain elements (knowledge bases, means of consumption, some methods of re/production). Yet other elements are elevated to a higher level of development: inclusive relationships turn into a logic of inclusion, voluntary connections of re/production are generalised and their potential is broadened, and so on. But, as philosophically adequate as sublation might be, transvolution seems much more intriguing.

In this chapter, we intend to take a look at the aim and path of transvolution theories: emancipation. We will find out that the process of emancipation is necessarily individual, societal, and collective. This classification requires that the transformation take a certain form. And, crucially, this new form of society must already be sufficiently shaped before the societal break takes place. Our basic question is: how can the process of constitution of a new societal form begin within capitalist society and, nonetheless, overcome this society and create a free society? In this chapter we introduce certain terms—early form, constitutive potential with regard to society, societal generalisation—which help to answer this question. Finally, we intend to present a society-constituting transvolution as a new paradigm of transformation.

1   Aim and Path of Transvolution

The aim of transvolution is human emancipation. Transvolution theories start by asking how a free society can evolve from capitalism. However, in order to discuss the path, the aim must be categorically defined. This is what we intend to do now.

1.1   The Aim: Emancipation

By no means have emancipatory movements developed a generally accepted understanding of the true meaning of emancipation. Emancipation is justified ethically, examined psychologically, or left as a blank space, an undefined "glimmer of hope linked to freedom." It meanders within a notion of freedom, joy, liberation, development, freedom from domination, human potential. In principle, however, emancipatory movements share the assumption that a society free from domination is possible. To not just postulate but actually substantiate this possibility would probably require a book of its own. This is due to the fact that a substantiation of the possibility has only been delivered in parts, never systematically, by emancipatory theory. For our purposes, it is sufficient to take over this postulate and substantiate it with accepted descriptive specifications.

A free society "aims at what is withheld from everybody: a happiness which is not only private and accidental and does not rest on the misfortune of the others" (Schimmang 1979, transl. M.R.). It is an "association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx and Engels 1848). It is a society in which we do not satisfy our →needs (p. 113) at the expense of others, a society shaped according to our needs and in which we can depend on each other without fear. It is a society in which one's freedom is not built on the lack of freedom of other people, a society following the principle: "each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" (Marx 1875) and which realises the human potential—to lead a life free from domination.

Emancipation as liberation is a goal as well as a process. It is the process leading towards the free society. It is not fulfilled upon arrival to this society, but it is given a qualitatively new foundation at that moment. From that point on, emancipation can develop under favourable and supportive conditions. Transvolution theories try to conceptualise the process of passing from capitalism to this free society. In this context, it is important to distinguish between three levels of liberation.

1.2   Three Levels of Liberation

Liberation is not only individual, societal, or collective. Time and time again, emancipatory movements have concentrated on one of these levels: individual—usually perceived as spiritual—liberation. Others only strive for a societal change, disregarding the individual and collective aspect. Yet

others attempted to overcome domination in the direct context of local communities. However, all three levels are intertwined. They do not lead separate lives; however, we can distinguish them analytically:

1. Liberation is *individual*. Each person can only liberate her/himself.
2. Liberation is *societal*. People can only liberate themselves within the frame of society.
3. Liberation is *collective*. We can only liberate ourselves in the context of our own immediate living environment.

To sum up: we can only liberate ourselves *on our own*, *within* and *with* society, *in* and *with* our immediate living environment. This thesis we want to demonstrate.

Liberation does not exist abstractly, separated from us. It is concrete and thus individual. It directly affects each individual person. Us directly. Domination can only be overcome by us. Freedom means to develop our individuality, our needs, our potentials and abilities. But only we can figure ourselves out and detect our needs, nobody can take that weight off our shoulders. This means that nobody can liberate someone else. Liberation is an individual task, but it depends on our scope of action.

We are born into a particular society, and our needs are formed in it; therefore, our needs always reflect a form of society. Today our needs are formed under conditions of exclusion. This creates a strong need for security, as a reaction to the constant worry of being excluded and losing freedoms. Furthermore, this is the foundation of the frequently observed need for →power (p. 4) over others. If other people have good reasons to satisfy their needs at my expense, the attempt to control and dominate them makes sense. Nevertheless, this is not a general human need; it is subject to certain (societal) conditions which essentially shape our needs. Domination is inscribed into us, we have internalised it—in a double sense, in fact: in how we dominate ourselves and how we dominate others. As a consequence, we find domination in something as personal as our needs. If we want to do away with it, then emancipation also refers to our needs. We will develop new needs, and old needs will become less important. It is a delicate process of self-understanding, self-transformation, and of finding a new form of self-development. Today we have good reasons to postpone, adjust, or suppress some of our needs. This self-repression, self-adjustment, and self-restraint helps us get along in the current society. It gives us the necessary discipline to act against our needs every day. This

discipline enables us to "pull ourselves together," "see something through," "control ourselves." Because our psyche is benevolent, we do not recognise most of this self-adjustment and our resulting inwardly directed hostility (cf. p. 121), for we have delegated the discomforting, self-adjusting self-treatment to the unconscious. The discomfort, however, has not disappeared; it resurfaces time and time again, as a feeling of vague unrest, dissatisfaction, sadness, or as a feeling of futility. The self-imposed restraints and conditionings make sense under today's conditions because they maintain our agency (cf. p. 118). In order to detect and slowly remove them, we must build conditions that do not favour them; this way, we will have no use for them.

At the beginning, we can only change the conditions of our actions at a collective, interpersonal level. We can open up new social spaces. However, we bring into them all our needs and conditionings and, thus, all our interiorised domination. In our collective practise we ever so often experience continuing forms of exclusion like sexism, racism, competition, and so on Nevertheless, we always have the option to consciously respond to our needs and suggested actions. Suggestions and needs do not determine our actions. And, yet, they only change if the conditions of our action change. Under conditions that give other people no reason to act at the expense of my needs, the need for power over others will decline. This points towards the crucial direction of transvolution: *disposal of conditions*. Emancipation requires the possibility to build our living conditions free from domination and inclusively, conditions that will not perceive cooperation as opposition. A process of transvolution entails greater control over conditions, the possibility to adapt them more and more to the needs of *all of us*—hence, no more under terms of exclusion and the domination of others, no more in the spirit of "for me only."

Conditions, however, are not merely the result of individual actions. We experience them in our immediate and interpersonal living environment, but they are, in fact, the result of a societal process. That is to say, a society is nothing else but the framework in which we produce* our living conditions. We can only change the conditions under which our actions take place by achieving a different way of producing* them; in short: a new form of society. That is why individual emancipation always involves societal emancipation.

This emphasis on the societal dimension of liberation has an important consequence: we cannot anticipate emancipation in interpersonal relationships, shared flats, families, political groups, movements, circles of friends,

community projects, and so on. These societal areas remain created and contaminated by excluding societal conditions. As kind as we might be to each other, interpersonal inclusion is undermined by sexism, stress caused by paid work, self-discipline, and so on. We are often told: "If we can't even wangle it in our close environment, how can it work in society as a whole?" We are convinced that it works the other way around: only if it works in society as a whole can we have deep friendships and satisfying living spaces/families.

Changing the form of producing* our living conditions does not happen at "the" societal level. Society is not an object we can grasp; it is a construct accessible only through thought. We can only think it, there is no way of feeling or seeing it. We only see and feel its effects, we only experience a certain part of it. But we do not only experience society; we build it. We produce* *our* own living conditions *in* society. And, thus, we reproduce our own domination and that of others. Through each act of purchase, each working hour, each relationship. This production* of living conditions takes place in interpersonal connections. It is here that we re/produce society. It is here we re/produce our living conditions. And it is only here that we can try to produce our living conditions differently. If we intend to do this in a form other than that suggested by society, we always act against the societal connection. Through our concrete actions we try to attain different goals, different logics, we try to establish new forms of usualness. However, these will remain contaminated by inconsistencies and limitations as long as they leave the societal level unchanged. If spaces render exclusion due to gender or skin colour less rational, sexism, and racism will be reduced. Nevertheless, the conditions of exclusion will only be overcome if, universally, the exclusion of other people—with no exceptions—makes no sense. Not until our emancipatory day-to-day activities take place in a free society will they really develop their new quality.

2   The Form of the Transvolution Process

2.1   *Constitution Before Break*

We have specified transvolution as a *process of individual-collective-societal liberation*. For us this is no conjecture. That human liberation must be comprehensive and universal is the one matter we consider of the utmost importance. This is a seriousness and consistency we often miss in other

transformation theories. For us, this attitude of taking the issue seriously has a consequence in form and theory: the societal reorganisation of a free society requires a *constitution process*. It is a process in which new forms of societal organisation evolve and old forms are adapted. It is based on the needs of the people and, therefore, can only be carried out by them. This new form of society cannot simply be planned in advance and then put into practice; it must be put to practice, tried out, and developed. Before transitioning from the old form of society—the societal break or tipping point—the new one must be sufficiently developed. The consequence in form and theory is less well known than the consideration that a liberation must penetrate all levels of human life. Therefore, we want to give full and detailed reasons.

Why does a transformation need a constitution process? We live under conditions of societal domination. This domination penetrates our needs and habits, the way we feel, think, and act. It is an interiorised domination that we can only slowly shed light on and overcome under different living conditions. This turns the process of liberation into a process of trial and error. We do not know what free living conditions look like. As we cannot design or plan the free society, we cannot simply switch over. The basis of a free society is an inclusive and free from domination mediation of all our needs. We must develop these needs and conditions beforehand. We do not know which societal conditions, which forms of activity, of producing, caring, dwelling, loving, and living comply with our needs. We must get acquainted with these societal structures, tailor them and develop them according to our needs. We need a process that is characterised by learning, testing, creating, rejecting, building; a step-by-step process of gaining power of disposal over the conditions of our actions, our life and our feelings. A process of liberation can only start small and grow in close contact with our needs—until it is finally capable of truly producing* our living conditions in a comprehensive way. That is when the liberation process will have constituted a new society.

At the beginning, the constitution process is unstable, small, and limited, unable to produce all living conditions. It only covers some parts of our life. The new conditions can only expand step by step, and these steps will be sometimes smaller, sometimes bigger. However, what this means is that the process must *begin within the old society*. This is where we can dare to take the first tentative steps, create the first spaces tailored to our needs, be it in a flat-sharing community, project group, camp, university, strike, and so on. The steps are still inconsistent but already governed by the new

societal logic—for us, the inclusive satisfaction of needs (cf. Chap. 7, 3.3). Once this constitution process has reached a critical mass to cover substantial re/productive parts of society, once we have gathered sufficient experiences with liberating structures and spaces, the process can involve society as a whole. Only then can it overcome capitalism in a societal tipping point and turn its free societal logic and form of re/production into the decisive, dominant logic of society. Thus, the societal tipping point *rests on* and *arises from* the preceding *constitution process.*

The State-Oriented Break and the Politicised Constitution

State-oriented transformation theories do not share these basics. We want to epitomise their theory of the societal break and reorganisation to clarify the differences. In state-oriented transformation theories, the emancipatory force supposedly captures (state) domination within the old society in order to achieve the societal break and build a different society. The new society, however, has no experience yet with other forms of re/production, other forms of producing* living conditions. The search process could start now. However, there is no time for a self-organised, need-oriented constitution process. Quick answers are required. As a consequence, societal reorganisation necessarily refers to the existing formative institutions. This societal task must be fulfilled by politics and the state. Thus, the new form of society does not evolve in a way that allows for needs to unfold, but rather in a projected and decreed manner. Unless a society freeing itself is developed on the basis of the needs of the people, these needs remain concealed, repressed, and the people squeeze into the new form of society (more or less voluntarily). What happens is a fall-back to old, familiar forms of the production* of living conditions. Traditional forms of domination linger after a state-oriented transformation process.

The Marxist-Leninist transformation theory was aware of this. After the initial societal break, a →society in transformation (p. 51) was supposed to be reached: socialism, the "first phase of communism" (Marx 1875). Still, the options of a constitution process in a society in transformation are clearly limited and possible acts of violence on the road to socialism must be anticipated. The fundamental transformation-theoretical insight was already in the looming in the Marxist-Leninist, state-oriented transformation *theory*: the societal process of constituting new circumstances must *not* take place *after* the societal break. The break can only take place on the basis of a sufficiently advanced and real societal alternative. In other words: the break has a *societal*—and not state—*constituting foundation.*

3 Elements of the Societal Transvolution

How can a constitution process begin within the frame of capitalist society and lay the foundations for a free society? To find an answer, we will first trace the content, the quality, that a constitution process requires; then we will concentrate on the form in which it must take place.

3.1 Early Form and Society-Transforming Potential

A new form of society does not fall from the sky. It must develop from the preceding society. The new form constitutes a break with the old society. It does not simply intensify certain logics and structures of the old society—for example, state or democracy. It is not simply a quantitative expansion of existing forms; it rather enforces a qualitative change of societal conditions. It develops from the old society on its *own basis*, on the basis of a fundamentally different logic of societal organisation. This new logic has the capacity to build new societal conditions and replace old ones; in short: it possesses a society-transforming potential. What is the essence of this potential?

As we develop in detail further on (Chap. 5, 2.2), the form of a society is characterised by two elements: first, by the way in which the living conditions are proactively produced (form of re/production); second, by the way it connects all people to each other (form of mediation). Therefore, the society-transforming potential comprises the possibility to unfold a new form of re/production and a new form of mediation. This potential can unfold without restrictions only when its logic has penetrated all of society. When the new forms of production* and mediation have not reached a level of generality and have only just started to evolve, they are in the stage of the *early form*. This is a social form that the not-yet unfolded form of re/production and mediation acquires in a "hostile" society. The early form is not a concrete project or a distinct movement but a form that can have many realisations. All social spaces governed by the new form of production* and mediation are manifestations of the early form. Hereafter, we shall use "early forms" as an abbreviation referring to realisations of one early form.

In order to conceptualise the early form of a different form of re/production and mediation within a form of society, one assumption is fundamental: no society is a consistent system. It is, rather, a *hybrid*, a mixture of various forms of re/production in which one is dominant, decisive,

hegemonic. This decisive form of re/production structures all of society according to its logic and imposes this logic on the other spheres and forms. In capitalism, it is the capitalist form of re/production that is predominant and decisive. Its logic of exploitation, of competition and exclusion, sets the framework for all of the other spheres. There are, however, many spheres with their own logic and aims (reproduction and care, politics, culture, etc.). To begin with, an early form can arise only in a niche of capitalism. To allow for the development of a different form of society, it must spread from there and become generalised.

The concept of early form as a social form capable of transforming society allows for a new wording of the initial question of transvolution: what is the early form of a free society in capitalism, and how can it become generalised? In other words: which is the social form of production* and mediation with societal transformative potential, which evolves in capitalism, and how can it become generalised? According to our argumentation, all theories of transvolution must identify the early form. This leads to two questions: how can a new society emerge from the early form? Why can the early form lead to a free society? The first question asks for the connection between early form and new society, the second asks for the content quality of the early form.

How Does a New Society Emerge from an Early Form?
We claimed above that an early form must already comprise the new form of re/production and mediation as an unrealised potential. In accordance with our social-theoretical analysis (Chap. 5, 2), we consider the form of mediation to be the decisive element: If the societal mediation changes, production* must change as well. Reversely, a different form of production*—for example, more ecological, more social, less controlled—does not necessarily lead to a new form of mediation. Production* must always be oriented towards mediation. Thus, generalised exchange leads to capitalist production (cost-efficient, oriented towards the realisation of value, etc.).[1] Therefore, our transvolution theory emphasises the question of how the form of societal mediation changes. Other transvolution theories might give a different answer to the question of early form.

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[1] We are aware of the double-sided, dialectic relation: the separated production of goods on the basis of private property needs the overall exchange (i.e. markets) for mediation. However, in this dialectic relation, mediation is the decisive element (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2).

The name itself is revealing: early forms exist *before* their full potential has come to light. So, the new societal dynamic is never complete in the early form; it is only partly present, and its potential is yet unrealised. However, this new quality, whatever it may be, is dominant. It shapes the early form, it specifies the logic to which the other elements must submit. For example, there might still be money and exchange in the liberating early form, but they are not dominant. They might be necessary to survive in capitalism, but they are subject to a different logic—for example, the satisfaction of needs. With the expansion of the early form, these non-decisive elements are continually pushed back. The generalisation of the early form creates a society where the new quality is no more a harried stranger but a societal leader, a determining factor. It should be noted once again that the relation between the early form and the societal form is still an open one. Transvolution theories can fill the transition in different ways.

Which Early Form Can Create a Free Society?

An early form does not possess a liberating potential if it only allows empowerment within capitalism and does not overcome it. To understand the liberating social form, the systematic goal of its development must be comprehended. The task, therefore, is to sort out what *emancipation* means. Unless we manage to conceptualise the free society in its fundamental features, we cannot specify the new, the capacity to transform society and, thus, the early form that can create it. Therefore, what we need is a justified utopia. No decorative fantasy image, but thoughts about the fundamental characteristics of a free society. It is all about a categorical understanding of the utopia of a free society (cf. Chap. 4), not a descriptive illustration. Without utopia there can be no transvolution theory. Only a clear understanding of the goal allows us to understand the path.

And so we arrive to the fundamental question of transvolution: what is the early form of the free society in capitalism and how can it become generalised? There are two discourses on this issue: the *utopia discourse* deals with the characteristics of a free society; on the other hand, the *transvolution discourse* asks for the early form and how it can overcome capitalism.

Transformation theories that are allergic to utopias—that is, refuse to think about utopia (→defence against utopia, p. 97)—face the huge

problem of defining the transformative potential that can create the new form of society. This entails the danger of repudiating the importance of the transformative potential with regard to society and simply replacing it with changes within the old capitalist form—for example, democratisation or →nationalisation (p. 50). This has already been the problem within the positively state-oriented, traditional reform and revolution theories (cf. Chap. 2, 2). Also, most modern state-critical transformation theories do not grasp the importance of the potential to transform society or are on the wrong track, as they do not consistently conceptualise the connection between the early form and the desired new society. Only those who specify the free society and analyse the connection between a liberating early form and a free society can detect whether the early form truly carries a liberating potential. A utopia focussed on scarcity will see the early form in technical developments. A utopia believing in central planning will look for state-oriented early forms. Our utopia finds its early form in new relations between people.

3.2   Societal Generalisation

How can the liberating early form prevail in society? How can its realisations step out of their niche role, go beyond being simply nice retreats from capitalist reality and represent the liberating "jump under the free sky of history" (Benjamin 1940, p. 701, transl. M.R.), where we can build our societal circumstances according to our needs—that is, in freedom. A transvolution theory must answer this question. The process of implementation essentially consists of two phases: in the first phase, before the societal break, the early forms *expand within* the old society. In the second phase, they reach the level of *generality* and become *dominant* in society: this is the societal break. Both phases—expansion within capitalism and break with capitalism—must be sufficiently conceptualised by a transvolution (cf. Fig. 3.2).
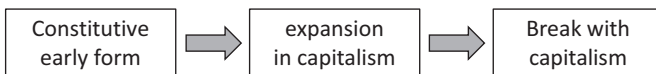

Fig. 3.2 A constitutive early form with regard to society in its phases of implementation

Expansion Within Capitalism

Why should liberating early forms expand within capitalism? And how? Many ideas and theories try to answer these questions. The most popular one is linked to a technical hope for which emancipatory theorists of all generations—above all, Marxists—have been striving. Because of its enormous innovative strength, capitalism is supposed to gradually render human labour redundant, so that a permanently decreased amount of necessary work walks hand in hand with increased well-being. Someday, according to the more ambitious, wealth will be available at almost zero cost (cf. Rifkin 2016). Projects based on voluntary contributions instead of forced labour will, step by step, seize the societal landscape. The realisation of freedom should be imminent (cf. "Technical utopias," p. 102). These and other hopes of expansion do exist, and they must be discussed. Our own theory can be found below (Chap. 7). We can reveal that much: the answer to this question is not easy. We assume, however, that expansion within capitalism is based on new forms of proactive production* of living conditions. We also are seekers, and we hope for a joint success.

Break with Capitalism

A societal break is a turning point, a fundamental change, a turnover. It is the end of the old societal logic of re/production and mediation and the building of a new societal logic. It is also called a "societal tipping point" because the break can happen unexpectedly and suddenly. Suddenly, society "tilts" into a new form. The society-transforming break is at the core of transformation theories: they try to explain how a qualitative change can occur within capitalism and open the path towards a free society. The state-oriented transformation theories envision a break. We think the break *emerges on the basis of a societal building process.*

   This, however, does not prejudge the way the break is effectuated. The only certainty is that it *is preceded* by a societal building process. Still, some transvolution theorists assume that the final break will have the form of a revolution and that there will be a sudden, probably armed, uprising. Other conceptualisations expect a slow, protracted, reformist transition.

4   Transvolution as a New Paradigm

The transvolution presented above is an attempt to overcome the old paradigm of *state-oriented* transformation of capitalism and to develop it in a new *societal* paradigm. The state-oriented paradigm is focussed on the

acquisition of domination. This pushes the question of form—"What is the early form of the free society in capitalism, and how can it become generalised?"—into the background. But *qualitative change of the form of society* is what transformation theory needs to explain, it is its subject matter. State-based transformation theories also answer this question and look at some aspects of this issue; however, they avoid dealing with the question of individual-societal liberation as a *building process.* So, actually, the new paradigm of transvolution only turns back to its object and answers the question of how to build a free society. In fact, the transvolution paradigm would *not* be the *new* paradigm *but* the *only applicable* one. Nevertheless, we intend to speak of a new paradigm in order to clearly mark a discourse space in which the theoretical basics of transformation are clear—in short: question of form instead of →domination (p. 49). As we have already explained, we use the term *transvolution* for theories based on that paradigm.

4.1   Hopping Steps

We have compared reform to the gradual climbing of a mountain and revolution to jumping over a gorge (cf. Chaps. 2, 3, and 4). The paradigm of transvolution combines the processuality of reform with the break of revolution, climbing a mountain with the jump. Transvolution sees transformation as hopping steps. We need a process, but the process must overcome the old logic, it must embody the jump and the break. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it is not our intention to serve you, dear reader, a perfect theory of transvolution and to demand a decision in favour or against it. No, the intention of this book is, above all, to open the space of transvolution theory. In this space there is also room for different, even conflicting theories. This space is what matters to us, and it is the actual purpose of the book. Its frame-setting theoretical pillars—transvolution theory (Chap. 3) and categorical utopia theory (Chap. 4)—are our essential contributions. We could have bound this space to our own transvolution theory, the seed-form theory (Chap. 7), and to our utopia theory, commonism (Chap. 6), but we did not want to predefine the perception of emancipation. While providing a specific framework, this book is an invitation to muse about the liberation of the people. Our concrete theoretical applications are only suggested steps for moving within this space.

5   SUMMARY

Transformation theories aiming at overcoming capitalism are transvolution theories. Their key question has to do with how a free society can emerge out of capitalism. Our findings are:

- The liberation of the human being is individual, societal, and collective: each person must do it personally, but it can only take place in and with society; namely, interpersonally in concrete, immediate circumstances.
- That is why the process of liberation must be a societal constitution process, need-oriented and self-produced.
- The constitution process begins in the old society.
- A free society emerges from new forms which must have evolved sufficiently before the societal break takes place.
- State-oriented transformation theories cannot conceptualise this constitution process, as they aim at a state-oriented seizure of domination with a subsequent societal reorganisation.
- The constitution process must have the potential to transform society.
- A form of society is characterised by its form of re/production and mediation; therefore, the transformative potential with regard to society must embody the new forms of production* and mediation.
- The social expression, the social form of the new production* and mediation, is the early form.
- The basic question of transvolution is: what is the early form of the free society in capitalism and how can it expand onto a general level?
- The content of the liberating early form can only be determined by a categorical development of the target society, the utopia. This we can conceptualise within the paradigm of the categorical utopia theory.
- The early form evolves into the decisive societal form in a two-piece process of implementation: expansion within capitalism and a generalised societal break that leads to a free society.
- Transvolution represents a new paradigm of transformation theory by focussing on the actual theoretical object of transformation, the qualitative change of the societal form.
- With our transvolution theory (and subsequent categorical utopia theory) we would like to invite people into a theoretical space, providing room for ideas about human liberation.

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Categorical Utopia Theory

The term utopia is linked to a number of metaphors: good society, fantasy, hope, freedom, unattainable perfection. The word itself is a creation of the utopian Thomas Morus (1516). He combines "place" (from the Greek *topos*) with the prefix "not" (from the Greek *ou*) to create a "non-place". The concept of utopia also gives birth to the positive "eutopia"—"place" combined with the prefix "good" (from the Greek *eu*)—and "dystopia", in its negative expression.

Nowadays, the statement "anyway, that is utopian" is almost the same as "that is impossible, after all". This everyday use of the term utopia hints at a substantive problem. Utopias are often arbitrary. They claim that a harmonious, free and happy world is possible and illustrate this world in order to make it clearer and more plausible. These attractive visions of the future are then often used to motivate and mobilise. But, when presented as mere claims, utopias are unreliable, unfounded and arbitrary. They do not specify a possibility but describe a dream, a "non-possible fantasy". Often these romantic, wishful utopias go back to ethical demands and describe what *should* be. Ethically based conceptions, however, are arbitrary. Romantic utopianism dwells in the land of fantasy, for it knows no limits. The utopian "overflow", the exceeding of present conditions, is important. We are used to seeing it in art and even in Hollywood blockbusters, this dreaming of a world without war or filled with love. It is an expression of the fact that what is, is not enough. "Something's missing" says Bertolt Brecht in the opera "Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany".

But these utopias have been dreamt up, they are not utopias of possibilities. They express a longing for "something else"; however, they do not explain why this "something else" should be possible.

1   Utopia Beyond Ban and Dream

Many critics of society have dismissed utopia as a hollow, helpless dream of the future. Thus, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels confronted "utopian socialists" with "scientific socialism" and claimed to develop socialism from a utopia to a science (Engels 1891). In this chapter we want to point towards the implicit and unacknowledged presence of utopias, as well as justify its necessity for a transformation theory. Our aim is to overcome the opposition between the "negative" ban on images, on the one hand, and the "positive" arbitrary utopian dreams and classic socialist pictures, on the other. This is what the concept of categorical utopia is about. A categorical utopia fathoms the humanly possible on a conceptual level. It is a utopia of possibility.

1.1   Utopian Socialism and Determinism

At the beginning of the nineteenth century workers' movements that developed utopias were quite common. Saint Simon (cf. Saage 1999), Charles Fourier (1829) or Robert Owen (1827) developed visions of new communities—rather than societies—and tried to bring them to live in pioneer villages. They aspired to communities that distribute the workload equally, collectivise the means of production and have some kind of democratic organisation. Empirical examples certainly have an epistemic value, but they also have significant limitations. "Whether or not a way of organising society works for a small community may not mean that it is or is not feasible for a society of a larger size" (Dapprich 2020, p. 17). Maybe the principles only work for a limited number of people. It may also be that the social system does not work at all on an island within a larger society that adheres to completely different principles.

Friedrich Engels argued against these "utopians" for other reasons which were no small matter for them. Engels wrote: "The utopian approach has long dominated the socialist ideas of the 19th century and to some extent still does" (Engels 1891, p. 200). Engels did not criticise the utopians for dreaming the impossible and praised their "ingenious thoughts and ideas" (ibid., p. 195). They criticised their ideas of

revolutionising the world through ideas and concepts alone and called them idealists. For Engels, socialism was not an "accidental discovery of this or that genious head, but the necessary product of the struggle of two historically created classes. […] Its task was no longer to create a societal system as perfect as possible, but to explore the historical economic course" (ibid., p. 208). Historical and economic development leads inevitably to socialism and then communism. Here materialism tips over into determinism, and determinism needs no utopias. Thus Ernst Bloch then describes the average socialist as a "totally unutopian type[,] a slave of the objective tendency" (Bloch 1985, p. 677).

Well, determinism has failed. In 1914, the German social democrats voted for nationalism and war instead of internationalism. The socialist countries developed not in the centres of capitalism but the peripheries, and "the haphazard production of capitalist society [did not capitulate] to the planned production of socialist society", as Engels assumed (1891, p. 201). In 1929, fascists, not socialists, took power in Germany. Walter Benjamin called history "a single catastrophe that ceaselessly heaps debris upon debris" (Benjamin 1940, p. 697f). Confidence in history disgraced itself, real socialism taught fear, and alternatives were urgently needed. A time for utopias? Hardly.

The 1920s to the early 1940s were a time of some utopian theories. The socialist calculation debate enrolled (Tisch 1932; Lange 1936, 1937; Lerner 1934, 1936), the council communists discussed alternatives to Soviet socialism (Korsch 1919; Pannekoek 1942; cf. Klopotek 2021) and Otto Neurath called for "scientific utopianism" (2004; cf. Da Cunha 2016), but the discussion faded. The debate on alternatives focused on reforms of Soviet socialism and market socialism in Yugoslavia—or mixed the two. The new left did not succeed in developing an overall societal alternative, and even after the end of Soviet socialism utopian thinking did not reappear. Today we are witnessing a resurgence of utopia, but most of the ideas are oriented towards a reformed social-ecological market economy. Margret Thatcher's negative utopia expressed in the phrase "There is no alternative" is still strong. We have to defeat it.

1.2   Ban on Images

The lack of utopian perspective is propelled by emancipatory theories that always reject utopias and decree a "ban on images". Their representatives argue (e.g., Adorno 1966; Behrens 2009) that each notion ("picture") of

a freed society is dominated by our present experiences and insights, that is, today's domination-based conditions. Thus, it is impossible not to prolong today's domination into the utopia and, therefore, it is impossible to currently envision a free society. It could be imagined as "the complete other" which cannot be described today. This is expressed in abstract and meaningless appeals like "For Communism" (a slogan on a demonstration banner). Utopia becomes the intangible heavenly hereafter.

We agree with this criticism; however, the answer cannot be to dismiss utopia, but to think in a way that specifies and reflects its foundations. Indeed, we cannot anticipate the free society today; we cannot prefigure how we will live then. But that is the fundamental problem of truth. No branch of science can find absolute truth; nevertheless, we can strive to come as close to it as possible. The same applies to scientific reflexion on utopia.

But how to fill the space of the non-existing but possible? Utopia is constituted and limited by human's possibilities of societal development. In other words: utopian space is determined and limited by the human-social potential. This potential we must explore. It is this utopia, the utopia of what is possible, that overcomes the ban on images, as well as the arbitrariness of utopian phantasy.

> **The Ban on Images Is Not a Ban on Thinking**
> Theodor W. Adorno is seen as *the* embodiment of the ban on images—and, indeed, he objects to any "ornamentation". Adorno's ban on images, however, is no ban on thinking. Utopia is not only a central element in his theorising, one that guides it as an antithesis, but an item on which he develops conceptual clarifications. A utopian society would involve the "fearless, active participation of each individual: within a whole which no longer institutionally hardens participation but would still produce concrete results" (Adorno 1966, p. 261, transl. M.R.). What is needed is "the liberation of the mind from the primacy of the material needs in the phase of its satisfaction. Only when the bodily urge is settled, will the mind be at ease" (ibid., p. 207, transl. M.R.) Adorno reflects on utopia, and we consider his theoretical foundation of Marxism and psychoanalysis to be the starting point of his utopian reflections. Thus, his utopian provisions are not arbitrary but verifiable, can be criticised and can provide the basis for further development—not unlike our categorical utopia.

1.3   Continuing Old Socialist Pictures

While the modern utopian discourse has surrendered to the ban on images and given up on looking for alternatives, concepts of traditional Marxism still fill the utopian space. No matter how real socialist countries might be assessed, they did exist, at any rate. Thus, they provide orientation, for criticism and utopia. In fact, socialism lost the status of a true utopia when the stage model (cf. p. 53) declared it to be just a transition society on the path to communism. The communist utopia, however, remained largely undefined. There are, certainly, some general clues—work as an end in itself, the socialisation of →property (p. 130), absence of the state and so on—but these are, strictly speaking, simple negations: work is not subject to a foreign purpose, property is not private, the state is not omnipresent and so on.[1] Even after the decline of real socialism, these problems of utopia were never properly processed. Thus, in many cases, pictures of an "improved" real socialism could mutate into a utopian goal (like in many reformist approaches: more democracy). However, such a "utopia"—including property, the work principle and the state—mentally remains a society that mediates its societal structure through (hours of) work, like in capitalism.

2   POSSIBILITY UTOPIA

All people who think about a better future in any way have utopian ideas. Marx had them, Lenin had them, Adorno had them. What is different is the degree of explication and foundation. This is exactly what categorical utopia is about: explication and foundation. It points towards a space of human societal development; it is a utopia of human societal possibilities. Its goal is to spark debate on the possible future of societal development. Otto Neurath already tried to overcome anti-utopian ideas in the 1920s by introducing a similar concept called "scientific utopianism". While Robert Owen tried to prove the feasibility of a better society by establishing small communities, Neurath used theoretical models and social science findings to design better political and economic systems (cf. Neurath 2004). Moreover, Engels' accusation of idealism does not apply to

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[1] In our research we were surprised to find out to what extent the work and performance ideology invades the utopian society: "Only in the highest stage of communism will everybody who is working in accordance with his abilities be reimbursed in accordance with his needs" (Ponomarjow 1984, 301, transl. M.R.)

Neurath's utopia as he does not disconnect the development of utopias from social movements. Rather, these utopias are meant to give a movement a clear goal to fight for and to show that this goal is feasible. Furthermore, we do not want our categorical utopia, substantially developed in Chap. 6, to be misunderstood as a "genuine truth", but as an invitation to criticise and refine it or to develop an alternative categorical classification. Utopia can become a science with the help of criticism, refinement and dispute. There are two requirements a categorical possibility utopia has to meet: a criticism of the existing and a classification of the possible.

2.1   *Categorical Criticism of Capitalism*

We consider the objection that our experience of capitalist reality shapes our thinking, feeling and acting and that there is therefore no possibility of transgression to be weighty. Our refutation rests upon the observation that the capitalist shaping is not closed, that, apart from integration and subordination, it also encloses transgression. The way we think, feel and act is certainly shaped by capitalism; however, there are elements of human potential that are deployed by capitalism in an inadequate or distorted form. These elements need to be given room to breathe.

We have grown into this society and we have, more or less, succeeded in learning its functioning. Every day we reproduce the societal conditions we are subject to. We are capitalism. Nevertheless, we are not happy with everything we experience, we see the faults resulting from capitalism and we criticise them. This criticism, however, as well as our daily functioning, refers to the given framework. First of all, our criticism is immanent. It stays within the boundaries of capitalist categories, refers to them and, thus, confirms them. For example, it accepts money-mediated exchange but demands a fairer distribution of money. This *immanent* criticism is important, for it is the beginning of an individual rejection of what is wrong, and it implies a search for alternatives.

It makes a difference, though, whether the criticism of the faults stays within the boundaries of the existing framework or the framework itself is criticised. That is the difference between immanent and *categorical criticism*. Immanent criticism objects to particular faults; categorical criticism aims at the systemic context, the source of the faults. The systemic context can only be figured out categorically. As detailed as a description and criticism of the faults of capitalism may be—and they are truly countless—they

do not provide insight as to the operating principle of capitalism. Categorical criticism claims to conceptualise the inner core of capitalism, that which creates it and holds it together. It approaches capitalism as a self-producing and self-maintaining system, as a whole. Criticism is aimed at the whole and, thus, at the forms of thinking, feeling and acting that shape our behaviour under the given circumstances in order to secure our existence. Consequently, categorical criticism includes the critics; it is also always self-criticism. No one stands outside looking in. The main features of our categorical criticism of capitalism have been outlined at the beginning of the book (Chap. 1, 3). It is a necessary socio-theoretical element of categorical utopia. Thus, we claim to know *what* must be transvoluted. An open question is *how* it should be done.

2.2   Human Societal Possibilities

Any given utopia can only put possibility into practise. As a consequence, we need general classifications and categories that outline the realm of human possibility. This includes the achievements of the general theory of the individual and the general theory of society. These theories do not deal with historically specific characteristics of specific people in a specific society, but with general features of people and society throughout history. They do not speak specifically of a capitalist or feudal society but of societies in general; this is also what links utopia to reality.

In this context, uncertainty can quickly erupt. This uneasiness is well-founded. All too often, talking about "the" human being results in its reduction, limitation, fixation. All too often, human beings are tied down as "instinct creatures", "biotic egoists" or "good by nature". We must tread lightly here. However, the emancipatory answer to the question of general human traits cannot be silence. This prevents us from thinking about the future and limits our classification of the present.

The point is this: criticism does not only require a theory of society; it also requires a theory of the individual if it is to understand our human suffering. Criticism could wear out in stating that many people do not feel well in capitalism. But as soon as it tries to go beyond this statement and become more specific regarding human suffering—be it stress, isolation, fear and so on—it implicitly touches on individual-theoretical statements. In doing so, it identifies what people would need to live a better life (cf. Chap. 4, 1). At the very moment that this better life requires a change in societal conditions, individual criticism becomes a general

societal claim. If we find people in capitalism to be existentially afraid of being outcompeted and taken advantage of, we implicitly assume →needs (p. 113) for a life free from existential fear. If we criticise the egoistic human of neoclassical economics, this implicitly confirms that people do not always act selfishly. These examples only give implicit conclusions. However, as long as they are not systematically reformulated within a theory of the individual and consequently justified, the mentioned problems run the risk of being unknowingly attributed to the individual as a personal deficit.

Therefore, we suggest an explication of the theory of the individual as well as of the theory of society (cf. Chap. 5). In this process we must substantiate them so that their assumptions become testable and debatable. This way we will refine and specify them and improve our categorical utopia along the way. Naturally, not all theories of the individual and of society serve that purpose, and explication alone is not enough. Many theories of the individual conceptualise the human being as independent of societal connections. The individual is the familiar ("inside"), and society is the stranger ("out there"). If a theory of the individual conceptualises the latter only as what the body encloses and society as simply an "external factor" or, at best, just another "variable", then it solely replicates what in capitalism is experienced as societal alienation. This, however, closes the door on an understanding of people as establishing a relationship in which they experience society as a part of themselves. Allow us to illustrate.

Some approaches, such as solidarity economy, degrowth, and alternative forms of living, acknowledge alienation in society. However, this alienation is only perceived as an interpersonal phenomenon: we do not feel connected, and without relationships we cannot achieve societal changes. Therefore, we must first connect with other people. This reflection is not wrong, but it falls short of the mark. It oversees the fact that we *are* already connected to *all* people, namely, transpersonally. First of all, we are not nomads, we do not have to go "outside" to connect; the relationship already exists. We simply do not experience it. Relationships are not to be established interpersonally, in the first place. Instead, we must ask ourselves why we experience the existing transpersonal relationships as separation, unfamiliarity and anonymity. A mere interpersonal criticism of alienation is not directed at the capitalist form of relationship, which can only appear as separation (cf. Chap. 1, 3.1); it rather tries to repair this

perceived separation at the interpersonal level. Therefore, unfamiliarity and anonymity seem to be generally immanent in societies. And the capitalist relationship of monads via markets, contracts, money and force appears as the "natural" form of establishing a societal "connection".

Defence Against Utopia
It is hardly surprising that most people do not think much of emancipatory ideas. When talking with critics, one often encounters the statement: "Nice idea; impossible though". Emancipatory movements have a fundamental problem. The pursuit of a free society rests on a basic assumption: a society free from domination is possible. But why? Isn't Capitalism the best of all bad societies? An emancipatory movement without a categorical utopia has no answer to this. Hope cannot be justified. But hope must—and can—be justified. Otherwise, emancipatory movements are to remain in the religious fogs of belief. Asking for the legitimation of hope means asking for the legitimation of utopia. We must have a clear understanding of our hope, that is, we must prove the human societal potential to build a free society beyond doubt. Only then will the emancipatory movement be able to stand its ground with conviction and, maybe, spread enthusiasm.

How to explain the paradoxical experience of perceiving connection as separation? The source of this paradox is the capitalist →logic of exclusion (p. 17). According to this, each connection simultaneously produces the exclusion of others. It is an excluding connection—interpersonal and transpersonal—of a structural nature. Recognising structural causes of alienation leads us to the next question: how can we produce* conditions which foster forms of structural connection that we can experience as such? In order to be able to answer the question of whether this possibility is a real one, we need an adequate theory of the individual as well as a theory of society. We develop our view on the space of human possibilities in Chap. 5. They allow us an approximation to answering the question of what we are capable of—individually and societally. In other words: what is our individual-societal potential?

2.3   *Utopia as Science*

Our categorical utopia aims at triggering a new form of thinking about utopia. Criticism is one way to specify categorical utopias. This criticism, however, should not be an abstract rejection or a mere →defence against utopia (p. 97) such as: "this simply doesn't work". On the contrary, it should be a concrete, relevant critique that focuses on what is possible. In our view, this criticism can take three forms: First, it can criticise the underlying theoretical base—the theory of the individual and of society. Second, it can question the relation between this theoretical basis and the substance of the utopia presented. Do they match? Does the utopia correspond to the theory of the individual and that of society? Third, criticism can attack the conceptual unfolding within the categorical utopia. Are there any additional implicit or explicit assumptions?

Description and Categorical Classification
Most existing utopias are descriptions of a situation hoped for. They describe how people live in this future society, how they bring up their children, how they work, move and so on. They provide a detailed description of everyday life to make it transparent, credible, to show that it works. In doing so, utopias can display different qualities.

The concepts of the early socialist Charles Fourier might appear a little strange when he explains how many people comprise the smallest group and how they should organise themselves (cf. Fourier 1829, p. 146 ff.). Likewise, the education utopia of early socialist Robert Owen, who hoped happiness could be imposed on people, is likely to be met with a sceptical frown (cf. Owen 1827, p. 105). In contrast, the description of the anarchist utopia in Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *The Dispossessed* (1974) seems more promising, even though its criticism of capitalism is reduced to a personalised criticism of inequality. However, all the aforementioned share a common problem: they are based on certain notions and theories about people and society—and on certain types of criticism of the existing society. These serve as a foundation for their moral rules, their concept of algorithmic division of labour via computers and so on. Neither theories nor criticism are openly stated, they remain implicit. One cannot blame a novel for this; however, it applies to most theoretical utopias. This lack of explication gives the impression that these utopias have been plucked out of the air, that they are arbitrary, an unfounded claim. Many assumptions remain in the dark, unclear and unquestionable. Why should three to five

people be in Fourier's core group? Does a computer programme allow for an organisation of task sharing free of domination?

We claim that *all* utopias have a theoretical and critical foundation. They are developed with a certain concept of the world in mind. They move within a certain categorical frame. Our categorical utopia demands an open naming and analysis of this frame and its connection to the utopia. Our assumption is that, in the course of this process, we will find out that many detailed descriptions of utopias are unsustainable. We cannot describe the future in detail. We cannot paint a picture of the future. We can only name some mechanisms, some forms of coordination, which could be essential in the utopia.

However, we do not know precisely how people will "work"—our categorical frame does not provide any information on this. But we can say that, in all probability, nobody will be forced to "work" in a free society. We can presume that activities will not be subject to a hierarchical structure, and that jobs that are not very popular, such as assembly-line work, will be replaced.

At this point we can guess the shape that utopias acquire when following a categorical outline. We will be less concerned with "ornamental" details and more with the fundamental dynamics in society. Rather than developing finished scenarios on the future, we will specify frame-setting considerations. Categorical utopia is not about depicting phenomena of the future but about comprehending its essential structures. This turns the utopian dream into a human possibility. And such a possibility utopia can improve and clarify the practice.

Utopia First!

Utopias are often seen as something unlimited, a dream, a space of endless possibilities. This conception conceals their fundamentally limited and limiting nature. Utopias are always grounded on certain theories, on conceptions of reality. Engaging with ideas of transformation, we come to the same conclusion time after time: transformation is fundamentally limited by the utopia it is based on. This, for example, becomes quite obvious when looking at Lenin's *The State and Revolution* (1917). The idea of socialism as a state-planned economy shapes the conception of transformation. Erik Olin Wright's utopia of a market with strict state rules and formative collective property is also within reach of his proposals of reformist alterations (Wright 2010). Again and again, the enormous importance of the utopia for the transformation becomes obvious.

An alternative concept to a utopia-first attitude is expressed by the motto "Asking we walk" of the Zapatistas in Mexico. This approach harbours an important truth: we cannot specify utopia completely; and, furthermore, the utopia itself and its theoretical basis can be wrong. On the one hand, this means that the utopia only becomes more specific and detailed in the practical process of transvolution. Step by step, the theory changes by incorporating new experiences and learning processes, thus adding clarity to the utopia. On the other hand, our new experiences might change the fundamental concepts of our utopia. But just as transformation cannot have an utterly predefined aim, it cannot be aimless either. To progress through questions without having sufficiently clarified the objective beforehand will probably lead to failure. Thinking about our aim, we might realise that a state-oriented transformation *cannot* help us reach our goal. With that in mind, no matter how long we pursue the state-oriented path of transformation, it will never lead us to the free society. The quest must include some basic considerations regarding utopia; this, in turn, will deliver fundamental findings about transformation. Otherwise, what remains is a hopeful groping in the fog of possibilities.

3   Other Approaches to Utopia

3.1   *Bloch's Concrete Utopia*

Ernst Bloch (1985) confronted the abstract utopias, already criticised by Marx and Engels, with his suggestion of a concrete utopia. He sees concrete utopia as a process of permanently renewed anticipations of little steps towards something forthcoming, which, as a whole, remains vague and only develops in the course of the approach. "The long-term goal must be recognisable in each short-term objective, so that the long-term goal is not empty, abstract and unmediated, and the short-term objective is not blind, opportunistic, living for the moment" (transl. M.R.). In this context there are two possible problems. One is that the little anticipations might lack the connection to a free society, so that they become a reformist accomplishment of the best possibility today. Without further utopian orientation there is, indeed, an additional danger of remaining tied to the respective society in the actual thinking. The other is that Bloch's concept might implicitly involve an aim from which it derives criteria, so that the little anticipations can be evaluated as implementations of real possibilities.

That would lead to the challenge of explicating the distant utopia as a goal. Bloch's approach is correct inasmuch as a utopia must be incomplete, and it will be specified in the process of transvolution. Nevertheless, the process of transvolution already requires the existence of qualitatively new relationships between people, and this quality must already touch people and be partly conceivable.

3.2   *Planned Society as Utopia*

If the core element of a free society is people designing their societal circumstances according to their needs, then the obvious idea is to plan this society. A free society needs planning, but central planning is dangerous. Societal mediation on the basis of centralised plans has little to do with freedom. Like the market, mediation based on a plan is also based on the separation of people from the means they need to live (→property, p. 130). The means for satisfying their needs are not freely available to the people; they must work and fulfil their planned tasks to get them. He/she who works harder or longer gets more. Only needy people get support without work, to cushion the work principle. In principle, however, the satisfaction of needs remains performance-related. This work principle (cf. p. 22) unites plan and market, socialism and capitalism.[2]

As the people are not voluntarily active under socialist conditions, they try to get as much societal wealth as possible for this unloved work. The businesses also try to secure the resources they need for the realisation of their plan. Although there is no official competition, the plan creates a structure of opposite sides. People and businesses compete for wealth and resources by trying to influence the plan in their favour. The state's task is mediation. It tries to examine the different claims and to control a population, cheating each other and the state. Since there is no market competition, the businesses do not feel the need to include the needs of the users. Thus, the produced items are often inadequate. Why should the workers care about satisfying products? They probably do not even work in the

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[2] Council communists and council anarchists believe that a free society should be coordinated through democratic central planning. The central feature is that the plan is not enforced but accepted voluntarily by all people. We sympathise with their theory and ideas, but we are critical about any mono-institutionalisation of society (cf. Embedded Generality, p. 168).

way which could appeal to them. They work because they get something in return and not because it makes sense to them. This leads to the conclusion that planned mediation also creates conditions that foster exclusion, rather than inclusion, for example, when scrambling for wealth.

3.3   Technical Utopias

The frontrunner of the (utopian and) transformation discourse is technology. Many transformation theories share a belief in technological development. Constant improvements would gradually render a great deal of work superfluous. As a consequence, many of our needs could be satisfied with ever-decreasing efforts. "Necessary working time" is supposed to decline to a manageable minimum of, for example, five hours per week. The remaining time could be filled with recreation activities. This, supposedly, brings us close to the free society.

Such hopes based on technology have been accompanying capitalism for a long time. As long as competition led to cheaper products requiring less labour, the development was considered positive. For Marx, too, the development of the productive forces was one of the most secure roads to a free society. For Lenin—along with education—it was the most important driving force for the transition from socialism to communism. Unfortunately, so far, technology has not delivered the promised results.

But predictions say it will not be long; it is estimated that 47% of labour in the USA will be automatised within the next 20 years (Frey and Osborne 2013). The affirmation that what causes social upheavals and redundancies in capitalism can hold the promise of the free society is one we cannot embrace.

For us, utopia is essentially a social utopia, a *utopia of relationships* and not of technology. Of course, technology will be necessary for a lot of things, and there will probably be exciting technological developments in a free society. However, the new quality of the satisfaction of our needs in a utopia derives from experiencing a new quality of societal integration and security rather than from new technological inventions. Our human potential surely includes the production of technological means; but even more impressive are the human possibilities of shaping our social means, our relationships, our mediation and organisation. Thus, the utopia is less concerned with unlimited freedom on the basis of technological omnipotence and more with the liberty of inclusive relationships, of being connected and mutually supportive so that we can advance together.

4   The Limits of Utopian Thinking

In this chapter we concentrate on some problem areas of utopian thinking.

4.1   Utopia and Criticism

Each criticism has a foundation, a position (a positive proposition) from which to criticise a state of affairs as wrong, painful, or unnecessary. This position can be justified in different ways, for example, through an ethical, normative perspective, by establishing values or, psychologically, by defining human needs. It is this position that establishes negation as a starting point. Without it, criticism would not be justified; it would be a mere rebellion against the unchangeable, against a world "which is as it is, take it or leave it". The position, however, refers to a point where criticism is transcended, where the basics of the position can unfold. This place of the practical transgression of theory, of the realisation of ethical values, of the unfolding of the human being, this place is utopia.

An example: when I criticise injustice, I assume a position which demands justice. This position refers to a place where there is no injustice, where justice has been achieved, a utopia. Naturally, I can oppose this place, discard it as impossible and not demand the qualitative fulfilment of justice but only its quantitative expansion. But this too must be justified and, again, criticism will reject the next phase as unjust. The foundation of criticism propels criticism. It needs utopia to reach its fulfilment, for the process to come to rest. Criticism aims at utopia.

In the critique of society, the position—and, thus, utopia—only implicitly resonates most of the time. There is a reason for that. A positioning is much weaker and easier to criticise than a negation. And, nevertheless, each negation always encompasses the position. Then one might realise that "what is wrong, once definitely recognized and specified, is already the indicator of what is right, what is better" (Adorno 1971, p. 19, transl. M.R.). When post-structuralism criticises the construction and exclusion of the "Not Normal", it has in mind the inclusion of diversity in its peculiarity. When neo-Marxism criticises subconscious socialisation, it demands a conscious one. When modern feminism criticises patriarchal domination, it desires a society without gender discrimination. When critical theory criticises interior and exterior repression, it imagines a society which provides for the "fearless, active participation of the individual" (Adorno 1966, p. 261, transl. M.R.). There is an interdependence between societal

criticism and utopia: the more detailed and insightful the criticism is in addressing the heart of the matter, the more explicit the utopia becomes. And vice versa: each statement on utopia sharpens the criticism. That is why utopian literature is said to have a socio-critical element. Criticism needs utopia, otherwise it is arbitrary. The explication of utopia sharpens the criticism. The ascertainment of criticism explores utopia.

4.2   Utopia as Legitimation

A utopia can legitimise actions people would not perform without the normative alignment of the utopia. With the help of this legitimation, they can induce people to perform unwanted actions: "A future good cause renders today's sub-optimal means acceptable". The destruction of the nature that surrounds us for the sake of wealth or the suppression of political opponents for the sake of enforcing the free society against the enemies also follow this line of argument. Thus, domination is justified. As Stalinism has proven, extreme forms can emerge in the name of emancipation which pervert the original aims. This brings to light a typical figure of civic enlightenment, an ends-means rationality which subjects the means to the ends. The ends justify the means, after all. That does not mean that the aim must be wrong. The tragedy is that the aim disintegrates, or develops negative features, because of the means employed in pursuing it.

Therefore, we come to the conclusion that a utopia cannot claim to be emancipatory in character if the means do not match the ends, if the path does not correspond to the goal. A utopia that is partial and selective is no utopia at all, at least not one referring to a free society, which can only be a society of universal freedom. If we reject an instrumental relation between ends and means, if we are convinced that the end cannot justify the use of conflicting means, the question of agency arises, of how to enforce a societal transformation. Another question is how an emancipatory movement can deal with force, one that it has not chosen but to which it is subjected.

4.3   Philosophy of History

Utopias are often associated with the philosophy of history or the teleology of history, a concept which identifies the utopia with an aim (telos) that the historical process necessarily pursues. In this context, the concept of "progress", at the heart of the Enlightenment acquires a clear

benchmark. The workers movement believed itself to be the actor of historical progress, the driving force and executor of the historical process, the one who would, sooner or later, lead humanity to communism. In light of the failure of real socialism, but also of the apparent limits of a logic of economic growth, all philosophy of history and related utopias must be discarded—so the argument goes.

This criticism implies that all philosophical reflexion on history is based on a teleological construction. But each view is based on key assumptions about the concept and progress of history, such as consistency, circularity, regression, randomness and so on and so forth. Historical reflexion without a philosophy of history is a contradiction in terms. The question is not whether to embrace a philosophy of history but which one to choose. We advocate a teleonomic[3] philosophy of history, investigating which historical development is within human reach and what conditions must be met for its realisation.

4.4   *Totalitarianism*

Another critique argues that all utopias go against the equal right to happiness for all. Happiness is supposed to be always entirely individual, a characteristic life plan, one's own preferences and goals. A totalitarian societal system is the inevitable result—according to this reasoning—of a utopia that claims to assess or simply describe everyone's goals for the sake of a unified form of societal realisation, subordinating the individuals to the whole.

This (short) conclusion regarding the connection between generality and totalitarianism points at the limitation of the underlying concept of emancipation. Indeed, in traditional Marxism, realised in socialism, there are utopias which subordinated individual happiness to the interests of the collective body (cf. also Chap. 2, footnote 6). Real socialism-oriented utopias represent a certain (state-oriented) version of utopia, not the whole space of its possibilities. Nevertheless, they implement an important requirement of utopias: they are generally valid and, therefore, apply to

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[3] "Processes are called teleonomic if they can be explained on the basis of their elements and structures alone" (German Wikipedia: Teleonomie). The stress here is on the word "alone". There is no external goal setter (like in teleology), it is the process, the setting its own aim. This is what happens in history: people set their goals and try to achieve them. What goals can be reached in principle is analysed by the categorical utopia theory.

everybody. However, this generality is attained by diluting individuality into the community. The utopia applies to everyone because everyone is equally subjected to it. Subordination in such a concept of community becomes a pressure that cannot accept deviation and leads to a totalitarian claim.

On the other hand, an emancipation that does not claim to involve everyone is not general but only partial, limited. Such partial emancipations—for example, the acceptance of homosexuality—can not only be nicely integrated into capitalism (perhaps as a new group of consumers), they can even become a motor of its inner differentiation and permanent renewal. This does not speak against partial emancipations, but as long as some interests are met at the expense of others, as long as emancipation is not general, it cannot aim beyond capitalism.

The solution to the opposition of generality and partiality, totalitarianism and capitalist modernisation, is unfolded individuality. An individual's unfolding is not limited by others; it requires them. A general emancipation can only be successful on the basis of inclusion, not exclusion.

5   Summary

Without utopian thinking, societal transformation has no goal. And without a goal, the path towards a free society is questionable—for, where could it possibly lead to? In the poetic words of Oscar Wilde: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at" (1891, p. 303). Nevertheless, utopian thinking is problematic and there are good reasons to oppose it. Our findings in brief:

- Current utopia theories either prohibit utopias, refer to them as an abstract "complete other", or tend to ornament them.
- A ban on utopia renders transformation undeterminable and misjudges the difference between pipe dream and categorical classification.
- A categorical utopia is based on two requirements: a critique of the existing and an identification of the possible.
- On the basis of explicit considerations about the human being and society, we can analyse basic dynamics of a free society.
- We can criticise and advance disclosed categorical foundations of a utopia, thus turning utopia into science.
- The limits and dangers of utopia must always be considered.

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CHAPTER 5

The Individual and Society

We will now concentrate on the theoretical foundation of our own approach. In Chaps. 3 and 4 we lay the basis for a transvolution and utopia theory. We have created a theoretical space, and now we would like to fill it with some of our own furniture. In line with our reasoning, we must first concentrate on the substantive content of the utopia theory, because we have to begin by understanding what we aim at before we can look at how to get there. So, we will start with the theoretical basis of our utopia. Provided it rests firmly on this basis, those who agree with our basis can also agree with our utopia. However, by all means, one could also agree with our utopia from a different theoretical perspective. The discourse on utopia has a scientific basis: we can argue about our (and other) theoretical foundations. The frustrating and non-scientific "take it or leave it" thus becomes a scientific dispute about utopia. Our theoretical basis rests on two pillars: a theory of the individual and a theory of society. These two theories are interconnected, for they deal with the same object: the relation of individual and society. Nevertheless, they must be distinguished. They require different methods. They view the same context from two different perspectives: the individual and society. Our theory of the individual is based on Kritische Psychologie (Berlin School of Critical Psychology), although we try to overcome its traditional-Marxist elements. Our theory of society rests on neo-Marxist studies, which we also claim to extend.

1   Theory of the Individual

Klaus Holzkamp and his fellow theorists laid the foundation of Critical Psychology at the Free University of Berlin in the 1970s. They did not intend to examine and describe human behaviour on an experimental-statistical basis; aiming big, they wanted to understand the inner dynamics of the psyche. Like Marx's Political Economy, Critical Psychology is not content with phenomena on the surface but wants to get to the bottom of the psyche. This programme requires an understanding of what is typically human. What makes the human, human? That is the question of a scientific *concept of the human being*. Importantly, a concept of the human being fundamentally differs from a "view of the human being". A concept of the human being is the result of a certified scientific process, a view of the human being rests on ascribing ontological properties. The scientific concept of the human being was developed by Critical Psychology in a *historical categorical analysis* (cf. Meretz 2012, 2017c). See below for more.

A concept of the human being is supposed to represent what is *generally human*; not historically specific, not how we only experience humans in present-day capitalism, but what makes the human being human. Looking at concrete people who live within a specific society involves the risk of mistaking actions that are encouraged by society for generally human. An example of this is to consider the satisfaction of egoistic interests at the expense of others as a general human behaviour and declare it a natural feature (also called "ontologisation" or "naturalisation"), instead of treating it as a realisation of possible actions *under certain conditions.*

But how can we possibly examine the "subject matter" of the theory of the individual? How can a categorical analysis referring to the subject be achieved at all? The human being did not fall from the sky. The human species is a product of natural history, of an evolutionary process. In his groundbreaking book *Grundlegung der Psychologie* (1983; working title: *Foundation of Psychology*, available in German only, cf. Tolman 1994)—which established the foundations of Critical Psychology—Klaus Holzkamp tries to reconstruct the forming of human nature in the course of the evolutionary process. *Historical grounding* protects Critical Psychology from the temptation of declaring societal-specific actions to be

general human behaviour. And it opens up the possibility to understand the particular quality of human life in contrast to other forms of life.

Altruistic Trap

Egoism is to do something following only one's own interests, regardless of others. Altruism, on the other hand, is about doing things merely for others, regardless of oneself. It is true that people can postpone their needs for the sake of others. But can altruism be expected to be a general principle? This would create a society in which the individual restricts itself for the sake of "others" or "society". The general rule would be "community or society before the individual". This element can be found in fascism but also in socialism, and many interpersonal ideas of community, which tell the positive story of admirable people, put the well-being of the community before their own.

Oscillating between egoism and altruism does not meet human agency. Even mainstream psychological theory has discovered that people act for others to feel better. But things become more complicated when considering the whole of society. At the societal level, we can only be free and happy if all other people are also free and happy. Because it is only then that other people have no reason to restrict our agency. Freedom and happiness cannot be gained individually, in isolation, separately and limitedly. We will expand on that below.

1.1   The Concept of Human Being

This might set off alarm bells: some researchers have the audacity to state what "human being" and "human nature" is about. As much as they might have reflected on their views and might have a friendly disposition, they only want to legitimise their own assumptions and hopes by fixing their view of manhood onto the human being. This impulse is in many cases legitimised but, as a result, numerous emancipatory, critical theories totally exclude an entire field of knowledge. The point is not *if* we must talk about the human being—there is no question about that. We must, in the name of knowledge and to decide whether we people are actually capable of fulfilling the emancipatory hope of a society free from domination. The point, however, is *how* can we speak about us?

Human Essence

The concept of the human being differs not only from a *view* of the human being but also from assumptions about the *essence* of the human being. According to the latter, the essence represents the "actual human being as such", from whom people have become alienated at present. The real "being human" presumably still remains unattained. A "should" is derived from this: the human being should free itself from this alienation and uncover its true humanity. This idea is present in the writings of the early Marx, for example, but also in all those statements trying to distinguish between "true" and "wrong" needs, "real" and "fabricated". But all needs are "true". They develop under certain societal conditions. That includes striving for →power (p. 4) over other people. Each society is human insofar as it realises human possibilities. However, we can try to investigate whether a more satisfying form of realising human potential has been known and experienced so far. This is exactly what most concepts of "real" aim at. However, we cannot delegitimise needs as "unreal" from the outside; we can only question them and look into societal possibilities that allow us to lead a more satisfying life. In order to be able to specify these possibilities, we need a concept of the human being.

Affirmative as well as emancipatory approaches are characterised by a particular form of reflecting on the human: images of humans. Such images are present in our entire world. One, in particular, is used decisively to legitimise the capitalist system: the human being is supposedly egoistic by nature. If limits were not imposed on human beings, they would satisfy their →needs (p. 113) again and again at the expense of the needs of others.

How do the representatives of emancipatory approaches react to this claim? They normally give examples (e.g., families and friends) where people take into account the needs of others. They remind you that reality contradicts that egoistic idea of humans. However, their critics justifiably ask: is it possible to form a whole society on a non-egoistic basis? Trying to prove this, we land on the →altruistic trap (p. 111). The problem here is that one abstract idea of what is human is criticised from the position of another abstract idea of what is human: "The human is bad. – No, the

human is good!" Many serious thinkers at this point will say: "Humans are neither good nor bad, they are capable of both". But in what situations do humans act "right" or "wrong"? The answer depends on which actions are suggested by the current *conditions* and, therefore, are functional from a personal point of view. Conditions are not static and do not fall from the sky: people produce the societal conditions under which they act. This dual relation—to produce conditions and to experience them as the preconditional frame of one's own actions—is vital for a *concept* of the human being.

People are neither clever nor stupid, neither white nor black, neither necessarily good nor always bad. We people develop under the societal conditions we have produced. These recommend a specific course of action, such as an excluding or inclusive behaviour. Both lie within the *space of possibilities*, they are part of the human potential. The concept of the human being allows us to recognise this human space of possibilities. This concept must make conceivable all that is evil and all that is good in human actions. Our concept of the human being does not enshrine people; it determines their possibilities. We do not say what they are but what they can be. And consequently, we also say what people cannot do, what possibilities are out of their reach. So now, on the basis of what—in our view—is the most suitable theory, Critical Psychology, we would like to develop the concept of the human being and ask ourselves what lies within the human space of possibilities, what is available to the people.

Needs

An individual's needs determine his/her interior status and the resulting readiness to act—discernible as wish, ambition, motivation or desire. Needs are not isolated, interiorised, and static characteristics of an individual; they undergo changes depending on the degree and possibility of their satisfaction. Therefore, needs are constantly emotionally rated and related to the societal environment and the incorporated possibilities of action. As needs and the means for meeting these needs are interconnected, both change in the course of societal development. New means for the satisfaction of needs produce new needs—and vice versa. Thus, the smartphone satisfied new communication needs and, at the same time, produced them. The general aspect lies in the fact that all specific needs involve a productive dimension of disposal over means of satisfaction and a sensual-vital dimension of enjoyment (cf. p. 117).

1.2   *The Societal Nature of the Human Being*

Humans are a social species. We live together with other people, and only in this relationship can we survive and unfold our humanity. Only in relationships can we learn, be protected, evolve and subsist. Early humanity—the hominines—lived almost exclusively within stable interpersonal social groupings. They were *directly* connected with each other through cooperative relationships. These cooperative connections were based on direct personal interactions in social proximity. For all parties involved it was clear who is doing what for whom, and in which way their own contributions were necessary elements for the livelihood of the social community. If somebody did not contribute, the community was in trouble. It depended on the individual. Direct social cohesion was all the hominines had. They lived socially but not societally. Not until the *homo sapiens* evolved was the mere interpersonal level of the social community overcome.

During the *homo sapiens* era, people are connected to people they do not know, to people they will never get to know. Nevertheless, they work for each other. How do they do it? The hominines already went beyond simply adapting to the natural conditions they came upon. At first it was just some tools, clothing, and dwellings; however, the production* of conditions of living (cf. p. 10) gets more and more complex and diverse. It possesses the *characteristics of proactively making provisions*: the social community secures its future existence by producing its own living conditions. The separate communities of hominines are in contact with each other. Occasionally, an individual switches its social community (e.g., to avoid incest), and there is also a sporadic exchange of products. But as long as the connectedness with other communities—mediated on a material-social basis—is too weak to contribute to the existence of the separate groups to a considerable or even indispensable extent, the whole burden of livelihood rests within the respective social community. However, its cooperative reach and complexity is limited, and this can be life-threatening in emergency situations.

This is a barrier that *homo sapiens* left behind. Connectedness, mediated on a material basis, is vital here. Means are no more produced only to be used in the group but, moreover, for the sharing and exchange of products and knowledge and the establishment of continuous social connections, crossing the boundaries between groups. These means, in turn, can be used for common activities, for example, as means for hunting, involving the whole group, or means for building dwellings. Little by little, the

proactive production* of living conditions overcomes the limit of the group and increasingly includes other groups. By creating stable networks that exceed the group, larger cooperative connections can arise ("tribes" etc.) which become increasingly important for the provisions of the individual groups and their members. Rare and irregular connections between groups are replaced by substantially mediated networking as this provides a survival benefit. With *homo sapiens* as actor, the proactive production* of living conditions exceeded the mere interpersonal-direct group frame and opened the door to a transpersonally mediated space of society. The level of direct cooperation is broadened by the new level of mediated societal cooperation. More and more, the individual's life does not solely depend on the survival of the social community anymore but on that of the society. What is central here is that the new, steadily growing societal space of possibilities is created by more and more people who have no direct relationship. That is what *transpersonal mediation* is about, and it enormously extends the survival probability of the human species. Societality is the decisive new feature of evolution, that which makes humanity really human. Societality—and, thus, the ability for individual socialisation, for participation in the societal context—is a natural-genetic feature of the human being. Its *societal nature* is its human capacity to build a society according to its needs.

Relation of Possibility and Freedom
In the evolutionary process leading to *homo sapiens*, the comprehensive societal network develops such a stability and self-sustaining ability that the direct need for concrete individuals to take part in the cooperative reproduction is reduced. Although it goes without saying that the contributions needed for the preservation of the society must be met, for the individual, societal necessities increasingly become mere possibilities for action. In the social community of hominines it was still vital that individuals carry out the functions they were in charge of. These necessities were quite obvious, since the existence of the group and their own existence were connected in an apparent and tangible manner. That is not so with the societally mediated form of life: here the necessities of society are possibilities for the individual. Thus, the individual can keep a distance from its circumstances. It can decide for or against acting. For the individual, the world represents a *realm of possibilities*, and it gains *freedom* from the immediate conditions. That enables a conscious behaviour towards the world. Freedom and consciousness are two sides of the same coin.

Due to this relation of possibility, there are now two ways to match societal necessities and individual possibilities: either the people are forced to do it or they do it voluntarily. This opposition is not quite true, for coercion always includes some degree of acceptance. Thus, the work principle (cf. p. 22) in capitalism forces people to fulfil the necessities, but the coercion is never absolute; there are also elements of →voluntariness (p. 144). In addition, there is a wide range of interpretative patterns which make the coercion appear as a voluntary choice.[1] Throughout history, most forms of society were characterised by the primacy of coercion. However, a society with its societal necessities being actually met by voluntary action could allow for the human capacity to unfold in a socially unrestricted manner. Coercion would lose its function, and society could develop much stronger, because individual motivation (cf. p. 119) would constantly drive the societal possibilities to satisfy needs. This society of voluntariness remains the utopian horizon.

Distance of Recognition and Societal Awareness

With *homo sapiens*, the material, symbolic and social conditions are no longer the epitome of necessities but form a space of possibilities. Being able to step out of the immediate necessities of existence allows us to distance ourselves from the circumstances. And distance allows for a pause, weighing, reflexion—consciousness. The individuals are no longer inhibited by their immediate subsistence; they can adopt a conscious, *reflecting distance* from the world and themselves. *Consciousness* develops as a relation of *understanding the world and ourselves.*

*Conscious*ness and social *aware*ness are not the same. Individual consciousness is the capacity to recognise the world and oneself. Social awareness is the degree of knowledge about the organisation of one's own conditions of life. Therefore, social awareness is consciousness of the societal mediation of one's own existence. If the individual considers its immediate living environment to be the whole world, it can consciously roam in this vicinity, but it will not develop a reasonable degree of awareness of society. To be sure, the relevant societal living conditions dominate one's own living environment, but remain unrecognised and, thus, out of dispositional reach. The individual does not utilise its societal capacity. Consciousness is an individual characteristic, whereas social awareness

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[1] The forced voluntariness of capitalism follows the motto: "Do what you like, but be profitable" (Glissmann/Peters 2001).

exceeds individuality and can only be gained collectively. I cannot recognise the whole of society on my own. I can only achieve social awareness together with others. Social awareness is collective consciousness.

The Concept of Inclusion
In recent discourse, the concept of inclusion is closely linked to the inclusion of people with disabilities. In this case, inclusion refers not only to certain groups but, in a general sense, to the inclusion of all people in their particularity—that is, at least, the claim. While integration means placing the "other" into a predefined common feature, inclusion does not imply an opposition of commonness and particularity, which it can integrate or not, but thrives on the diversity of the particularity and constantly changes in the face of the new particularity. Inclusion aims at "togetherness in diversity"; this dimension of the inclusion concept we want to stress. However, we notice that inclusion is dependant not only on our culture and our attitudes, but also on how the dominant →logic of exclusion (p. 17) is suggested by societal conditions. The attempt to achieve general inclusion must necessarily involve the creation of conditions that support the logic of inclusion, in which my needs are best served by including others.

Productive and Sensual-Vital Dimensions of Needs
But can we not do without awareness and the conscious collective disposition over our living conditions? That is basically possible. However, a renunciation is always connected with the fear that "external" conditions might change and infringe on one's own existence and quality of life. The urge to secure one's own existence in the long term has evolutionarily developed as the productive need to dispose over the proactive production* of living conditions. Strictly speaking, this is not about "one need"; each and every need possesses a *productive dimension*, apart from its *sensual-vital dimension* of enjoyment. To enjoy the food that is currently available is one thing, to have the power of disposal over food in the long run is another. In this context, "power of disposal overfood" does not necessarily mean to produce it oneself. Hunger only seems to be a sensual-vital need; but it develops a particularly destructive power if I do not have the choice of partaking in the social disposition over my life conditions in

such a form that I will not be hungry in future. This is the productive dimension. And it is the poor, in particular, who are most clearly excluded from participating in the disposal of their living conditions in this world.

Agency

Generally speaking, in societies with a division of activities we mutually produce the means for the satisfaction of our sensual-vital needs. Therefore, the productive dimension of needs presents itself as the desire to participate in the disposal of the proactive production* of life conditions. I am oriented towards seeing my needs integrated in the way the production* of life conditions is organised. This vital importance of proactive disposal is why Critical Psychology calls *agency* the "prime need of life". Agency means disposal of one's own life conditions through participation in the disposal of the societal process. Depending on the form of society and the particular societal conditions, this participation can manifest itself in excluding or including relationships with others (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2). If the societal conditions urge people to satisfy their needs at my expense, I am induced to try to control my relevant life conditions and the people involved. The need to participate then becomes a *need to control*. I aim at organising the conditions according to my needs. I feel the need for →power (p. 4) over others—this is where Nietzsche's "The Will to Power" (2017) finds its societal base. Society then materialises as the *battle* of all the opposing *individual needs for control*. Control is always precarious and fragile, even if I were to control the whole world. Because other people have sound reasons to resist and escape control in order to prevent their needs from coming second. This triggers my fear of others taking away my control. However, this anxiety, in turn, contaminates my satisfaction of disposal through control: I cannot be sure of my proactive satisfaction of needs, but I must worry about it. Anxiety is the general feeling that runs through exclusion societies. This hints at an explanation of the "authoritarian tendencies" of exclusion conditions: people wish for a strong authority—a state or a Leviathan, as in Hobbes'[2] novel, a leader—which will cushion the free-for-all battle, moderate, manage and decide according to their needs. At the same time, there is absolutely no reason why there should not be a second option; we can organise our participation in the disposal of the production* of our life conditions not only in

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[2] "Leviathan", a biblical-mythological monster, is a metaphor for the state which rules with absolute power, in the work of Thomas Hobbes (1651).

excluding but also in inclusive relationships. Not in opposition but together. For that purpose, we need societal conditions that encourage inclusion, the integration of the needs of others. Such an inclusive common disposal would be free from angst, for I would not have to be afraid of others trying to deny my needs by exclusion. I cannot reach this individually; I can only participate in a collective disposal.[3] In its most satisfying form, people exercise their participation through inclusive relations with others. As it were, they care for me as I do for them. As societal people, we always depend on others. However, in inclusive conditions this dependency would not be accompanied by anxiety; it would be interconnected through trust.

Emotionality and Motivation

Emotions establish a connection between my needs and the world. They *evaluate* the environment according to my perception. For hominines, who lived only in immediate relationships, a sufficiently strong emotion directly triggered an activity. For societal human beings, however, the connection between emotions and activity is no more a direct one, it is a *problematic* one. I must explore my emotions and mentally establish the connection between my needs and the world to find out what possible action is best for me. Due to the relation between possibility and the world, my emotions do not determine my actions anymore, but I can and must relate to them. I can use their evaluating function as a means, as a *source of knowledge*, to examine my relation to the world. Thus, feeling and thinking, emotionality and rationality, are not opposites. Only through our emotions can we experience and understand our relation to the world. Therefore, manipulating or denying one's emotions is self-damaging. Denying my emotion means denying my needs means denying myself.

The societal mediation of existence also has an influence on motivation. Motivation is a future-related evaluation. It evaluates the future results of a current activity by relating envisaged positive changes in the quality of life to the efforts and risks involved. If this cognitive-emotional assessment comes to a positive conclusion, it can result in a motivated activity. This assessment of possibilities and efforts involved depends on an actual interconnection between societal participation and one's livelihood, on whether

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[3] The desire to organise the disposition according to one's own needs also materialises in the idea to produce* one's life conditions self-sufficiently in small groups. As understandable as this wish is, it falls short of our societal capacity and the possibilities for action involved.

it is conceivable and, thus, recognisable at the societal as well as individual level. Will I really improve my quality of life if I take part in the cooperation? At the immediate-cooperative level of the hominines, the connection between one's own participation in the cooperation and one's livelihood was obvious, so to speak. Provided it was relevant, the motivated activity took place. However, at the societal level, one's insight regarding the connection between societal participation and one's own existence is not self-evident anymore, it is problematic. I can act according to my insight in a conscious manner, but this insight might be wrong. And vice versa, people can act even if they lack awareness of the connection, if they are forced or force themselves to do so. However, in this case the activity is no more emotionally endorsed and, therefore, does not promise a truly improved quality of life as a result of the effort; in a self-disciplining act, it must be enforced against oneself (cf. Kaindl 2008).

The well-known distinction between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" motivation (cf. Deci and Ryan 1985) often makes no sense. It separates the inner life from the outer world—instead of understanding it in its context. Our inner life and thus our motivation depend on external conditions, and these in turn are created by individuals. The more they can dispose of their affairs collectively, the more motivated they are. One could therefore understand "intrinsic motivation" as a kind of "unconstrained motivation" in which I can consciously and voluntarily decide to take corresponding actions. However, this is only possible if I can also co-dispose over the conditions of my actions. In contrast, "extrinsic motivation" can be understood as "forced motivation" or simply: "coercion". Situations of coercion occur when I do not have a say in the conditions of my actions. However, coercion is not only an external phenomenon, but I can also coerce myself, for example, when I cannot currently change the conditions, assess an action as necessary and therefore perform it (cf. Shah and Kruglanski 2000). Finally, I can make extreme efforts, even sacrifice myself, to achieve a subjectively important goal—even if the current actions are not enjoyable or are dangerous. All these aspects of motivation—voluntariness, disposition over conditions, coercion, self-coercion, sacrifice and so on—can occur in mixed form. A simple distinction "intrinsic" versus "extrinsic" is not useful here.

Reasons
The relation between possibility and the world means neither arbitrariness nor determination. Each human act is based on reasons. Reasons establish

a connection between objective conditions and subjective acting. Reasons are always *my reasons*. My reasons are founded on my *premises*. Premises are the material, symbolic, and social aspects of reality that are important to me. However, I am not exposed to the world in a passive manner, I choose in society—and, thus, I do so influenced by society—the aspects important to me: my bank account or my free-time activity, my dog or my friends. Traditional psychology tends to perceive acting as a direct result of conditions. However, people do not simply react to conditions (stimulus → response) but act for reasons to which they can consciously relate. The idea that actions are based on reasons is essential. If a person is denied the status of reasoned actions—and his/her actions are qualified as confused, crazy, hysterical, emotional—the person is not taken seriously. The person's needs and ideas about reality are ignored.

Intersubjectivity

My conscious behaviour in the world, my relation of possibility, allows for a clear distinction between myself and the world and, thus, also between myself and other people. I can understand that they also have a relation of possibility to the world. Like me, they have reasons and intentions. That is the basis for seeing other people not as mere "social instruments" but as individual "centres of intentionality", as subjects like me, people with their own needs, reasons, premises and intentions. This acceptance of others as subjects is the basis of *intersubjectivity*, which allows me to include others in my activities. But this is not self-evident. Under certain conditions— exclusion conditions—it can make sense to not include others but, rather, treat them as the objects of my actions. This can be seen most clearly in times of war, when other people are often not treated as people anymore.

Self-Hostility

Excluding activities are not only a burden for other people but mediately also for me—namely in two ways: at the *interpersonal* level, the people I exclude have reasons to treat me with suspicion, dominate me and exclude me as well. At the *transpersonal* level, my excluding activities strengthen the structures of the →logic of exclusion (p. 17), which render excluding behaviour functional in the first place. Therefore, I—either personally or structurally—support the circumstances that restrain or harm me in a direct or indirect manner. My exclusion of others and my hostility is also self-exclusion and self-hostility. But since this is contrary to my productive needs of disposal (cf. p. 117), that is, I cannot *consciously* harm myself, I

have to negate and mentally block out the connection between hostility and self-hostility, that is, repress it. The repression is only justifiable if I in turn repress the fact that I am repressing—and so on. This is the source of a dynamically generated and continuously confirmed unconscious.

1.3   *Capacity of Inclusion Relationships*

We have the option—particularly visible today—to utilise other people as instruments for the satisfaction of our own needs. I can try to control them, dominate and use them. Thus, I implicitly deny them their subjectivity and degrade them to objects. This comes naturally to us in circumstances where we do it all the time and where the rule of egoistically seeking one's own advantage prevails. But "by isolating myself from him, he isolates me from himself" (Holzkamp 1983, p. 379, transl. M.R.).

The logic of exclusion is experienced interpersonally as an excluding behaviour. However, it is a structural relationship. It is subjectively functional for persons whom I have excluded to exclude me in return for the satisfaction of their own needs. Exclusion works reciprocally: generally speaking, by excluding others, I cause them to exclude me. I implicitly encourage my exclusion. I re/produce and maintain the structures which make exclusion functional because it "makes sense". While I can personally cushion exclusion and include others individually, the logic of exclusion as a structural relation can only be overcome societally (cf. next chapter).

Recognising other people as subjects follows from the possibility of intersubjectivity. However, intersubjectivity is an interpersonal relationship. The societal possibility of inclusive conditions is one we cannot present at this point. It requires the theory of society and its concept of mediation, and it will be dealt with in the next chapter.

So far, we know two things: We are indirectly connected—that is, in a transpersonally mediated way—with almost everyone else; in interpersonal relationships we are able to act inclusively. Due to our relation of possibility, we can recognise other people as subjects, and the question remains on how to find out their needs and include them. There are many options for that. Day by day, we include the needs of persons close to us—by speaking, knowing, anticipating and trusting—in inclusive relationships, in which this behaviour is subjectively functional. Such relationships of interpersonal inclusion can also be found in capitalism, for example, with relatives or friends. The point, however, is whether inclusion circumstances can be generally societal. Can interpersonal capacity also be a societal one?
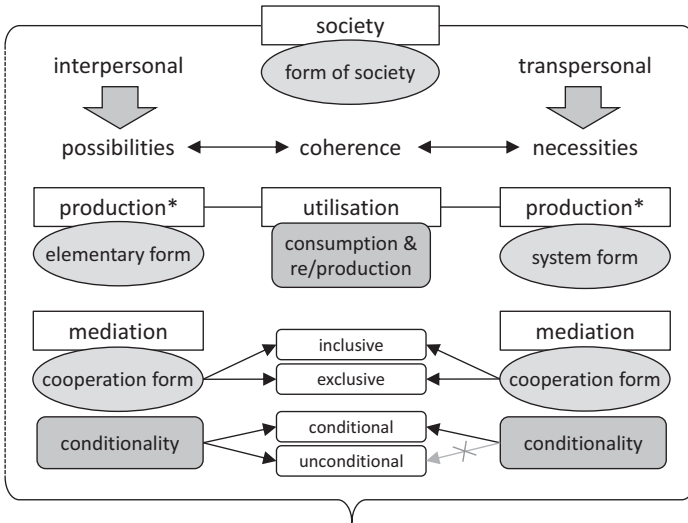
Fig. 5.1 Illustration of the argumentative structure of the general theory of society

2   THEORY OF SOCIETY

In this chapter, we intend to develop the social-theoretical basics needed to establish the possibility and quality of an inclusive society, which we will call commonism (Chap. 6). So, our theory does not refer to a specific society—for example, capitalism—but to the essentials of a theory of society in general. The general theory of society builds on the theory of the individual, as developed in the previous section. It is the other side of the same coin, the coin of the individual and society. A society is a cooperation structure in which and with which people produce* their life conditions.

In the process, society encourages people to act in a way that ensures its preservation. At the same time, the overall societal necessities are only individual possibilities (cf. Chap. 5, 1.2). Thus, for all societies the question arises of how to ensure—despite the relation of possibility—that societal necessities will, indeed, be generally fulfilled by the people. Figure 5.1 illustrates the concept tree.

2.1   *Elementary Form and System Form*

Each form of society possesses typical, historically specific characteristics. These represent the material, symbolic, and social manner in which the people proactively produce* all necessary life conditions in this society (cf. p. 10). The focus is not only on "production" but also on reproductive activities; not only on the material conditions of our life but also on the symbolic and social ones. The concept of production* becomes clearer if we comprehend it as the interaction of an individual-interpersonal level (elementary form) and a systematic-transpersonal level (system form). This dual meaning, we believe, includes the connection between individual *possibilities* and societal *necessities*.[4]

An *elementary form* represents the obvious interpersonal *course of action* to secure one's own livelihood. The elementary form embodies the dominant rationality of action, ensuring survival under the given societal conditions. For example, in capitalism, it is rational to do paid work or employ others as wageworkers and exploit their labour. Each individual has good reasons to adopt the obvious forms of action, and this is done by the vast majority of the society. As it ensures survival, this rational activity at the same time maintains and renews the existing societal structures—even if they are unpleasant or very repressive. Therefore, individual existence and societal structures are inseparable. I maintain my existence within the societal structures and, thus, reproduce them. But there are still *possibilities* (cf. p. 115) at the individual level and no determination. However, as people need to secure their own existence one way or the other, there is huge pressure—even manifest duress at times—to accept the obvious forms of action and use them. From the systemic point of view, not everyone must take up the elementary form of action. It is enough if a sufficient number of people act in conformist ways. For the purpose of transformation, a relevant question is whether there are also good reasons not to abide by the obvious forms of action but create different, nonconformist action patterns to ensure one's life conditions. We will come to that later.

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[4] The term elementary form derives from Karl Marx, who analysed commodities as an elementary form of capitalism, its related system form. We generalise Marx's analysis and follow Nick Dyer-Witheford (2007, 82), who sees the →Commons (p. 143) as an elementary form of a free society (cf. also Meretz 2015, 2017b).

The elementary forms of action are in line with the systemic structures of action. The *system form* represents the dominant transpersonal *structures of action*, in which and with which people produce* their life conditions. In capitalism, for example, these are the logic of realisation of value and the state; the dominant societal structures of action we introduced as forms of re/production (cf. p. 10). These structures of action come about through the totality of elementary actions. Thus, elementary actions are conformist actions which create and maintain the system form. In a society in →coherence (p. 126), these elementary actions cover all societal *necessities*.[5] However, it is not only the elementary form that produces the system form; the system form simultaneously "produces" the elementary form, for it provides the frame which encourages the elementary actions ensuring existence.

In the fabrication this reciprocal relationship of elementary form and system form the *systemic level is dominant*. The system form dominates the elementary form. The systemic level of society is the level of generality. It predefines what is generally valid, therefore, in which way in general the life conditions are proactively produced*. In this context the systemic level is independent of the individual actions, it sets the frame. The dominating generality cannot be levered out interpersonally, it can only be overcome as a whole, which means, it would have to be replaced by a different generality. This finding has led traditional transformational approaches to turn the element-system-relation into a first-then-sequence: first achieve a different society, then different elementary actions. If we were to proceed that way, we would disregard, that society is not an entity separated from human beings, which can be imposed as "liberation" from above. A free society can only be built by the people themselves. It is the people, who, acting differently in proactively producing their life, produce different societal conditions on the way. If societal transformation is understood to be mainly a political process, relatively independent of the form of re/production, then it is no wonder that people ensure their existence

[5] Capitalism displays a special feature: apart from the dominant structure of action, there is one subordinated structure that has split off but is, nonetheless, indispensable. The re/production form in capitalism is characterised by the fact that the spheres of production and reproduction are separated and follow their own logics (cf. p. 23). Thus, here the "productive" elementary actions do not provide for all societal necessities generating the system form; "reproductive" actions following their own logic (care) are also necessary. Consequently, the separation of spheres is not a "natural order" but a special feature of capitalism that wants to be transcended in a societal transformation (which we will specify below).

according to the old elementary form, thus maintaining and renewing the old systems, which was to be overcome.

> **Coherence**
> Coherence means context and cohesion. A society is in a state of coherence, if all necessary societal functions are met in such a way, that society can reproduce, ergo maintain itself. This "state" is not to be taken in a static sense; it is rather a dynamic process. Consequently, coherence has to be permanently established. Societal functions are not only necessary, because they are desired subjectively, but because they are objectively essential. The production* of useful items is necessary for the survival of people. In Capitalism, functioning markets are necessary to ensure the distribution of products, resulting from separate production and so on.
>
> A significant challenge for each societal coherence is the congruence of what is desired and what is produced; in other words, of needs and the means created for their satisfaction. Thus, coherence becomes a historically subjective concept, insofar as the actual satisfaction of needs cannot be objectively measured, only subjectively felt. Feeling, in turn, depends on the historical state of possibilities. In 1990, a mobile phone was hardly given any attention; today, it is crucial for the satisfaction of our communication needs. Whether a deficit in the satisfaction of needs is endured, results in a revolt, or leads to a repressive adaptation, are also a question of subjectivity.
>
> Bottom line: Coherence is established when objective societal necessities are in line with individual desires. Incoherence occurs if subjective desires are not met by society to an extent that endangers the preservation of society. It can be caused by many factors, which cannot be established categorically but only empirically.

The elementary form and the system form deal with the same thing from different perspectives. The elementary form looks at the actions that ensure the individual's existence. The system form views the sum of actions that ensure the future existence of society. Each combines three identical aspects, albeit at different levels: production*, mediation and utilisation. We analyse them in what follows.

2.2   Production, Mediation and Utilisation*

The *production** of life conditions, as we generally say (cf. p. 10), is realised through the production* of the *means*—means of consumption in the broadest sense—that we need for our life.[6] These means of consumption vary throughout history. In principle, they can be classified into three groups: *material* means (e.g., food products), *symbolic* means (e.g., knowledge and culture) and *social* means of cohabitation (e.g., care). All three groups of means are in permanent development, reflecting the development of needs. Regardless of the point of view—whether we look at immediate actions from the elementary perspective or at average actions from the system form—what is desired must be provided. As shown, there is a more or less large individual space of possibilities, while in the sum, that is, societally, the necessities arise.

The *utilisation* of the means produced can be divided into re/productive and consumptive utilisation. When the means are used for further processes of re/productive production*, they represent means of re/production (e.g., a machine or diapers). If they serve the immediate satisfaction of needs, they pertain to so-called consumptive utilisation, or just consumption. This utilisation requires mediation, insofar as the means must be transferred from the place of production* to the place of their re/productive or consumptive utilisation. In societies with a low level of task division, mediation tends to be organised in an interpersonal way (in family or local relationships or largely interpersonal markets); in modern societies with a high level of task division, it is predominantly transpersonal (state and transpersonal markets).

In contrast to the aspects of production* and utilisation, the aspect of *mediation* must be differentiated according to the elementary and system forms.

Interpersonal Mediation
Mediation at the level of the elementary form refers to the *interpersonal* relationships people engage in when producing their life conditions. It is the form in which we cooperate directly. Interpersonal cooperation displays two different characteristics: *conditionality* and the *cooperation form.*

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[6] This includes resources. Resources, in our understanding, comprise (natural and produced) basic means of production.

- Conditionality: If cooperative interpersonal relationships require conditions to be met in order to come about, they are *conditional* (or demanding) relationships; otherwise, they are *unconditional* (without presuppositions). Conditional relationships, for example, are exchange relationships, where the cooperative act demands each side to fulfil its share of the bargain (transfer of commodity/value). Relationships in families may serve as examples of unconditionality. So, a yelling child gets fed "unconditionally". The child gives something back "in return"; however, this "return" is not paired with the (previous) "offering".
- Cooperation form: Conditionality, in turn, is expressed through two opposing cooperation forms: inclusive (enclosing) and excluding (debarring) relationships. *Excluding* relationships involve extended possibilities for one party and limiting consequences for the other, possibly putting one activity up against the other. If I prevail in applying for a job, this is done at the expense of the losing applicant. In *inclusive* relationships, cooperative activities complement and support each other. If many users unite their WLAN routers to a common open Wi-Fi network,[7] everybody in reach of the network has free access to the internet. The unconditional inclusive cooperation form will be the basis of our utopia.

Transpersonal Mediation
Mediation at the level of the system form refers to the *transpersonal* relationships people engage in when producing their life conditions. It is the way people cooperate in an indirect or mediated manner (German: "*mittel*bar" or "ver*mittel*t"—"with *means*", the terms apply almost literally). Mediated cooperation relations rely on the help of means—material, symbolic and social—for the purpose of the satisfaction of our needs. We, and the people we closely relate to, do not produce most of our means of satisfaction ourselves. The coffee we drink in the morning was produced somewhere in the global south. This "somewhere" marks the point: it does not matter who has produced the means of satisfaction, where, and how. They only have to be produced within the societal context. The same applies to symbolic means—for example, the book read, the computer program used—or social means—for example, the work organisation in our job. Direct relationships are exceeded by the fact that they take place via *means*,

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[7] Cf. also https://freifunk.net/, accessed 15 May 2022.

therefore *indirectly* or *mediately*. Relationships via means connect people unknown to each other in a global net of cooperation. Similar to interpersonal cooperation relations, we can also distinguish between *conditionality* and *cooperation form* as far as transpersonal mediation is concerned.

- Conditionality: in contrast to the individual level of possibilities, mediation at the societal level of necessities is *always conditional.* Here, global limits must be respected and the balance between production* and utilisation must be kept. Indeed, these conditions may temporarily be infringed on (which is happening at the moment); however, they must work out in the long run to maintain humanity's life conditions.
- Cooperation form: the *form* of mediation, on the other hand, once again corresponds to interpersonal cooperation. Only its character now becomes a structural one: exclusion and inclusion at the societal level now figure as *exclusion* and *inclusive conditions.*

As for the relation of production*, mediation and utilisations *mediation* proves to be dominant. A society is a human cooperation network with a historically specific form of cooperation, the actual form of re/production. How the produced* means circulate in society is decisive for the form of re/production. Mediation connects those who produce the means (re/producers) with those who need the means (consumers). Thus, the form of mediation dominates societal cooperation and, consequently, production*. If, for example, mediation in capitalism rests mainly on the exchange of equivalents, then producers must be oriented towards generally accepted prices and produce in a cost-efficient way. At the same time, a whole part of production* (the so-called reproduction) is steered towards the private sphere, because mediation on the basis of the exchange of equivalents cannot produce or maintain it. (cf. Chap. 1, 3.2 and Chap. 5, footnote 5). In summary, we can say that the *systemic level of mediation* is decisive for the preservation of society and the individuals within. We will use this insight later on as a criterion in our commonist seed form theory (Chap. 7, 3).

For example, solidarity economy focuses on changes within the enterprise itself, such as democratic structures, ecological production, equal pay and so on. Usually, mediation is still thought of and organised by a regulated market. However, if mediation is dominant, one cannot simply produce differently within the old mediation form. In practice, we witness solidarity economy enterprises being torn between their own goals and

market competition. Commons focus on changing mediation—they build a coordination beyond the state and the market and can, therefore, attain solidary goals in production.

Property

Property is one of the first legal forms anchoring exclusion. Property is a relation between people in which one party can exclude another from the disposal of things. As this exclusion must be enforced against the will of the parties concerned, property always involves force. In premodern times, it was the direct force of personal rulers. Today, it is the state claiming the monopoly on violence and enforcing it through its executive powers. In short: property is a relation of domination that organises the disposal of resources through exclusion. Ending property as the limitation of disposal would seriously undermine structural exclusion. However, at the same time, a new form of →collective disposal (p. 145) of resources and means must be developed. This can only assume an inclusive shape, as there are no longer means of domination forcing people to do things against their will. At the same time, resources, means of consumption and living spaces must be produced, cultivated and—if necessary—improved. Therefore, disposal always involves practical activity and participation and can only be done cooperatively in a collaborative society. Traditional Marxism sought to overcome exclusion through property by making society the "proprietor". However, so-called societal property—the result of "socialisation"—is still property, and it is contaminated by the historically developed exclusion function. This contradiction is similar to that of the "withering of the state" (cf. p. 55), in which the state is supposed to disappear even though it has previously been extremely strengthened. In the case of property, this contradiction surfaces through its extreme strengthening by →nationalisation (p. 50), which cannot bring about socialisation in the end and, thus, neither societal property. Indeed, we think it is important to acknowledge that property simply represents a certain form of disposal, namely a closed form. The opposite is not a different form of property, but a different form of disposal, namely an open form: an inclusive interpersonal and transpersonal →collective disposal (p. 145) of life conditions, forming the material base of →voluntariness (p. 144).

Disposal

Closely linked to the question of mediation is that of the *disposal* of means. Only by disposing of means can I unfold my capacity to participate in the societal proactive production* of life conditions. The possibility of disposing of means ranges from open to closed. An open disposition, and thus disposition on a large scale, makes my societal participation easier. I can take part in decision making on the utilisation of means of re/production and means of consumption. On the other hand, closed forms of mediation monopolise decisions. Only a limited number of people have means at their disposal and decide on their use. This limits the participation of others in the societal process.

In capitalism, property guaranteed by the state represents a closed, highly exclusive form of disposal, for it is the exclusive right of the owner and excludes all others. Throughout history, rights of disposal have often been more open; for example, in mediaeval villages those in need were entitled to gather harvest residues from the fields. Research on enclosure reveals an ever increased shut-down on disposal.[8] Whereas in earlier times forests were open to many users for gathering wood, pig feed, hunting small animals and so on, disposal has become more and more limited. Apart from property-based exclusive disposal secured by the state, there were and still are numerous social protections of collective disposal; they have been established on the basis of local conventions and non-formal laws and partly still hold today. It is important to acknowledge that the form of disposal is closely linked to the form of mediation. Thus, exchange as a form of mediation requires a closed form of disposal. In capitalism the exclusion from disposal is exercised by property secured by the state. This exclusion from disposal is necessary for (at least) three reasons: first, the excluded have no access to means of consumption and are forced to perform paid work in order to buy them; second, decision making on the use of the production means and, thus, on the purpose of production is monopolised by the owner; third, the collectively produced product is appropriated in an equally monopolistic fashion. If it were not for this exclusion, in all three cases people would act in such a way that capitalism would collapse: (1) means of consumption would be acquired freely, (2) means of production would be used for the satisfaction of needs and (3)

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[8] The historical process of (ex)closure in the transition to capitalism is called "enclosure of the commons" (Neeson 1996).

the results would be available to everybody. Open forms of disposal are linked to other forms of mediation. This statement does not specify the particular forms.

The continuum between open and closed mediation points at the human-societal possibilities. While a closed mediation limits the participation of people and, thus, the productive dimension of needs, an open mediation refers to the possibility of a collective, conscious design of the societal process. Such a form of collective disposal would make it substantially more difficult to exclude other people and would encourage the inclusion of a multitude of needs, as far as utilisation, production*, and preservation of means are concerned. However, such a collectively open disposal cannot simply be demanded; it requires a societal (mediation) process which integrates the participation of all in a positive way. Then I will have no reasons to limit the disposal of others; on the contrary, I will be reinforced if others, too, have the power of disposal. How this can become true we want to develop in the next chapter.

Relation Between Interpersonal and Transpersonal Mediation

The concepts of *interpersonal cooperation* and *transpersonal mediation* encompass two social spaces that incorporate and create each other. The social space opened up by interpersonal cooperation is the concrete space where each person produces society and, at the same time, socialises; therefore, it is the space where one realises one's own capacity for product-related participation (utilisation *and* production*) in societal possibilities. The diverse totality of all overlapping interpersonal spaces constitutes the transpersonal system we call society. Society, on the other hand, is the system defining the structure in which the interpersonal spaces unfold. They both incorporate and generate each other: society is present in the interpersonal space and makes it what it is (in a positive and in a negative sense); society is a combination of countless interpersonal spaces. We are dealing with two levels of mediation that are, at the same time, identical and different: the space of interpersonal cooperation, which is none other than a part of societal mediation, and the space of overall societal mediation, which is none other than the transpersonal totality of all interpersonal cooperation.

Interpersonal and transpersonal mediation share a certain relation: they can either be opposed or correspond to each other. If transpersonal mediation is structured according to the logic of exclusion, it is evident that I should prevail at the expense of others. Nevertheless, interpersonal

cooperation is often inclusive. In families, friendships, shared flats or at the workplace, it is often more common to include other people and their needs, although, here too, exclusion lines operate. This is understandable, as a lot of these social connections would disintegrate were the societal exclusion logic to prevail. If I wanted to pursue a career at the expense of my colleagues, a successful cooperation between us would be difficult. That is why a society excluding both transpersonal and interpersonal mediation would be self-destructive. So, a tension exists within capitalism between excluding transpersonal mediation and a tendency towards inclusive interpersonal cooperation.

However, there is the option of an inclusive transpersonal mediation being in line with an inclusive interpersonal cooperation. Evidently, such mutual-inclusive relationships at the transpersonal and interpersonal level comply with our perspective of a free society. The overall societal condition of balancing production* and utilisation, however, constitutes an absolute barrier. To be sure, the prerequisite of a balance between give and take can be ignored interpersonally and between groups but not in all of society (Meretz 2017a). Everything needed and consumed must be re/produced. Even a free society must "keep its feet on the ground", in the figurative and literal sense.

The concepts developed here might appear complicated and, in fact, they are. We are aiming at providing general specifications on the connection between the human being and society. The problem is that we cannot experience society as a transpersonal cooperation with our senses. We can only perceive its effects interpersonally and directly in small doses. The state, patriarchy, the market; we do not experience them directly, we only experience their effects. Nevertheless, we need the abstract dimension of words to *conceptually understand* the interpersonal experience (cf. also Chap. 1, 2.2).[9]

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[9] Karl Marx taught us a lot through his analysis of capitalism. However, in adopting his concepts we always critically asked ourselves whether they apply to history in general or to a historical phase in particular, for example, capitalism. Therefore, we accepted "elementary form" as a historically non-specific concept, but we broadened "means of production" to become "means of re/production". And this is because we believe that the segmentation of society into a sphere of "production", called →economy (p. 14), most of the time, and a sphere of "reproduction" is a historically specific phenomenon, not a general one (cf. Chap. 1, 3). Consequently, our terms must be more general.

2.3   Capacity and Domination

The individual-societal capacity to proactively produce life conditions in the widest sense is an exclusively human trait. No other creature can do it. Pippi Longstocking got to the heart of that: "I'll make the world the way I like it". However, this capacity also opens up the possibility of limiting our capacity to make a world to everyone's liking; if we make a world that only pleases one part, it will displease others, as it is done at their expense. The satisfaction of the needs of the privileged at the expense of others is also endangered, insofar as it cannot be guaranteed, and they will face "reciprocal" exclusion.

We believe that, so far, throughout all the historical forms of society, we have not yet been able to realise our human-societal capacity in an *unlimited* form. This also applies to capitalism, which claims to be the realisation of freedom and reason. The form that limits human capacity is *domination* and it pervades history in its entirety. It is the domination-based assertion of some people at the expense of others. Domination is not one-sided, for the underlying power is never absolute, but it always needs a certain measure of consent. Consent is achieved through the promise of securing one's own existence by accepting domination. There have been different forms of domination. We can roughly divide them into two groups: the *personal* form and the impersonal form or domination via *structures*.

Personal Domination
We come across *personal domination* when people restrict and repress others in interpersonal relationships and assert themselves at their expense. Personal domination can take many different forms, including direct threat and exercise of violence, as well as psychological pressure and disregard for declared needs by those with exclusive disposal of the means to satisfy them. In addition, personal domination can be exercised by using transpersonal structures of domination interpersonally. Thus, the interpersonal debasement of people with disabilities takes advantage of ableist structures. If direct and mediated forms of domination pervade the different levels of the social hierarchy, and these dominate social cooperation altogether, we are dealing with societies of personal domination. Such societies can appear in many forms: slavery, feudalism, patriarchal "tribal societies" or village communities. However, the differences are only gradual, and they stand in qualitative contrast with a different type of domination, domination via structures.

Domination Via Structures

Dealing with *domination* via *structures* always involves an →independent self-replicating (p. 155) transpersonal structure. But structures do not dominate, people do. Transpersonal structures materialise in peoples' actions. The independent self-replicating structures represent imperatives, which we—more or less—must follow in order to secure our existence. We reproduce these imperatives by following them—that is, in how we act, produce, organise and so on. We create them and are simultaneously "shaped"—or simply controlled—by them (cf. p. 19).

In contrast to personal domination, where the presence of dominating persons was the symbol of one's own lack of freedom, domination via structures has no clear opposite. Or, in other words, domination via structures can be exercised by anyone. Indeed, in concrete situations there is an identifiable person exercising domination, even if this "just" means filling a position and thus, enjoying privileges that the person uses "quite normally" with no "evil" intentions. Nevertheless, rulers and subjects are no longer easily distinguished; it is not clear which side of the barricade they belong to. The barricades are spread crisscross. Certainly, domination is experienced in interpersonal relationships; however, its causal source is somewhere else. Its fundamental origin derives from—and its functionality goes back to—the structural, substantial domination of capitalism and its conditions of exclusion.

Personalisation of Structures

Even today, many critics of capitalism still claim that the question "cui bono"—"who profits?" makes the rulers identifiable and nameable. It is a question that inevitably generates a personalised answer. But personalising can only identify the profiting person, sometimes also a group of people ("the Bilderberg group", "the rich", "the bankers" etc.). However, the structures which give actions their excluding function remain in the dark. Personalised criticism is directed at the acting people, not the prevailing conditions they are subject to. But it is these conditions of acting which must be changed, so that they will not encourage the individual actor to exploit and dominate others. The rejection of this criticism often points out that it makes a difference whether individual people are subject to interpersonal excluding behaviour or, on a larger scale, are excluded via the destruction of habitats; whether ordinary people take advantage of others, or investors with gigantic capital ignore necessities of life. That is certainly true. However, the difference still lies within the same frame of

exclusion logic, where there are always those who benefit, on the one hand, and those who pay, on the other. This also applies to collective agency, for example, that of trade unions. A union is designed to advance the interests of workers against the economic power of companies and their managers. However, in the societal exclusion matrix, these collective interests are opposed to other partial interests at whose expense they prevail (cf. Chap. 2, 2.1). How often is the argument of "jobs" presented to overrule almost all other interests?

As important as it might be to fight individual forms of discrimination, it is also problematic to separate them from structural causes. Generally speaking, conditions of exclusion that level or minimise exclusions at one point, often create new exclusions at another. At the level of difference, be it gender, skin colour, education, age and so on, the logic of exclusion cannot be overcome, because the difference is only the vehicle, but not cause of exclusion. On the contrary: difference can be a source of unfolding and strength if given the chance to develop within general inclusive conditions.

2.4   *Capacity and Inclusive Society*

We concluded the section on the theory of the individual with the statement that people can treat other people as subjects, and this is what they do in interpersonal relationships. But can inclusive conditions be general in society? Is the intersubjective capacity also a societal one? Bourgeois theorists such as Frederick von Hayek (1936) always stressed that people are capable of respecting the needs of others at the interpersonal level—in manageable groups—but not at the societal-transpersonal level. Here, apart from some exceptions, the "free-for-all battle" starts whether you like it or not. The appropriate self-praise of the market economy proclaims that people support the well-being of everybody else by seeking their self-interest, also at the expense of others—such a contradictory promise. ("Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone"—John Maynard Keynes, cf. Albert 2001.)

Our criticism of this idea is twofold. Bourgeois theorists consider inclusion to be a *morally motivated act of the individual.* As people know and appreciate each other from the family, the "tribe" or the village, they take care of one another. Furthermore, for most bourgeois theorists mediation is a mystery and, therefore, so is society. In 1986, in an interview with woman's magazine *Woman's Own,* former British Prime Minister Margaret

Thatcher went as far as drawing the following conclusion: "There is no such thing as *society*. There are individual men and women, and there are families." Society and mediation can, at best, be imagined as an event of individuals exchanging things.

All these ways of thinking underestimate or negate the capacity of the societal organisation people engage in. They judge the general human capacity by the current forms of organisation, structured by a logic of exclusion, instead of asking what could be possible in society. We pointed out above (and gave specific examples) that people are able to engage in inclusion relationships at the interpersonal level. Our simple question is: why should this not be possible at the transpersonal level? In our view, a societal generalisation is possible if (at least) these five elements are generalised: needs, awareness, disposal of conditions, trust, security.

In an inclusive society, inclusion is not just an ethical-moral action; it is encouraged by the societal structures. Acting according to the structural suggestions is subjectively functional for me, because in that way I can satisfy my *needs* best. To accomplish that goal, I must not only include the needs of the people in my vicinity, those interpersonally accessible, but also of those with whom the contact is only mediated. Thus, the reference to needs is generalised, my actions include the needs of all the people I am related with in society. This general form of inclusion requires a collective form of *disposal of conditions* and people who consciously design their conditions in their society. An inclusive society is capable of building this disposal, and for this we must take the time to realise the consequences of our actions on others. Our actions can be changed only if we can analyse them and use these insights. This requires expanding our consciousness, dealing with our vicinity, raising our level of *awareness*, perceiving societal connections.

If my needs, and those of others, are taken into consideration and if the conditions are at our collective disposal to give them a long-term base, the result is transpersonal *trust*. Transpersonal relationships no longer rely on distinction, domination and contracts, but rest on relatedness, a leap of faith and agreement. This trust can become sustainable by moulding institutions which objectify relatedness, trust and agreements. The particular quality of institutions is their ability to provide societal services independent of concrete people.

A free society, therefore, is an institutionalised organisational form of human cohabitation beyond the state. In contrast to the state and its institutions, which supposedly mediate the opposing interests deriving from the logic of exclusion, institutions in the free society beyond the state

represent direct objectifications of the logic of inclusion. Thus, they do not reside outside the dominant societal logic (like the state) but are an integral part of it, namely of the logic of inclusion. They are embedded in the societal mediation. This provides *security* for everybody, because fundamentally different needs may indeed create →conflicts (p. 146), but these are not enforced in the mode of opposing interests at the expense of a groups of "others". Even though there are conflicts, nobody needs to be afraid of being different or of falling through the societal safety net. A free society lies within the reach of human capacity. Embedded institutions allow for a general awareness and collective disposal of the conditions of our actions. Then we can relate to each other's needs and, thus, cooperate on the basis of trust and security.

But can this possibility of a societally mediated organisation on the basis of a logic of inclusion become a reality? What conditions are needed for that? What questions must be answered and what problems solved? These and other questions will be addressed in the next chapter.

3   SUMMARY

Each utopia theory must confirm its theoretical foundations. Utopias of societal development need at least two: a theory of the individual and a theory of society. In other words, we need a scientific concept of the human being and one of society. For us, they are two sides of the same coin.

Here is a summary of our findings on key issues:

- A concept of the human being covers general characteristics and not historically specific traits.
- People are societal and live in society. For the human being, society is a space of action possibilities. Thus, their relation to the world is one of possibilities.
- People have needs. Their concrete shape depends on the societal possibilities of satisfaction. All needs have a sensual-vital and a productive dimension.
- The sensual-vital dimension of satisfaction is that of enjoyment, the productive dimension is that of disposal of the societal conditions to ensure the sources of satisfaction.
- People always act for a reason. To ask for reasons is to ask about subjective functionality. Emotions evaluate the connection between reasons and possibilities, disposal and limitations.

- My disposal of conditions can either limit or eliminate (exclude) or support and comprise (include) the disposal of others.
- People can acknowledge and include the needs of others in their actions. They can engage in intersubjective relationships.
- Each society consists of a systemic structure, which is the result of many elementary actions. The systemic structure and elementary form of actions depend on and create each other.
- The societal structure represents the frame for actions and, thus, has a certain degree of independence. Particular actions relate to each other through material, symbolic and social means: they are mediated.
- The form of this mediation determines the quality of re/production and, thus, the form of society.
- Mediation is inclusive when the systemic conditions encourage the inclusion of the needs of others for the satisfaction of my needs; that is, when this inclusion is rendered functional.
- The creation of inclusive relationships is within the range of interpersonal capacity, which can be transpersonally generalised to create an inclusive society.
- This requires a generalised awareness and a collective disposal of conditions.

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Commonism

Now we intend to overcome the ban on images (cf. Chap. 4, 1). However, this time it will not be based on an arbitrary pipedream; we claim to build a scientifically discussible, categorical utopia, developed on the basis of our theories of the individual and of society (cf. Chap. 5). From the epistemological point of view, this utopia cannot be complete given that society is complex and constantly developing. We are part of that development. Therefore, utopia can only mature in an act of societal transformation. However, we are convinced that we can attain a more profound understanding of *commonism*—this is the name we want to give to the free society—by way of a common reflexion. For that purpose, criticism is important; but not an abstract criticism, one that only rejects and says "no", but a concrete criticism that is based on arguments.

The text below tries to develop the societal conditions which will allow inclusion to be the suggested course of action, at the interpersonal as well as transpersonal level. But we would like to begin by discussing the relation between freedom and inclusion in a free society. Then we will describe the qualities of commonist mediation, based on voluntariness and collective disposal, before suggesting some changes our individuality might experience in a commonist society. Finally, an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) closes the chapter.

We will often present dynamics in a concrete, descriptive form. However, these *scenarios* only serve the purpose of illustration and should not be mistaken for categorical specifications.

1   Freedom and Inclusion: The Capacity of Human Beings

We cannot define the free society in detail or "ornament" it. We cannot say how it will actually work. But we can grasp basic dynamics at a categorical level. Comprehending the free society means substantiating it. We cannot say how people will behave in commonism. Such a statement would be based on a false determinism (cf. "reasons", p. 120). But we can ask which conditions encourage which actions and make them functional, therefore allowing us to accept the suggestion as well-based. Two questions—one based on the other—are constructive:

1. Under what conditions does individual development *not mean infringing* the individual development of other people?—The point here is: how can we exclude exploitation, suppression and domination?
2. Under what conditions does individual development *become a precondition* for the individual development of other people?—The point here is: how can the logic of inclusion establish itself as a societal principle?

However, do we really need to include other people? Is it not sufficient to simply not dominate them? The connection between freedom and inclusion we discuss in our first section (for →The concept of inclusion cf. p. 117).

1.1   Free Society and Its Inclusive Conditions

Free society is a big concept. We will try to give substance to it. Freedom at the individual level involves possibilities. These possibilities have been coined agency (cf. p. 118) by Critical Psychology. We possess agency when we are able to get to know our →needs (p. 113), unfold them and satisfy them. The more agency we have, the freer we are. As we live together with other people in a context of societal cooperation, our possibilities of

satisfaction are linked to those of other people. If I, for instance, consume agro-industrial food, this might result in other people losing pristine recreational opportunities due to monoculture farming.

Commons

Commons describe "resources (code, knowledge, food, sources of energy, water, land, time etc.), which develop from self-organised processes of common, need-oriented production*, management, preservation and/or use (commoning)" (German Wikipedia: Commons, transl. M.R.). The precursors of the commons are traditional "*Allmende*" (historical commons), originally denoting those areas of medieval villages which were used and maintained collectively by all village inhabitants. These commons were an important part of the production* of provisions, secured by many social processes and rules. Numerous early forms of collective disposal (commoning) appeared here, mostly the disposal of material (e.g., land) and symbolic (e.g., stories) life conditions, even though they were limited by social hierarchies. Research on the commons, apart from these traditional commons (cf. p. 143), looks into modern practices of collective disposal such as music sharing, squats, free spaces, climate camps, appropriated factories, software, town, climate, oceans and so on. Crucially, no resource is a commons in itself (e.g., oceans), but resources and means *become* commons (cf. Helfrich 2012) through →collective disposal (p. 145) and the resulting inclusive relationships (cf. Meretz 2012). These commons are often characterised by →voluntariness (p. 144), need orientation and inclusive dynamics. We build on this research on the commons and examine how an entire society could be organised on the basis of commoning.

Human freedom is not a detached ideal; it emerges within and by virtue of society. It does not simply turn up; it is built. Human freedom is a societal freedom. As a consequence, it is always linked to the freedom of others and does not live a lonely life isolated from the freedom of others. The absence of domination is a nice idea. However, it is inadequate if the concept assumes the existence of a neutral reference between people. Societal freedom can be exclusive—in those cases where my needs are best served at the expense of others—or it can be inclusive—then my needs are better

satisfied when they include the satisfaction of the needs of others. Therefore, the negative specification of the absence of domination only becomes a reality in the positive specification of general inclusion. Due to the dependence of freedom on society, the absence of domination can only be achieved by inclusion, an inclusion applicable to all. Our thesis is: I am free only if my freedom rests on the freedom of the others. General freedom is linked to general inclusion, and vice versa.

Voluntariness

Voluntariness, that is, acting according to one's own free will, is located in the relation between necessity and possibilities. A free will presupposes the *relation of possibility* to the world, as developed above (Chap. 5, 1.2), because it means being able to act one way with reasons and another way with other reasons. If I have a lot of alternatives at my disposal, my space of opportunity is large. If the necessities set the tone, it is small. It would be ideal if the voluntarily realised possibilities automatically covered the necessities. In that case, *motivation* reaches its peak. In principle, that is possible. No one is forced to produce his/her required items on his/her own, but we deal with provisions universally and share activities in society. That makes individual life much easier, in principle, because it depends on societal organisation. If I am *forced* to contribute to the societal provisions because my life depends on it, my space of possibility is contaminated. If fear dictates my choice of possibility, my voluntariness is deformed or even totally reversed—and motivation hits rock bottom. Inversely: when I not coerced and I am able to choose my possibilities of my own free will, my motivation is much higher. That is only possible in a free society, which is always a society of secured existence. Voluntariness here is a characteristic of freedom and does not depend on the absolute size of the space of possibility.

Conclusion: Voluntariness comprises the unlimited unfolding of our relation of possibility to the world.

However, everyday life tells a different story: "A person's freedom ends where another man's freedom begins" (attributed to Immanuel Kant). Here the assumption is that possible actions limit each other, that they are mutually exclusive. And this carries some societal truth. It is the isolated

capitalist concept of freedom: the freedom of others threatens my own freedom. Freedom becomes alive through actions, and the main purpose of acting is the satisfaction of needs. Thus, the needs of other people—or even other people themselves—are a danger to me, given that they limit my needs and the satisfaction of my needs. The other way round: under the condition of limited resources, my freedom only expands if the freedom of others decreases. This "freedom" is a freedom subjected to exclusion, an *excluding freedom*. Neoliberalism can be defined as a radicalised ideology of excluding freedom. In this context, morality and state intervention are required to stop people from "excessively" expanding their freedom and the satisfaction of their needs at the expense of others. However, a different freedom is possible: in a society where my freedom and the freedom of the others correspond in a positive way, in a society of *inclusive freedom*.

Collective Disposal

Disposal governs my capacity to participate in a proactive production* of life conditions (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2). A closed form of disposal, for example via property, limits my possibilities to shape the conditions of my life according to my needs. An open disposal requires collective processes of mediating different needs. Openness must be organised. In principle, all people can partake in the disposal of the various means. On the flip side, that means nobody can be generally excluded from the disposal of means. This disposal can only be inclusive if there are no longer means of domination that force people into doing things against their will. At the same time, resources, provisions and living spaces must be produced, maintained and, if necessary, improved. Therefore, disposal always involves practical activity and participation, which in a society with shared activities can only be done collectively. And this cooperation can only be exercised collectively.

Bottom line: Collective disposal is the free interpersonal and transpersonal cooperative disposal of life conditions. This is the material basis of voluntariness.

The freedom of others is no danger to me in a society where it subjectively makes sense to include their needs. If the satisfaction of the needs of

others is best served by including mine, I have no reason to be afraid of their actions, their needs, their freedom and, ultimately, the people themselves. On the contrary, my options for satisfaction and my freedom increase when others expand their freedom. Only like this can freedom as inclusive freedom, or—what is the same—general freedom, comes to its own. Such an inclusive society realises the freedom of the individual by realising everyone's freedom. It is an "association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx and Engels 1848). It needs this societal unfolding of freedom to make our unfolded individuality the foundation of society. The individual must no longer be subordinate to society. Society fosters the development of our needs, their unfolding and fulfilment, and acknowledges us as individual, unique people. On the basis of our unfolded individuality, society comes into its own and, in doing so, allows everyone to grow.[1]

> **Conflicts**
> Conflicts reflect incompatibilities between various positions; at least one position regards them as a limitation. In this book, we are mainly interested in conflicts regarding →needs (p. 113) and in the forms of settling them at the interpersonal and transpersonal level—in exclusively as well as inclusively structured societies.

The societal unfolding of freedom can be once again theoretically sharpened at the level of the individual. People possess agency when they are in command of their life conditions. As the production* of life conditions is societally mediated, we only achieve this disposal by *participating* in the disposal of the societal process, the proactive production* of our life conditions. This disposal reaches its peak amidst inclusive conditions, for it is free from fear. It is not unstable and precarious anymore. Others do not have "good reasons" to limit my disposal. Their disposal of the societal process is not limited by mine; on the contrary, it is enhanced. Here, inclusion is not a (moral) will-based relationship but a structural one,

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[1] Our entire text is pervaded by an "immaterial" concept of freedom and unfolding, focused on relationship. While critical theoretical traditions often underline the conditions (level of productive forces and division of labour), we emphasise the human capacity to create need-oriented relationships and an inclusive mediation. It might appear one-sided, but our focus is the result of reflexion, and we believe this capacity has been unduly neglected so far.

fostered by the societal structures. But is such an inclusive society possible? What are its foundations? What societal structures make inclusion a subjective reasoning, a subjectively sensible action, an individual rationality?

1.2 Basics of Commoning: Voluntariness and Collective Disposal

We believe we have identified two structural elements generating societal inclusive conditions. These are →voluntariness (p. 144) and →collective disposal (p. 145), which we have hinted at in the previous chapter (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2) and which will be explained in detail below. They characterise the social relationships that exist in an inclusive society. Just like separated production and →property (p. 130)—and, hence, the commodity—are the basis of the capitalist form of mediations, these elements are the basis of the commonist form of mediation, *commoning* and, hence, the →commons (p. 143). As we consider commodity the elementary form of the system form capitalism, so we consider the commons the elementary form of the system form commonism (cf. also Dyer-Witheford 2007). This connection is illustrated in Fig. 6.1, according to the categories developed in Chap. 5, 2.
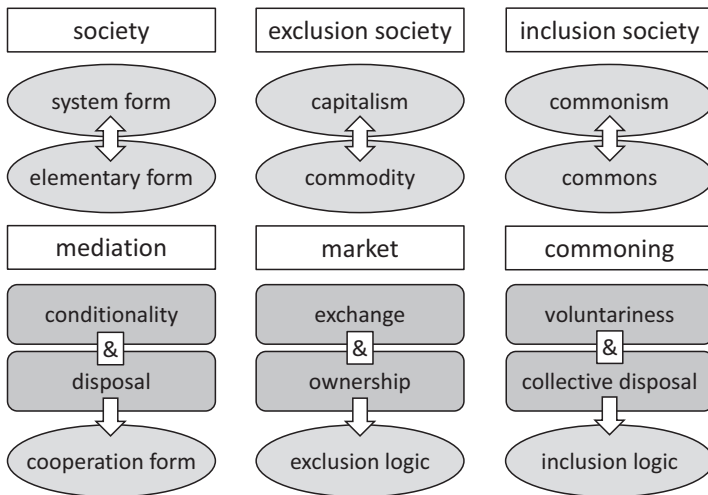

Fig. 6.1 Capitalism (centred) and commonism (right side) in a schematic comparison according to the categories (left side)

Our specification of basic commoning is preliminary, as we are still involved in the research process, together with other people. Our train of thought in a glance: Commoning is a social relationship based on voluntariness and collective disposal, generating a logic of inclusion and leading to inclusive conditions. This should now be explained in detail.

Inclusive conditions are incompatible with a pressure to contribute to society, with the "right to exist" being glued to the "obligation to contribute". Commonism is based on self-selection, on people choosing their own activities. We will only do what we consider important, necessary, or satisfying—in any case, that which we are motivated to do. Motivated activities are the ones that are positively evaluated from the emotional point of view after the individual assessment of the estimated positive changes, on the one hand, and the efforts and risks, on the other. Our emotions here play a decisive role. Abstract rules and forces, like money or domination, no longer dictate our activities; our needs and our emotional and cognitive perception of the world now take command. The principle of voluntariness is a highly challenging concept, for it requires a totally different form of societal organisation. In the commons context, this element is also termed "contributing instead of exchanging" (cf. Siefkes 2007; Habermann 2016). Pressing issues, such as "but then nobody will do anything" or "who will collect the rubbish"?" will be answered below.

Voluntariness is closely linked to the second element fostering inclusion: *collective disposal* of the means of consumption and reproduction. The material, symbolic and social means of consumption in the broadest sense must be openly available to all people. Otherwise, the danger arises that people might be excluded from the satisfaction of their needs because of missing participation. The same applies to the means of re/production. If they take the form of property, people are structurally excluded and do not have the option of disposal of the proactive production*of life conditions. However, collective disposal does not mean that everybody is entitled to everything or can demand participation in everything. Collective disposal means that no one can be excluded from available material, symbolic and social means in an abstract way, such as due to a general rule (a law or similar).

Collective disposal takes three different forms: Firstly, the re/producers of one commons collectively dispose of their means of production*: factory, wood, task organisation and so on. They choose what and how to re/produce and how to distribute the produced means. However, they are not isolated from other commons but, rather, fundamentally dependent

on them. The commons are encouraged to include the needs of their cooperative partners; if they exclude all others, their partners will finally withdraw from the cooperation. This is an important incentive for inclusion: by mutually including cooperating partners, all actors along the line are eventually encouraged to make inclusive decisions. Secondly, some means will be simply distributed openly; an example of this are places resembling modern-day supermarkets but without checkout. Open distribution depends on the means, which commonist society decides to produce in sufficient quantity. This can apply to the "basics", such as food, clothing, medicine and so on. Thirdly, certain means will be limited and distributed on a need-oriented basis. If limited means were to be distributed according to power or performance, voluntariness would be contaminated. Questions of collective disposal will certainly lead to →conflicts (p. 146) surrounding the use of these means. In this case, a mediation of these conflicts is needed, which, however, will assume a form not forfeiting basic inclusion. Understandably, the question arises on how open disposal is possible under the condition of limitation; we shall address this further on. The general issue of conflicts will be pursued after developing the inclusive society in more detail.

We are convinced that a society based on voluntariness and collective disposal generates inclusive conditions. Inclusive conditions require an *absence of means of domination*. Inclusion becomes subjectively functional when I cannot dominate other people or make them do things. Then I cannot simply ignore their needs, stop them or suppress them; I must include them. Certainly, there will be exclusion in an inclusive society—based on →power (p. 4) for its enforcement—even if only linked to outright physical superiority or similar. Inclusion does not pervade absolutely everything; it only does so to a degree that is decisive. However, exclusions will be much more difficult to exercise, and inclusion will provide for a much better, more solid satisfaction of needs. To test our concept, we can therefore ask: are there instruments of domination? Can people prevail at the expense of others? And, most significantly: is it subjectively functional to use these instruments of domination?

Now we want to deal with two important references of voluntariness and collective disposal: necessity and limitation. After that, we will try to develop the concept of the commonist inclusive society. We will ponder on the idea of how a society based on voluntariness and collective disposal can come into being, be preserved and mediate itself. And we will test whether it can actually create inclusive conditions.

Voluntariness and Necessity: Who Cares About Waste Disposal?

The statement "We do freely what is important to us" is often met with a capitalistic lack of understanding: "Impossible! Everyone will be sunbathing on the beach and the important jobs will be left undone". When asked whether they would like to spend their life reclining on the beach—and not just enjoy a week of regeneration—the sceptics almost never agree. It is always the others causing the problem, "If it weren't for them". Indeed, for most people the idea of a land of milk and honey or of an "oral communism", where everyone lounges around and consumes, is not a utopia—even if the left promises to reactivate such notions again and again—for example, with slogans such as "Let's live the beautiful life", accompanied by a white, palm-lined beach for illustration. However, there is a truth involved: paid labour in capitalism is predominantly characterised by burden and agony. What happens with unpleasant activities in commonism?

To begin with, nobody can be forced to do unpleasant activities. Thus, activities should be organised in such a way that they are motivating. This could mean automatising them, sharing them (e.g., disposing of waste for half a day instead of 40 hours), making them more pleasant and so on. We know that the human occupational drive oscillates "between pleasure and necessity" (Kratzwald 2014). We do not only do the pleasant things but also follow our motivation, even if there is some hassle involved. Motivation is the result of an assessment between expected positive changes and the efforts and risks involved (cf. p. 119). Being able to determine our own conditions motivates us to undergo considerable efforts, if the result promises satisfaction and happiness.

Feminists have pointed out that, particularly in the area of care, necessities have an existential character, and there is often no room for delay (Praetorius 2015). There is a high degree of motivation involved in responding to a crying child and seeing to its well-being. Are "pleasure and necessity" not intricately connected here? And does the same not apply to software development, where the tackling of a newly detected, security-related error brooks no delay because millions of people are using the software? And does fixing the software, as well as caring for the child, not involve a pleasant feeling of satisfaction when the error is eliminated and the child is content again?

At this point we want to develop a more fundamental approach to this question for, generally speaking, it is about the relation between necessity and freedom. The commons researcher Friederike Habermann criticises

Marx's claim that "the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and outer expediency ceases" (1894, p. 828). She questions Marx's opposing freedom and expediency: "As far as it (working) is determined by necessity, yes. But by expediency? When Marx wrote *Capital* was he in the realm of necessity? Or might he even have enjoyed it sometimes? If yes, does that render his works irrelevant to us?" (Habermann 2016, p. 83).

Marx speaks *of external* expediency, but what else could that be than the proactive production* of our life conditions? Can this not also simultaneously be the self-defined *inner* expediency, the self-definition of purposes, ergo our unfolding in freedom, which is the freedom of everybody? Did Marx forget his Hegel here? Did he forget that necessity and freedom take opposite shapes in capitalism, and that this, however, does not apply "in all societal formations and under all possible modes of production" (Marx, ibid.)?

The contrast Marx clearly experienced at his time can be overcome in commonism. The self-determined satisfaction of our needs through the free disposal of our life conditions does not have to be a contradiction. On the contrary, freedom becomes true in the free and creative unfolding of the necessities of life. Life itself, when at our disposal, is beautiful.

Openness and Limitation: Who Gets the House with a Sea View?

There will also be limitations in commonism. It will not be possible to settle all needs (at once). I cannot have everything or do whatever I want. I cannot dispose of all of my life conditions as I cannot contribute everywhere. Therefore, disposal takes the form of *participation* in disposal. Mere participation in disposal is no problem if others, while including my needs, dispose of the rest of life conditions. In addition, however, needs must be prioritised while producing* and disposing of them. We can certainly avoid prioritising by producing* sufficient means (enough houses with a sea view) or use these upon collective consultation; however, we cannot settle the problem completely. It is also clear that life provisions, ranging high in societal esteem, will get high priority to allow for an open disposal by all people. Also, open disposal does not mean other people demanding (co-)disposal of the toothbrush I use, my pullover or flat. In some places a commonist society will establish stable conditions of disposal and possession. However, these are not enforced by a central power, but are fundamentally changeable. The local bread-distribution commons dispose of the bread, but if this disposal turns exclusive and increasingly

disregards needs, there will be opposition and, for example, a different distribution commons will be established, guaranteeing that bread producers will perform a need-oriented distribution.

Resources and possibilities are always limited. Therefore, there can and will be conflicts (cf. Chap. 6, 3.5). We are used to settling conflicts under conditions of exclusion: "How can I satisfy my needs and get my house with a sea view?" Under inclusive conditions conflicts are settled in a fundamentally different way. My needs are not simply opposed to the needs of others, but all concerned are interested in how they can best satisfy their needs collectively. How can we use the houses with a sea view in a way that is best tailored to our needs? This is the conflict problem put in an inclusive way. Openness, disposal and limitation thus turn into the collective question of tailoring and using our conditions according to our needs.

2   Production* and Use

The commonist way of producing* the societal life conditions is based on the logic of voluntariness. Voluntariness only works if the form and organisation of society cater for the needs of society in the best way. This applies to the productive as well as the sensual-vital dimension of needs (cf. p. 117). People want to dispose of the process of production* and shape it in order to minimise existential anxiety and being at the mercy of circumstances (productive dimension). On the other hand, production and preservation are supposed to be enjoyed and to satisfy needs like curiosity, entertainment, coming together and so on (sensual-vital dimension). Production* takes place in direct cooperation, given that each concrete activity is carried out individually or in interpersonal relationships (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2). We will call these forms of direct cooperation *commons*, in line with our analysis that the →commons (p. 143) represent the basic social form of activity (=elementary form) in commonism (=system form) (cf. Chap. 6, 1.2 and Fig. 6.1, p. 147). The concrete form a commons assumes depends on the existing conditions (resources, people, requirements etc.). This is an empirical problem and cannot be dealt with in detail.

If a commons is not capable of including the needs of the re/producers, it will sooner or later disintegrate. Here, disintegration is an important means of regulation: it releases bound resources, makes people wiser and opens up space for new developments. The need-oriented form of production* will present itself in the organisation of activities. Commons developing authoritarian or top-down organisational forms will not persist for

long, for they will have limited voluntary support or none at all. Why should people engage in such a context? People can satisfy their needs better when they can dispose of the environment of their activities and design it according to their wishes. A self-created framework always suits one's needs better than an externally imposed one. Abstract role definitions—such as "boss"—will probably end up in the list of words on the brink of extinction. Here too, voluntariness has a role to play: qualifications can be acknowledged and respected. Instead of formal status, it is specific contributions that count. To the extent that people contribute voluntarily, only the commons that actually include the needs of people will thrive in the long run.

Voluntariness also requires self-organisation. Self-organisation—determining one's own purposes, aims and forms of cooperation—means that the contributors themselves define what they want to do and how they want to do it, how they design their commons. No plan or societal generality (cf. Chap. 6, 3.6) tells them what to do. They themselves decide what is important. And they themselves decide on the rules—concrete, flexible agreements—they want to obey. They decide on the decision process. Here, shared experiences of sound practices play an important role; but they never appear as an abstract and unquestionable framework, as is the case, for example, with general law. On the contrary, the framework is always adapted and applied according to the needs of the people organising a commons.

The guideline for production* is determined by the needs of those who act. In the case of interpersonal relationships, it is perfectly clear that *specific persons* benefit from the result of the activities and are motivated by the satisfaction of their needs (such is the case of care activities). But why should re/productively active people consider the needs of all others, of *others in general*? The self-determined definition of the purpose of production* is not detached from the needs of other people. Cooperative production* aims at participating in the societal disposal of the proactive creation of life conditions. Re/productively active people want to co-design society according to their needs. Participation, co-design and inclusion are only ensured through a performed contribution that delivers a satisfactory result. Only then is the contribution societally "realised" and, thus, acknowledged. Therefore, at the emotional level it is obvious that re/producing things nobody uses is not very rewarding. So, to include the needs of the users is subjectively functional—that is, it makes sense—but not mandatory. By including the needs of the users in production*, the

productive dimension of needs of the users is indirectly involved: their needs are part of the re/production process. In this sense, the ability to satisfy the needs of others becomes a need in itself. Here, too, the idea is that people will be more eager to contribute to commons that re/produce desired means of consumption and living spaces and, thus, satisfy needs better. Others will dissolve or change. How the information about the needs of the users gets to the re/producers, we deal with in the next section on mediation.

Self-defining the aims of production and preservation entails putting an end to the separation of spheres. Separating a "reproductive-private" sphere of preservation in the household, children and care from a "productive-public" sphere of work and money does not make sense anymore. Production and preservation—in short, production* (cf. p. 10)—always take place *on the basis* of needs and *for the satisfaction* of needs. Production and reproduction coincide. What difference would there be between a commons for child-care and a commons for producing washing machines? Both satisfy important needs. This also means that the gender attribution of "female" to reproduction and "male" to production—and the subsequent gender-based division of tasks according to gender—does not make sense anymore. Excluding gender relations and other structures of exclusion will be dealt with in detail below (Chap. 6, 5.3).

The process of utilisation itself is more than a sensual-vital act, it also involves creative aspects. The produced means are not simply consumed; the satisfying quality is mainly realised in the way items are enjoyed—for example, in the savouring of a delicious meal or participating in a culture of enjoyment. The way the means are used points towards the conditions of use likely to maximise the satisfaction of needs. Just as the sensual-vital dimension of needs gains from production* due to voluntariness, we expect the productive dimension of needs to play a more important role in the process of utilisation. The separated satisfaction of the sensual-vital dimension of needs while using (pleasure, joy etc.) and the productive dimension while producing* (designing, deciding etc.) diminishes. We assume that, in commonism, the separation of production* and utilisation will decrease enormously. We re/produce with great delight, and we satisfy our enthusiasm while re/producing. This "universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc." of the individuals, so says Marx in the *Grundrisse* (1858, p. 387), is the real human-societal wealth, while the "real […] wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections" (Marx and Engels 1846, p. 37).

3   MEDIATION THROUGH COMMONING

We now have arrived at a thrilling aspect. How do the re/producers gain knowledge about the preferences or needs of the users? On what information basis can new projects of production and preservation be founded? Under what circumstances and in which ways will conflicts of aims and needs be negotiated? How do we deal with limited resources and possibilities in commonism? These questions guide us to the area of *mediation* and its design through *commoning*. Mediation basically takes place via means. These are the medium of mediation in its specific form. In capitalism the means reflect exchange as the form of mediation and the logic of exclusion and exploitation that arises from it. They represent the societal logic. Material means—such as kitchen appliances—are often difficult to repair, requiring the purchase of a new one in case of a defect. Symbolic means—such as cultural goods—are artificially restricted in order to maintain their status of commodities. Social means—such as methods of work organisation—allow for a highly cost-efficient exploitation of human labour. The logic of the capitalist society is put into practice via means as concrete *calls for action*. The means embody the ways in which they must be treated in order to be produced successfully, sold and consumed. They connect people; they are the practical mediation of society. The same is true in commonism.

> **Independent Self-Replicating Mediation**
> It is important to understand the meaning of societal mediation in capitalism, for most people think there is no alternative. This view shapes and restricts our understanding of society and mediation. For example, we can hardly imagine that something as complex as society can be consciously designed by us people. The characteristic of capitalism is "unwitting sociality". It appears when two dynamics merge: societal mediation emerges "behind the back" of the people (independent self-replication) and inverts the relation between the subjectively intended satisfaction of needs (social process) and the objectively enforced valorisation (material process). The element of self-replication, the basis of all societies, in capitalism usurps an independent position of constraint against the needs of people. We cannot control capitalism anymore, but capitalism controls us.

Commonism will reflect the elementary logic of commoning: voluntariness and collective disposal, which—according to our thesis—yield conditions of inclusion. *Material means*—such as the means of re/production—provide the material prerequisites for the highest possible unfolding and satisfaction of productive and reproductive activities. *Symbolic means*—such as freely available cultural assets and knowledge—are acquired in all their richness and contribute to an unfolding of a lifestyle of enjoyment. *Social means*—such as methods of self-organisation and communication—will become sources of self-development and allow for a design of activities as pleasurable as possible. In commonism, means also objectify the societal logic and the relevant inclusive calls to action. The forms of dwelling, mobility, communication create new forms of relations between people. Even while eating, we support a re/production designed according to the needs of the people involved. Our everyday life is inclusive.

For us, the notion of mediation (German: "Ver-Mittlung"—via means), of coming together via means in the broadest sense, is an important opening towards imagining something as complicated as society. A logic of inclusion does not operate in an abstract way; it imprints itself into the material, symbolic, and social means and, thus, into the conditions of our lives. Therefore, it is not necessary for individuals to constantly reflect on the needs of others and include them—this would not even be possible in transpersonal relationships. On the contrary, these needs are already *incorporated in the means* of daily use. This way, the conditions of inclusion—just like the conditions of exclusion in capitalism—are present in people's everyday activities via the means.

3.1   *Commonist Mediation*

In order to understand commonist mediation, let us contrast it with that in capitalism. In capitalism, social mediation—and thus the →coherence (p. 126) of society—does not only occur behind the back of the people, it has also turned into →independent self-replication (p. 155): "Their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which controls the producers instead of being controlled by them" (Marx 1890, p. 89). We have tried to conceptualise that as *domination* via *structures* (cf. p. 135) and *independent self-replication of conditions* (cf. p. 19). Prices and markets are not shaped by the people but are an unwitting societal phenomenon, one dissociated from the conscious actions of the people. The transpersonal

level of material socialisation has become independent from the interpersonal level of acting and dominates the actions of people. However, societal mediation can be different.

A popular alternative tries to conceptualise societal mediation at the interpersonal level. Only at the interpersonal level can the needs of others be included. The questions arise: how can we include the needs of *everybody* and prioritise? How can we guarantee the production* of the required means? Quite rightly, opposition immediately arises: the free society, a plenum of a huge flat-sharing community, a meeting in a football stadium? This alternative conceptualises society in a simple and direct manner, in the form of interpersonal consultations. It is the attempt to *arrange transpersonal relationships at the interpersonal level*. However, there is some truth in this idea. If we want society to be organised on the basis of people's needs, this must be done by concrete people in concrete relationships. And concrete relationships can only be direct, interpersonal. However, it is the concept of mediation which allows for a connection of interpersonal formability and societal independence. We do *not* need to build and arrange *everything*. We do not need to tell everybody our needs. We do not need to do the impossible and include the needs of humanity in every conflict. The structures of a voluntary and collectively disposing societal cooperation not only make the inclusion of other people easier but also encourage it.

Another alternative tries to delegate the organisation of societal mediation to a central institution. Societal relationships should be consciously planned instead of resulting from uncontrolled market mechanisms. The idea sounds tempting, but here too the question arises: how can we include the needs of *everybody* and prioritise them? How can we make sure that the means desired are the means produced? As we know, this is what broke the neck of socialist societies with central planning. They could not find a positive solution. However, that is only an empirical argument. In our view, there is a logical flaw in the concept of a society based on central planning as the form of societal mediation. Although it may seem different at first, central planning is related to the image of a "flat-sharing community in a football stadium". It transcends it solely in the insight that direct coordination of the tasks to be regulated with gigantic numbers of people is impossible. It involves a hierarchy of intermediate stages, integrating information on needs and resources and passing it on upwards, until a reasonably sized institution that is capable of acting starts planning on this basis. Indeed, here interpersonal priorities can be determined, and resource

allocation can be planned. So, this is another case of attempting to arrange transpersonal relationships at the interpersonal level—this time through the hierarchical accumulation of information and requirements.

Along a similar line, other approaches speak of safeguarding the controllability of cumulative-hierarchical levels by way of elected and replaceable councils. In our view, these are versions of the same concept: cumulative planning through a hierarchical organisation. They all entail the same fundamental problems: in the process of the cumulative-hierarchical transfer upwards, the people not affected must solve conflicts of needs and resource allocation. The resulting conflict resolutions put the parties concerned in an awkward position: the solutions are not mine, why should I comply? The crux of the matter is that alienation in capitalism results from the fact that material mediation via the market takes control; in hierarchical, cumulatively planning societies it results from "planning for others". Our conclusion is that planning can only be self-planning. Indeed, conflict solutions can be developed in many places; however, solutions cannot be imposed from above, they must be worked out and put into practice in a self-determined way (cf. Chap. 6, 3.6). A "planning for others" that includes "implementation from above" always leads to a separated generality disposing of the means of domination (cf. Chap. 1, 3.3).

3.2   *Simultaneity of Shapeability and Autonomy*

We will try to clarify the concept of society and its aspect of autonomy. All human activities are direct and interpersonal. Society is a human phenomenon; therefore it is the result of individual actions. However, these individual actions create a complex phenomenon. The (societal) whole is more than the sum of its (action) parts. Society is an emerging (resulting) phenomenon. The elementary actions, by their definite *form*, create a specific societal whole, the system form (cf. Chap. 5, 2.1). This societal whole in turn frames individual and collective activity and pushes it into a certain form. It is obvious to secure one's existence in the given society and to use what is recommended. Actions and society are mutually dependent. However, society is the decisive pole. It sets the conditions of actions and is independent from individual actions. Society exists even if single actions are not in line with the form and logic encouraged by society. Businesses might try to do without exploitation; capitalism will, nevertheless, continue to exist. What is crucial for us is that societal independence *must not necessarily* turn into independent self-replication.

Independence means that society sets a framework for actions. Independent self-replication means that society sets a framework for actions which can be modified but not overcome or fundamentally changed. The capitalist form of society produces the independent self-replicative frame of exploitation and exclusion. These aims dominate people's activity and develop their exclusive effect in this frame. The commonist society creates—in our view, through voluntariness and collective disposal—an independent frame of inclusion. However, this inclusive frame precisely necessitates the debate on the aims of societal re/production. There is no independent mechanism dictating how various decisions are made—as the dictate of valorisation does in capitalism. Inclusion is encouraged, but conflicts of needs cannot be automatically settled. They must be mediated by the people themselves. They must decide what the aims of their re/production are. We stressed this when speaking of production* with the emphasis on self-organisation. Inclusive societal conditions require organisation and social awareness.

Production* takes place on the basis of the needs of the users and contributors. When people get together for the production* of consumption means and the required means of re/production, then, generally speaking, the reference-based coordination between production/preservation and utilisation is sufficient. We will deal with this aspect in the next section on commonist stigmergy (Chap. 6, 3.3). However, as soon as conflicts arise between different needs or regarding limited resources and their prioritised use, they must be mediated interpersonally. As demonstrated in the context of cumulative-hierarchical planning, conflicts of needs cannot be decided upon by anonymous mediation without resulting in alienation; instead they must be interpersonally negotiated. Needs change, they are individual or collective and, therefore, cannot be appropriately mediated through a general—thus necessarily abstract—external mechanism refraining from the concrete case such as a computer algorithm, a democratic vote, or other. The mediation of needs on the basis of inclusion is so complex, its conflicts are so manifold and complicated that only the people themselves can settle them; ergo interpersonal relationships are required. In contrast to daily life, which is by and large free of conflicts, conflicts must be taken out of transpersonal mediation and integrated into a space of interpersonal regulation. Today the cookie crumbles differently; in line with the logic of exclusion, money or domination decide on conflicts. Commonism sets a different pattern. Conflicts only find a functional solution if the people involved agree to it. We will expand on this dynamic in

the section on conflicts. What we want to emphasise here is that, in the case of conflict, transpersonal inclusive conditions require an interpersonal mediation. How does self-organisation come into play?

A structure setting its own purpose is self-organised. That is the prerequisite in order to be organised according to the needs of the parties involved. Self-organisation must be organised at the interpersonal as well as transpersonal level. At the transpersonal level, however, self-organisation is not a conscious determination of aims by a global panel, central planning committee or world council, but an emergent phenomenon arising from interpersonal self-organisation and its mediation. This mediation is based on stigmergy and interpersonal conflict regulation. In many different places—in projects of production, preservation, dwelling, conflict situations and so on—people voluntarily come together in order to organise their activities—production, preservation, dwelling, mediation of conflicts and so on—according to their needs, thus organising themselves. A commonist society does not function on the basis of a societal plan but rests on self-planning, on the self-determination of purposes by the people. It is not a planned society but one of self-organisation. Commonist mediation—commoning—does not plan society but allows for self-planning and the self-organisation of the people.

3.3   Commonist Stigmergy

Stigmergy is a concept that describes the coordination of communication in a decentralised system comprising a large number of individuals (e.g., a swarm, cf. swarm intelligence): the individuals communicate by influencing their local environment. They leave hints (cf. *stigma*: signs). That can be the package leaflet of a drug or the form of a light bulb. Stigmergy is all around us in daily life, whether it is a sign at traffic lights, toilet signs, or the "message" conveyed by the shape of a chair on how we should sit on it. We live in a sign-based system of coordinates. The concept of stigmergy derives from research on termites (Grassé 1959): termites implement stigmergic effects via odorous substances, for example, when building termite mounds. Each animal gathers a small ball of mud from the environment, adds a specific odorous substance, and installs it in the common building. The odour tells the next termite how to proceed with the building process. However, stigmergy can not only be found in the animal kingdom; the market is also a stigmergic system.

Each society is kept in motion by stigmergy and, thus, is mediated by signs. The simple explanation is that we do not relate to other people directly, that is, interpersonally; the connection is transpersonal, via material, symbolic, and social means. Signs enable us to make rational decisions as far as society is concerned, that is, decisions in line with the societal conditions. The signs convey to us the societal logic, the rationale of action. In capitalism, one essential transpersonal sign is the price of a commodity, even though its production displays quite a number of signs, such as load-bearing capacity, fat content, weight and so on. It is on the basis of prices that businesses calculate their rationality of production. It is on the basis of prices that people decide whether to buy or sell things. In all our life, prices enable us to adjust our decisions according to the capitalist logic of valorisation. They reduce the complexity of the societal logic to our local action situation and enable us to go along with it. They enable us to save money, pursue our personal advantage, invest our money advantageously, pick a promising job and so on. They allow for a decentralised societal coordination based on indirect signs. Nobody tells us directly what society advocates; but, day after day, the signs themselves—through myriads of hints—illuminate the logic of society. These signs establish a coherence between individual decisions and societal conditions. In commonism there will also be signs, thus an indirect coordination. However, these signs do not communicate the logic of exploitation and →exclusion (p. 17) but that of inclusion.

Commonist signs communicate needs. They allow for the inclusion of the needs of others in our actions. They suggest what we can do. They connect our conscious decisions with societal inclusion. For that purpose, the signs cannot be one-dimensional, quantitative in character; they must be multi-dimensional with a qualitative shape. For example, the signs will communicate where contributors are needed and what aim a project is pursuing. They will point a steel commons towards someone who needs steel. They will direct a cleaning-commons towards a place where it is needed. They inform an innovation commons on the need to automate sulphur extraction because it is harmful for humans. They enable a farming commons to plan their production* for the following year. And they hint at conflicts which must be settled. This also leads to indirect coordination, resulting from the existence of many signs of needs which condense into *societal traces of needs*. Our needs guide societal re/production via traces of needs. The traces of needs enable us to make inclusive

decisions, while the societal conditions of voluntariness and collective disposal encourage us to act in a truly inclusive way.

The medium of sign-based cooperation is the material, symbolic, and social means that we create and maintain. They are not isolated from mediation but are a part of it. In this context, stigmergy can mediate information in two ways: *process inherent* information directly emerges from the production and preservation process, and *process accompanying* information is indirectly created before the process starts or in parallel to it. The information is either *directly embodied in the means*—as in the case of a nail that tells us how to drive it in—or *indirectly attached to the means*—as in the case of a price tag assigning a price to the nail. Examples of direct process information are tracking information, the shouts of the baby, or the red links in Wikipedia. They speak of the process and are the basis of my activities in this process. In addition, there are indirect pieces of information for the purpose of planning and coordination, necessary input conditions of a process (resources, tools, nappies, energy etc.), planned exit conditions (results, secondary effects etc.), open tasks (to-do-lists), required contributions and qualifications and so on. All of these signs communicate the societal logic in many ways and enable people to act accordingly. The commonist form of sign-based coordination entails some important elements.

Self-Selection

The core element of stigmergy is the decision on which activities are to be carried out. So far, hierarchical or consensus-based decision systems have been opposing each other and marking the arena. In both cases, the individual is the recipient of the decision, while the consensus-based decision system benefits from increased participation. Commonist-stigmergic decisions rest on voluntariness. The individual plays an active part in the decision by selecting the task he/she wants to fulfil. Self-selection is grounded in local information, such as the information I have regarding the task to be fulfilled. For example, if the local waste disposal commons communicates a need for further contributors, I can join. If there are not enough contributors a conflict arises which must be rationally solved (cf. Chap. 6, 3.5); this lies outside stigmergic coordination.

Tracing of Needs

In commonist stigmergy pieces of information express needs, for the processes they emerge from are production* processes of material, symbolic,

and social conditions for the satisfaction of needs. The signs point towards the productive and sensual-vital dimensions of needs and not towards a scale of utilisation. For instance, they communicate how limited, dangerous, or demanding the production of a washing machine is. The users communicate their different needs for strawberries and the strawberry farmyard makes use of this information.

> **Network Theory**
> Each society is a network. Therefore, it can be described in terms of the network theory. Three concepts are important to us: emergence, nodes or hubs, and edges. Emergence means many single events creating something bigger, an emergent structure that results from the overcoming of the sum of single effects. Solar radiation, the wind and so on create the weather, the billions of exchanges create capitalism and inclusive activities designed to satisfy needs create commonism. Hubs are nodes of special importance in the network. They integrate information and effects. They and their relations, the edges, create the network. In capitalism businesses or state institutions are hubs. In commonism it is the commons which assume meta-tasks, that is, tasks providing for the self-organisation of other commons projects. The edges represent mediation between the nodes.

Bandwidth

Information for coordination in commonism is a matter of quality. It therefore needs a high bandwidth (capacity of data transfer) when it is communicated and becomes part of a mediation process. That is a fundamental difference between commonist stigmergy and mediation via money, which merely represent one-dimensional quantity as price. Prices cannot represent or communicate needs directly. What they represent is the logic of valorisation, whether something is profitable or not. Commonist-stigmergic information can be transported in many forms: images, texts, videos, augmented reality and so on. We assume the internet will play an important part in providing this bandwidth.

Societal Impact of Coordination

Commonist stigmergy answers Hayek's problem of knowledge in a different way than the stigmergic mediation via the market. Hayek's problem asks for a "rational" planning under the condition that knowledge is only available in a contextual, local manner, limited and dispersed. Hayek's market-friendly approach praises the exchange-shaped complexity reduction of prices and competition compared to under-complex, misguided central planning (cf. v. Hayek 1936). The market is also a form of stigmergy, albeit a very limited one considering it is only equipped with minimal bandwidth via prices. On their basis, the societal coordination of needs is a free-for-all battle.

The commonist-stigmergic inclusive coordination of needs must rest on rich, qualitative information. Global, open information enables the individual to participate where needs can be satisfied in a better way than anywhere else. Comprehensive signs allow for a complex mediation of needs. The logic of the signs does not aim at valorisation but at the satisfaction of needs. Commonist stigmergy allows for a design of the conditions according to our needs and does not put us under the pressure of an abstract logic. It does not organise the societal process but creates the conditions for societal self-organisation. It allows for an indirect self-regulation and self-selection on the basis of the needs of all people. Thus, local activity is inclusive and need-oriented: it unfolds on the basis of everybody's needs. Stigmergy is the foundation for an emergent, coherent, integrated outcome in a society with the highest possible satisfaction of needs.

Societal coordination does not materialise merely at the interpersonal level, even though interpersonal cooperation is its basis. Commonism does not give transpersonal relationships an interpersonal shape, for example, in the forms of central planning or hierarchical council systems (cf. Chap. 6, 3.1). On the contrary, commonist-stigmergic mediation is designed for the transpersonal level of large and diverse systems—like overall societal mediation—rather than for small interpersonal units. Based on the *law of large numbers,* the analogous *stigmergic law* was coined for the transpersonal level: "If a sufficient number of people and commons is provided, there will be a person or commons for each job that needs to be

done" (Meretz 2015, 2017, 2018).[2] Such a "law" can unfold if the two conditions we mentioned above are met: the voluntary choice of activity (self-selection) and the collective disposal of action conditions.

3.4   Changeability and Ex-ante Mediation

In the market an *ex-post* (in retrospect) mediation of needs and production takes place. Businesses produce; whether there is sufficient demand for the quality and amount of their products will be revealed in the selling process (with the exception of trade between businesses, where there are also prior arrangements). In commonism this arrangement will take place *ex ante* (in advance). Production and preservation are based on anticipated needs. In the market that place is filled by price signals, experience and market research. In commonism, re/production is preceded by a stigmergic and possibly conflictual communication on needs.

Many problems can be solved before a conflict arises. For example, a coordination commons for buildings might communicate to a steel-producing commons that a school and a kindergarten should be built in its region. If the steel-producing commons finds enough people and resources to cover the requirements, there is no conflict to begin with. This clearly shows that, contrary to the ideology of economic sciences, shortage is not a natural phenomenon but a socially fabricated one. If our needs are the foundation of production*, many conflicts regarding resources will not arise at all given that the shortage will have already been overcome in the production* process. For us it is difficult to conceptualise a world with less scarcity, because in our capitalist world scarcity is the precondition for economic activity. We continually witness an enormous abundance of consumption means restricted by property and money. We simply cannot afford them. In commonism there are also limitations. However, they are not the result of an abstract principle but the consequence of natural conditions, and we decide how to use them. They are designable.

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[2] Stigmergic law is based on the *Linus law*, which Eric Raymond dedicated to Linus Torvalds, the inventor of the Linux-kernel, and refers to the accuracy of open-source software: "given enough eyeballs (checking the programme code), all bugs are shallow" (Raymond 1999). Both stigmergic and Linus law go back to the *law of large numbers*. This claims that when the number of events (e.g., coin toss) increases, a target value (e.g., the expectation that half of the results will be "heads") is approximated. In the case of stigmergic law, the variety of individual desires to act corresponds to the *events*, and compliance to the abundance of societal tasks that must be fulfilled corresponds to the *target value*.

3.5   *Conflicts in the Inclusive Society*

The term conflict already gives us the creeps, and justifiably so. In an exclusion society a conflict of needs means I must try and defend my needs, protect and enforce them. Now the heat is on: it is "I/we against the others". And I must be strong for that. Conflict means the existence of different, conflicting needs at a given moment. Conflict management, therefore, amounts to the mediation of needs; this is not something negative, least of all when the mediation of needs can assume the form of exploring and better understanding needs.

Conflicts are not a side issue or a nuisance in commonism. Commonism will be the first society in which we will have the time and possibility to actually settle conflicts. It will not be possible to simply enforce specific needs through the use of instruments of domination—whether economic, social or political—they will have to be negotiated with others. As different needs that can be in conflict with each other at a given moment also imply different goals (of action), conflicts can lead to decisions on the prioritisation of goals. The discussion on goals, and particularly on their prioritisation, is central in a free society, because a free society means being able to consciously set and define one's goals.

Maybe a thought experiment can clarify the position of conflicts. Let us assume commonism is working. Societal re/production can cover many needs, and the people produce their life conditions according to their needs on a daily basis. Sign-based coordination suffices for the "normal functioning". However, society changes, either due to new needs or due to new ideas on re/production, environmental issues or other impulses. Some changes cause no frictions, there are no conflicts of needs and society changes. Other changes cause a conflict of needs. While large parts of society function as usual, in other parts decisions are pending. These conflicts draw attention.

Technical means could possibly allow for a general adjustment and prioritising of needs—for example, via an algorithmic decision-making procedure (cf. Heidenreich 2017). However, we assume that in many cases the complexity of need mediation requires the conscious participation of people. This conscious arrangement will take place within interpersonal, direct relationships. We will meet in many different hubs and commons projects to make decisions: steel for the kindergarten or the school, space for nature or houses, how to use the house with a sea view? Not all those affected by the decisions will be present, but all those who wish to be can do so. Do the needs of the absent then tend to be overheard?

Of course, that is a real danger, but the form of mediation does not encourage the neglect or conscious ignoring of needs. For the conflict mediators, it works much better to include the needs of others, for it makes their recommended solutions more robust and significant. It will convince more people and motivate them to contribute to their implementation (cf. self-selection). If a conflict-management solution does nothing but directly enforce isolated, individual needs, it is likely to only convince a small number of people. The people will not embrace the decisions of the procedure, they will try to change the procedure itself, or turn to a new hub for a different solution. The main point is that conflict-management hubs have no instruments of domination to impose their decisions on other people. The conflict resolution cannot be enforced, it must convince. Their power is "social power, rooted in the capacity to mobilize people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions" (Wright 2011, p. 20).

Concrete agents could try to carry out exclusive actions; this, however, would put them in a quandary. A steel distributing commons that for short-sighted reasons—for example, because it makes their life easier—often applies non-inclusive actions could be faced with the problem of a steel-producing commons or logistic commons denying cooperation. People participate in this commons because it is important to them, because here they can satisfy their needs. If their cooperation commons repeatedly obstructs this satisfaction of needs, they have good reasons to look for a better cooperation partner. Therefore, the obvious choice for the concrete actors is to include many needs, for their cooperation partners will be inclined to further their cooperation.

There can be domination in commonism. But people have good reasons not to submit to these attempts at securing domination, given that there are no instruments of societal domination to support such attempts. I have nothing at my disposal to force other people to do what I want. If the streets are dirty or copper mining is poisonous, we cannot simply pay wage-earners in precarious situations to perform these jobs. We must organise things in a way that people will evaluate and experience their respective activities as important enough to carry them out. Therefore, copper mining will possibly have to be automatised at great expense, as we value the health of the people involved. It is an effort that is not profitable on the market but one which we consider is worth the cost.

A commons not able to solve the conflict will try to organise the mediation of needs in a different way. For that purpose, for example, it may be

useful to extend the conflict and have more people get consciously involved. It is very likely that there will be people with a passion for conflict mediation, experts that can be invited. Many things are possible, but one thing is for sure: there is no court of last resort that will ultimately decide on the conflict. That would require an institution of *separated generality*, for example, a state or council, located beyond mediation. This, however, would be a centre of power, an instrument of power that can become a means of domination. Conflicts will have to be settled by the people involved themselves. If they cannot settle the matter, nothing will be set in motion. The decision lies on those practically acting. No higher authority will be able to make the decision for them.

3.6   Embedded Generality

Most emancipatory utopias assume a separated institution of generality. Whether they call it state or something else is irrelevant. Elected representatives, volunteers or councils are supposed to assemble in these separate institutions to make decisions. We believe that such a separated institution entails a limitation of freedom for a lot of people. It will only be able to operate in a meaningful way if equipped with instruments of domination to enforce decisions. Even if it enforces the "objectively best" decisions, it must get past individual wills, thus suppressing and commanding them. Applying instruments of domination is not necessary but possible and, therefore, encouraged. These instruments of domination lead to a hierarchical structure of societal relations. People are not required to include the needs of others in their decisions; they can ignore them. We are afraid that such an "institution of separate generality" entails further negative dynamics.

First, there is an impulse for justification. An institution of separate generality must regard and justify its decisions as generally correct; otherwise it would not try to enforce them. In consequence, its decisions do not reflect the subjective considerations of fallible individuals and must, rather, be presented as objective and generally correct. They have to be the best solution for the problems. This urge for justification we know too well from the pretended objectivity of real-socialist party rule, which

outright claimed "The party is always right".[3] The particular opinion of some is elevated to become the "true" opinion of the general public. The opinions and needs of the "losers" are disqualified. A "separate generality" always enforces the general at the expense of the particular.

Secondly, there is a tendency towards expansion. An institution of generality tends to usurp and to centralise processes of self-organisation in the resolution of conflicts. The parties to the conflict are less and less able to find a solution and are increasingly tempted to use the institution of generality and its power to enforce their needs. This is no ill will; it is reasonable. If there is an option of powerful enforcement, it obviously makes sense to use it in order to get a quick and clear decision. Thus, we assume, conflicts become increasingly institutionalised, in turn increasing the power and importance of the institution. Although there is hope the institution might only intervene in truly important cases of conflict, we are afraid its expansion is obvious. And where does its limit lie? Which conflicts should be out of bounds for this institution? When more than ten people are involved? When it refers to a conflict within a project itself? Here too we fear that the decision-making power of the institution will expand, and it will finally produce a complicated body of laws, similar to that of the capitalist state.

As long as voluntariness is guaranteed, the institution cannot force anyone into activities. However, the restriction of exclusion via collective disposal is substantially hampered by allowing the institution to decide on the use of some of the material, symbolic and social means. Even if the institution does not "possess" them, decision-making powers lead to partial domination. In addition, this institution requires a sanctioning power with which to threaten or implement. In capitalism, as in real socialism, these decision-making and sanctioning powers are the state's prerogative, with its monopoly on the use of force.

Instead of the forceful implementation of "objective" decisions, in commonism, generally speaking, those recommendations will prevail which can best mediate different needs in an inclusive manner. In our view, this will lead to the rejection of a general institution as well as of a

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[3] The "*Song of the Party*" (German: Das Lied der Partei), also known as "*Die Partei hat immer recht*" (The Party is always right) was the party song of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, SED, the ruling party of East Germany, used as a hymn of praise. It was written by German Bohemian composer Louis Fürnberg (1909–1957). It is best known by the first line of its chorus: "*Die Partei, die Partei, die hat immer recht*" (The Party, the Party, is always right).

central societal organisation. Generality is not manufactured in a separate institution, but it is the product of many decentralised decisions and actions or, in other words, it is the product of polycentric institutions and of the multiplicity of commons. It is an emerging phenomenon. There is no societal mechanism enforcing a logic upon us. We ourselves settle need-related conflicts and make decisions while being active. The emerging spread-out generality has not been completely designed and, still, it expresses our needs. It has not been consciously planned, and yet it is the result of conscious acts of self-determined positioning and conflict management. It has no life separated from people's actions but is embedded in them. It is the lively expression of individual-societal self-organisation.

Council Communism and Its Criticism

Council communists are the anarchists of communism. They want an institution of central planning, but their representatives should be "no politicians, no government. They are messengers, carrying and interchanging the opinions, the intentions, the will of the groups of workers" (Pannekoek 1942). Councils are no government, and the council institution is no state because it lacks the essential element of a state: the power to enforce a decision. "The councils are no government; not even the most central councils bear a governmental character. For they have no means to impose their will upon the masses; they have no instruments of power. All social power is vested in the hands of the workers themselves" (ibid.). But why do the workers follow their decisions? "What enforces the accomplishment of the decisions of the councils is their moral authority. But moral authority in such a society has a more stringent power than any command or constraint from a government" (ibid.). This is the utopia of real democracy, real representation. The central councils reach perfect decisions: they take most needs and most information into account and reach the most inclusive decision. This sounds good, but it is highly idealistic.

Councils were not theoretically envisioned, but arose from self-organisation in factories, social movements and so on. In factories, workers realised that it would be too time-consuming to discuss and decide everything in the general assembly. Therefore, they organised themselves in small groups which would send one or two delegate(s) to the central council meeting. The delegates were controlled by the group and usually groups could constantly vote out their delegates; sometimes, delegates even had an imperative mandate. Delegates with an imperative mandate

have very limited decision power and are bound to the will of the group they represent. Within socialist revolutions, such as the November revolution in Germany and the October revolution in Russia, councils formed and were scaled up. Socialists used council democracy not only in factories and districts but in whole production chains and, finally, on the national level. But with the scaling up of council democracy serious problems arise, which historically barely became visible, because council democracy was usually destroyed by authoritarian powers such as the Bolsheviks.

We sympathise with council communism, as it is one of the most important antiauthoritarian strands of communism, but we are critical of its worldwide implementation because council democracy tends to form a state-like institution. Council communists think the best way to do societal planning is by centralisation and an institution of generality. We do not have enough space for an elaborated discussion, but we want to point out some problems.

First, delegates become socially a government. Whereas delegates on lower hierarchical levels may still find time to do other things, delegates on higher levels must specialise in planning, evaluating information, decision-making and conflict resolution. Despite reflection and openness, a certain culture and entrenched routines facilitate access for certain groups and milieus and make it difficult for others. But how do the "sick, physically or cognitively impaired, sad, small, old, dying, dreamy people" (Lutosch 2021) gain access? Formalised rules and representation may help, but cannot grant equal access. Independent forms of decision-making may be increasingly conceived by most people as relieving and efficient, but they undermine the idea of self-government (cf. Demirović 2009, p. 196).

Secondly, delegates may become politically a government. The political centralisation and hierarchy of council democracy encourages delegates to treat their electing councils as voters. The higher councils certainly (and rightly) have their own ideas and concepts, and they will try to persuade their electing councils with the largest amount of information and knowledge. This is not a human flaw but, rather, something reasonable; they simply spend more time pondering on and discussing up-scaled conflicts. Deselection power may make it more complicated for council delegates to become politicians, but it cannot stop it. An imperative mandate destroys the desired centralisation and concentration of information and (decision-making) power, because the lowest councils would have to understand up-scaled conflicts and decision as much as the councils working at the highest aggregated levels. Frequently, delegates will not perceive their

actions as political-instrumental; they will speak of "best solutions" and "practical constraints" and unconsciously treat their delegating councils as voters. A high moral integrity and social awareness may shield them, but unconscious power mechanisms and possibilities to use power are in place.

Thirdly, the tendency to usurp and centralise processes of self-organisation has already been mentioned. This leads to an implicit state logic. The council institution concentrates a lot of power and access to resources and therefore has ample opportunities to present its decisions as the best and most inclusive options. If re/producers are dissatisfied, they have no real alternative, but can only try to change the council's plans, which in turn increases their power. Ultimately, the council's plans have no alternative and are therefore enforced de facto—although not de jure. Finally, there is the threat of the real seizure of executive power and the corresponding wage labour. The subjugation of social power to state power can happen gradually or abruptly.

Nevertheless, Pannekoek's ideals are pretty close to our own. It may even be possible to build an inclusive council organisation. We just deem it unlikely. Aggregation as a mono-institution reaches a tipping point where it becomes an obstacle to inclusive problem solving. This tipping point might be shifted by new social and technical means, but we think it will still be reached. In a larger picture, council communism may be understood outside its historical setting. Council communism emerged at the beginning of the Fordist revolution, and the ideas of centralisation, pyramid structure and strict hierarchy of the latter were a determinant factor; furthermore, the decentral communication tools that exist today were not available.

Communist Centralisation, Anarchist Decentralisation and Commonist Polycentricity

That said, aggregation, centralisation and collective decision-making remain important in every utopia. Large factories, cities and cooperating factories may want to, or have to, reach collective decisions and use council democracy, sociocracy, other forms of collective decision-making or even a kind of parliamentary democracy. Utopia should open up the possibilities for many different ways of organisation. Another strand of antiauthoritarian socialism—anarchism—is deeply critical about centralisation and political hierarchy, and cherishes autonomy, decentralisation, and self-administration. Many anarchist utopias imagine a decentralised and self-sufficient re/production on the level of communes, with these communes

building only loose federation and cooperation. However, these loose federations and low levels of division of labour may be just fine for peasant-based societies, but industrial and information societies need other practices of planning and coordination. Communists argue for centralisation, complex division of labour and global planning, which may lead to a state-like institution and new political hierarchy. On the other hand, anarchist decentralisation may lead to low levels of efficiency and cooperation, particularity, and disintegration.

It is easy to see that both concepts have their strengths and weaknesses. One of them might be better than ours, but the first problem is that these models are rarely developed—that is what we call for in this book: a development and discussion of utopias. Our model is a combination of anarchist and communist concepts called polycentric mediation. In polycentric mediation, aggregation, centralisation and collective decision-making are an important part of an overall decentralised mode of coordination. Centralisation can flexibly arise and weaken but will likely not accumulate in one central institution of planning and decision-making. Finally, we want to strengthen the notion that a free society is a place of many places. Voluntariness and collective disposal can manifest itself in many different ways. Maybe in south-east Asia people will plan and decide in a council communist way, whereas people in North America have better experiences with a more anarchist way of coordination.

3.7   Planning and Polycentricity

In commonism there will be *no central institution* mediating needs, providing infrastructures, or enabling self-organisation (cf. Chap. 6, 3.6). The basic preconditions for self-organisation—voluntariness and collective disposal—are transpersonal and general. Specific conditions, however, must be built interpersonally; not by a central, general institution but by many polycentric institutions (cf. Carlisle and Gruby 2019). These meta-commons address the diversity of needs. We assume they will be founded on many different levels. Some will help at the interpersonal level to solve conflicts within commons or between commons. Some will observe and evaluate the transpersonal level; for example, a coordination-meta will collate the use of steel in a region, mediate it and, thus, identify conflicting demands. Some will produce material, others social and symbolic infrastructure. An infrastructure commons planning the wastewater regulation for a town, an information commons gathering and facilitating
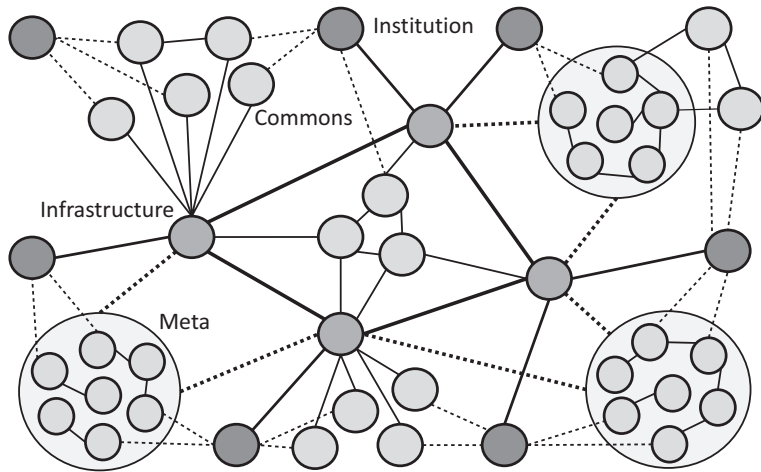
Fig. 6.2 Illustration of a polycentric stigmergic mediation

information on worldwide wastewater regulation. Some conflicts and decisions will concern a wider field: "Do we want to build more schools or cultivate more strawberries?" But very few decisions will concern all of humanity. It could possibly be decisions such as "Do we want to put resources and efforts into a project taking us to Mars? Or do we prefer a project balancing out the climate?" Thus, the coordination and attainment of conditions will be located at many levels. Figure 6.2 illustrates an example of a polycentric stigmergic mediation.

Commons need each other. Commons "connect horizontally with similar enterprises, vertically with those who provide them with materials or use their products" (Pannekoek 1942). Therefore, they will rest on implicit or explicit cooperation. Explicit cooperation may be needed for specialised products such as ships or complicated machines. Thirty different commons producing steel, engines, and building ships may enter into an agreement to collectively produce 300 ships within the next six years. These contracts of sorts won't be enforced by a central state but by the commons themselves. If the steel commons fail to deliver on plan, the partners will first try to help and include their needs. If this steel commons overestimates its production all the time, commons will only reluctantly cooperate or even end cooperation. Commons producing the same means—for example, alpine cheese—could form an institution to

collectively distribute their products and plan their production. These institutions of aggregated decision-making may use different social means, such as representative democracy, sociocracy or council organisation. Commonist society will surely invent many more and better means. For all aggregated decision-making, the following holds true: these institutions will persist only as long as they are able to include the needs of their participating commons. If they cannot, single commons will leave, they will restructure or dissolve. In commonism aggregation is not the governing logic but a flexible possibility.

3.8   Characteristics of Inclusive Conflicts

Conflicts based on exclusion often lead to a rigid attitude. We have committed ourselves to this or that need—or opinion—and now must push it through. But such a conflict rarely allows for a reflection on my needs: where do they come from? Why are they important to me? What do the needs of others mean to me? On the contrary, an inclusive mediation of needs is not about defending myself against others, but about looking for the best solution within the context of a common effort. Therefore, conflicts will always have a relating, investigating and clarifying character.

We often do not really know what we want. Conflicts open up space for us to look into our needs. Also, my needs change when they become aware of the needs of others. For instance, the wish for a swimming pool might become less attractive when compared to the need for a new hospital. Such positive trade-offs are well known from times of crisis, when people depend on inclusive cooperation. In commonism we will try to collectively find out what we and others need.

There is another dynamic at play here. Inclusion also refers to problems occurring within the cooperation. If a commons distributing washing machines often gets late deliveries from a commons producing them, it can obviously try to establish cooperation with other commons producing washing machines to bypass the unreliable commons. Or it can try and get to the bottom of the late deliveries and organise some form of support for the failing commons. Maybe it does not communicate its resource requirements or lacks contributors. Cooperation does not have the form "if you can't deliver, I'll go somewhere else". In an inclusive cooperation there are good reasons to take an interest in others and support them in their problem-solving efforts.

Just because there is a need, it does not entail the right to its satisfaction. That would imply an abstract right. In a stigmergic process a multitude of needs can be signalled. At the beginning, nobody will decide which needs really count. Who may decide why they are important? All needs are reasonable. Mediation with other needs will reveal their priority. This makes it perfectly clear: not all needs can be satisfied at once. Nevertheless, there is no reason to disqualify certain needs due to abstract rules. Decisions regarding the satisfaction of signified needs based on a stigmergic and communicative procedure aim primarily at establishing a sequence for the production* of the relevant means. However, certain vital needs will obviously enjoy a high priority in production*. Refraining from satisfying needs is also a societal option. Instead of further "chasing alien stars" we can also decide to "lie on the water and watch the sky peacefully" (Adorno 1980, p. 179, transl. M.R.).

Commonism is no harmonious paradise. It is the mediation of humanity with itself. Needs of utilisation are mediated with needs of production and preservation, and vice versa. We decide what we want to consume and how much we are willing to do for it—this is the very essence of free coordination. When the mediation of these needs is free from domination, we live in a free society.

4   Commonist Individuality

With society, the people themselves will change. They will develop different needs, different emotional states, different premises and different reasons. We will discuss some aspects of these assumed changes below. Certain consequences follow from our categorical considerations. We are navigating troubled waters and would like to invite you to find the correct course.

4.1   Overcoming of Separateness

In capitalist society it seems self-evident to experience oneself as a separate individual, harbouring private wishes and feelings, a particular history and identity. Economic sciences hypostasised this separateness in the ideal type of *homo economicus*—a person only maximising his/her egoistic interests. This idea of the human seems strange to us, considering how many times we include other people and their needs into our actions. It seems to indicate a certain rationality of market actors in the economy pointing towards exclusion, rather than a human characteristic.

Some scientists even claim that in many →precapitalist societies (p. 20) people did not experience themselves as individual beings (Merchant 1987; Bauer and Matis 1992). It was natural for them to think of themselves and of their needs as part of and in relation to their family, their tribe or other communities.

Capitalism leads us to believe that our needs are separated, that we can become happy in isolation from the happiness of others. Indeed, our needs are torn apart in capitalism. In capitalist reality I must satisfy my needs at the expense of others. The truth, however, is that our needs are related to each other. We experience this in interpersonal relationships, where we are better off when the people we care for are also well.[4] This reference applies to our transpersonal relationships as well. In this case, the satisfaction of our needs refers to others in general. In radical terms: if another person, no matter who, a general other, is forced into labour or is forced to suppress his/her needs, the satisfaction of my needs is infringed. Why?

> **"New human being"**
> The focus of our theory is not on changing people but on changing societal conditions. Commonism does not demand that people be "conditioned" in a particular manner to be "empathic", "altruistic" or "new". There is no need for a re-education or adaptation; commonism should rather allow for the need-oriented collective unfolding of people. However, in transvolution the people will change in accordance with the new conditions of acting and living, they will develop new needs, get to know themselves better: "Walking we change the world and ourselves" (following the Zapatista slogan "Asking we walk").

In the exclusion society, the quality of the satisfaction of our needs is often hampered or feels dim or flat, for it is—generally speaking—instable and precarious. There are people who have good reasons to infringe on the satisfaction of my needs, just like the satisfaction of my needs occurs at their expense. If I limit the freedom of others, whether on purpose or not, it can be reasonable for them to limit my freedom and extend their freedom at my

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[4] The intrusion of the logic of exclusion into our emotional life is reflected in the fact that many people feel better if people they absolutely dislike are worse off.

expense. Thus, the productive dimension of our needs is damaged. We are usually not aware of this. We feel so separated from other people that we believe we could not harm others because there is no relationship between us. That is in fact a fallacy. We might not have any interpersonal relationship, but we are related to all people transpersonally. We could comprehend this idea, but most of the time we suppress or ignore it. Emotionally, this enforcement against others comes back as a feeling of threat, for each enforcement is an enforcement against oneself given that other people—for identical reasons—could answer my actions the same way. The satisfaction of my needs at the expense of the needs of others will always be contested at the expense of my needs elsewhere. This relation of mutual hostility is always also a relation of self-hostility (cf. p. 121). And vice versa: as our needs are fundamentally linked in society, my unlimited happiness requires others to be in the same position. I can only be free if we are all free.

In commonism, this dependency of our needs on the needs of all others is realised as a societal experience of connectedness, not of separateness. The relatedness no longer limits my needs, it is not something I try to ignore in order to intensify my satisfaction. It is realised as unconditioned inclusive relationship (cf. Chap. 5, 2.2), it is the basis of my actions. The material-symbolic conditions are in line with my inner psychic relatedness. Under inclusive conditions, it is beneficial for me to act out this relatedness and actually include the needs of others—thus satisfying my needs as well as those of others. As I can include others, I can include all of my needs. I cannot and need not assert myself against anybody and, therefore, neither against myself. As I can include others, I am being included. To attain this would be to reach a state of congruence between the material-symbolic level of relatedness and the psychic level of relatedness. In both cases it is normal to include others. The consequences for the individual would soon become obvious. We would have less reasons to keep our distance from other people, to be afraid of them, to regard them as strangers. We would be less inclined to exclude them and, in turn, would be less excluded ourselves. We could develop trust, feel integrated and dependant without fear. Because this is what we are: societally, we depend on each other—not the concrete other but, societally, on the general other. This most definitely coincides with a different self-perception. We are bound to not experience others and their needs as alien. We are bound to feel the concrete relatedness of needs as the emotional expression of relatedness, of solidarity. Nevertheless, individuality and diversity remain the basis of this relatedness.

4.2 Overcoming of Community

Many people despise the forced separateness and the constant pressure to prevail. Very often their response is the abstract opposite: a desire for community. They long for being part of something, being together, being with each other; for a community without fighting, without opposition, without exclusion; a community in line with our needs, even corresponding to each other. A wish for oneness emerges. For our needs to correspond in harmony, we can be different only inasmuch as everything fits together. Forced separation due to the logic of exclusion gives birth to its opposite: the melting down of differences. The guiding principle is harmony, the wish for a global harmony in which all needs are compatible and all people want the same—and are the same. For wanting the same implies being the same. Uniformity vaporises individuality. Individuality is only allowed inasmuch as it fits into the common. The wish aims at a disappearance of differences within the community. In a nutshell: "we are all one".

Harmonious community requires the subordination of the individual to the collective, of the particular to the general. A harmonious community is unimaginable without a limitation of the individual, without the reduction, curtailment and, ultimately, exclusion of those needs that are not in line with this harmony. This way harmony becomes exclusion. A harmonious community aims at a coexistence without rough edges, without conflicts. While capitalism isolates and puts us up against each other, in the collective we are communalised and pressed together. Both states tell a truth about our needs: capitalism teaches us that our needs are different; the message of the community is that our needs are related to each other. Commonism aims at a relatedness in diversity, a collectivity grounded in individuality. Or, in the words of Bini Adamczak, "Satisfying forms of relation […] must include the option of difference and dissent, of aggression and crack. They must not be conceptualised as harmonious but as able to deal with conflict, not as trouble-free but as squeaking-flickering" (2017, p. 274, transl. M.R.).

Inclusion is fundamentally impaired if it only aims at the inclusion of others. Inclusion demands the integration of one's own needs, getting to know them and standing by them. The inclusive society is not a society of self-sacrificing altruists but one of individuals related to each other in an inclusive manner. Our needs are different, we are different. We are neither able to do away with this difference nor should we try to. At the same time, our needs refer to each other. We are neither able to do away with

this reference nor should we try to. Our reference to each other derives from our difference and vice versa. In commonism, we can live out our difference on the basis of realised relatedness that becomes connectedness. In the inclusive society we truly relate to each other in a real and positive manner. We support each other while satisfying our own needs. To unfold my individuality, to develop our difference, is to support the individuality of other people. Some like to work in a steel mill, others like to keep the town clean. One is good at listening to others and helping them detect their needs, others like to raise awareness on conflicts and settle them. In acting out and articulating our needs we support the satisfaction of the needs of others. Our individuality is no longer the wall blocking relatedness but the door that gives access to it.

4.3   Overcoming of Ethics

Ethical action[5] means people doing the things they feel to be right. This is often done in contrast to societal conditions which encourage a different behaviour. Ethics seldom pursue self-interest because great importance is given to the interests of other people. Ethics overcome individual needs. In addition, ethics entail freedom. We would rarely think that a person behaving ethically is forced to include the needs of others. Ethics involves inclusion by free will.

There is another element in ethics. Ethical behaviour often involves consciously putting the needs of others above my own. Ethics reminds me to attach more importance to the needs of others than to mine. This behaviour has an important and self-evident prerequisite. The fact that preferring the needs of others involves limiting the satisfaction of my own needs implies the existence opposing needs. An inclusive ethic unconsciously implies conditions of exclusion. While the conditions in which the action takes place encourage the satisfaction of my needs at the expense of others, ethics demands that we position ourselves against these conditions and "think of others". Examples can be found in fair-trade-consumption, monetary donations, or self-sacrificing for others. This element gives ethics a new meaning: it is represented as free inclusion under conditions of exclusion, as an acting against the conditions.

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[5] As many people hold ethic in high esteem our criticism might naturally raise opposition. We are not rejecting ethic in general but certain notions often connected with ethics and moral. We also criticise the instrumental use of ethic as justification for action.

In an inclusive society, however, to act inclusively is not to sacrifice oneself anymore. Inclusive acting does not demand giving up one's own possibilities of satisfaction. Inclusive conditions encourage a way of satisfying my needs which allows for, or even extends, the satisfaction of the needs of others. Inclusion is not a limiting supplement, a form of resistance within exclusive normality but an everyday normality. Inclusion loses its ethical dimension. It does not have to exercise its power on people via ethical norms but is encouraged by countless conditions of action. But does this make inclusion a given? And are ethics not, in fact, a free decision to include others because I consider it important and not merely because the conditions encourage it?

When practicing ethical inclusion, I do so because my ethics tell me to hold other people in high regard. I include others because this seems important and correct to me. But, in reality, we remain disconnected. Maybe I feel better when helping others. This is even more so when I help people close to me, while the feeling diminishes when dealing with the general other. My withdrawal in favour of others will likely leave me with a better conscience than a higher satisfaction of my needs. In an inclusive society, I include others because we are actually related to each other. I am actually better off when I include others. Under inclusive conditions, I watch out for others because that is best for me and for others. Satisfying my needs is anxiety-free—and therefore most satisfying—only when it is not done at the expense of others. Generally speaking, commonism dissolves the contradiction between my needs and those of others. Crucially, difference and conflicts remain, but I am actually better off if others are better off. While ethics assume the separateness of our needs—something that is produced societally in capitalism, in opposition to our relatedness—commonism implements our actual relatedness.

Commonism overcomes ethics. The ethical self-sacrifice comes to an end because the inclusion of others does not demand foregoing one's own satisfaction of needs. The original ethical aim of the inclusion of others is kept alive and assumes a new form: the inclusion of others contains and secures my own inclusion. The ethical aim is realised in an unethical manner (cf. p. 204).

4.4   Relationship to Nature

The commonist society will most definitely develop a new relationship with nature. We have already dealt with our "internal nature" as beings in

need. We will no longer be forced to put aside our needs, to act against ourselves. I no longer have to overcome myself, subdue my "internal nature". "External nature", referring to other people, has also been dealt with in many ways. But what about our relation with the non-human external nature? How does that change in an inclusive society?

So far, we have only partially conceptualised this relation. We can be sure of one thing: in commonism we will have the option of not destroying our natural foundation. There is no "independent logic" anymore suggesting "cost reduction" through cost externalisation or "economisation" through production that harms the environment. We now have ample possibilities of sustainably using and protecting nature. We can dedicate more of our energy and better technology to practicing an ecological production and preservation in all of society. This, however, will also involve conflicts. Some will advocate a strict sustainable regime demanding the use of limited resources exclusively in closed material cycles. Others might be willing to turn a blind eye on closed material cycles at the beginning and focus on developing the methods and techniques regarding ecological production. Ending "production for the sake of production" (Marx, 1890, p. 621) and the constant desire to extend sales opportunities will probably cause a fundamental change in our relation with nature as far as production* is concerned. There will be a genuine societal chance to break with the necessity of economic growth and to establish a generally accepted reduction in the consumption of natural resources ("degrowth") and new relations between society and nature (cf. Görg 2003). Nature will not only be seen as a resource to be used and will be appreciated for a variety of reasons. Our view on nature will widen and differentiate. A forest can be a resource for manufacturing furniture, but it can also be a recreation area, a habitat for wildlife, or simply wilderness. Nature will not be solely appreciated for the raw material it delivers for production* but also for its variety. When sales battles and market power have become obsolete, a school of fish can be something to simply admire, and a forest lake can remain precious in itself.[6]

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[6] The intrinsic value of nature is accepted today. However, preservation and protection are fighting an uphill battle against the economic rationale and its logic of the realisation of value.

5   FAQ: Frequent Questions About Commonism

The questions we are asked about commonism frequently repeat themselves. We summarise them here and try to give concise answers.

5.1   Is Domination Really Abolished?

Unfortunately, it seems highly likely that people will always have the chance to prevail at the expense of others. In commonism, all one can do is simply hoot down another. However, the crucial question is whether instruments of domination will be available in a form that allows for an effective, long-term and secured domination. Could a commons mediating conflicts ignore needs in the long run? No, it does not have any means at its disposal to enforce its recommendations. The long-term ignoring of needs would eventually mean losing support. Could a wastewater commons keep up a deficient wastewater regulation over a longer period of time? Well, the prime question would be: why should the commons want that? But even if that were to occur, some people would try and change this commons or form a new one, one that will better satisfy existing needs, or other commons would refuse to cooperate with the wastewater commons.

Our main idea is that if people cannot be coerced into doing things and there are no general abstract possibilities to exclude people, domination cannot be established. On the one hand, it is no longer subjectively functional or encouraged to strive for domination over others. Other people no longer appear as competitors or enemies. On the other hand, there is ample opportunity to evade attempts at domination. Without property, a central element for exclusion is missing. Therefore, the obvious and sensible option will be to consider the needs of others in order to include them in order to achieve one's own goals.

5.2   Is Commonism a Truly Inclusive Society?

We have attempted to trace inclusion and to present the importance of designing production* according to the needs of the contributors in a way that includes the needs of the users. We have attempted to show how information about needs penetrates the societal network and how these signs of needs simplify conflict resolution, self-selection, and collective self-organisation. We have also ventured to discuss the form of conflicts

that do not have centralised instruments of domination at their disposal and are, thus, unable to enforce exclusive demands and particular interests. These conflicts require the integration of the needs of all those involved due to collective disposal and voluntariness. But is that enough to announce the emergence of inclusive conditions in such a society?

Although we are not 100% sure, we believe that this is the case. We cannot conceptually proclaim that the commonist society must be an inclusive society. However, we have repeatedly pointed out that the inclusive society encourages inclusion and, in turn, inclusion becomes a well-founded form of action for the people. Maybe we are on the wrong track, maybe something is missing; but we do basically hope that our attempt has highlighted the possibility of talking about utopia. At this point our considerations are insufficient and might lack complexity. However, they are the ideas of several dozen people only. Imagine the potential of hundreds, thousands, even millions of people discussing a free society and starting to practice commoning.

5.3   Are There Chief and Secondary Contradictions?

Capitalism's logic of exclusion appears in many forms. As racism, sexism, homophobia or nationality, it separates people and legitimises domination and exclusion. How about these exclusion structures in commonism? Traditional Marxist criticism of capitalism stressed the power relations between capitalists and workers as a "chief contradiction". Sexism, racism and so on were subclassified as "secondary contradictions". The disappearance of class relations would solve them pretty soon. Is such a distinction part of our theory?

The goal of our theory is a different form of society. Not only a changed "economy", a new form of production, but also different forms of dwelling, thinking, hoping and loving. For us there is no central dimension of exclusion (e.g., ownership of the means of production) which must be changed in order to suspend all the others. The goal of our utopia is to eliminate the conditions that make exclusions functional and effective, no matter what kind they are. We believe that will render the exclusion of people on the basis of their skin colour, sex, ownership of means of production and so on no longer possible of obvious. We aim at the disappearance of the conditions of exclusion altogether and not of a particular dimension of exclusion. However, whether current and traditional forms

of exclusion will be effectively overcome is a practical problem of the transformation and utopian organisation. Our intention is to show the conditions that are necessary for this overcoming.

5.4   Another Mystification of Care Work?

Following the German version of the book, feminist criticisms of the book were raised. The philosopher Heide Lutosch argued that the protagonists are often "mature, healthy, articulate, young people who are responsible for themselves and only themselves and can work" (Lutosch 2021). In most societies, only half the population would work, and even of these, many would need care—in addition to those who need support anyway: "I had hoped that these people—sick, physically or cognitively impaired, sad, small, old, dying, dreamy—would move from the shadows to the centre of attention" (ibid.). Lutosch goes on to ask whether we are not once again mystifying care work in our theory. When we respond to a crying child, are "desire and necessity" really "intimately connected", she asks. Care work is dirty, often at night, exhausting (moving heavy, immovable objects), has no regular breaks, cannot be planned, but requires constant organisation (psychological stress). It contains many repetitive elements and is therefore quite boring, it never really ends and "requires patience despite time pressure and multitasking, because the people for whom it is performed are slow. They eat slowly, they walk slowly, they think slowly" (ibid.).

The criticism is justified. In fact, we have mistakenly inferred pleasure from motivation. We have thus fallen into the trap of even the conventional concept of motivation, which always equates motivation with enjoyment of the activity—something we had previously refuted. In fact, motivation in care work usually coincides less with pleasure than with necessity. This is all the more true in societies where care is largely relegated to families and thus often to women. Feminist utopias should carefully devise procedures for identifying the needs of those who cannot or can hardly articulate themselves, create a clearer awareness of informal hierarchies and prioritise the abolition of sexist violence as part of alternatives to traditional legal structures. They should rationally analyse care work with its affective and non-affective aspects and examine the non-affective aspects for their quantifiability, collectivisation, automation and digitalisation. Finally, they must

question or even abolish the traditional bourgeois family and design alternative voluntary care structures that are not based on marriage, friendship or blood relationship (cf. Lutosch 2021).

Another criticism also hits a sore spot. Political scientist Antje Schrupp argues: "For my taste, the image of man behind the bourgeois utopia is still too much shaped by an atomised conception of freedom, in which the free and the equal negotiate with each other on an equal footing and the most important feature of freedom from domination is that no one can be forced to do anything. But isn't the most important feature of freedom from domination the certainty that no matter what happens to me and no matter how sick or old I get, my needs will be reliably met?" (Schrupp 2018). This criticism hits home because it was actually our concern to show that freedom from domination cannot be achieved without social security for all. Only from a position of secure existence can I speak and disagree with others at eye level. "Care work is explicitly thematised by the authors as a necessity […], but this does not change (or even disguise) the fact that care economy is not really considered in terms of content" (ibid.). This requires the abolition of the separation of production and reproduction—as shown in this book. But as for so many areas (law, relationships etc.), we have not thought through the consequences for the care sector.

5.5   *Criticism and Open Questions*

There are only a few of us, and that is not enough to explore a free society in detail. We can only take some preliminary steps and invite others to join in. What is fundamental for this path and its further development is criticism; however, it should be a criticism of content based on arguments. We can think of three such forms: firstly, criticism of the underlying theoretical concept (e.g., intersubjectivity). Secondly, a critical examination of the switchover from theoretical basis to utopia (e.g., commoning does not match the claims of transpersonal mediation). Thirdly, criticism of the conceptual unfolding (e.g., our deduction from voluntariness to inclusion). In this way we hope to explore commonism in more detail, for a lot of questions must be answered.

At some point a book cannot be extended and a deadline is reached. However, an abundance of topics remains. The conceptual exploration has only just begun. Numerous topics have been simply outlined or not mentioned at all, for example, commonist institutions and the question of

violence, concrete rules instead of general law, love and relatedness. In addition, there are many hints—for example, conflict mediation—which require further investigation. And anti-racist, decolonial and anti-eurocentric critics raise further questions. We write out of our socialisation and with its limitations. It is only a part of a bigger picture. We need other people, other theories and other utopias, because a free society is a collective process of development. Therefore, many thanks to the critics and those who will become critics.

We have dealt with the goal in detail. Now we want to turn to the obvious question: how can the commonist inclusive society emerge from capitalism? How can we conceptualise the path of transformation and open it to discussion?

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Seed Form Theory

In this chapter we intend to develop the commonist seed form theory. The name is based on the assumption that the new society develops from seed forms. In Chap. 3 we presented the idea that a qualitative change of society towards a free society must be conceptualised (and carried out) as a constituting process of a new form of society. This theoretical demand is our starting point. The seed form theory is a possibility of giving substance to this demand of transvolution. It is not the only way of doing this. The framework we have previously described allows for the inclusion of other transvolution theories, and we invite their development. The presentation of the elements of the seed form theory aims at opening it to discussion and criticism, thus enabling further development. The seed form theory attempts to conceptualise the qualitative change of the societal *form*.

A new society does not fall from the sky but must emerge from the old society. So, the point is: how does a new form of society emerge from the old one? To this, the seed form theory answers that the new can already be found in the old but still in the form of a seed, enclosed in the old conditions. And yet, this seed form embodies the quality it can develop into a new society. In our theory of society (cf. Chap. 5, 2.) we discussed the mediation form as a decisive element of society. That is why the new quality of the seed form must appear as a new mediation form. This new mediation form is restricted in the old society and only becomes dominant in the new society.

History of the Five-Step Process
The version of the five-step process presented here has many precursors. We have critically viewed these precursors (Holzkamp 1983; Meretz 2012, 2014) and arrived at some changes which hopefully provide more clarity. The five steps go back to Klaus Holzkamp. He is the founding father of Critical Psychology, which in this book we refer to in many ways. In his main work *Grundlegung der Psychologie* (1983, working title: *Foundation of Psychology*, available in German only, translation in progress) he extracted "five steps of the analysis of change from quantity to quality" (ibid., p. 78) from the historical analysis of the origin and development of the psyche. Holzkamp traced the origins of the psyche. However, we believe the five-step process is equally heuristic for describing qualitative changes in other systems—for example, societies. In this sense it has, so far at least, helped us considerably.

1   Five-Step Process as a Heuristic

The seed form theory is based on a methodical heuristic,[1] the "five-step process". For analytic purposes, it divides qualitative changes into five sections. Sometimes the five-step process is seen as a claim or settlement. We do not insist on five steps or assert that intermediate steps cannot occur. The five-step process is an attempt to find terms for a qualitative change. So far, these terms have served us well; however, there still might be something missing.

The five-step process is not an act of magic. The new does not fall from the sky but emerges as a new function within the old system (seed form).[2] These seed forms create a new system form (shift of dominance) to which the whole system adjusts (restructuring). The rest of the terms follow from that: the new develops on the basis of certain requirements (preconditions) and a contradictory dynamic within the old system (contradiction in development).

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[1] Wikipedia: A heuristic "describes an analytic procedure in which limited knowledge is used to arrive at knowledge about a system by way of practical conclusions".

[2] The *system* is the object (the WHAT) which we scrutinise with the five-step process. The *function* describes the behaviour, the dynamics of the system (the HOW). An example below will make that clearer.

At this point, it is important to stress that the five-step process represents a logical and not necessarily temporal sequence, although some steps must indeed follow each other. The five-step process can only be explained in hindsight, when the actual process is a thing of the past. Thus, it is a retrospective analysis. The question regarding the new can be put this way: what were the preconditions and what course did the process of emergence and enforcement follow? The new must be taken for granted. For us, the new is commonism, a categorical utopia of possibility (Chap. 6). Even though commonism is not a reality, we presume it is and look back: how did it come about? We pretend the matter is settled in order to gain insight. Therefore, one thing is for sure: we cannot be sure. Knowing that, we can learn a lot from looking back virtually, a process that will help us in taking practical steps.

The five logical steps can be structured in two blocks. The first two steps in fact only name the *preconditions*, inner prerequisites and outer framework conditions, including the contradictions that occur as the process unfolds. The last three steps deal with the actual *development process*. This development entails two qualitative leaps, and in the last step the whole system is restructured according to the new function. We will now explain the five steps, which we have illustrated in Fig. 7.1. Then we will give an example (the origins of capitalism) to illustrate the structure, which at the beginning might appear somewhat vague and general.

1. The *preconditions* are the inner prerequisites which the development of the new is based on. There can be one or more prerequisites.
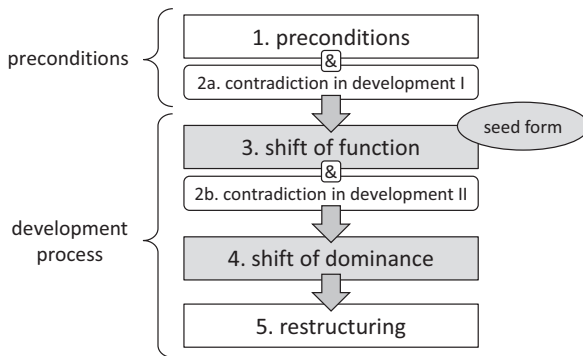

Fig. 7.1 Illustration of the heuristic five-step process

2. Prerequisites alone, however, are not sufficient. There has to be a dynamic, a *contradiction in the course of development*, which requires and promotes the emergence of a new function. In the best case—the one we focus on—the new function develops and solves the contradiction. The contradiction can result from changes in the external conditions as well as the inner prerequisites, and it can change in the course of the development (cf. 4.).

3. The *function shift* describes the first step in qualitative development. Based on the prerequisites, the *seed form* emerges—for example, by joining two qualities which have been separate so far. A *new function* develops, specifically regarding the further development. This new function represents a new quality compared to the old one, which is still dominant. At the same time, the seed form is active in the old system, thus supporting this system in decline. This is called *double functionality*: the new function supports the old and is, at the same time, incompatible with it; therefore, it cannot be integrated into the old without losing its new quality. That means that if the seed form were to be integrated, it would lose its quality and character as seed form. That would be the end of the development process. This case we do not discuss here.

4. The *shift of dominance* is the second qualitative development step. The old and the new functions change positions: the new function prevails and, as of then, dominates the dynamic of the system; the old function recedes. When the shift of dominance reaches the point of no return, it is a *singularity*: the change is selective and unpredictable. The transition from the function shift to the shift of domination is advanced by a certain contradiction in the course of development. We assume this contradiction is not necessarily the contradiction in the course of development which generated the seed form (cf. 2.). The following contradiction in development can be a different one. That is actually a question of history and cannot be answered schematically.

5. The *restructuring* finally extends the new functionality to the whole system. Consequently, these parts are also captured and penetrated by the new function, which had no essential part in the shift of function and domination. The whole system develops a new quality.

These ideas seem complex, but the theory is actually quite simple: there are *preconditions* creating the basis for the development of a new quality. A dynamic within the old system drives the development into a *development contradiction*. The quality of a new system emerges (*function shift*) and becomes dominant (*dominance shift*). Finally, the whole system adjusts to the new logic (*restructuring*).

2   HISTORICAL ANALOGY: THE ORIGINS OF CAPITALISM

2.1   *The Analysis of Societal Transformation*

The five-step process as a heuristic seems complex and vague due to its many terms. Therefore, we would like to illustrate the concept by looking at the historical transformation of a specific society. Can the five-step process be helpful in understanding the origin of capitalism?

Before we go into the five-step process we must be clear about a number of things: what *object* are we dealing with? What is the object's central *dimension of development*? What *function* governs the development of the respective dimension? In the general presentation we omitted these preconditions. The content analysis must be clear about this in order to stay on the right track. Figure 7.2 illustrates the following explanation.
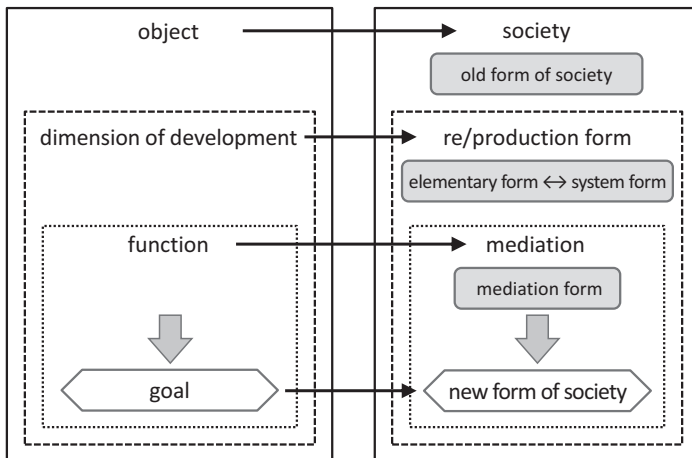

Fig. 7.2   Object, dimension, function and goal of societal transformation

Our object is *society*. The goal is the emergence of a qualitatively *new form of society*. The central dimension of development of our object, society, is the form in which people proactively produce* their life conditions; in short: the *re/production form*. This re/production form changes its quality in the transition from one form of society to another. Just a reminder: we can conceptualise the re/production form as the relation between the *elementary form* and the *system form*. The elementary form represents the dominant rationale of action for securing individual existence; the system form is the "materialised" system rationale. Both depend on each other (cf. Chap. 5, 2.1). The local, interpersonal activity locally produces the overall societal system, which—with its system rationale as a precondition—gives local activity its functionality (securing existence).

The function dominating the dynamic and development of the re/production form is *mediation*. Mediation establishes the societal relationships between people. It dominates the production* form—whether it prioritises cost-efficiency, religious rules or needs. The mediation corresponding to the re/production form also has two elements: direct cooperation at the level of the elementary form rests on *interpersonal* relationships, while the mediated-societal system form is based on *transpersonal* relationships. A new re/production form always involves a new form of relationship (cf. Adamczak 2017).

2.2   The Origins of Capitalism

The empirical-historical basis of the following presentation mainly stems from Marxist historian Heide Gerstenberger (1990). The five-step heuristic can surely be applied to other explanations of the origins of capitalism. Here we want to focus on the shift of domination, for it is the element that seems most thrilling to us.

We are looking at societal development, so society is our object. To begin with, we must define the goal, given that the five-step process is an analysis in hindsight. In our case it is capitalism, which we put in a nutshell in Chap. 1, 3. The central dimension of development is the

re/production form, and the dominant function is the mediation form. In the transition to capitalism the mediation form of exchange became the exchange of equivalents. So, the five-step process must explain how the previous exchange, being inconsistent and variable, became dominant in society and thus turned into the general exchange of equivalents (cf. Chap. 1, 3.1, p. 16). For as long as capitalist mediation was not generalised in society, the general exchange of equivalents was also impossible. The exchange of equivalents as a general societal mediation form came to be when domination detached itself from the inconsistent exchange form, governed by variable local and societal conditions. This form of exchange—we named it variable exchange—is the seed form of capitalism in the feudal society. It is a subordinated principle and often surfaces without being dominant in society. Now we turn to the five-step process.

We should begin by explaining how the seed form of variable exchange came into being. The preconditions could be social practices of giving and counter-giving, geographical differences and so on. Which contradiction in development could have made exchange functional for a society at that moment? Exchange can establish controlled give-and-take relationships over long distances and minimise insecurities. The dominant feudal mediation, however, is still personal domination, in which tribute and feudal duties produce and govern a violent and forced "exchange". Nevertheless, these forms are restricted to the local territory of the ruler. Thus, the western Frankish feudal rule cannot command the iron ore deposits in the Alps. Exchange becomes the functional solution to this contradiction in development, for it helps to obtain resources otherwise not available under the "usual form of feudal domination". In the shift of function, the new quality of the capitalist society emerges: an exchange that is not yet equivalent but is regulated. It exists within the old system, the feudal society, in its rudimentary form. This changes with the shift of dominance.

Heide Gerstenberger does not limit the origins of capitalism to a rising merchant class or to the expansion of trade; she speaks of a change it the quality of exchange. Precapitalist trade and exchange was subject to many political privileges. Guilds could set the prices in many mediaeval towns; certain association of merchants had political privileges such as custom

relief, tax exemptions or even the monopoly on the import of certain goods. The market was penetrated by political and personal privileges. This hindered especially one element of exchange: competition. The individual producers and traders did not compete as equals, and the disadvantaged fought against the unjust system. This political war between producers and especially traders went on during the entire early modern age (roughly from 1500 to 1800) until, slowly and gradually, the decisive process was realised: the unleashing of competition. The market actors began to relate to each other as mainly economic, not political, competitors. Their existence and success became less dependent on personal networks and political support and more on economic performance. This change within the sphere of mediation penetrated production and remodelled it according to its logic of competition and valorisation. Profits were not used as much for individual enrichment but as investment, a vital ingredient for existence. The mediation form of exchange gained increasing importance, the growing urban population was more and more dependent on the availability of food via competitive markets. Exchange became decisive when it became crucial in securing the existence of a major part of the population. In the process of the generalisation of exchange as the primary mediation form for livelihood, the local and dependent, variable elements of exchange began to lose importance: exchange became the general exchange of equivalents, money became a general equivalent and capitalism was born.

After the change in domination, equivalent exchange triggered an enormous increase in the division of tasks and, thus, in the depth of the re/productive mediation. Transpersonality is the strong side of exchange: it connects people who are only interested in maximising their self-interest. The exchange partners do not have to care for each other. While in the feudal society the depth of mediation is low, and transpersonal relations are not very complex or extended, equivalent exchange generates an intricate, highly structured transpersonal mediation—which today has reached a global level. The old system of feudalism has been transgressed by the new system of capitalism. The late-feudal and the emerging capitalist society became restructured step by step to align themselves with the requirements of the capitalist re/production.

3   SEED FORM THEORY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMONISM

With the intent of drawing analogies with the origins of capitalism, we now turn to the transition to the free society. Our utopia and thus our concept of the free society is *commonism*, as developed in Chap. 6. Other analyses could reach different understandings of the free society and, consequently, the five-step process presented below would take a different course. The object of society and re/production, the dimensions of development are the same as those in the transition to capitalism. However, the new function, the new mediation form is different: What exchange was to emerging capitalism, commoning is to emerging commonism (cf. Chap. 6, 3). However, we feel that, at this point, our research and theory are still immature.

One quality of commonist mediation, of commoning, is →voluntariness (p. 144). People only become active if the activity is important to them and they have the wish to act. Another quality is →collective disposal (p. 145): no abstract rules ensure divisions and claims as much as →property (p. 130) does, but collective possibilities of use are negotiated on the basis of →needs (p. 113). These commonist elements produce inclusive conditions. Other people cannot be instrumentalised or coerced into an activity; I have good reasons to include the needs of others. The same applies the other way around, in what refers to other people including me. Only through mutual inclusion can we achieve our goals. We will utilise these qualities to find and analyse the different ways in which the seed form appears under current conditions. As a reminder: on the basis of a human possibility—a free (from domination) society called commonism—we take a virtual look back and ask how this society could emerge.

3.1   *Preconditions*

The commonist society and the form of mediation that prevails in it are the result of human-societal preconditions. These preconditions differ in their characteristics: some are generally human and thus do not depend on today's form of society. Others arose historically and are tied to certain societal developments. We would like to start with the generally human preconditions.

The human ability to enter into an inclusive, need-oriented mediation form requires perceiving the needs of other people and integrating them into our premises of action. This ability is called *intersubjectivity*. We have

explained it in the theory of the individual (cf. p. 110). Intersubjectivity enables us to recognise other people as individuals in need with particular wishes and perceptions and to integrate them into our own wishes and perceptions on a par, instead of instrumentally subordinating them to our own needs.

As human beings we have a cognitive *distance* to the world. We are not a direct function of our perceptions and emotions, we are not victims of the world, but we can distance ourselves from the world and assume a reflective stance. Our consciousness enables us to design our societal conditions according to our needs. We can reflect on our own needs and on those of others and balance possibilities of satisfaction. As societal individuals we are not trapped in an individualised motivation. We do not only act when concrete and individually useful actions motivate us, but we also know a *generalised motivation*. Our motivation can include the needs of other people, even the needs of the "general others", that is, people we do not know. I bake bread not just for me and my friends, I can be motivated to bake bread for people I do not know. We are not sure about other general-human preconditions commonist mediation might have. There could be others. When all is said and done, the essential precondition is that *we are human beings, we are able to design our living environment.*

Now, however, we would like to deal with the historical preconditions. We enter even more troubled waters: how can we specify what the changeable preconditions of a free society are? What is essential, what is dispensable? Is it a high technological development? Global networking? We quickly arrive at elements which regard capitalism as a vital requirement for the realisation of human capacity. Since we are uncertain, we would like to describe these historical preconditions in the subjunctive.

Maybe *global networking* is necessary for the development of an inclusive mediation form. Only then will there be no more outside. Only then can all needs be included, without the danger or the need to prevail at the expense of others. Or the opposite: maybe a free society can start in one region and expand from there. We believe this is not very likely, but a free society in certain isolation could be conceivable. Naturally, the division of tasks and the diversity of needs would be less differentiated, but this does not exclude the possibility of an inclusive mediation form. These considerations open up the question of whether a free society could prevail in some parts of the world, while others are still governed by domination-based mediation forms. It is obvious that mediation relations to these "external societies" could in parts corrupt and damage the inner logic of inclusion.

What about the *depth of mediation*? Capitalism has integrated people into a strong societal →network (p. 163). All people are producing for everybody, even if under the negative omen of structural exclusion. Much more than in earlier forms of society, in many places capitalism has dissolved interpersonal conditions of tradition, family and union, thus creating the basis for an individuality beyond groups. Are these societal interconnections not also a basis for the free mediation form to overcome the interpersonal level and become transpersonal-societal?

Maybe a certain level of *technological development* must be acquired for a society based on voluntariness to become a reality. This might give the chance to automatise many unloved, dangerous and tedious activities, which in capitalism cannot be made a source of profit and, therefore, must be covered by cheap workers susceptible to blackmail.

3.2   *Contradiction in Development*

Mere preconditions do not do the trick. One—or more—dynamic(s) are required to exert pressure on a development towards the new mediation form. A societal contradiction in development is a subjectively felt contradiction. It is a contradiction between the needs of the people and societal re/production, between subjective needs and the societal possibilities of their satisfaction. These subjective needs are proactively oriented: society is supposed to satisfy my needs in the future. And they can exceed my individual needs: the suffering of other people can also lead to a pressure for change. Furthermore, an escalating crisis—for example, the global use of resources (cf. Brand and Wissen 2017) or the inner-capitalist →realisation of the value crisis (p. 202)—can exert a pressure for change, for it can endanger not only the current supply but also provision. Thus, the emergence of the seed form of commonism, commoning, can be triggered by a number of dynamics: social isolation, destruction of the environment, reasonable wishes of re/production—prevented by the force of valorisation—exclusion from the market and so on. It is no coincidence that people discuss and feel the urge to engage in societal alternatives. Even those with a sufficiently secured existence—from their subjective point of view— become active for a different social organisation when there are tangible opportunities. Many dynamics seem to nurture hope of a transformation already in the making, and do not only begin when one is starving despite having money.

Valorisation Crisis

The capitalist form of production entails a self-contradiction. On the one hand, capitalism is based on the exploitation of human labour. On the other, all producers of commodities must strive to cheapen their commodities as much as possible, therefore, to minimise the human labour in them. Both processes are propelled by competition. The first strives for expansion and perpetual growth, the second for implosion and perpetual negative growth. The origin of the self-contradiction—and source of the dual crisis of realisation and metabolism—is the "the two-fold character of labour embodied in commodities" (Marx 1890, p. 56). Marx distinguishes concrete from abstract labour. Concrete labour produces use value, which satisfies needs. Abstract labour produces exchange value, which establishes equivalence in the act of exchange. Indeed, the proactive production* of life conditions aims exclusively at useful things, use value. However, in capitalism the only commodities produced are those which promise valorisation (German: ›Ver-Wert-ung‹—›make-value-real‹). Their value is established by abstract labour, which in competition is permanently reduced, however, due to the pressure to increase productivity. The same output of products demands less and less input of labour. To compensate, the amount of commodity output must be permanently increased. To achieve the same extent of value, an ever-increasing amount of commodities must be produced, requiring an ever-increased use of resources that causes increased externalities (e.g., CO_2 emissions). Increasing environmental consumption walks hand-in-hand with two conflicting tendencies: the expansion of value due to production expansion and the reduction of value due to increased productivity. The capitalist mode of production is systematically heading for a crisis of global metabolism—in times of upswing faster than in a crisis.

Despite the permanently increasing output of commodities—that is the crazy thing about this mode of production—imminent valorisation crises also escalate at the same time. The heart of the matter lies in the fact that the continuing decrease in value cannot be compensated (anymore) by the extension of production. Cyclical crises can only compensate to a small extent for this instability which permanently increases. This is done by transferring investments from

(continued)

the real economy to "investments" in a future, desired real economy. This has become possible by transferring real capital to financial markets, where it generates fictional capital many times its volume (cf. Lohoff and Trenkle 2012). The problems start when fictional capital is materialised and invested in the real economy. The current economy then becomes more and more dependent on the smooth functioning of the future economy. A house of cards is erected, which would do no harm if this were just a game of cards. But, in the meantime, real houses are built on that foundation. The downfall of the house of cards brings the real economy to a partial standstill. The real size of this crisis potential is an issue and so is the nature of the next crash.

3.3   *Function Shift*

In the shift of function, a new specific function emerges, the *seed form*, which will dominate the future development. In the shift of function, a new mediation form must emerge which will become the foundation of the new society. According to our postulated goal, this new mediation form, the commoning, represents—when societally generalised—the core of the inclusive society, commonism.

Inclusion takes place in many places in capitalism: in friendships, families, even businesses. People even act inclusively without directly gaining from it. We call this sort of behaviour →individualised inclusion (p. 204) if it is based on conscious ethical decisions. Individualised inclusion is an important step, but commonism takes a step further. Commonism creates a space and conditions suggesting inclusion, it makes them subjectively functional. In a commoning framework, I have good reasons to act inclusively. In commoning, inclusion is not an individual ethical decision, but rather one suggested by a *logic of inclusion* that is generated by the framework. I do not need to →altruistically (p. 111) go beyond myself and postpone my needs for others; it is useful to include the needs of others for the satisfaction of my own needs. So what are the required conditions for the mediation form of commonism to emerge?

Individualised Inclusion

Inclusive actions fall into three categories: individualised, interpersonal and transpersonal. In the case of individualised inclusion, people act individually on the basis of ethical convictions, such as justice, sustainability, solidarity and so on. In this case, the needs of other people are taken care of in private life. Examples are fair trade, bio consumption, donations and so on. As these actions are only individual and monetarily mediated, they do not create new and lasting social relationships and, therefore, cannot establish a new mediation form. Inclusion takes place through the intentional use of one's money, for example, in consumption decisions and donations. Individualised inclusion is real inclusion, and it improves conditions but is necessarily limited: it always involves acting against one's own needs. Based on morals and ethics, I consciously prioritise the needs of others over mine: instead of going on holidays with my money, I buy fair-trade goods to make people's life in Cambodia a little bit better. If taking into consideration the needs of others involve disregarding one's own needs, people have good reasons to not participate in this individualised inclusion. It is altruistic: I am doing something *for others*. Initiatives propagating individualised inclusion often appeal to morality: people should take care of others. We must help the poor and the sick. However, would it not be much better if egoism and altruism were combined? I do something *for others and for me at the same time*. The conditions in which caring for others is not an issue of morality would be both interpersonal and transpersonal. They would be conditions in which I would be better off if I cared for others, and others would be better off if they cared for me. This can only be achieved by changing the framework of actions, by going beyond individualised inclusive *actions* towards interpersonal inclusive *spaces* and again, finally, towards a transpersonal inclusive *society*.

We have set out a conceptual framework of commoning (cf. Chap. 6, 1.2) but we have not reached the end of it. We condensed our findings in the statement that commoning would be based on *voluntariness* and *collective disposal*. These two elements generate the conditions from which commonism can emerge. Our thesis here is: in the shift of function stage, only the seed form of commoning appears; therefore, collective disposal

cannot develop as a transpersonal but only as an interpersonal quality. In capitalism it is the generalised exchange on the basis of property that is dominant. Collective disposal at the societal level is impossible and, at the interpersonal level, difficult. In the case of →commons (p. 143), many projects try to eliminate or cushion the exclusive effects of property. This is what the slogan "possession instead of property" (Habermann 2016, p. 10) stands for. In autonomous centres or political camps, the basis of decisions is not property, what is attempted is the mediation of needs. This is often done via tricky legal constructs, such as tenement syndicates, free software licences, creative commons licences, seed licences and so on. However, as we shall show, the domination of property fundamentally limits the scope of voluntariness. In capitalism many connections also depend on voluntariness—often beyond the sphere of the →economy (p. 14)—which requires the inclusion of the needs of the actors. The role of honorary officer is based on voluntariness: volunteer firefighters, refugees-welcome groups, clubs and so on. Political activity also presupposes voluntariness. It is not an individual's job to include the needs of all actors, but the overall structure must secure this, otherwise it will disintegrate. Even in businesses, voluntariness is on the rise. New organisational structures and management approaches increasingly advocate voluntariness, autonomy and self-motivation. The workers are enabled to better adjust their tasks as they wish. This is still subject to compulsory valorisation, as voluntariness is just the basis for increased productivity but, nevertheless, it is a form of commoning within the economy (cf. Meretz 2016).

Interpersonal Inclusion

What limitations is commoning as a seed form subject to? It can only seize the interpersonal-collective level but not the transpersonal-societal level. One reason for this is the lack of collective disposal beyond the interpersonal frame, as mentioned before. It seems obvious that these two elements are interconnected. Our thesis is: if commons—at the level of the seed form—try to overcome exchange and, thus, the logic of property in capitalism to some extent, they must *interpersonalise transpersonal relations*. And that is a fundamental problem.

We can illustrate that with examples of community-supported agriculture projects. For example, an average agricultural farmyard in capitalism produces vegetables as commodities for a supermarket, and the consumers buy the commodities from there. For the consumer or the producer, it is irrelevant who actually produces or consumes. The exchange of money for

a commodity connects people transpersonally. Community-supported agriculture tries to establish a different mediation between consumers and producers: the consumers establish a fixed group financing the production of the farmyard, and they receive the produced vegetables in return. They do not pay a price per potato but cover the costs of the farm, labour, seeds, electricity and so on. There might be a solidary redistribution by way of rounds of contribution, enabling people to contribute according to their financial possibilities and allowing people who are better off to support others. A partial separation of give-and-take is practiced, and new logics emerge: the consumers have a word in the production, the producers are exempt from market competition and can produce more ecologically and considering their own needs. The project still needs money, but consumers and producers are joined in a commoning process: they show special consideration for the needs of others. Inclusion is important. This commoning only works because people engage in direct interpersonal relationships: the producers produce for concrete consumers and the consumers receive their vegetables from a concrete farmyard. In community-supported agriculture projects, the transpersonal relationship of the capitalist farmyard with its consumers is rendered interpersonal.

This example is intended to illustrate a general logic. At the level of seed form, voluntariness, inclusion and collective disposal are somehow accessible in interpersonal connections. However, at the transpersonal level there cannot be collective disposal. Hardly any project in capitalism can afford to give away products or services free of charge, to give others the power of a free disposal, whether individually or collectively. The reason is that the means for the respective production—whether they are means of consumption for the producers or means of re/production—usually are property and, therefore, stem from exchanges or the state. Nevertheless, some projects try to rule out the property of the produced means on the output side. In that way, the clear connection between give and take is cancelled; such is the case of cf. "Küchen-für-alle" (kitchen-for-all), volunteer fire departments or community-supported agriculture.[3] But due to the fact that property is dominant in society and, therefore, so is the

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[3] The attempts at "Nichtkommerzielle Landwirtschaft (NLK)" (non-commercial agriculture) and other projects associated with the Karlahof (Karlafarm) in northern Brandenburg are legendary. The well worth reading reflexion "Ich tausch nicht mehr. Ich will mein Leben zurück" (Autor*innenkollektiv 2015) ("I don't exchange anymore. I want my life back" by collective of authors 2015) clearly shows possibilities and (interpersonal) limits.

need for cash, the separation can only be partially successful and must be cushioned in interpersonal connections. Only in interpersonal connections can the logic of exclusion of property and exchange be consciously overcome by cooperating people. However, this overcoming necessarily remains limited. Thus, at the level of the function shift, inclusive conditions are created mainly by voluntariness and a limited disposal of some resources. Generally speaking, if projects build interpersonal conditions partially representing a logic of inclusion, inclusive actions lose their mere ethical character. They are structurally encouraged and foster each other. Individually, there are good reasons to adopt the encouraged inclusive activity, for it means that one will be included in return. Projects based on voluntariness and partial collective disposal do just this: they generate these conditions of collective inclusion. This is the *seed form* of commonism: inclusive conditions at the interpersonal level. It will take a shift of dominance—in our view incurring the true collective disposal of all aspects of producing* the means of consumption—for the (interpersonal) seed form to transform into a (transpersonal) *elementary form*, making the inclusive conditions societal and general and, thus, dominant. We will now present some examples of the commonist seed form.

Traditional Commons

Traditional commons hold their ground above all in connection with the preservation of natural resources, and they are often a direct source of livelihood through the selling of natural products (fishery, forest use, grazing, water regulation etc.). Today they are surviving islands in the ocean of capitalist enclosure and the valorisation of capital, while in earlier times they formed an important part of societal re/production. Political scientist Elinor Ostrom (awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009) analysed these surviving commons and carved out eight design principles, which she summarised in her Nobel Lecture (Ostrom 2009, p. 422):

> 1A. User Boundaries: Clear and locally understood boundaries between legitimate users and nonusers are present.
>
> 1B. Resource Boundaries: Clear boundaries that separate a specific common-pool resource from a larger social-ecological system are present.
>
> 2A. Congruence with Local Conditions: Appropriation and provision rules are congruent with local social and environmental conditions.

2B. Appropriation and Provision: Appropriation rules are congruent with provision rules; the distribution of costs is proportional to the distribution of benefits.

3. Collective-Choice Arrangements: Most individuals affected by a resource regime are authorized to participate in making and modifying its rules.

4A. Monitoring Users: Individuals who are accountable to or are the users monitor the appropriation and provision levels of the users.

4B. Monitoring the Resource: Individuals who are accountable to or are the users monitor the condition of the resource.

5. Graduated Sanctions: Sanctions for rule violations start very low but become stronger if a user repeatedly violates a rule.

6. Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms: Rapid, low-cost, local arenas exist for resolving conflicts among users or with officials.

7. Minimal Recognition of Rights: The rights of local users to make their own rules are recognized by the government.

8. Nested Enterprises: When a common-pool resource is closely connected to a larger social-ecological system, governance activities are organized in multiple nested layers.

Traditional commons could survive when they drew clear lines and developed a system of domination, sanction and →conflict (p. 146) solution for the internal organisation. Or, in Ostrom's words: "In all self-organized systems, we found that users had created boundary rules for determining who could use the resource, choice rules related to the allocation of the flow of resource units, and active forms of monitoring and local sanctioning of rule breakers" (ibid., p. 419). *Defence structures* against the hostile surroundings and their intruding logic were necessary, as many of the internally linked commons appeared externally as competitors—for example, when produce from the use of the commons was sold on the market. On the output side property was not overcome, while on the input side natural resources like forests, moors, pastures, lakes and so on were not used as individual property but were preserved according to the needs of the parties involved. The preservation and protection of the commons was partly carried out on the basis of voluntariness. The limited collective disposal of resources on the input side and the fact that voluntariness was only partially present created limited inclusive conditions.

Projects of Collectives

Projects of collectives cover the organisation of a wide range of different aspects of life with a special focus on interpersonal relationships. This includes communities, collective parenting, dwelling projects, autonomous centres, queer-feminist connections and other associations with an emancipatory claim. These groups considerably differ in their thematic focus: ecology, dwelling, producing, culture, politics, sexuality and so on are keywords. However, they have a lot in common: dealing intensively with social processes in the group, criticising and reflecting on →power (p. 4) and domination, creating solidary possibilities of conflict resolution and of dealing with traditional forms of relationships. On the basis of voluntariness, they create a *self-organisation* exceeding structural isolation in capitalist society and developing new forms of cooperation. Here, inclusive conditions originate from voluntariness and are developed via reflexion on domination and the criticism of power. Most of these projects focus on their inner social structure. They produce new symbolic and social means: in particular, new forms of dwelling, love, conflict resolution, perception, thinking and critique. In addition, some projects of collectives produce or offer means that cannot be easily replicated: for-free shops, community-supported agriculture, Küfa ("Küche für alle"—kitchen for all), cultural events and so on.

Myriads of Further Seed Form Instances

There are a vast number of further projects based on voluntariness (and partly on collective disposal). As mentioned above, businesses also try to incorporate voluntariness into their work organisation. More extensive projects of solidarity-based economy stress the importance of voluntariness by demanding it, and the contributors collectively determine the goals of their re/production. However, this form of self-organisation is limited by the continuing ownership of the products.

Knowledge Communism

The concept of "knowledge communism" goes back to Robert K. Merton (1942). Scientific knowledge is supposed to be the outcome of a cooperative research process, whose results are published, examined, copied, criticised and refined. So this knowledge is public. In the middle of the 1980s, Richard M. Stallman extended this idea to include software representing a special form of knowledge.

Fighting the growing containment of software (transition from free software to property by requiring a charge for its use) he developed the concepts of *Free Software* and *Copyleft* licence (GNU General Public Licence). Free software means the software is free for use; it can be changed and passed on. Copyleft requires that follow-on software also fall under the copyleft licence. The "virus of freedom" is passed on.

The new millennium saw these beginnings turn into a broad movement of free and open-source software (FOSS). The basic idea of cooperative sharing and improving available knowledge quickly spread to other areas: open design (of clothes, houses, cars etc.), open courseware (learning materials), free encyclopaedia Wikipedia, free cultural goods (books, films etc.) and many more. The Oekonux project ("Oekonomie und Linux"—"Economy and Linux", cf. Merten 2001) predicted this development and, furthermore, postulated the emergence of a new production form with the potential of replacing capitalism. We build on these ideas.

The essential quality of knowledge communism attempts is their achievement of the societal level. Scientific findings influence *transpersonal mediation*. However, they must be subject to free disposal and, therefore, de facto nobody's property (albeit not *de jure*). This way, interested parties all over the world can examine the results and develop them further, and the human potential of cumulative contributions to a global production* of life conditions can unfold in the area of science. Knowledge only has to be acquired once to be potentially available to everybody. In this case, de facto unlimited collective disposal and voluntariness are already possible and create a transpersonal space of inclusion, albeit limited to only one sector.[4]

Leaving the Niche

The commonist seed form can be found in many contexts and in many places. But how can it go beyond its niche existence? How can it achieve societal generalisation? In the function shift, the first step of qualitative change, the new quality of commoning develops on the basis of voluntariness and partial collective disposal, producing inclusive conditions applicable at the interpersonal level. This new mediation form differs in quality from the old function, the exchange based on property, which is still

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[4] The intrusion of logics of valorisation and exclusion into science experienced for many years is another story.

dominant. At the same time, commoning is active in the old system environment, thus actively contributing to capitalist valorisation (dual functionality, cf. Chap. 7, 1. "shift of function").

3.4   Scenarios of Shift of Dominance

With the shift of dominance we arrive at the second qualitative change. Now the new quality of commoning is no longer a subordinated function within the old system but becomes the dominant function in the new system. Commoning not only takes place in less important areas and niches, but a societal point of no return is reached making commoning the dominant societal mediation form. Two questions arise: how can this point of no return be conceptualised? Which dynamics will lead to this point of no return? Let us begin with the first question.

Commoning as a seed form—apart from knowledge communism—so far appears at the interpersonal level. This sort of commoning emerges on the basis of voluntariness and partial disposal. This partial disposal can only be gained by steering hitherto commodity-like transpersonal relationships of producers/maintainers and users towards the interpersonal level through commoning. Commoning, to that extent, transforms from seed form to elementary form as the repeal of exclusive property, individually agreed on, becomes the general societal structure; or, in other words, as property is overcome and collective disposal becomes generally implemented. Thus, instruments of domination acting in interpersonal and transpersonal relationships disappear—both on the input and on the output side. Means of re/production and life are not necessarily bought or sold anymore but are produced* on the basis of needs—prioritised, if necessary. At the same time, the produced* means are at everyone's free disposal. This overcomes the hitherto exclusively interpersonal form of commoning. The commonist mediation form must now design transpersonal relationships. Polycentric structures emerge—for example, infrastructure commons, conflict management commons and others (unpredictable at the moment)—that are able to carry and shape this transpersonal net (cf. Chap. 6, 3.4).

While individualised inclusion on the basis of ethics and morality is always possible, the shift of function leads to a collective inclusion on the basis of interpersonal commoning. With the shift of dominance, this interpersonal commoning becomes generalised and turns into transpersonal commoning, the inclusive society. Not only the needs of *concrete others*,

that is, my direct cooperation partners, are included, but also the needs of *general others* are consciously and directly included—or indirectly, when producing and applying means stemming from voluntary activity. How will that come about? Once again we find ourselves in troubled waters. We wish to present various scenarios and invite you to ponder on the correct course.

Scenario 1: More Efficient than Capitalism

Dual functionality means that the seed form already emerges in the old system; although it is functionally useable, its inner logic is at the same time incompatible with the existing system. This is how the capitalist seed form actually expanded within the framework of feudalism: it was useful, mainly to the interests of the ruling aristocracies. It can easily be assumed that the same applies at present to the commons. Could they not be functional for capitalism? Being functional for capitalism means they improve valorisation. And, indeed, this is the case with Wikipedia and free software but also with commons-oriented work organisation: they allow for a reduction of costs and/or a better realisation. However, this is impossible for most of the commons engaged in material production, given that their logic is the exact opposite of cost-efficiency in the struggle for the valorisation of value.

In the mainstream production of goods, efficiency and cost-efficiency are mostly achieved through externalisation and exclusion, that is, through satisfying the needs of some people in one place by violating the needs of other (generations of) people in another place. In fact, this form of production inevitably combines local or partial efficiency with system-wide inefficiency—as measured against the satisfaction of the needs of humanity. On the contrary, the commonist logic of inclusion achieves a significantly higher degree of efficiency in the satisfaction of needs, even if it might cause "inefficiency" regarding the valorisation of value, given that externalisation and exclusion at the expense of others are not possible. As a consequence, it is very unlikely that it will expand under capitalist competition and its drive for the realisation of value.

So, if the commons cannot successfully compete in the field of commodities, two conceivable possibilities remain: either the competitive disadvantage in the field of commodities will be compensated or the field will be left. In the case of the compensation of competitive disadvantages, additional (virtual) characteristics are added to the commodity; these are externalised in mainstream commodity production, but they are enjoyed

by certain groups of buyers. In solidarity-based economy, for example, the resulting earnings are evenly distributed among the producers. Fair trade generates a higher yield for the producers compared to conventional production. The approach of the economy for the common good ("Gemeinwohlökonomie" in German, Felber 2018) makes factors like ecology, societal issues and so on, profitable through a calculated assignment of attributes (in the form of a "common good balance").[5] However, these approaches do not usually displace mainstream commodity production but complement it. They fill unoccupied areas or even create new markets. As they are completely integrated into the logic of the commodity form, they are just as exposed to a crisis or breakdown of the economy and cannot represent alternatives.

An example of a game changer is online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. Commercial encyclopaedias, which aimed at excluding others from the use of their products via copyright, were not outcompeted in the field of the commodity form but rather *out-cooperated* in the field of cooperation through voluntary contributions. This became possible by the fact that the product, the generated knowledge, in the digital form can be arbitrarily copied at little expense (cf. "communism of knowledge", p. 209).

Scenario 2: Expansion
Another, possibly more obvious, idea is that of gradual extension. Numerous commons projects from all sorts of areas—culture, agriculture, internet, energy and so on—are expected to network and grow. This networking already develops slowly expanding mediation networks. Societal re/production increasingly becomes commonist. This leads to the point where commonist re/production represents a serious alternative to the capitalist form of livelihood and a shift of dominance occurs. We have also given this idea of change in domination some consideration, but we recently came to the conclusion of rejecting it. On the one hand, expansion is limited by the existing property structures—and it will be difficult to buy most capitalist property. On the other hand, the mediation between particular projects is problematic. We fear that such a growing mediation necessitates either a planned form or that of exchange. We would like to take a closer look at this issue.

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[5] In their political demands, these approaches in parts go much further; however, here we only deal with their economic practice.

There are two possibilities of organisation when several commons join forces, such as several CSAs ("community-supported agriculture") and a wind power commons. They either form a *consortium* with a joint budget and common membership, sharing all products and services, or form a rather loose *network*, where each commons keeps its organisational independence as far as budget and membership are concerned; defined agreements allow for the members' mutual use of the products. Certainly, mixed forms are possible, but we would like to focus on the end of the spectrum.

Consortium

In the case of a *consortium* there is an interface mediating exchange, the relations of exchange with capitalism to which the projects must submit monetarily. Within the consortium, individual projects can establish forms of reciprocity other than exchange. Electricity does not have to be "paid for" by an equivalent of vegetables and vice versa. The members of the consortium contribute to the combined budget in rounds of solidarity-based contribution. Thus, give-and-take is partially decoupled from the projects involved, as well as from the members. As the projects still entertain external monetary relations, on the one hand, and the "hired contributors" must be paid to find sufficient time for their activity, on the other, the decoupling between the projects can only be partial. The voluntary contributors must secure their monetary livelihood, therefore not all necessary activity in the consortium can be exercised voluntarily *and* reliably. External monetary pressure for survival competes with voluntariness, and, at the end of the day, it is the former that has the final say.[6] Given the capitalist conditions, the solution can only be to pay people for the reliable fulfilment of an activity that is necessary for the project. But how to ensure the (often only precariously) paid activity is reliably delivered? Solutions tend towards either the "market economy" or the "planned economy": the reliable delivery of the work is either ensured by resorting to market competition—threat of dismissal and of hiring a reliable worker—or social, moral or political pressure is applied in order to "voluntarily" achieve sufficient dedication and reliability. Both strategies undermine the targeted

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[6] A well-known phenomenon is exiting a project due to a "bad conscience", as those involved repeatedly fail to strike a balance between their own aspirations and the need to secure a livelihood under conditions of paid labour (and the accompanying necessities of recovery).

new quality: voluntariness and inclusion.[7] The growing size of the consortium requires an even greater reliability of the scheduled activity to keep the task sharing running. This is the precise problem encountered by planned societies that replaced the market-based economic threat of dismissal with a symbolic pay and political-moral pressure.

Apart from voluntariness, collective disposal also reaches its limits. When transpersonality increases, so does anonymity. The more this happens, the more contributors and users—as consumers living in a capitalist setting—might be induced to acquire a bigger share of the produced wealth. In smaller, interpersonal projects this is contained by the individual assessment of fairness and social control. However, with an increase in the size of the consortium, individual ethic and social pressure might decrease. This could lead to a behaviour that is functional in the context of the logic of exclusion, the minimising of input and maximising of output at the expense of others, severely disrupting the space of inclusion. One way of balancing this could be to increase control and the rule of law; this, however, would push the consortium further towards a planned economy.

Apart from these perilous inner dynamics, the external dynamic of the capitalist surroundings is also in play. This decoupling of give and take, generally speaking, reduces (or aspires to do so) the pressure of competition and productivity. This also entails (or aspires to do so) the tendency to internalise so far externalised factors such as environmental protection, climate protection, preservation of soil fertility and so on. However, this usually leads to the consortium's products becoming more expensive than conventional capitalist production, if its productivity is trailing normal market economy businesses; moreover, new costs incur due to re-internalisation. This problem of productivity was also present in the planned economies of real socialism. Without the pressure of competition, the rise in productivity deaccelerated, leading to political campaigns in an attempt to compensate for it. A growing consortium of commons also becomes more and more expensive and, thus, unattractive for old and new members. This puts limits on a "planned economic" solution.

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[7] In addition, the well-documented psychological *overjustification effect* occurs, when "internally" motivated voluntary activity is "externally" rewarded (cf. Deci et al. 1999).

Network

The second possibility is a loose *network*. In this case the individual commons remain unchanged, keeping their own budgets and entering into agreed relations. These relations would only make sense if not organised on a commodity-based exchange but involving a decoupling of give-and-take. For example, this is practiced in the Intercom-Network of municipalities in the Kassel area (Wenk 2014). Their concept of "free flow" "is mainly based on the principle of surplus" (ibid.). Means are not exchanged but given according to fairness standards. However, one thing is clear: fairness must not overextend the individual commons. This condition is met only when passing on the surplus; however, it reaches its limit with the exhaustion of the surplus. The general rule is that fairness must not disconnect product costs too much from market prices.

Deviations from exchange and the market are possible, especially for not-required surplus means, but a market orientation remains overall necessary. Therefore, property is hardly overcome and collective disposal basically remains within the particular commons; this can hardly include the needs of others, for they must ensure their further existence. Moreover, fairness cannot be generalised but rests on perceived justice and interpersonal relationships. Fairness is an interpersonal feeling and requires a concrete other. It is precisely this interpersonal bond that the transpersonal exchange of equivalents overcomes through its abstract justice.

The idea of "free flow" is interesting as far as the radical decoupling of give-and-take is concerned. Because it is grounded on the limited interpersonal basis of fairness and surplus, this approach cannot be generalised. Is there a way out? Could "fair" exchange relationships be internally established instead of organising a completely free flow for non-surplus goods?

Such an approach of mutual production for each other instead of for the market would involve a definition of fairness. Only an "almost equal" exchange would be accepted as "fair", given that production involves certain inputs. These must also be considered, regardless of a non-market-oriented "fair internal exchange", in order not to overstrain the particular partners. In the end, such a fairness would result in a market price plus X, while X stands for the higher costs deriving from lower productivity and higher internalisation (protection of the environment, work conditions etc.). If these relatively higher inputs were accepted in the "fair internal exchange" ("expensive electricity for expensive vegetables") these deviations from the market would not matter in the internal sphere; however, they would be felt even more in the monetary external relations with the

capitalist environment, where merciless market prices prevail. In the external relations, "fair" products would be more expensive than "conventional" ones and, thus, less competitive.[8] However, acquiring the necessary financial resources ("foreign currencies") for the consortium demands external orientation, thus making these external standards the yardstick for the "fair" internal conditions. Here too we find a situation comparable with real socialism: dependency on foreign currency causes the import of capitalist criteria into the network. Although other modifications are still possible, the bottom line is that the idea is overall market-oriented. This usually indirect market orientation limits the extension of the network.

In our view, both approaches—consortium and network—remain limited. This cannot be surprising, for the transpersonal space of mediation is dominated by the exchange of equivalents. In other words: the transpersonal space is occupied. The transpersonal terrain of mediations must be relieved of equivalent exchange step by step. That is the essence of the idea of expansion. We might be wrong, but we believe that one cannot beat capitalism at its own game, the logic of valorisation, by outcompeting it. So, it should not be surprising that the idea of crisis and the accompanying breakdown of mediation by exchange are seen as likely candidates for initiating transformation.

Scenario 3: Crisis

A crisis means the current form of society cannot secure its future functioning anymore. Contradictions cannot be solved within the framework of the old societal structures but demand that conditions be overcome. The crisis of a form of society is also always a subjectively felt crisis: society cannot secure the livelihood of an important part of the population. But at what point is my livelihood endangered? When I am hungry? When anxiety regarding the future of the environment breaks my heart? When I feel struck by misfortune? Or is it when my internet access is not working? What is an important part of the population? 20%, 40% or 60%? This goes to show that a *societal* crisis invariably entails a *subjective* element. People are proactively oriented. The point at which they experience life as unbearable varies and, above all, depends on possible societal alternatives and on the path leading to it; this is what gives transformation and utopia theories

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[8] A niche market for "fair" products does exist, where customers are willing to pay higher prices in exchange for a good conscience. But this "fairness-plus" is also limited. Market pressure is present here too, albeit at a somewhat higher level.

their prominent place. Currently, there are two major and intertwined elements of crisis: the capitalist *crisis of valorisation* and the global *crisis of metabolism.*

Unfortunately, the capitalist crisis of realisation is difficult to understand without basic prior Marxist knowledge. We have tried to explain that in the box →realisation of value crisis (p. 202). Apart from that, we can only bring the manifold and well-known crisis phenomena to attention: increased shifting of realisation of profits to the financial sphere, debt crisis, increasing paralysis of central banks and governments and so on. The awareness of the crisis of global metabolism (resource depletion, climate change etc.) can also be taken for granted. Now the interesting question is what potential these crises have for a shift of domination.

A crisis or growing crisis phenomena build up considerable pressure to pursue an alternative path to the proactive production* of life conditions. The bigger the crash, the greater the pressure. This pressure always involves a subjective part. The old does not only reach an objective barrier, but this barrier is also subjectively unacceptable. The subjective experience of an alternative can strengthen such a rejection. Acute crisis situations are often chaotic. People feel anxious and believe more and more that things cannot go on like that. They demand safety. Under conditions governed by a logic of exclusion, safety is achieved through domination and exclusion. These are familiar action patterns. Therefore, in a crisis many people will rely on hierarchic-authoritarian solutions. Whether alternatives governed by a logic of inclusion can prevail against such a presumable tendency depends on the breadth of experiences with interpersonal spaces of inclusion. If a lot of people know the strength and safety that a space can provide, the latter becomes increasingly attractive. However, in such a crisis situation commoning must be able to quickly organise transpersonal mediation, where experiences are rare. At the same time, we expect that in radical situations of upheaval property could become fragile, allowing for an easier attainment of the collective disposal of property. Under these circumstances, inclusive conditions via voluntariness and collective disposal seem easier to accomplish. However, there are at the same time many dangers. For us it is an open question: what conditions could allow for inclusive forms of cooperation to become dominant?

Scenario 4: The Partner State as a Suicide State

We do not exclude the possibility of the state playing a role in the change of domination. In Chap. 2, 2.2 we tried to explain in detail that the state

cannot build a free society. We also consider it impossible for an inclusive society to be built quickly and spontaneously from below after a state-oriented break. However, it seems quite conceivable that commonist forms—supported by the state—could expand within capitalism and partly guarantee the livelihood of many people. A state-oriented break could then end the old system logic, allowing for the commonist societal form to extend. A problem here is the dissolution of the state itself. Our other considerations regarding the shift of domination involved the state becoming "superfluous". The state is not used, and commonist mediation increasingly renders it superfluous, although a real confrontation—for example, in the form of an active revolution (cf. p. 64)—remains an option. However, in the scenario discussed here the state is not the opponent to be abolished, but a stirrup holder, an accomplice to emancipation. Due to the state-oriented focus of transformation research, the respective suitable mental images enjoy great popularity: the state could socialise property, promote and protect new practices, democratically dissolve into society and so on.

Lenin asked the obvious question (cf. p. 55): why should the state wither away? Why should the state only remain as a stirrup holder and not be a player anymore? Why should a state which breaks the domination of capitalism dissolve afterwards? How does this transforming state become a suicide state? From the individual perspective of the people involved in state power, a different form of livelihood must seem more promising. However, the end of an institution of domination leaves a power vacuum, inviting well-organised groups to fill it for the purpose of exploiting power for their particular interests. This might rather suggest a gradual loss of significance of the state institutions of domination. Having said this, we consider it an open question whether this is possible at all. We must admit that there are many people more knowledgeable in the field of state and politics. So we are happy to pass the question on to them: What could be the state's contribution to a shift of dominance establishing a free society?

Scenario 5: Commons and Social Struggles
Commoners are usually inherently critical about struggles, fighting and politics. They stick to the Zapatista slogan: "It is not necessary to conquer the world. It is sufficient to build it new." You may often hear commoners expressing sentiments like "I'm done with fighting and with being against something, I want to experience and live utopia". This antipathy towards struggles is accompanied by a certain scenario of generalisation: The

peaceful, slow expansion of commoning and commons, one by one. First, creating Community-Supported Agriculture, then building communal energy production, functioning Fab Labs and, slowly, Community-Supported Everything. More and more people and enterprises turn to commoning and expand the commons sphere, because it feels good, it satisfies unsatisfied needs, and it is simply the right thing to do. We think that this path does not stand a chance because of the prevailing capitalist way of producing* our living conditions—the markets and the state still satisfy many needs. Secondly, because of the existing property structures. Commons do not have the resources, land, metals, housing and so on to expand widely. Thirdly, because of the aforementioned criticism of the commons network and consortium.

Commoners are critical of struggles because of the very practice of commons. Commoning thrives on a culture of inclusion, cooperation and respect and, therefore, is culturally averse to discourses and practices of fighting, struggle and exclusion. Some commons challenge existing property structures by occupying, for example, houses or forests, but most accept them and buy the property. But the commons cannot even buy a significant part of capitalist property, mainly because they do not focus on making money and on valorisation but on satisfying needs.

Therefore, some commoners and activists point out the importance of coupling political struggles with commonist seed forms. Supported by political struggles, commoning could thrive within the very movement and be enhanced by it. On the other side, political struggles can incorporate constructive and constitutional elements of commoning. They do not only fight *against* something or for state reforms, but they fight *for* something, and they already experience, develop and refine an inclusion logic of re/production. This coupling of struggles and commoning is not that far-fetched but is already happening. Every movement has structures of collective organisation. But, whereas traditional labour movement organisations were dominated by hierarchy, work, and obedience, new social movement organisations already display a commonist logic of voluntariness and collective disposal. They try to minimise hierarchy and structural domination within the movements, enabling more "democratic" structures. To illustrate, the camps of the climate movement are built on hundreds of activists cooking, organising, building and cleaning voluntarily. This constructive element should be strengthened and acknowledged for what it is: the very element that may evolve into a free society. Constructive movements would not think of themselves primarily as political collectives

trying to achieve state reform but as constructive collectives fighting and struggling, building and fostering within their own structures of living the seed forms of a free society.

This concept is new to us, and it is not sufficiently developed here, but we are already working with activists and commoners on a new book where we will look deeper into this connection between struggles and construction.

3.5   *Restructuring*

When the dominance of inclusive conditions has been established, a new relation between the elementary and the system form has also come about. A new frame of action emerges, involving all people in all spheres of life. It is encouraged everywhere to include the needs of concrete others as well as general others. This activity no longer has to be pushed through and consciously maintained against a different societal logic, it is rather in line with it. Inclusive activity is positively accepted and socially rewarded. The new elementary form of action spreads even to areas that have been, so far, untouched by societal transformation—whether due to their insignificant role in the old logic or their belonging to the "split-off" activities that are now being appreciated because of their importance for everyone's existence. Transformation according to the new infuses machines and child support, sex practices and industrial activities, patient care and infrastructure, houses, and music.

4   Practice

As beautiful as theory may be in its singularity, its function is and remains profane: to improve our practice. To the extent that our transvolution theory is unfinished in substance, our reasoning about practice is fundamentally limited. However, some ideas can be gathered.

Emancipatory practices face the fundamental problem of moving in a society they actually want to overcome. But as long as this cannot be achieved, they remain a part of the society they reject, nevertheless reproducing and supporting it. We can begin by evaluating the potential of practices for improving people's lives under present conditions. On the other hand, we can rate their potential for designing new societal conditions. Thus, generally speaking, even while reproducing the old society, emancipatory practices would overcome it at the same time. The crucial element here is reference to utopia.

4.1   *Reference to Utopia*

Many of today's practice forms have a loose or non-existent utopian reference. Although they intend to improve things, they lack a clear utopia and, thus, a clear transformation theory. This is particularly true for practices that are mainly directed at the immediate improvement of life under present conditions. There is nothing wrong with these reformist practices. They are probably praiseworthy, as they draw the line at a "revolutionary wait-and-see-attitude". This consists of waiting, accepting the existing situation, possibly even hoping for additional suffering as it might create a "revolutionary situation". However, we are convinced that reformist practices could also improve their effective force if they were to develop an explicit reference to utopia and transvolution.

Many further practice forms are characterised by a loose reference to utopia and transvolution. Although they pronounce their practice as aimed at overcoming capitalism, they practically lack theoretical basis. These ideas often remain stuck in theoretical considerations of power: somehow it is all about becoming more, become stronger so that someday in the foggy future an overcoming of capitalism might come about. This is the place where traditional revolutionary theories often hibernate: once we have become strong enough we can usurp state power, use it, and abolish it. (cf. Chap. 2, 4.1). We would very much like the practitioners explicitly going to the bottom of their reference to utopia. Transvolution is not the result of abstract wishful thinking. Substantiating transvolution to a free society requires a sound understanding. As developed in our considerations regarding the frame of our transvolution theory (cf. Chap. 3), practice must anticipate a qualitatively new, unevolved form of re/production.

Our seed form theory conceptualises the mediation form as the dominant element of the form of a society. It comprises the relations established between people and is at the heart of our societal form. Consequently, this qualitatively new form of mediation—according to Adamczak, this new "form of relationship" (cf. 2017)—must be anticipated in practice. This very focus, which in the commons discourse places the emphasis on commoning, is social practice. Commonist mediation should be governed by the logic of inclusion, but this cannot yet reach all of society, only interpersonal spaces. Here, inclusive conditions can be established.

4.2 Interpersonal Inclusive Conditions

A free society can only be free if the satisfaction of my needs does not occur at the expense of the satisfaction of the needs of others but, rather, relates to it in a positive way. Inclusive conditions are the action conditions that generate this logic of inclusion. Therefore, the central question regarding emancipatory practice is: how can we create conditions in our movements, our projects, our spaces, which combine our needs in a positive way? Which conditions suggest the inclusion of other people and their needs? And how do our needs come into their own? All of this requires a collective process of exploration of our needs and taking our feelings seriously. On the basis of our utopia, we can name some criteria regarding practice which create inclusive conditions. We should be aware of the fact that this practice will always be broken and contradictory, for it can only unfold when inclusive conditions have reached the level of societal generality.

4.3 Criteria

Voluntariness
If people only participate in social spaces based on their free will, these spaces must be designed in such a way that the needs of the people involved are included as much as possible. This is put into practice to some extent in self-organising emancipatory projects that set their own aims. Self-organisation allows people to command their own action conditions. This disposal of conditions gives us the option to design the aims of our activity, thus acting in a motivated and voluntary manner. However, this disposal of conditions quickly reaches its limits. For instance, often our time is not at our disposal, given that we must earn money or the project needs money which has to be acquired outside of self-determined activity. Indeed, this hampers motivation and voluntariness, but it does not necessarily destroy it. For we can position ourselves towards the conditions individually and collectively, even though they still constitute the societal frame. However, the infringement remains, for we are restricted to an interpersonal disposal of conditions. For example, this is often recognisable when talking about political *work*. This way of speaking, on the one hand, upgrades political activity and results in it being taken seriously; on the other hand, "work" is tainted by heteronomy. It must be done even if motivation is almost non-existent. As we cannot completely dispose of the

conditions of our political activity, it contains elements of self-constraint. In order to be actually active in a motivated, thus self-determined, manner, we have to try disposing of our action conditions as comprehensively as possible. Therefore, in our projects we must keep an open eye regarding voluntariness: how, why, and where do we damage and limit it? Which conditions can promote voluntariness?

Disposal

Inclusive conditions are also re/produced by mediating the material, symbolic, and social means of action in a way that is as cooperative and need-oriented as possible. This inclusion is necessarily hampered if disposal is limited due to gender, race, hierarchy and so on. While collective disposal seems obvious with material-symbolic means, this does not seem quite as obvious with social means. Thus, for example, collective disposal of discussions and organisational processes requires that individual needs and feelings are taken seriously and are supported in their wish to participate, in order to realise collectivity and inclusion in the process of mediation. Modern emancipatory movements have gathered a lot of new insights regarding this issue, especially in openly dealing with forms of domination within the movement. While we can design numerous things at the interpersonal level in a need-oriented manner, it is true that the transpersonal exclusion structures of patriarchy, racism, homophobia and so on repeatedly transform and damage our self-organised attempts at producing different life conditions. But as long as mediation remains hierarchic, it is obvious and simple to exclude other people and their needs time and again. Thus, our practices will continually cause frustrations.

By keeping in mind the limits of dealing with societal mechanisms of domination interpersonally, the resulting frustration can guide our awareness. It can open up new possibilities of learning, point towards limitations in our projects, and trigger insights regarding inclusive forms of disposal.

Limits and Exclusions

In an exclusion society, inclusive conditions can only be designed in limited areas, separated from a contrasting outside. Inclusive practices can only unfold their logic when they are open to all people, which, however, is impossible in capitalism. The exclusion logic, time and again, enters into open projects and disintegrates them. Limits are necessary, but they are not an integral part of commons. So, for example, community-based agriculture cannot make its products openly available, or a (queer-)feminist

protected area requires a certain sensitivity and, therefore, cannot be open to everybody. Here limits and exclusions are needed to protect the inclusive inner space of projects. But these limits are designable. So, a conscious handling of the necessary access to money can be found in order to not reproduce the logic of exchange in the inner space of projects.

These limits aim at extension: people can only feel safe in protected areas like community-based agriculture or (queer-)feminist projects when the shelter of the inclusion logic is extended to other areas. This is so because the protected area cannot be separated from society, its logics can be cushioned in it but not completely overcome. Generally speaking, inclusive practices aim at generalising inclusive conditions, for only then their logic can unfold entirely and thus remain stable.[9] So we should always ask ourselves: where do we need limits? Where do these limits damage inner inclusive dynamics by excluding people's needs, even if they are not necessarily exclusive? For example, in the beginning men regarded the inclusion of women and their needs as strenuous and unimportant; however, their inclusion considerably sped up inclusive dynamics within the spaces by unveiling the existence of machismo, biased emphasis on rationality, rigour and so on. Also, the inclusion of people with no academic background will reduce mechanisms of exclusion based on formal education. Therefore, the point is: where and how can we overcome and extend limits?

4.4   More Thoughts

Norms and Learning Spaces
There is an interesting dynamic in inclusive areas, where the result is contrary to the goal: the inclusion of the needs of others is experienced as compulsion. Thus, people who have become male consider it to be an impertinent demand to reflect on their privileges and to include the needs of people who have become female. Antisexist behaviour is experienced as an imposed norm and rejected. This perception is supported by the one-sidedness of the concept of privilege, stressing exclusion: the abandoning

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[9] There are also inclusive social areas aiming at exclusion, for example, in right-wing structures. Here the needs of the in-group are organised in a way that enforces them against the needs of out-groups. In this case, we find limited inclusion for the purpose of a better exclusion. It is the radicalised mode of the neoliberal exclusion society.

of privileges is perceived as mere loss. Privileged people give up privileges and, thus, freedom without gaining anything. But this view is rare.

Inclusion has a dual orientation (cf. Chap. 6, 1). The inclusion of the needs of others establishes at the same time the inclusion of my needs. Adhering to a male identity not only means neglecting the needs of others but also one's own needs. Submitting to beauty standards demands enslaving one's own body to these norms. Thus, exclusion always involves self-hostility (cf. p. 121). On the other hand, inclusion always means letting go of self-domination. Inclusion has an internal and external effect, just like exclusion. Racism—exclusion based on gender, social class and so on—legitimises the domination of certain privileged groups; however, it also restricts these groups through identity, splitting-off and self-hostility. Exclusion means my separation from others and from myself. That said, this dual orientation of inclusion does not mean that inclusion is easy. The inclusion of the needs of others, as well as the inclusion of one's own needs, is a difficult process. Conflicts remain between the various needs and the task of their mediation. Taking one's own needs seriously and overcoming their splitting-off also generates an increased contradiction to societal reality, which is increasingly experienced as an imposed demand. A strong effort must be made to act within the frame of these imposed demands, manage them, and act against them. Exhaustion due to permanent conflicts probably explains the forming of unburdening "bubbles", distinct and trusted social areas in emancipatory movements. However, the goal of such inclusive areas should not be to subject people to inclusion as a new norm but, rather, to offer possibilities of accepting one's own needs and those of others.

This, nevertheless, demands that emancipatory areas be learning spaces. We introduce all our interiorised domination into these areas, and we need such a secure environment to be able to change. Again, this requires tolerating faults and foreseeing errors. This idea of a learning space understandably contrasts with the wish for the existence of safe areas, with sensitive people having reflected on and overcome exclusion structures and privileges. This need for already safe areas often materialises in implicit and explicit rules. Not knowing these rules or how to handle them can quickly make one feel out of place, incompatible or inept, probably leading to anxiety and insecurity. If these feelings cannot be articulated, they limit the possibility of taking one's own needs seriously and adjusting the areas accordingly. On the other hand, a free space does not mean "I can do what I want"; it rather outlines the possibility of, and the attempt at,

collectively creating an inclusive area. From fundamental considerations it follows that this attempt is necessarily limited; we can, indeed, criticise and attack particular privileges and lines of exclusion, but there are no two ways about it: the overall exclusion logic can only be overcome societally.

The Guiding Function of Feelings Towards Awareness

Feelings evaluate my needs against the background of the world (cf. p. 113). Thus, they are the foundation of my self-perception. Neglecting them means neglecting myself. However, feelings are no final judgement. My feelings do not represent all of reality and should not define it. By listening to them I can be in better contact with *my* relationship to the world, *my* premises about the world, and *my* needs. This also gives me important clues on what limiting dynamics exist in social areas. My frustration can hint at exclusions in group processes. This helps in finding out which conditions simplify taking one's own feelings and needs seriously without, however, making them the sole standard for everybody. There are good reasons to wish for one's own feelings to be the standard for collective activity if one is afraid of exclusion and of having needs ignored. Hence strategies for action, described with unpleasant words like "emotional terror", hinting at dynamics of feared exclusion. Contempt or condemnation should not be the answer to these strategies but, rather, attempts to create safe areas—and that means inclusive areas—where feelings and needs are taken seriously, where we try to understand them and act accordingly.

Radicalness Lies in the New Form of Relationship

The new quality of emancipatory practice is not so much its (political) output but the new forms of relationship and mediation we engage in. Whereas state-oriented transformation rather aims at enforcing political goals, transvolution is above all focussed on creating new forms of re/producing our life conditions. Thus, a separation of path and goal is counterproductive. The path must incorporate the goal in its unrealised form, the seed form; it must be noticeable and lived. Therefore, the transformation process cannot be dominated by a process of sacrifice and suffering until—through a state-based break—the new heavenly society dawns. No, the process of liberation itself must be need-oriented. The satisfaction of our needs is its scale and goal. This gives enjoyment and quality of life their place in the transformation. They should be present as a claim in our practice of changing society.

Towards Voluntariness and the Disposal of Conditions

The more we dispose of the material, symbolic, and social conditions of our actions, the more possibilities we have to satisfy our needs. Then we can proactively design our living environment in such a way that we can do what is important to us, in a way that motivates us. A free society must grant us a collective and conscious disposal of our societal conditions (cf. Chap. 5, 2.4). The goal of transvolution is the disposal of the re/production of our life conditions, so that we can organise these conditions in voluntariness. So, practice must answer the following questions: How can we increasingly dispose of our conditions in our practice, in our projects? How can we inclusively organise disposal in such a way that we avoid giving other people good reasons to limit our disposal? Mechanisms of exclusion are also present in our areas, but we can try designing the inner structures in a way that encourages inclusion as much as possible, on the basis of voluntariness and collective disposal. In this process, our inner logic of organisation must always be protected against exclusive suggestions of the dominant societal structures. The external transpersonal logics of exchange, exclusion and domination should penetrate our internal interpersonal relationships as little as possible—well aware of the fact that both "inside" and "outside" pass through us.

Our feelings can be a guiding basis for action in our search for an inclusive expansion of our disposal. They inform us on our perceptions of the world and needs, and they can help us in our search for trusting and safe relationships. Inclusive mediation also requires awareness of our societal conditions. We need theories and analyses that will help us better understand society. Given that we are the society, we consciously want to conceptualise this awareness, which is always self-awareness. In a transvolution we will get to know ourselves, our feelings, our ways of thinking, and our needs. Designing our new conditions will be accompanied by developing and unfolding new needs. Self-understanding and self-exploration demand safe and trusting areas in which our needs and ways of thinking are not devaluated as inappropriate, bizarre, or abstruse, where they can be consulted and, thus, may be understood. This requires a trust and safety which only prevails in inclusive areas governed by voluntariness and collective disposal.

Voluntariness and collective disposal and, thus, awareness, trust, and safety can only become a reality when we also dispose of the transpersonal conditions and when our needs can become the scale of our societal organisation. We have outlined the main path leading to this goal. The concrete

steps we have only hinted at, and our wish is that we can walk the path together and develop it (further) together. For that purpose, we need theory as well as a practice aiming at transvolution. The path is still foggy, but the direction is clear: mediation without exclusion, a life not at the expense of others, relationships without anxiety.

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Epilogue

The free society is neither planned nor decreed, neither designed nor enforced. It is learnt and created.

Domination is not abolished but unlearnt. And freedom learnt. Learnt in feeling, in thinking and in acting.

Alone we cannot do it. We need structures—immediate spaces and relations—and must create them in a way that allows for, supports, and protects the process of learning in a liberating manner.

In the process of emancipation—the unlearning of domination, the learning of freedom—people have to liberate themselves. Nobody can do that for them. They must increasingly build their life conditions in a liberating manner.

A free society is only built by people liberating themselves.

There are probably a lot of authors in a similar situation: we look back, and the relief of having finally put ideas to paper walks hand in hand with discontent about the topics and theoretical elements that are immature or missing. For sure, this discontent is heightened by the subject of the book: in many cases we felt we were entering untrodden or unattended theoretical ground. This book deals with central questions that every person interested in emancipation has: Where do we want to go? How do we get there? And yet, we often felt this forward-looking space has been avoided by theory, unlike questions of criticism concerning issues such as right-wing populism, sexism, colonialism and so on. Time and again, we learnt that basic questions on utopia and transformation are more frequently encountered in late-night pub talks rather than open theoretical discourse.

This book wants to counteract this. We intend to give keywords rather than a comprehensive theory, thought-provoking impulses than a ready-made plan.

In the writing process, we experienced this lack of discourse tradition as ambiguity, insecurity and disappointment. Disappointment linked to earlier hopes probably stops many from dealing with questions of social transformation. Of course, we can only hope that someday in the future there will be enough of us with sufficient power to reach the sky. However, realising that conquering power can become part of the problem turns old matters of course into frustration, and the path of transformation becomes hazy. We too experienced a deep uncertainty when we finally understood the problem of extension, presented in Chap. 7, 3.4. We tried to evade the consequences, shifted our interests, but to no avail. We must admit that certain approaches do not work; we literally had to *disappoint ourselves* (German: *ent-täuschen*—"de-deceive"). That is a lesson learnt by experience: considerations on transformation require solid support. We need each other to answer such difficult questions. We, as authors, needed each other. We hope for a better world, and we act accordingly, but when the path towards this utopia gets shaky, certainty stumbles and hope becomes blurry. Only mutual support enables us to go on looking, researching, hoping. This support we gave each other, and we experienced it from many others, without whose contribution this book would never have seen the light of day.

We would like to invite to a new area of discourse on utopia and transformation. Our considerations regarding a new categorical frame and our theories also offer some content for reflection and further development. If emancipatory movements are seriously pursuing their aim, they must put the focus of their theory and practice on questions concerning goal and path. It is to that end that this book wants to contribute.

Utopia can show what is within the reach of people; transformation can show how people can turn possibility into reality.