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**Discussion Paper on the Domain «Empowerment», submitted to the Project
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Peter Herrmann

Empowerment – processing the processed

I. Introduction – Localising Empowerment

To look at empowerment in the context of the social quality approach has to face two challenges,

- * the one being the necessity to locate the orthogonality and embeddedness of empowerment in the context of discussing the other components;
- * the other being concerned with elaborating the specificity of the component and its distinctiveness in relation to other reference-theories of empowerment.

To put it simple, the first question is: How is empowerment linked to and actually defined by the other components? The questions in the second complex are: Has empowerment a distinct meaning in the context of the social quality theory – distinct when compared with the understanding in other contexts? How is it differentiated in relation for instance to empowerment in the context of social work, learning theories and others? Of course, these questions are interrelated and in actual fact, in a way we have to answer both questions simultaneously.

The original definition of empowerment in the theory of social quality, as it had been iteratively developed (s. *Beck/van der Maesen/Walker: Theorizing Social Quality: The Concepts Validity; in: Beck, Wolfgang/van der Maesen, J.G. Laurent/Thomése, Fleur/Walker, Alan (Eds.): Social Quality: A Vision for Europe; The Hague/London/Boston: Kluwer Law International; 2001: 307-360*) highlights the following five points:

- * the fundamental reference to equity;
- * the reference to capabilities and capacities and thus – logically – the interaction of action and structure
- * the reference to the actor-orientation of the social-quality concept and thus the central role empowerment has to play;

- * the «practical» relevance of the concept, and its «instrumental character» in terms of policy making;
- * the reference to «choice», again linking action and structure.

Seen in this light, empowerment had been defined in the following way.

Empowerment to realize human competencies or capabilities (versus subordination) primarily concerns the micro-level enabling of people, as 'citizens', to develop their full potential. Thus this component of social quality refers to developing the competence of citizens in order to participate in processes determining daily life.

(Wolfgang Beck, Laurent van der Maesen/Alan Walker: Social Quality: From Issue to Concept; in: Wolfgang Beck/Laurent van der Maesen/Alan Walker [eds.]: The Social Quality of Europe; The Hague et altera: Kluwer Law International; 1997; 263-296; here: 290)

Already from here it is clear – and will be further developed in the following contribution – that as much as the social quality concept in general aims on overcoming the methodological individualism as it underlies – explicitly or implicitly – most of social science, it is in particular the centrality of *empowerment as an objective component* that makes it possible to grasp the dialectical relationship between (a) actor and structure and thus between (b) the individual and soci(et)al.

Another important aspect has to be seen in linking empowerment to change. In a Social Quality perspective, empowerment is not solely and even primarily concerned with transfer of knowledge, enabling the individual to cope with given structural situations. Rather, empowerment is concerned with enabling the person individually and socially to

- * adapt to a given situation,
- * to cope with changes of situations and
- * to actively influence social developments, i.e. to evoke and maintain changes.

In this perspective, drawing attention to the «enabling welfare state» – as we can find it for instance in their Preparation of a New Perspective by Beck et altera (Beck, Wolfgang/van der Maesen, Laurent/Thomése, Fleur/Walker, Alan: *The Concept Revisited: Preparing a New Perspective*; in: Beck, Wolfgang/van der Maesen, Laurent/Thomése, Fleur/Walker, Alan [eds.]: *Social Quality: A Vision for Europe*; The Hague et altera: Kluwer Law, 2002: 147-172; here: 162) – gains a different meaning compared to mainstream social policy. Rather than forcing

people to subordinate under given requirements, the understanding here starts from a perspective on enabling which then is followed by «integration». Boldly, this emphasises the right to work, rather than starting from the obligation to take up employment.

In further discussion of social policy issues it is worthwhile to link to a wider concept of integration, actually acknowledging the interests of people not simply and solely in terms of employment but as well in terms of what may be considered as «socially meaningful activities». One thought which is concretely conceptualised is concerned with overcoming unemployment and precarious employment by going beyond the orientation on traditional employment strategies and orientat on «security of employment or training» (see *Boccaro, Paul: Une sécurité d'emploi ou de formation; Pantin: Espère et Le Temps des Cerises, 2002*).

In general terms of the social quality approach it is as well a reflection of the difference between changes of the constitutional and the conditional factors. This is based on a kind of dynamisation of the static. In other words, by translating structure (capacities) into action (capabilities), it is possible, to accommodate the «independence of the social» as it had been defined by *Durkheim*¹ without accepting the deactivation which can be read in *Durkheimian* sociology.

By introducing empowerment, the concept of social quality gains a further momentum of being able to understand not least the contradictory character of modernisation.

However, before we look into details, a further general, though fundamental point has to be made in regard of understanding quality. The proposed approach

¹ *Social facts consist of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him. Consequently, since they consist of representations and actions, they cannot be confused with organic phenomena, nor with psychical phenomena, which have no existence save in and through the individual consciousness. Thus they constitute a new species and to them must be exclusively assigned the term social. It is appropriate, since it is clear that, not having the individual as their substratum, they can have none other than society, either political society in its entirety or one of the partial groups that it includes ...*
Any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or: which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, in-dependent of its individual manifestations.

is concerned with understanding a specific quality. However, quality is first and foremost a «value-free» term, introduced by *Aristotle* – together with substance, quantity, relation, place, time, situation, condition, action, passion – as one of the fundamental categories of logics. As such, the determination of quality is not concerned with the assessment of something being «good» or «bad». Instead, as analytical category it is concerned with determining the composition, the configuration and constellation of an object, an action or a complex system of activities.

Though quality reflects in the original teaching of categories («*Kategorienlehre*») the actual material «density» of an entity, differentiating this against the «idealist» or substantial characteristic, it is interesting here, that nowadays the term quality actually only refers to the latter.

This links well to the understanding of constitutional processes which link the two dimensions of the «*Ding an sich*» as considered by *Immanuel Kant* and the process of «*Sinnstiftung*» as *Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel* – referred to as a matter of appropriation by the individual. In a philosophical reflection it can probably be stated without major contestation that quality is the «visible part of the essence of an object, an action or a complex system of activities». However, the term quality developed over time and at least the following perspective has to be added. It is the concern with the perception and reception of the object or subject in question, aiming on assessing the «appropriateness» and «suitability» of something, answering specific «needs». – to be included in one of the general chapters

For the further elaboration of social quality the first step is to locate empowerment and its current reflection in the scientific debate and then in the policy debate in a historical perspective of analysing the development of «productive forces» not only as matter of economic processes but as social relationships.

II. Reflecting Empowerment – The Light of Previous Debates on Social Quality

In general, social theory is – as long as it exists – concerned with two main tensions, namely

- * material versus ideal and
- * societal versus individual.

However, going back in history of social science, these poles had been mainly interpreted as dichotomies without reflecting the in actual fact objective dialectic between the poles of the two axis. As already briefly mentioned, empowerment is positioned at the borderline of the different dimensions, actually meaning that it fulfils a bridge-function.

The challenge of defining empowerment is seen as overcoming the apparent disparity of

- * the *Durkheimian* understanding of the social, pointing on an independent entity in its own rights and
- * the original definition of the social quality approach according to which *the social is not existing as such but it is the expression of constantly changing aspects of processes by which individuals realize themselves (verwirklichen) as interacting beings. (II: 310)*

In actual fact, what seems to be suggested as contradiction between the approaches is more a contradiction in the social quality approach itself as at the same location it is said that

our endeavour is to develop a scientific framework and a political programme which assume the social as an authentic entity. (ibid.)

In other words, this approach itself presumes on the one hand a certain independence of the social, whereas it states at the same time that the social «is not existing as such». Here it is turning the attention to another emphasis of the definition, seeing it as

both the ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is conscious production, and (normally unconscious) re-production of the conditions of production, that is society. (Bhaskar, R.: The possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences; Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1979: 43 f.; quoted in ibid.: 312)

Seen in this light, empowerment is central to the entire concept of Social Quality. Deciphering the definition of the social, we can highlight as a forgotten matter of interest that an explicit link between the living-together of people on the one hand and the definition of citizenship is established. This is getting clearer by turning the view from the components to the two axes,

- * the one being concerned with the biographical development at the one end and the societal development at the other and
- * the other spanning between systems, institutions and organisations at the one end and communities, configurations and groups at the other end.

In short and following proposal of a trinomial structure, (a) the subject matter of empowerment is the provision of the means of and for communication as foundation of the social. Whereas other components concentrate on available material resources (*socio-economic security*), the integration into different relationships (*inclusion*) and trustworthiness of relationships (*cohesion*), the concern of *empowerment* is the availability and reliability of this availability of access, necessary to establish the capability of participation.² (b) The specific nature, i.e. the resources needed being knowledge and rights, necessary to put the potential into reality. (c) Taking these considerations seriously when looking at empowerment we can say that this is a variable that is

- * to some extent the point of departure, the factor on which the realisation of the others is build upon and
- * at the same time the «result» of the other components.

In other words, *empowerment is very much a conditional and – when related to the other components – a resulting factor*. We have to take this already into account when we are looking for a definition of empowerment.³ The definition proposed is – so far as follows:

Empowerment is concerned with the means and processes and relations necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment.

Or shorter we can say that

Empowerment is the degree to which the personal capabilities are and ability of people to act is enhanced by social relations.

² This refers largely to the definitions of the other components, recapitulated by *Laurent van der Maesen: Elaborating the Theory of Social Quality and its four Components. Discussion Paper, September 2003: 23.*

³ From here, the proposal of an «orthogonal» character of indicators, as put forward by *Yitzhak Berman (Indicators for Social Cohesion, January 2003)*, is at least problematic, if it claims to go beyond stating a very general point of reference of indicators.

II.a. Empowerment – the notion of enlightenment

The dichotomising nature of mainstream thinking in social sciences has as consequence that empowerment is usually located on the micro-, the meso- or the macro level. Accordingly, we find for the introduction of empowerment into social science usually an individualising bottom-up approach versus a «collective top-down approach».

A very general, i.e. philosophical orientation on empowerment comes from the notion of enlightenment which derives the social from the notion of rationalisation and of translating increasing cognition by the individual into the basis of the social fabric and finally society. In this perspective of the *Kantian* imperative

act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation

(Immanuel Kant: The Critique of Practical Reason. Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott; 1788 –

<http://eserver.org/philosophy/kant/critique-of-practical-reaso.txt>)

the social is nothing else than an «invisible contract», drawn between individuals not on grounds of necessary control⁴ of individual behaviour but on grounds of a higher natural law of reason and the ability as well as duty of the individual to accept responsibility.

As such this can be already seen as an acknowledgement of power, though it fundamentally divides the individual and the social – and power is then equalled with responsibility – responding in accordance with the ability to rationally perceive the world and to act accordingly. The social is not seen as a genuine «goal and framework» in and by which individuals realise themselves. Rather, the social is understood as construct, a conglomerate emerging from isolated individual acts based on knowledge.

However, this vision of «empowerment by knowledge» is very vague, without fully reflecting the character of its foundation. As much as *Kantian* thinking is of course idealistic, it would allow well for the further development of in particular

- * orienting on the «absolute idea» as particularly suggested by *Hegel*
- * mechanical materialism as primarily developed by *Feuerbach* or
- * a dialectical-materialist perspective as it is well known from *Marx*.

⁴ As it would be the case for example in a *Hobbesian* perspective.

II.b Empowerment – a revival under the influence of the social and political crisis

Leaving these debates behind, empowerment had been only recently re-invented and defined as explicit issue of social science. One reason for this explication can be seen in an increasing gap between private and public. On the one hand, the public gained more and more momentum – we can see it in the growing meaning of social (policy) actions, the interpenetration of daily life by public measures and the strictly defined responsibility of «the public», meaning predominantly the state and its «linked» bodies, combined with a decreasing control of these entities. At the same time, however, we find an increasing dependency of individuals by these bodies and as well a kind of «privatisation», definitely a «closure». For example one expression of this general shift can be seen in the fact that more and more people are covered by social measures of one or the other kind.⁵ However, such a «public system» is at the same time increasingly «private» as the general interest is getting less and less important, its definition follows private decisions rather than being an issue of real public discourse.

Stemming from such a disparity between individual and social regulation and action in particular two notions of empowerment are getting prevalent – the one being concerned with a technical approach of increasing the accessibility of given – and uncontested – structures; the other concerned with developing a vision of increasing the power of the individual in control over his/her own life.

(1)

The first perspective, strongly an individualist strategy, has two dimensions. The one is concerned with the «opening of structures». Though it is not geared to fundamental change, the concept is concerned with altering the structure of society. Here powerlessness is seen as result of a mismatch between «the individual» and «the structures», requiring a simplification of the structures. We find such theorising in particular in reflections on management and of political sociology, look-

⁵ As for example the increasing coverage of the people independent of their employment status by social insurance systems.

ing at questions of government's responsiveness and the respective «crisis of governance» and «crisis of governability». All these approaches assume basically an irreconcilable relation between social and individual. The social is designed as largely independent of the actors, determined (*a*) by an (undetermined) elite and/or (*b*) as undetermined entity, a kind of *deus ex machina*. Empowerment in such a context is understood as making out access points that allow successively finding a common language of «actors» and «structures». Though alienation is – even if not necessarily explicitly – accepted as unavoidable feature of society, empowerment is interpreted as bottom-up strategy of opening the system to allow for «participation».

In theoretical terms, this approach is based in political science on the one hand, and more broadly it can be traced back to systems theory, as it had been brought forward by *Niklas Luhmann*. Though *Luhmann* claimed to start from «open systems», he established the presumption of mechanisms which in actuality fact closed the different entities by referring (*a*) to functionality of the systems and (*b*) – especially in later years – the reference to autopoietic self-reproduction.⁶ In terms of empowerment – though not explicitly elaborated by *Luhmann* – it meant that we find potentially two forms.

The one can be seen as «internal empowerment», being concerned with establishing and developing mechanism of internal control of own resources. In other words, here we can talk of «empowered management», increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of using respective «general media» as they are used by the (sub-)system in question.

The other can be seen as mechanism of enhancing communication skills between (sub-)systems. The «general media» are bound by the «formulas of contingency» as limitations of what a single system can actually deal with. As such these media cannot be «translated» and consequently exchange is limited (as *Luhmann* mentioned it is not possible to exchange for instance lawfulness by capital gains and vice versa). However, this does not make the necessity of «coordination» redundant. One way of coordinating is to put mechanisms of «structural coupling» into place. In a way, these can be seen as effort of translation –

⁶ It is a worthwhile debate in its own right to look at how far actually such a closure of system theories reflects in actual fact reality or is simply an expression of certain ideological limitations of systems theory.

for instance are «rights» a typical example where the legal code is actually used as an answer on civil, political and social challenges.⁷ Such a perspective would allow a way of passive empowerment. The actual power basis is not even looked at; however, the changes which are controlled, are the procedures by which the actual execution of power takes place (in *Luhmann's* terminology the «legitimation by procedure»).

Another mechanism is more active, i.e. it is defined by the actors or the respective subsystem itself. This starts from the presumption that the different systems are well able to produce an effective «noise» which requires at least the targeted system to answer in some way. This kind of action can be well interpreted as empowerment as it is conceptualised by theories of government. Politically, as we will see, it finds its expression in strategies of «better government», orientation on governance and «strategic management» by creating «one-point-access», improved and simplified information etc.

At the end, in this light empowerment is reduced on the partial redistribution of power, enhancing the abilities of the individual to access power points. Turned around, this means however, that power as such is not availed off by the individuals. (a) It is individuals who (may) increase their own power rather than changing the actual power structure. This can be interpreted as an increase in «quality of life», but is alien to increasing «social quality». (b) Power is basically seen in terms of a zero-sum game – collective power, though in modern theories of governance mentioned, is not at the core of such theories.

What can valuably borrowed from such an approach, however, is the requirement of clearly defining the reference points of the analysis. In regard of the debate on empowerment it is necessary (a) to clearly define over what power is actually exercised and (b) to make out on which level it is actually exercised – this latter point may be concerned with the reference to the same aggregate level and as well with the power which reaches across the different levels. In particular we have to distinguish between

- * sub-systemic exchange, i.e. the execution of power on the same aggregate level (individual power),
- * systemic exchange, i.e. the execution of power in the immediate environment (social power), and

⁷ Obviously referring to *T.M. Marshall's* perspective.

* exchange with the environment, i.e. the execution of power in the wider environment (societal power).

(2)

Looking at theories that aim on means of increasing the power of the individual over his/her life we are very much confronted with theories of learning and psychologically oriented strategies of enhancement of self-esteem – power being equalled with individual abilities.

It is somewhat striking that the debate on empowerment has its origins on the one hand in community work and community development reflections, the latter including settings which largely deal with ethnic minorities and/or issues. One of the most pronounced representatives is probably *Paulo Freire*, working on a «*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*» (Sheed&Ward; Penguin, 1972). Though largely concerned with pedagogy and in particular with developing learning strategies in particular in Latin America, the focus which is of interest in the context here is the emphasis of transformative action as a concept which claims to link dialectically the two sides of the consciousness, i.e. the subjective and the objective side. It is important that in this perspective «teaching» and the «appropriation of knowledge» does not equal the reproduction of knowledge. Rather, *Freire* interprets learning as an act, beginning with «The Act of Study» (*Paulo Freire: The Act of Study; in: The Politics of Education. Culture, Power and Liberation; Massachusetts: Bergin&Garvey Publ.; 1985: 1-4*). He explains on another occasion:

In reality, consciousness is not just a copy of the real, nor is the real only a capricious construction of consciousness. It is only by way of an understanding of the dialectical unity, in which we find solidarity between subjectivity and objectivity that we can get away from the subjectivist error as well as the mechanical error. And then we must take into account the role of consciousness or of the conscious being in the transformation of reality.

(A conversation with Paulo Freire. The Institute of Cultural Action; in: op.cit.: 151-164; here: 153 f.)

Actually it means as well to understand power as a «passive» factor in the sense of something «one has or does not have» and at the same time as a process one can use, leaving for the present open the question for what it is actually use, in who's interest it is executed.

The last formulation makes already clear that power – and with this empowerment – is a matter that relates not only to subjective and objective aspects but – thus – as well to individual and collective aspects. Though it is an individual who avails of power, it is always the establishment of identification of the individual with a collective identity by way of self-actualisation.

The «us and them» of the pluralist form of community were to be interpenetrated into a collective «us» through a linking of «public and private interest» formed in open and public dialogue.

(Heskin, Allan David: The Struggle for Community; Boulder et al-tera: Westview Press, 1991: 63 f.)

This interpretation opens the view on structures and the question if they are characterised by reciprocity (equalling empoweredness) or lack of reciprocity (equaling a lack of empoweredness). In the words used above, it is the reflection of the dialectical relationship between (a) actor and structure and thus between (b) the individual and soci(et)al.

Heskin reminds us of the relevance of the *Gramscian* ideas and the fact that the Italian politician and scientist pointed on the necessity of an alternative hegemony, encapsulating the process of what dialectics called *Aufhebung*, the process of sublation and supersession.

A major challenge remains from here. Though power is in this understanding in the mentioned approaches – apart from the *Gramscian* view – basically open for the development of an «easing» between different interests and allowing for the development of power in the «common and general interest», there is at the same time the contradicting notion according to which power of communities seems to be somewhat prior to power of individuals, whereas then again the power of the communities seems to be always in danger of being subordinated by the power of society. In other words, these approaches – being fundamentally individualist – seem to presume as irrevocable fact – as general social law – that societal structures emerge in a way that makes them led by interests independent of the actors. In other words, the alienation between structure and agency appears in this light as indispensable.

Consequently, we find a kind of «normative gap», namely that community work and development approaches draw on the one hand attention on objective mechanisms of inequality; on the other hand, however, they seem to be ready to leave a high degree of openness to the predisposed normative – though representing themselves in an objectivist manner – definition of what empowerment, then, is about. This gets in particular clear if one confronts the following statement by *Fetterman* with the just mentioned contradiction which is established by many of those approaches between individual, community and society.

Empowerment has roots in community psychology, action anthropology, and action research. Community psychology focuses on people, organizations, and communities working to establish control over their affairs. ... work in action anthropology focuses on how anthropologists can facilitate the goals and objectives of self-determining groups

(Fetterman, David M.: Foundations of empowerment Evaluation; London et altera: Sage, 2001: 10)

The links from here to the first two of the three steps of empowerment evaluation, namely

- * 'establishing a mission or vision'
- * 'identifying and prioritizing the most significant program activities' (*ibid.*: 5)⁸

remains problematic as they are not part of a clearly set overall goal or evaluation respectively.

(3)

A third approach – and one which is very inspiring for understanding empowerment from a social quality perspective – focuses on capacities and capabilities. In particular *Amartya Sen* can be seen as representative – and even initiator – of such an interpretation. The characteristic moment is that such a view takes capacities and capabilities together, thus emphasising the connection between (a) objective conditions of availing of power and (b) the ability to make use of these

⁸ The third step, *Fetterman* mentions is 'charting a course for the future.' (*ibid.*: 6)

«opportunities». Not least, this is based on a critique of parts of traditional mainstream economic theory. *Sen* argues against simplifying economist theories of motivation which suggest

*to see rationality as internal consistency of choice, and the other ...
to identify rationality with maximization of self-interest.
(Sen, Amartya: On Ethics and Economics; Oxford: Basil Blackwell,
1987: 12)*

Instead, for him rational decisions are only one element of decision making. In consequence, there are as well other moments that finally decide over the power of individuals. The one aspect is simply the economic power in the sense of objectively given resources «as such»; however, another aspect is the «value» of these resources in terms of what a person actually can achieve with them.

By developing such a perspective, *Sen* articulates in particular the reinterpretation of poverty as matter of accessing means by which the individual can gain control over the own life circumstances. Philosophically, such a perspective is based on Stoicism and its emphasis of the independence of the individual, the «engagement by gaining distance and independence» (*s. Nussbaum, Martha C.: Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education; Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1998: 52 f.; 58*). Sociologically, such an approach is closely (though not directly and explicitly) linked to interpretative sociology as it looks for structures and resources insofar – and only insofar – as they represent a certain «meaning». In other words, the form is only relevant as far as it determines – and allows for – a specific and enhanced content. Here, empowerment is very much linked to its etymological root – the *pouvoir*, the ability which can be understood as

*the expansion of the 'capabilities' of persons to lead the kind of
lives they value – and have reason to value.
(Sen, Amartya: Development as Freedom; Oxford/New York: Ox-
ford University Press: 18)*

Consequently, *Sen* writes

*The concept of 'functionings', which has distinctly Aristotelian
roots, reflects the various things a person may value doing or be-
ing. The valued functionings may vary from elementary ones, such
as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable dis-
ease, to very complex activities or personal states, such as being*

able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect.

(ibid.: 75)

This is followed by the remark

There can be substantial debates on the particular functionings that should be included in the list of important achievements and the corresponding capabilities. This valuational issue is inescapable in an evaluative exercise of this kind, and one of the main merits of the approach is the need to address these judgemental questions in an explicit way, rather than hiding them in some implicit framework.

(ibid.)

However, it has nevertheless to be seen that this debate is mainly based on an economic approach of «balancing resources», aiming on equilibrium and orienting on «coping with situations of shortage». On the one hand, *Sen* rejects a purely economic approach and argues in particular against welfarism on the basis of Pareto-optimal distributions, which he argues are only concerned with efficiency criteria. He states that

Welfarism is the view that the only things of intrinsic value for ethical calculation and evaluation of states of affairs are individual utilities.

(Sen, Amartya: On Ethics and Economics; Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987: 40)

On the other hand, it can be very much argued against him that – by referring to agency – he only adds another moment to individual motivations underlying their decision making. Though he mentions the ‘creation of social opportunities’ (*Sen: Development as Freedom; op.cit.: 40*), the said limitation gets clear as he does not attempt to overcome the individualist perspective of the much referred Stoicism and the reference to

four distinct categories of relevant information regarding a person, involving ‘well-being achievement’, ‘well-being freedom’, ‘agency achievement’, and ‘agency freedom’.

(Sen: On Ethics; op.cit.: 61)

Furthermore, there is with this an undeniable danger to slipping down into a solely subjectively defined «meaning». Here a similar critique would apply as it

had been brought forward in the debate of *Pierre Bourdieu's* class analysis and the notion of – at least partially – interchangeable ‘concept de capital’ (see e.g. *Bourdieu, Pierre: Les structures sociales de l'Économie; Éditions du Seuil, 2000*) and its culmination in the ‘esprit de calcul’ (*ibid.*: 17). Though power – and with this empowerment – is not infinite and not even quantifiable it is by no means a matter of contingencies. This is true in terms of the range of power and as well in terms of the foundation of power.

An important point in overcoming the difficulties can be seen in establishing a strong link between empowerment and citizenship. This is not only concerned with pointing on rights based aspects of the conceptualisation of empowerment strategies. Of course, strong points can be made in this regard – drawing attention to the historical development as pointed out primarily by *T.M. Marshall* (see below), but as well at least in terms of the established welfare states, in particular in form of legally codified systems.⁹ Despite this, however, there is a second strand of the debate which focuses on the meaning of citizenship. As much as this a matter of existing – and withheld – rights we have to go a step beyond. The question of citizenship and rights is very much a matter of «openness», of existing opportunities to participate (= take part in a given system), but as well of exploring and developing an in general open space. In other words, empowerment has to be concerned not solely and mainly with the realisation of the given social space but as well with the realisation of the self by which then the social space itself develops.

Before we come back to this we will have a look at empowerment in the context of the European Social Model – or of what is understood as such.

⁹ In this context it is interesting that we find in German social science alongside with the term welfare state (*Wohlfahrtsstaat*) the term of the social state (*Sozialstaat*), the first referring more to the general pattern of the welfare related governance structure, the different actors and the outcome of any kind of well-being, security and «social embeddedness» (see in this context *Gøsta Esping-Andersen*), the second reflecting the judicial codification of social policy in its relation to the «politics of [soci(et)al] order» (*Ordnungspolitik*).

III. Empowerment – its relevance in European politics

Somewhat strangely, empowerment went through a weird career as part of European (social) policy making. Basically we find the following three notions in the debates.

First, there can be seen a general, not concretely reflected philosophical approach. The importance of *Kant* and the tradition of enlightenment had been mentioned before and without exaggeration this can be seen – as positive basic feature as well as limited by the individualist and idealist perspective – «European common sense», defining the European Social Model (*see for a debate: Herrmann, Peter: European Integration between Institution Building and Social Process. Contributions to a Theory of Modernisation and NGOs in the Context of the Development of the EU; New York: Nova Science, 1998; Leibfried, Stephan/Pierson, Paul [eds.]: European Social Policy. Between Fragmentation and Integration; Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1995*). Thus, the notion for instance of the Summit in Paris in 1972, emphasising that economic growth cannot be an end in itself but has to serve the well-being of the people can be interpreted in this sense.

Second, this general notion had later been translated into what may be called «social work» perspective,¹⁰ being recognised as an important moment of programme policies particularly in the social area (*see for instance Herrmann, Peter[ed.]: Europäische Integration und Politik der Armutsprogramme – Auf dem Weg zu einem integrierten Sozialpolitikansatz?; Rheinfelden/Berlin: Schäuble, 1995; Herrmann, Peter: Sozialpolitik in der Europäischen Union; Rheinfelden/Berlin: Schäuble, 1997; and: Partizipationskulturen in der Europäischen Union. Nichtregierungsorganisationen in EU-Mitgliedstaaten; Rheinfelden/Berlin: Schäuble Verlag, 1998*). The core was largely concerned with a strategy of solely enhancing individual's capacities and capabilities of adaptation. This is, by the way, important to note with view on cohesion and inclusion alike. In these terms of «empowerment in programme policies» it can be said that fail-

¹⁰ Although one has to be careful with such a terminology as there is nothing like a uniform understanding of the social work profession. Moreover, if this term is used here it refers to something which is more concerned with social work in a stricter sense, taking the Anglo-Saxon tradition which tends to distinguish between social and community work.

ure of inclusion and lack of cohesion hat been seen as a matter of individual capacities lagging behind untouchable (and not responsible) conditions in the social fabric, a strategy of blaming the victims.

Third, this had been translated back again into a wider social and societal strategy, however one, which had been entirely concerned with matters of economic integration. Interestingly it can be noted that on the one hand the explicit reference to empowerment as it had been spelled out in social policy programmes had been more or less eliminated and replaced by the orientation of activation. This opened the way to an explicit link to welfare and social policies as it is outlined as part of the triangle which had been put forward by the *European Commission* in the Social Policy Agenda of 2000.

Looking further into backgrounds and details of the development the following points do arise.

III.a. Power as Marketability

The meaning, i.e. the importance that is given to empowerment in EU-politics and policies can be debated. On the one hand it is declared to be a major topic, part of the debate about the «*grande themes*» or even *leitmotifs*. As such, it is directly or indirectly issued in debates on governance, sustainability, the Future of Europe and the like. On the other hand – and in more practical terms it is limited to the areas of programme policies. The first time that empowerment had been explicitly issued as major aspect had probably been in connection with the anti-poverty programmes of the mid/late seventies – it was only from there that the idea of empowerment gained ground in other areas as well.¹¹ To some extent this is surely linked to of the debate on poverty and in particular the – largely in the French state philosophy based – encroachment of the concept of «*exclusion sociale*». However, at the same time it had been very much concerned with (a) an individualised and individualising concept of empowerment and (b) the idea of the relief of public accounts. In both cases, the pattern is one of scapegoating, attributing the causes for disempowerment to the individual. What is interesting is

¹¹ And actually empowerment had been taken up in many cases only on the ground of the impulses coming from such programmes and their critical discussion.

that this view actually understands empowerment as the norm in today's society, attributing disempowerment to a state of destitution.

What has to be highlighted, then, is the fact that

- * empowerment is – as politics and policy – the exception, confined to the experimental level of programme policies and
- * being empowered is – seemingly contradicting – the rule, as its strengthening appears only necessary where we are dealing with cases of destitution.

Seen in a wider conceptual perspective, empowerment as a matter of European policy making has in particular the following dimensions:

- * There is one dimension that has to be mentioned at least en passant – it is part of the general orientation on internationally «regulating deregulation», i.e. the fostering of a solely market based international economy. For example, the strategy in the context of the WTO and GATS negotiations claim that the «deregulated economy» provides the best and actually only basis for a free and competent decision of any social relevance. This is highly contestable, of course, and even in the framework of the official debates we find demands from EU-officials for exemptions.¹² However, the idea of such exemptions is largely based on the premise that these exemptions are necessary because of the «underdeveloped state» of those who benefit by them. The other way round, «liberalisation» is seen as empowerment; and for those who are already to some extent empowered it is understood as means to express their interests.
- * This pattern is repeated more particularly on the European level where it is claimed with the reference to the four basic freedoms that the «regulation of deregulation» is the precondition for competent and rational decisions by the «customer» – this formulation makes already clear that citizenship gains very limited, attention, being defined as customer citizen, the «*Marktbuerger*» [«market citizen»], as the German language suggests.
This has huge implications not least for the understanding of the social,
 - being on the one side concerned with the general limitation in the understanding of interests and competencies and the mode of their regulation – «the social» then can and has to be commodified;

¹² In general it has to be said that the EU has in these negotiations a less rigid approach than the United States of America though the differences should not be overestimated.

- being on the other hand concerned with the provision of social services which sooner or later will be subordinated under the market rules (*see the current debate on services of general [economic] interest – Communication of the European Commission: Services of General Interest in Europe. COM(2000)580 fin.; Brussels 20.9.2000; Communication from the European Commission on the Status of Work on the Examination of a Proposal for a Framework Directive on Services of General Interest; COM(2002) 689 final; Brussels 4.12.2002*).

Empowerment is, again, reduced on «liberalisation»; and it is seen as means to express their interests for those who are already to some extent empowered, limited to the area of commodifiable areas, where an «empowered customer» may act rationally.

- * Furthermore, empowerment is, again in a more general context, seen as matter of providing at least to some extent means of subsistence, in particular in form of «social benefits» as a right. The current trend is, however, to change the pattern from a fundamental and incontestable right to qualified approval of the right, depending on the readiness to enter employment. This may not be a problem per se as long as it is thought of developing a support system that encapsulates the various «multidimensional» aspects of empowering individuals. However, the way the so called «activating state» implies that the «right to work» is in actual fact in most of the cases a matter of reducing empowerment on a passive integration into the labour market, neglecting aspects of social integration as for example social networks, special needs and interests etc. (*cf. Chiara Saraceno [ed.]: Social assistance dynamics in Europe. National and local poverty regimes; Bristol: The Policy Press, 2002; Peter Herrmann/Frances Zielinski: The Systems of Guaranteeing Sufficient Resources in the Republic of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; in: Herrmann [Ed.]: Between Politics and Sociology: Mapping Applied Social Studies; New York: Nova Science; 2003*) Despite some positive examples as they could be made out for instance in France, the main trend is the creation of minor positions and new forms of dependency rather than the development of empowering settings.¹³

¹³ In the meantime many of the previously positive, although by no means perfect approaches in France are as well very much under threat or already defeated.

In other words, we find – despite some different verbal claims – a total neglect of what *Anne Schowstack Sassoon* refers to as Complex Citizenship (*see: Anne Schowstack Sassoon: Political Participation, Political Rights and the Politics of Daily Life; in: Beck/van der Masen/Walker, op.cit.: 191-203; here: 201*)

- * This points already on the final aspect of the limitation, namely the orientation of empowerment strictly along the lines of employment. This has to be stated another time, as it is not only a question of availing of means for subsistence. Rather, employment is as such seen as major aim of social integration, suggesting that this is not just a means of integration, empowerment, accessing relationships etc. Instead, employment is redefined and rather than being a means it is seen as end in itself. What has to be critically debated is the fact that characteristics of the work and the quality of work is barely debated in this context – thus for example the Irish Presidency 2004 works in the social policy area under the heading «Making Work Pay» and even the modest alternative «For More and Better Jobs» encounters rejection. Against this background it is interesting, that we see on the one hand the emphasis of employment as foundation and ultima ratio of empowerment, and at the same time statements indirectly saying that work is disliked. So *Ludwig Georg Braun*, president of the German *DIHT (German Industrial and Trade Congregation)* stated recently

A policy can be only then be said to be social if work is rewarded more than being out of work. It is one of the large challenges to lay the necessary conditions for this.

(Braun, Ludwig Georg, quoted on the Bundeskongress fuer Soziale Arbeit, September 2003, Kassel)¹⁴

In short, from a Social Quality perspective we can make out the following major shortcomings of the EU-official way of looking at empowerment.

III.b. Individualism and liberalism

Despite the fundamentally individualist orientation which had been already mentioned before the *second*, specific though closely linked limitation is that of the

¹⁴ Sozial ist eine Politik nur dann, wenn sich Arbeit staerker lohnt als Nicht-Arbeit. Dazu die Voraussetzungen zu schaffen, ist eine der große Herausforderungen.

reduction of empowerment on «economic rationality». The emphasis of the economic dimension is not at all a problem as such – taken in the correct understanding, it would well comply with the necessary emphasis of the material conditions which have to be fulfilled before any other perspectives can be developed. What is problematic with the EU-perspective, however, is the limitation (a) on employment, supposedly providing as such the necessary material conditions or even more: being already material «empoweredness», (b) the suggestion that there is an automatic connection between a liberalised market and the creation of a space for «free decisions» of the enlightened individual citizen and (c) the simultaneous attribution of the responsibility to the individual by reducing processes of empowerment on enhancing his/her capacities rather than linking this on structural causes of disempowerment and enhancing structures in their accessibility. The first is concerned with the question «why individuals fail», whereas the second has to be distinguished as it is concerned with the accessibility for those who are well capable to execute power, who, however, do not have access to spaces where to execute such power. (d) This perspective takes finally not into account that it is to some extent necessary to (re-)distribute power. For this, we have to acknowledge the fact that there are two dimensions to (em)power(ment). First, power, and thus empowerment has a dimension that is neutral in regard of distributive aspects. We can speak of (em)power(ment) as matter, not being based on a zero-sum constellation, instead being concerned with the mutual enrichment and enhancement of life chances. Second, however, we have to distinguish a dimension of (em)power(ment) that is concerned with an unequal balance, i.e. the distribution of power (in particular in political and social processes) where the power executed by one is limiting the power of somebody else (be it related to individuals or groups). The latter is barely a matter considered as matter of fact in official political views.

III.c. The American Turn of the EU Social Model

A further aspect is that by defining power and empowerment in the said way the EU-concept actually undermines what is claimed to be the European Social Model for which *Fintan Farrell* highlighted the following characteristics:

- *A society which places human rights including economic and social rights at the centre of its concerns and ensures that no one is excluded from exercising their rights and participating fully in society.*
- *A high level of social protection and universal and equal access to key services such as; health care, education and training, housing, that is guaranteed or provided by the state.*
- *The recognition of the strength of cultural diversity within and between member states.*
- *A commitment to high quality and stable employment with a strong emphasis on the rights of workers.*

(Fintan Farrell: The Social Dimension of the European Union; Presentation on the Forum on the Future of Europe: Dublin Castle, 12 November 2002: 2)

As he also mentioned, thus pointing as well on the undermining process

These values are in danger of being undermined by aspects of economic globalisation unless we work together to defend them. (ibid., 1)

III.d. The Managerialisation

Though mainly economically driven in the sense of mainstreaming a liberalised economic thinking and streamlining other politics and policies by its predominant application, empowerment has – understood as *Leitmotif* – as well an important meaning in the polity debate. Here it translates into the debate on governance, a way which is largely concerned with partially «opening closed structures» by way of finding «translation points» between different interests and developing mechanisms of increasing responsiveness. However, it has to be highlighted that at the end these strategies are not really concerned with power structures, i.e. with looking at the «*pouvoir*», the abilities. Instead, the mechanisms are more aimed at developing strategies of adoption and opening certain channels of influence. In the worst case scenario, such managerial strategies as strategic management initiatives, «better local government», decentralisation and the like are not more than instruments of controlling the influence and power «from outside» by chan-

nelling access and increasing the efficiency of dealing with such still «external power requirements». Linking this to the debate on citizenship and rights, we are confronted with a «technical understanding of rights and citizenship», a concept which is truly based on law, however which neglects largely the substantial side of

- * control over the own life,
- * the influence by the individual over the existing social space and
- * the enhancement of dialectically processing social and biographical development.

IV. A critical review empowerment as a matter of control over living conditions and life

Clearly spelt out, empowerment in the debate of the institutionalised Europe is very much a concept which in actual fact does not refer to power but instead to capabilities in a liberalist sense. As much as capabilities are the main reference point, indeed, the crucial point where the political, social and scientific conceptualisation of empowerment faces a necessary decision between two alternatives is the link to its social dimension. The crucial question, then, is if empowerment is understood as a matter of shaping the situation of an isolated individual – an individual being on his or her own – or if it focuses on the individual as fundamentally social entity and the dialectic of individual and soci(et)al development.

Considering empowerment as process, the latter means that the first and most important question is of what actually the aim of empowerment is. In other words, the question is who benefits from empowerment. And again in other terms we have to ask *for what* a person shall be empowered. At the first glance this is – and actually it should be – the person who is being empowered. However, in actual fact it had can be seen especially in recent times that empowerment had been understood as an instrument to «enhance the performance of people in terms of the system». We find management strategies of which the aim had not been the development of the people concerned but the enhancement of their responsibility in favour of production. Another strand of utilising empowerment for the sake of the system is the widespread use of the concept in the context of welfare (state) reform.

I suggest to define the *aim of empowerment in the perspective of Social Quality* as **enhancing the participation of people to enable them to balance personal development and coordination with the immediate social and physical environment and the more distant social and physical environment.** In other words, the Social Quality approach understands empowerment as a means to enable people to control the personal, communal and societal environment to foster their own development. Such control comprises of gaining influence over the environment as well as accessing the environment to enrich the socio-personal life.¹⁵

Thus, empowerment has the three dimensions of

- * access,
- * participation and
- * control.

For the later search for indicators this means that we have to look for input indicators (namely factors that enhance the abilities of the individual/group) and output indicators (namely factors that are available to the individual/group to actively take part in social and societal life). It means as well to be aware of the fact that empowerment always has the two angles of passive and active. However, the particular difficulty is to make clear that the «passive» moments are actually only then «real» if and when they are actually put into practice. This had been meant when in this paper is emphasised that we are dealing with real processes where the rights as such are only then meaningful if they are translated into actual action – in particular in looking for indicators this is an important point which has to be kept in mind. In other words, we are already with compassion and social responsiveness as matters of activating collective identities.

This has huge implications as well in regard of the localisation of empowerment in the process of social development. Besides the requirement of determining an aim in the sense of who is profiting in which way from empowerment, another aspect of discussing the aim of empowerment is concerned with locating empowerment between the poles of social integration on the one side and social change on the other side – again a matter which is by way of status and development concerned with the passive and active side of empowerment. Though

¹⁵ It would be necessary to discuss the different approaches of methodological individualism, as task that cannot be approached here.

closely linked to the before mentioned aspect it is important to note that whereas before we dealt with the actor perspective – combining input aspects into «the system» and output aspects regards the individual/group – we are now dealing with the perspective of the impact, concentrating solely on the output. Looking for an answer on the question if social integration or social change is reached we actually have to be clear about the character of social integration. This can have two dimensions,

- * the one being concerned with the integrity of the system – and as such it can absolutely be an «emancipative» instrument, changing the social conditions and the social system respectively,
- * the other being concerned with the integration into the system, a kind of subordination of the individual/group.

It is important to clarify which side, namely the individual/group or the social setting is taken as dependent and which as independent variable.

This is closely connected with the question if empowerment is based on the idea of distributing power in society as a zero-sum constellation. Establishing such a perspective means to consider the link between the individual and society. Interpreting power as zero-sum constellation means that power is a subordinating process. The individual/group is seen not in relation to the environment along the lines of access and participation; rather, in the conceptualisation of power as zero-sum constellation the relationship is set between individuals/groups. However, the Social Quality perspective requires to think of power and empowerment as establishing and designing a relationship between people, but the actual aim is – as mentioned – access and participation in the sense of changing the environment. In other words, the output is personal power in its combination to social power. In practice, this has two dimensions,

- * the one being «competition», i.e. the redistribution of power
- * the other being self-realisation of the individual/group, utilising the social for own purposes and «enriching the social» by reaching a higher degree of sociability.

The question of re-distribution of power, though being strongly linked to empowerment, can be better dealt with in the framework of in particular the factor of socio-economic rights and cohesion. In other words, it is here where actually the complementarities between empowerment on the one hand and in particular socio-economic security and social cohesion on the other hand have to be dis-

cussed. On the other hand, self-realisation is suggested to be an original question of empowerment.¹⁶ Then, what the individual gains actually equals what is gained on the soci(et)al level. In other words, we are concerned with a process of socialisation as mutual enhancement.

However, it has to be noted that despite the fact of mutual benefit there will be some groups losing their own power. What actually happens in the ideal case is that subordinating forms of power cannot persist under generally empowered and empowering conditions.

Finally, it is important to put the debate on empowerment into a wider perspective of rights. This can contribute to avoiding an individualist approach to empowerment, based on the idea of «enhancing individual performance», thus requiring educational support for the individual rather than securing soci(et)al conditions which are accessible and allow participation of individuals and groups. A rights based approach can link to *T.M. Marshall's* historical perspective on civil, political and social rights. It has to be emphasised, however, that the different rights are in actual fact only different dimensions of the same right, i.e. the right of what we might call «active social inclusion», i.e. social inclusion on terms and conditions of the individual rather than inclusion as subordination. As it is suggested to talk of «active social inclusion», the granting of the set of different rights can be seen as a major factor of empowerment.

Going back from here, we have to re-establish the link to the relationship between biographical and societal development. This had been understood as a conditioning, mutually beneficial and enriching relationship. Following this line, we can say that the three dimensions of empowerment, namely access, participation and control are centred on the common link to autonomy. Individuation thus is not only complementing (let alone opposing) socialisation and vice versa. On the contrary, individuation is a form and expression of socialisation and socialisation realises itself as individuation. Seen in this light, the frequently found interpretation of individuation is a form of increased socialisation – we can establish a strong link to the *Kantian* understanding of the enlightened societal development

¹⁶ In the further discussion of the connection between the four or even eight factors it will be getting clear that there can be major constraints of one factor stemming from the performance of (an)other factor(s).

as putting freedom as realisation of necessity into place.¹⁷ This should not be confused with other forms of individuation which are simply a matter of anomie, where actually individuation translates into forms of isolation (*cf. in this context Herrmann, Peter: Person-oriented services and social service providers in comparative and European perspective. Current debates on changes by liberalisation in a perspective of a theory of modernisation; Brussels et altera: 2003*).

Taking up *Marshall's* consideration of rights we have to emphasise again that the three rights, which in his historical analysis appear to be distinct from each other are in actual fact historically emerging into the one right of what is in the meantime understood as civic citizenship. As such, it can be considered to look at social quality as a matter of merging the rights – civil, political and social – into the one right of civic participation. This again can be seen as merging of biographical and societal development as being concerned with the means and processes and relations necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment. As this is the definition of empowerment given above, this dimension can be seen as central for societal development. Moreover, this debate is clearly marking a necessary shift in the welfare state. It is not simply concerned with the realisation of opportunities which are given in principal and which we want to be given for all. Instead, a welfare state with a high social quality has to be concerned with the self-realisation of the individual in the social context and as such the mutual development of the individual and the social. Loyalty is then achieved by evoking a critical distance. This means not least that

- * «social security» is not simply the provision of replacements for otherwise commodified provisions
- * «education» cannot be solely concerned with teaching technical skills and retrievable knowledge,
- * «participation» is not only the opening of existing structures.

Instead, empowerment requires truly open structures, starting from the needs of the people concerned and the management of reciprocity of structure and agency.

Of course, this has to be understood not least as qualification of the orientation on capabilities and capacities necessary – *A. Sen's* work had been addressed before.

¹⁷ Though the idealist turn within the *Kantian* paradigm is of course a major obstacle.

To summarise, we can take up the requirement of the trinomial structure. The *subject matter* is the autonomy as capability and right to act. Then, the *resources* are knowledge and rights. This establishes a *relationship to the other components* utilising and actually realising (*verwirklichen*) socio-economic security, social inclusion and social cohesion as a reference for the action of the individual. At the same time, empowerment serves as Procrustean bed for striving for the other components.

V. Domains and dimensions – developing an analytical tool

V.a. Dimensions of empowerment

As mentioned earlier, the term «domain» captures the aspect of «property» as well as the one of «master(ing)». The subject matter of empowerment had been defined at the end of section one «as a matter of control over living conditions and life». It is of particular importance to keep this twofold orientation in mind, i.e. the orientation on living conditions – thus reflecting the «structural side» – and life, by this reflecting as well the side of the «actor». «Action», then, can be taken as the factual bridge of these two dimensions. Theoretically, this reflects very much the age-old sociological debate of functionalism and structuralism (their absolute meaning and relation to each other) and the more recent questions, raised by *Giddens*, *Archer* and others. What can be recorded so far is that «living conditions» and «live», i.e. «structure» and «acting» can be taken as dimensions (on a first level), describing a tensional matrix, against which «empowerment» is measurable as simultaneity of the self-realisation of the individual in and through the social.

Determining the dimensions for the development of indicators further, we arrive at the four crucial ones, namely

Individual living conditions	Individual life
Social living conditions	Social life

This is in a way the reflection and even dialectic reproduction of the four objective domains inside of the domain of empowerment, namely

Socio-economic security	Empowerment
Inclusion	Cohesion

However, this way of expressing it, is by now means identical with the notion of a simple reproduction, i.e. the search for indicators in the other domains and their use as dimensions of empowerment. Instead, understanding the domains for our purpose as dimensions, they provide the basis to develop indicators that are sensible towards the question of «*what matters?*». As empowerment – even more than all other domains – is fundamentally

- * processual
- * relational and
- * historical

it has to be considered in this twofold context and tension of the simultaneity of biographical and societal development. The difficult task will be to avoid the limitation of using indicators as means of «descriptive measurements». Instead, the crucial point is to explore the individual's capacity of appropriation in terms of the enhancement of his or her own control over

- * the living conditions
- * the life
- * and – perhaps most importantly – the «comfortable», «appropriate» and «suitable» matching of both.

These terms – «comfortable», «appropriate» and «suitable» – point into the direction of the subjective dimension which has at least to be kept in mind. For this, it is useful to explore the link (*a*) to socially agreeable or even agreed values¹⁸ and (*b*) to the subjective conditional factors, namely the collectivisation of norms, participation, sensitivity towards values and social recognition. – At this stage these subjective conditional factors are simply taken from the given set of considerations, admittedly a tentative concept which has to be further elaborated. Though these subjective factors have to be considered already here, they will be at the same time developed from the elaboration of the objective factors – as con-

¹⁸ though socially agreeable does not necessarily mean that they are uncontested

ditional factors, they are the material and objective basis from which the subjective factors dialectically emerge.

The dimensions mentioned are, however, incomplete, even more: they are not dimensions as such. To translate these tentative dimensions, i.e.

Socio-economic security	Empowerment
Inclusion	Cohesion

into the actual dimensions it is useful to refer back to the question «*For whom and for what*» empowerment actually takes place. The reason for this step is that there we actually stated the clear reference of empowerment to the social and physical environment. Doing this, we arrive at the following matrix which is at the same time a recapitulation of the theoretical elaboration:

<u>Societal development</u>			
<u>systems, institutions,</u>	Access as dimension of socio-economic security in terms of empowerment as <u>personal capability and relationships</u>	<u>Autonomy</u> as dimension of appropriating and utilising resources in order to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment	<u>communities, configurations,</u>

<u>organisations</u>	Participation as dimension of inclusion in terms of empowerment as <u>civic rights (comprising of civil, political and social rights)</u>	Control as dimensions of cohesion in terms of empowerment as <u>accessibility of the institutional system</u>	<u>groups</u>
<u>Biographical development</u>			

V.b. Conclusion

V. b. 1. Status and Process

First, we have to be aware of the fact that empowerment had been defined as a matter of access and participation, always being a process of *getting empowered* rather than being concerned with a status of being empowered. In regard of the search of indicators and their interpretation we have to be aware of the processual dimension (which is important in capturing the consequential meaning of the factors that are suggested to be empowering) and as well in regard of the normative challenge to properly elaborate the distinction between top-down approaches («empowering») and bottom-up approaches («empowerment»). From here, we can determine as core underlying aspects of compassion and social responsiveness. In other words, the core aspect of empowerment is the establishment and enhancement of relations. With this, it is clear as well that their cannot be any individual turn of empowerment!

V. b. 2. Empowerment and Participation

Second, the main difficulty of finally defining empowerment is that it is a multi-level-process, being concerned with mainly the following dimensions:

- * There is an ascending sequence of empowerment along the different aggregate levels of the social. For this we can utilise the *Ladder of Citizen Empowerment* as it had been suggested by *Atkinson and Cope* (see *Rob Atkinson/Stephen Cope: Community participation and urban regeneration in Britain; in: Paul Hoggett [ed.]: Contested Communities. Experiences, struggles, policies; Bristol: The Policy Press; 1997: 200 – 221; here: 206*) who made out twelve steps
- beginning with CITIZEN NON-PARTICIPATION with the three forms of
 - ▢ Civic Hype
 - ▢ Cynical Consultation
 - ▢ Poor Information and
 - ▢ Customer Care,
 - going on to CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, which consists of
 - ▢ High-Quality Information
 - ▢ Genuine Consultation
 - ▢ Effective Advisory Boards
 - ▢ Limited Decentralised Decision Making
 - ▢ Partnership and
 - ▢ Delegated Control,
 - and finally arriving at what they see as CITIZENS EMPOWERMENT with the two forms of
 - ▢ Entrusted Control and
 - ▢ Independent Control.

The strong link to participation is important, though it evokes some critique and admonition to care. I prefer to see participation as an element of empowerment rather than a kind of preliminary stage on the way to participation. Furthermore and on this basis, to orient solely on participation is not advisable as it tends to emphasise only the politico-structural side. However, both the dimension of rights and the dimension of objective conditions remain faded out. It is suggested to see participation as element in the philosophical meaning of the term, namely '«elementary form» of a concrete, developing system.' The element is not with itself identical but contains the contradiction and thus the movement ...' (*Camilla Warnke: Die 'abstrakte' Gesellschaft. Systemwissenschaften als Heilsbotschaft in den Gesellschaftsmodellen Parsons', Dahrendorfs und Luhmanns; Frankfurt/M.: Verlag Marxistische Blätter; 1974: 33*) To translate this into the concrete meaning of empowerment it says that participation is part of establishing power over oneself and at the same time the

conditions which are decisive for one's own life. In other words, participation is being identified as a matter of socialisation, thus enhancing the individual's independence and the individual's inclusion into soci(et)al environments. This is a contradictory process, as independence and inclusion are already as such caught in a tension; furthermore the inclusion in more than one soci(et)al environment is potentially tensional as well.

In this perspective, it is necessary to link participation with the fact of access, understood as a matter of developing power of disposal rather than formal admission – this is clearly reflected by the use of the term self-realisation and its dialectically-tensional relation to collective identities.

* We find an immediate link from looking at the power of disposal to deal with the different aggregate levels of the social being. To deal with the different aggregate levels we can take two ways, the one being concerned with the «reach of influence» (*a*), the other with the «power of influencing» (*b*).

In general, we can differentiate between the three aggregate levels of

(A) «REACH OF INFLUENCE»	AGGREGATE LEVEL	(B) «POWER OF INFLUENCING»
Individual/personal	I	developing personal capacities as regards the individual's sociability
socio-personal relations as neighbourhoods, friends, clubs and associations, «communities» etc.	II	influencing the immediate personal wellbeing (1) without actually making changes possible, (2) by participation in formal procedures or (3) in causing changes of the immediate environment by direct interaction with others
access to societal mechanisms	III	(co-)designing of living conditions in (1) by participation in formal procedures (<i>election etc.</i>), (2) by participation in the institutional system (<i>active representation ...</i>) or (3) in causing changes of the immediate environment by direct interaction with others (<i>community movements with a wider radiation; civil movements ...</i>)

This coincides largely with the proposal made by *David Phillips*, pointing on the

'three facets to the social quality of community members. The first is their social quality as citizens in relation to their dealings with

the nation and society (or demos) in which they live. The second is their social quality as community members and derives from the support provided by community institutions and from the strength of community identity. ... The third relates to the social quality of the community itself. A community's social quality depends on both its strength as a collective entity in its own right and on its relationship to the wider society and, in particular, the nation state, which in turn is influenced and constrained by national legal and policy frameworks (which are usually beyond the community's control).'

(David Phillips: Community Social Quality, Social Exclusion and Empowerment; Paper delivered to the Council for European Studies 2002 Conference of Europeanists. Panel on Decentralising Social Policy: Local Actors Fighting Social Exclusion. Chicago: March 2002: 5)

However, there is a difference as I suggest to emphasise the societal aspect in the third facet, thus assessing it actually from the societal level and requiring the openness from this level rather than leaving it to the community level to «open the door» to the societal level.

In any case, it has to be accepted that there is still a potential mismatch between the individual and the social as far as «individual circumstances beyond control» are concerned. Speaking of control, this is concerned with the balance between social and individual rights and duties. Furthermore it is important to recognise that any empowerment has an objective and a subjective dimension – this is what is marked by the differentiation between participation, access and control.

V. b. 3. Dialectics of Soci(et)al and Individual

Third, there is in any case a «dialectical hierarchy» between the different factors, i.e. material and psychological empowerment of the individual is precondition for the development of social empowerment and this is precondition of societal empowerment. However, at the same time a Social Quality perspective does not stop at such a mechanic hierarchy between the different factors; instead – after setting

an objective fundament for empowerment, a dialectical relationship emerges which is characterised by an increase in social power that supports the emergence of societal power that in turn enhances community power – in all cases linked to increasing personal power.

V. b. 4. Empowerment and Rights – Marshall Revisited

Fourth, the question of empowerment has to be directly linked to rights. I suggest to modify the distinction as it is used by *Tom Marshall*, i.e. his interpretation of the development from civil to political and then to social rights (see *Tom H. Marshall: Citizenship and Social Class; in: T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore; London et altera: Pluto Press 1992*). First, it is more appropriate to concentrate on the interconnection of the different forms of rights. Actually, it makes much sense to interpret them as different elements of one fundamental right. This makes it possible to explore the dialectical and tensional relationship between the different elements. Furthermore, even if implicitly developed by *Marshall*, the emphasis of different elements of one right makes it possible to link the question of how far rights are actually realised to the idea of Social Quality. In this perspective, they are the fundamental condition of empowerment and as such they can be linked to the other three or seven factors respectively. Thus, the modification does not question *Marshall's* approach; instead, it changes the emphasis for a specific purpose, accepting the original approach in its own realm.

From here we arrive at the following domains and subdomains and finally indicators: we have to make sure that in all regards a further subdivision is guaranteed, namely the consideration of children, disabled people, senior citizens and other groups who may have special needs or require special attention. – to be included in one of the general chapters

As INDICATORS the following suggestions are made

personal capabilities and relationships	general and political knowledge	<i>formal educational achievement</i> <i>participation in non-certified courses</i>
	access to information	
	⇒ <i>general</i>	<i>regular reading of a newspaper</i> <i>regular specific information via radio/TV</i> <i>accessibility of public library [this has to include factors as spatial distance, opening hours and as all factors as standard of media available]</i> <i>accessibility of Internet</i>
	⇒ <i>general political</i>	<i>regular reading of a newspaper (general and/or political section)</i> <i>regular specific information via radio/TV</i>

		<p>Subscription to politically oriented mailing lists on the internet</p> <p>search of general political information on the internet</p> <p>subscription to relevant journals</p> <p>participation in relevant public events</p> <p>information on possible alternative jobs via official job offices</p> <p>advertisement of possible jobs in daily/weekly accessed newspapers</p> <p>radio advertisement of possible alternative jobs</p> <p>access of specific information via internet</p>
	<p>⇒ labour market/job positions</p>	
	<p>⇒ vocational knowledge/further training</p>	<p>participation in relevant evening classes</p> <p>participation in relevant courses, supported by the employer</p> <p>participation in relevant courses, without support by the employer</p> <p>Subscribing to a relevant journal</p>

	<p>availability of advice guidance</p>	<p><i>accessibility of job centres – general</i> <i>accessibility of job centres – opening hours during off peak times</i> <i>career advice in the enterprise where employed</i></p>
	<p>job flexibility</p>	<p><i>change of job staying with the same employer during the job career – voluntary</i> <i>change of job, staying with the same employer during the job career – enforced</i> <i>change of job changing the employer during the job career – voluntary</i> <i>change of job changing the employer during the job career – enforced</i> <i>moving accommodation to another region for a job change</i></p>
	<p>«compensating socialisation»</p>	<p></p>

civic rights (comprising of civil, political and social rights)	personal relationships	<i>command over time</i>
		<i>family living together</i>
		<i>availability of friends</i>
		<i>local distance to friends</i>
		<i>frequency of contact to good friends</i>
		<i>frequent contact to colleagues at work</i>
	«availability of access points»	
	⇒ <i>cultural community organisations</i>	<i>number of community organisations per thousand people</i>
		<i>variety of fields, organisations are active in</i>
⇒ <i>political community organisations</i>	<i>number of community organisations per thousand people</i>	
	<i>variety of fields, organisations are active in</i>	

	<p>openness of communities towards new organisations and processes of networking/cooperation</p>	<p><i>years of existence of community organisations</i> <i>organisations founded during the last year</i> <i>organisations founded during the last five years</i></p>
	<p>openness for «unorganised» action</p>	<p><i>existence of community open access centres</i> <i>availability of services to support community activities (office space, administrative appliances)</i> <i>Availability of services of advice to support community activities</i></p>
<p>Accessibility of the institutional system and civic control</p>	<p>political electoral system and structures of political institutional accessibility</p>	<p><i>frequency of elections (for each level)</i> <i>public accessibility of committee meetings (including information of kind of committees)</i></p>

		<p><i>procedures of «direct democracy»</i></p>
	<p>material independence of accessibility of the political system</p>	<p><i>dependency of representatives from income from this position</i></p> <p><i>reimbursement for participation in meetings and activities of representative bodies (for people not elected as representatives)</i></p> <p><i>representation of political bodies in the region («degree of decentralisation») [including the question of their decision making power]]</i></p> <p><i>granting of leave for participation in political meetings</i></p>
	<p>availability of services that support physical and social independence</p>	<p><i>granting of leave for participation in general social community events</i></p> <p><i>granting of leave for support of relatives</i></p> <p><i>granting of leave for social family events</i></p>

			<i>availability of crèches, day-care nursing homes etc. [including infor- mation on affordability and opening times]</i>
			<i>availability of community centres</i>

VII. Conclusions and Challenges

However, up to now we had been concerned with the measurement of the actual degree of empowerment. Although this is the core interest from a social quality perspective and in particular the current project, it makes some sense to go a step further, looking for indicators of empowering structures and mechanisms. In other words, a Social Quality perspective is geared to finding

- * indicators of the character of empowerment («aim»),
- * indicators of the state of empowerment («structure»),
- * indicators of the process of empowerment («process»).

Thus, in addition of measuring empowerment by the indicators suggested above it is here promoted to look as well for indicators on a different and additional level.¹⁹ These are concerned with the activities and structures supported by various soci(et)al actors – considering that, as has been developed, empowerment is a social process and a relationship rather than an individual «capability».

As main – general – actors the following are to be mentioned:

- * non-governmental/non-profit organisations (including self-help groups)
- * community development groups/social movements²⁰
- * non-governmental/non-profit institutions²¹ (as e.g. trade unions, employers organisations, political parties, the church ...)
- * state bodies²²

¹⁹ To which extent this can finally be implemented has to be decided – in any case the respective considerations always should be made at least in the discussion of the indicators and the assessment of the dimension of empowerment of Social Quality.

²⁰ There will be a huge overlap with the previous group; however, it is reasonable to distinguish between the two categories as the latter is not to the same “organised” as the first.

²¹ This category is introduced, taking account of the general exclusion of organisations mentioned here from the NGO/NPO/Third sector (as for example in the explicit discussion of this aspect in the framework of the Johns-Hopkins-Project; for instance in *Salamon, Lester M./Anheier, Helmut K.: The emerging nonprofit sector. An Overview; Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press; 1996 (Johns Hopkins Nonprofit Sector Series 1)*

- * statutory support organisations as for example advisory bodies
- * employers²³
- * institutions with a controlling and advising function (as «ombudspeople», complaints bureaus and the like, as well psychological consultancies, child guidance clinics etc.)
- * individual services as psychological consultancies.

Despite this it may be useful to consider other actors when it comes to the debate of empowerment in connection with a specific project. Then, for example, beneficiaries or very specific organisations and/or decision makers may play a decisive role and should be investigated separately.

ⁱ My special thanks to the colleagues of the network for the fruitful debates during the meetings and the valuable contributions during e-mail discussions. Special mention deserves the meeting with the assistants of the network in October 2003 and the feedback after that meeting.

²² Probably it is useful to subdivide according the classical division of power, i.e. to look separately at legislative, judicative and executive bodies.

²³ The difficulty to deal with is that it can be useful to look at “employers” in general, referring to the “entrepreneurial culture” for example in a country, region or a specific time period and/or to look at individual employers.