

No Agency, No Sustainability

Conceptualising the Loss of Agency and how to Restore it for Sustainability

Jan Peter Glock

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Abstract

Anthropogenic climate change and environmental degradation demand humanity to depart from the growth imperative forming the economic structure of the world. In other words: Structural transformation is needed. Much of the sustainability debate in academy, politics, media and the public revolves around two paradigms: minor changes within the current system (e.g. green consumption, green growth) or shifting responsibility to the individual (e.g. environmental education, science communication) without reflecting on constraining circumstance. Whereas the first paradigm does not aim for transformation, I argue that the second paradigm does not lead to transformation because it neglects a vital aspect: individual, self-determined agency.

Along arguments made by e.g. Standing (2009, 2011) and Wrenn (2015), I investigate how the neoliberal welfare system and labour market deprive individuals of their agency, rendering them unable to become agents of change for structural transformation into a sustainable human-environment system. To conceptualise the deprivation and find a starting point for emancipation, I develop the *Model of Transformation*, with the *Cycle of Reproduction* and the *Cycle of Transformation*. The Model is based on a critical realist ontology in collaboration with Bourdieu's practice theory concepts *capital*, *habitus* and the *field* as well as socio-psychological evidence.

I substantiate the model along an illustrative journey in Germany: From the structural macro level (neoliberalism) to the meso level (welfare system and labour market) via flexibilisation and dismantling; And from the meso level to the individual micro level (*habitus*) via relative poverty, stigmatisation and future anxiety.

Based on the fall of agency as conceptualised in the Model of Transformation, I analyse an *unconditional basic income* as emancipative reform. The unconditional basic income has the potential to revive the individual agency needed for structural transformation. Further research should critically analyse the conditions needed to enable the new agency to unfold towards challenging unsustainable structures and aiming towards a sustainable human-environment system.

Keywords: agency, strong sustainability, unconditional basic income, neoliberalism, insecurity, structural transformation

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Prologue

Through the rising ocean water surface bursts the giant Leviathan in boiling rage. Its angry look turns towards those who dare to question the growing of his empire, and with his huge voice he shouts: "Do not refute my reign and my growing realm or there shall be no more fish and you shall die of hunger, and so your children, and so their children." Daunted by the monster's threat, the men and women that staged the protest hastily turn around their cockleshells and sail back into the safe structure of the harbour. At night-time, the men and women sit in the fiery glow and hungrily repair their nets for tomorrow. In the morning, they will put out to sea, yet not to fight the voracious ruler of the rising seas but to fill their boats with fish for their empty stomachs. The rising surge, gnawing at their little houses, could not be of less concern as long as starvation was looming over any attempt to revolt. The men and women were powerless. They fished in the morning and repaired their nets in the night, day after day. The sea level rose, yet no-one dared to breast the voracious Leviathan, king of the ocean and its treasures, for they were afraid of his threat with starvation. It was not until the village elder decided that fish, grain, and all the basic foods there were had to be shared among the community, that they spoke of him again. The tide had turned. The women and men put out to the sea in their rocky cockleshells. And when the water surface burst and the Leviathan emerged in wrath, they were not in fear. They were in power.

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List of Abbreviations

ALG I	-	Arbeitslosengeld I (unemployment benefit)
ALG II	-	Arbeitslosengeld II (unemployment assistance)
BA	-	Bundesagentur für Arbeit (German Agency for Employment)
CME	-	Coordinated Market Economies
CR	-	Critical Realism
CSS	-	Critical Social Science
DH	-	Disempowering Habitus
ISSP	-	International Social Survey Programme Research Group
MoT	-	Model of Transformation
SB	-	Statistisches Bundesamt (German Federal Statistical Office)
SGB I-XII	-	Erstes bis zwölftes Sozialgesetzbuch (German social security code 1-12)
UBI	-	Unconditional Basic Income
WS+LM	-	Welfare System and Labour Market

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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem and Research

The prologue is the story of my thesis. And it is the story of our times, where the *neoliberal Leviathan* (Collier, 2012; Wacquant, 2012a) has caused the fall of individual, self-determined agency, rendering a great number of citizens powerless against climate change and environmental degradation (for an elaboration of the agency referred to in this thesis see chapter 1.4). It has done so by dismantling the post-war welfare regimes and the post-industrial labour markets, reducing the attenuating function of the former against the increasing risks for individuals emanating from the latter (Beck, 1992; Harvey, 2005; Standing, 2009, 2011; Wacquant, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Went, 2000). As a result, precarity, the risk of social decline and even exclusion is omnipresent – as is the risk of starvation for the men and women in the prologue. I argue that this risk is depriving the so called *extended precariat*¹ of its agency, which "[...] may result in a frenzy of activity but engenders passivity as a social citizen" (Standing, 2009, p. 211), hampering its capability to adequately tackle environmental problems that are not within the realm of his/her immediate self-interest. A similar argument is made by Bourdieu (2003, p. 34) and Polanyi (as cited in Harvey, 2005, 80f.; Standing, 2009, p. 4), who drew the connection between the insecurity originating from unbridled market structures and the rising extremism. Today, we see this extremism – as one possible manifestation of the fallen agency – rising in favour of economically motivated nationalism and racism and at the expense of endeavours to mitigate climate change or stop environmental degradation.² As will be seen, the argument of this thesis focusses on the passivity rather than extremism. However, I assume interchangeability of these terms and thus the argument made.

In combining precarity as cause for the fall of agency with a concern for environmental problems, I strike two stones together, hoping for a spark. This joint consideration of two major problems of our time distinguishes this thesis from other research trying to either solve environmental problems or diminish precarity. The negligence of this link allows *passivity towards environmental action* to

¹ The extended precariat consists of the unemployed, the precariously employed and those being afraid to lose their employment status (see chapter 7.3).

² Hitherto, the worst example of this claim is the election of Trump as president of the USA, who cut funding towards environmental protection in favour of the defense budget (Limitone, 2017) and appointed Scott Pruitt, a denier of anthropogenic climate change and former lawyer for the fossil fuel industry as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Pruitt's plans to repeal the *Clean Power Plan* that reduces carbon emissions and the *Waters of the US rule* that reduces water pollution (Milman, 2017; Traywick, Natter, & Huq, 2017). Others, such as the French presidential candidate Le Pen canvasses with nationalist solutions to precarity and neoliberalism.

persist, despite the scientific knowledge about causes and effects as well as practical knowledge about alternative ways to shape the human-environment-system. Yet, the knowledge needs to be utilised urgently, to avoid further transgression of (core) planetary boundaries and a consequential aggravation of the potentially devastating effects on humanity (Steffen et al., 2015). Some argue increasing environmental education is needed to utilise the knowledge (Dobson, 2003, 2007a; Seyfang, 2006), while others suggest overcoming psychological barriers to behaviour change as solution (Gifford, 2011; Johnson & Levin, 2009). On the contrary, I argue that overcoming those barriers or increasing awareness and public knowledge about environmental problems and solutions will not be effective as long as neoliberal structures deprive individuals of their agency. As Sayer notes, "[...] education is not a sufficient condition for social change and actions which attempt to change practice are constrained by existing structures." (Sayer, 2000, p. 255).

Thus, I propose to reform the constraining structure, namely the welfare system, to restore its attenuating function and create conditions that allow for transformation. The reformative mechanism I analyse is the Unconditional Basic Income (UBI; see Part IV). The UBI in its emancipative form has the potential to unfetter the agency necessary for a structural transformation based on "a collective pursuit of global social transformation" (Anderson, 1980, p. 2), as opposed to mere individual action that needs no agency and leads to little or no change (see chapter 3 for a discussion about the need for agency in sustainability). I consider the UBI to be instrumental to the transformation rather than to be a green policy with intrinsic value for environmental sustainability. So far, proponents of the UBI have focussed on the latter way of utilisation to make the green case. Hence, they have been limited to its direct or *primary effects*³, focussing on the UBI's efficacy against the prevailing growth imperative, against the economic structure. In line with propositions in an alternatives-to-growth-debate in *Ecological Economics* (Martínez-Alier, Pascual, Vivien, & Zaccai, 2010; van den Bergh, 2011), their arguments for the UBI regard possibilities to decouple growth and individual financial security (Andersson, 2010; Boulanger, 2010; Ferguson, 2013; Fitzpatrick, 1999/2013), to allow for reducing working time in favour of sustainable activities (Ferguson, 2013; Mont, 2016; Pullinger, 2014) and even to be idle (Fitzpatrick, 1999/2013; van Parijs, 1987/2013). On the contrary, this thesis considers the UBI to be a mechanism that can allow to revive the agency necessary for strong sustainability through its material effects and socio-psychological benefits. This means, the instrumental value of the UBI in this thesis is not directed against neoliberalism but directed towards reviving agency.

³ Arguing for a UBI, Robeyns (2000/2013) distinguishes primary and secondary effects like direct and indirect effects. She gives examples for primary effects, such as effects on labour supply and total income, and secondary effects, such as revaluation of unpaid care work or psychological effects on housewives.

The core of this thesis is the *Model of Transformation* (MoT) that allows analysing the fall of agency from the structural to the individual level. It conceptualises the impact of neoliberalism that deprives individuals of their agency and sets them into a state of passivity against environmental problems: the disempowering habitus (DH). Additionally, it allows for an emancipating counter-movement: that ends the deprivation restoring the agency necessary for structural transformation for strong sustainability. Hence, it is not providing a vision for sustainability, but the agency to envision and to act. In other words, this thesis aims at providing agency as necessity for structural transformation and not at providing a blueprint for structural transformation itself. The conditions allowing agency, once in place, to unfold towards structural transformation, are thus not part of the thesis but are crucial future research, since agency alone does not necessarily lead to a balanced human-environment system.

1.2 Roadmap and Research Questions

The setup of this thesis (see Figure 1) is aligned with the stages of critical social science (CSS; see Sayer, 2010).⁴ Part I identifies the problem – the simultaneous need for and lack of agency – as well as the source of that lack – neoliberalism. In other words, research question (RQ) 1a is: To what extent is the fall of agency of the extended precariat taken into account in the current debate and political practice of sustainability? This question will be answered based on a literature review. Additionally, Part I includes a pledge for sustainability that needs agency for its success as opposed to the dominance of approaches that get along without it, yet also do not result in sustainability as defined in the chapter, namely strong sustainability. In other words, RQ1b is: In how far does strong sustainability need agency to lead to a balanced human environment system? Part II then explains my ontology and which theory helped me to construct the MoT. This includes an examination of Critical Realism (CR) as the ideal philosophy of science for my model and Bourdieu's *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* as basic elements of it. Part II culminates in the conceptualisation of the MoT as theoretical explanation of the fall and rise of agency. In Part III follows an illustrative application: I use the MoT for a critical, multi-level diagnosis of the fall of agency in the German context, analysing the interlinkages between neoliberalism, on the macro, the welfare system and labour market [WS+LM] on the meso, and the habitus emerging from psychological impacts on the micro level. In other words, RQ2 is: How does the fall of agency of the extended precariat develop in Germany? In Part IV,

⁴ Sayer (2010, p. 159) lists these as: problem identification, identification of the source for the problem, critique of these sources, emancipating action

I examine the UBI as policy mechanism aiming to remove the restraining influence of neoliberalism. In other words, RQ3 is: How does the UBI revive agency for the extended precariat in Germany? In Part V, I recommend the analysis of policy suggestions that have been proposed by different scholars as addition to the UBI. Future research needs to find policies creating conditions that let the agency unfold itself in a sustainable direction. I then conclude with limitations and implications of my research.

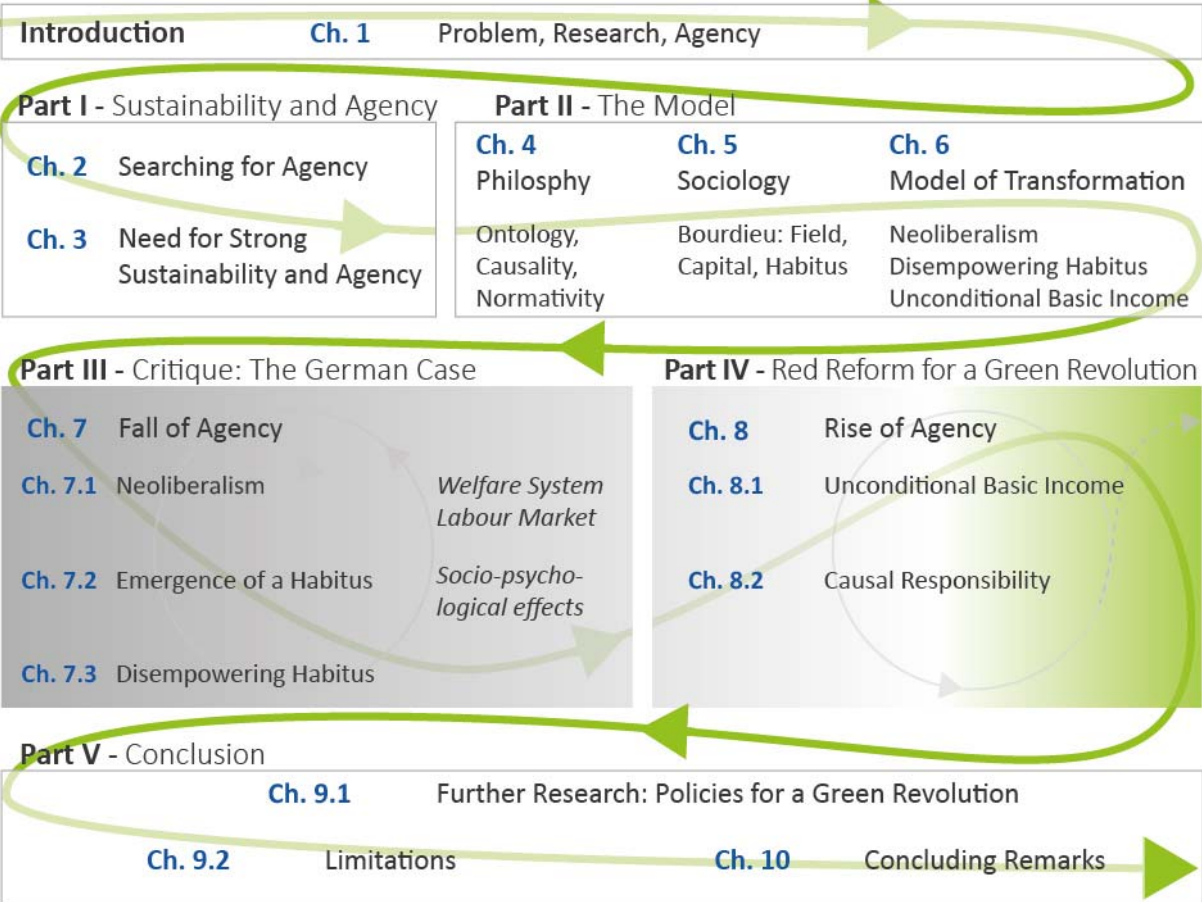


Figure 1: Thesis Pathway (own illustration).

1.3 Research Process

The very iterative process of researching for the thesis and writing this thesis has had different forms for the accompanying different parts. In general, it is a theoretical thesis based on a consultation of academic literature. The entry point for my thesis was my own experience standing between the poles of an environmental education that counts on the individual’s capacity to bring change and an

economic structure that demands conformity. Consequentially, in my first literary inquiries I engaged with the visionary work of E. O. Wright (2010) who elaborates ways to bring about radical change against structural constraints and with the sociologist G. Standing (2009), who scrutinises the development of the labour market-citizen relationship in an economic and societal critique. Along the lines of the emancipatory social science put forward by Wright I began to research and write a theoretical thesis. I engaged with the epistemological debate of sustainability related science for Part I. Regarding the conceptualisation of the fall of agency (in Germany), I relied on secondary data: Sociological literature evaluating the welfare system, labour market and Agenda 2010 mostly qualitatively; Psychological meta-analyses of the statistical effects of the WS+LM on the individual. Literature of both research fields was found in databases such as *Web of Science* or *psych.info* as well as through snowball sampling. A sampling purely based on a systematic search was tried with different search strings but deemed impossible, due to the heterogeneous topic. Regarding the effects of a UBI for sustainability, I relied on literature from a comprehensive anthology of literature on the basic income debate (Widerquist et al., 2013) and a systematic search of the keywords *sustainab**, *green*, *environment** in all issues of the Journal *Basic Income Studies*. However, no UBI-Agency-Sustainability link was found. This link was logically inferred based on the fall of agency and grounds on theory rather than data (see chapter 6.3.1 for why data from UBI experiments has no value for my case). Instead, the literature was used for a discussion of the UBI, and to identify potential policies that should accompany a UBI for sustainability and which should be investigated in future research.

1.4 Agency

Let me define the individual agency I consider necessary for structural change more explicitly adhering to Callinicos (2004) and Anderson (1980). Anderson distinguishes between three types of agency (p. 19f.). While two of these agency-types are exercised within and, more importantly, in accordance with the structural conditions, the third type is “a full popular agency desiring and creating new social conditions of life for itself” (Anderson, 1980, p. 20). Allowing this agency of *self-determination*, Andersson (1980, p. 22) writes, means transitioning from the “realm of necessity to the realm of freedom”. As opposed to the reproduction of structure, agency under the realm of freedom can lead to “collective projects of transformation” (Callinicos, 2004, p. 3). This is the understanding of agency underlying this thesis. An agency that allows the pursuit of structural transformation, however is dependent on specific conditions. Callinicos (2004, p.36) thus

conceptualises it as “the power to do x” while not being “prevented from doing it”. Here, again, I have to stress the importance of a thorough analysis of such conditions that should accompany the rise of agency for sustainability in future research.

Additionally, it seems noteworthy that a fourth type of agency could be seen in people’s illusion of their autonomy stemming from the flawed perception of their autonomy, which “does not correspond to reality” (Callinicos, 2004, p. 2). Its occurrence can be attributed to the erroneous conflation of agency and neoliberal freedom (Heron, 2008) that Patterson attributes back to the enlightenment view of the individual conflating “the autonomous, self-made person with agency” (Patterson, 2005, p. 374). This form of ‘agency’ could be called neoliberal agency, or *inauthentic agency* (Wrenn, 2015). Wrenn (2015, p. 1232) explains:

“Individuals might indeed exercise agency while possessing the power of self-reflection, but those individuals are engaging agency that is not authentic when that self-reflection exists within institutional contexts that represent the veiled exercise of agency of others who are more powerfully positioned.”

As example for this institutional or structural determination getting confused with agency, Patterson (2005) gives the *hungry proletarian* not being free to choose his participation in the labour market. This example is also at the core of this thesis, although here it is embodied by *the extended precariat*.

One more thing ought to be mentioned, before turning to the first research question in chapter 2. Agency as authentically self-determined action aimed at structural transformation has no inherent, normative constraints and can result in not only unintended consequences but consequences that are to the detriment of the majority. Therefore, it must be supported by conditions allowing a particular development trajectory. In the case of this thesis, this is a sustainable development trajectory. Consequently, two types of conditions are important for structural transformation for sustainability. The first type of conditions allows agency of self-determination to exist in the first place, while the second type of conditions allow that agency to unfold towards a structural transformation aligned with sustainability norms. This thesis is only concerned with the first type.

Part I – Sustainability and Agency

“Loving the Earth never guarantees that you will treat it well.”

(Dryzek, 2013, p. 204)

2 Searching for Agency

What motivated this thesis among other things was my impression of a reluctance of sustainability related science to take the structural constraints on agency and the mismatch between structural critiques and individualist solutions into account. Research and policies implemented in the name of sustainability emphasise individual responsibility and individualist approaches to behaviour change as consequence of privileging “mental processes over embodiment” of structure (Kent, 2009; Page-Hayes, 2015; Schwanen, Banister, & Anable, 2012, p. 524; Shove, 2010). Underlying this emphasis is a simplistic, linear behaviour change model trying to explain change with a causal chain of psychological constructs such as awareness, knowledge, attitudes and values as predictors of sustainable decision making and behaviour (Halkier, Katz-Gerro, Martens, & Hargreaves, 2011; Jagers, Martinsson, & Matti, 2016; Shove, 2010; Uzzell & Rätzzel, 2009). While this model is not wrong, it encourages the reproduction of a narrow theory of change by framing climate change solely “as a problem of human behaviour.” (Shove, 2010) as opposed to enabling holism. Acknowledging the limited impact solutions to environmental problems that are solely based on the linear behaviour change model have, Wiek, Farioli, Fukushi, and Yarime (2012, p. 1) propose a reorientation towards a new approach “[...] that enables students to be visionary, creative, and rigorous in developing solutions and that leaves the protected space of the classroom to confront the dynamics and contradictions of the real world.” However, their proposal does not escape the pitfall of individualist solutions that ignores the impact of social, political, and economic structures on the decision space of individuals (Mills, 1959; Sayer, 2010; Uzzell & Rätzzel, 2009): the fall of agency is not taken into account. In their recent *Science* article, Amel, Manning, Scott, and Koger (2017) acknowledge this shortfall and call individuals that resist structural constraints to confront the dominant worldviews of modernity *heroes*. Sustainability science, then, should empower the ‘non-heroes’. As a result, those facing the unsustainable structures do not need to be heroes anymore, for everyone has the agency that allows the “collective pursuit of global social transformation” (Anerson, 1980, p. 2) and whether one engages in the pursuit becomes a question of preferences and options

to choose from.⁵ Instead, Amel et al. (2017, p. 278) fall back into the individualist trap and call for “[...] building ecological understanding [...]” to equip the heroes in their endeavour without asking whether they have the agency to apply their understanding. In fact, science might “[...] be ‘barking up the wrong tree’ by assuming that more solutions-oriented knowledge [...] or that working on science-policy or science-society interfaces is the best way forward.” (O'Brien, 2013, p. 588). In this sense, increasing environmental knowledge and affection through science communication (Dahlstrom, 2014; Downs, 2014), calling for wilderness experiences to increase connectedness with nature and environmental consciousness (Nazir & Pedretti, 2015; Sparks, Hinds, Curnock, & Pavey, 2014) or advocating environmental education to ‘create’ an ecological citizen (Dobson, 2003, 2007b; Seyfang, 2006) will hardly lead to change as long as structural conditions hamper the conversion of cognitive constructs into concrete action. The lack of agency of the extended precariat as a consequence of such structural conditions is not substantially taken into account.⁶ However, structural transformation needs agency. Yet, does sustainability need structural transformation? In chapter 3, I argue it does.

3 Strong Sustainability and Agency

Strong sustainability aims for a transformation of the human-environment system on the assumption that nature has intrinsic value as opposed to mere functional value (Uzzell & Rätzsch, 2009). Thus, nature cannot be substituted by money or technology, as Solow (1974) argued. Strong sustainability is also based on a rational argument: there are limits to growth and (growing) consumption – the very basis of our economic system – cannot be absolutely decoupled from resource exploitation (Claus, 2016). For this reason, “[...] a progressive transformation of economy and society” (Brundtland, 1987) is needed. Even the Brundtland commission acknowledged the need to challenge structures that lead to a transgression of the planetary boundaries established by Steffen et al. (2015). For this theory of change based on structural transformation, Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien (2005, p. 46) coin the term *transformationist*. It is the underlying theory of change of this thesis, similarly to strong sustainability as the understanding of sustainability underlying this thesis.

⁵ This is where the conditions to be explored in future research become important.

⁶ See Callinicos (2004, p. 34ff.) for a profound, theoretical discussion of this methodological individualism in his investigation of agency.

Structural transformation, however, needs more than passive, agency-less, ‘low-investment’ pro-environmental behaviour that does not question the growth paradigm, such as represented by the empirical evaluation of Dobson’s ecological citizenship (Jagers et al., 2016)⁷ or by what Scerri (2012, p. 131, 133) calls “democracy through the wallet” and “ethics-lite”.⁸ Such behaviour does not tackle the economic and power structure and is insufficient for transformation (Hopwood et al., 2005). Even worse, if “[...] individuals are deprived of control over their living conditions, [...] they are likely to look for satisfaction through consumerism and through identity construction via carbon generating consumption [...]” (Uzzell & Rätzzel, 2009, p. 342). Structural transformation, instead, “[...] requires individuals to participate in public dialogue and activism in both informal and formal social collectives” (Amel et al., 2017, p. 277). It needs individuals to engage in resource intensive practices, investing cognitive, financial and time resources. Bourdieu (2003) summarises that structural transformation needs social movements and Hopwood et al. (2005, p. 46) emphasise it needs “[...] social action and political action that involves those outside the centres of power [...]”. In other words: structural transformation needs self-determined agency to allow for a deliberate process that transforms structures and individuals interchangeably over time, “a collective pursuit of global social transformation” (Anderson, 1980, p. 2), eventually resulting in a balanced human-environment system. This understanding of transformation is in line with the MoT constructed in this thesis. However, the much-needed transformation itself is not part of this thesis. Here, I solely pave the way for it through a diagnosis of the fall and a prescription for the rise of the indispensable agency.

⁷ Some items from the pro-environmental behaviour scale by Jagers et al. (2016, p. 1020): “How often do you do the following? 1. Buy locally produced meat; 2. Choose not to use a car for certain trips; 3. Buy used instead of new products [...] 11. Buy ecological foods; 12. Use low-energy light bulbs”.

⁸ While such behaviour is not genuinely irreconcilable with the aim of structural transformation, it does in no way support it. Instead, it can enhance the tendency to avoid the latter and be satisfied with the alleged impacts of one’s lifestyle ‘environmentalism’ (Luque, 2005).

Part II – The Model

“This ontology is the recognition of the possibility that powers may exist unexercised.”

(Sayer, 2010, p. 12)

In Part II, I construct a model of the structure-individual relationships that explains the absence of agency as consequence of neoliberalisation and gives leverage points for emancipation. The model is built on a critical realist ontology that empowers the researcher to overcome the individualist approach to sustainability criticised in chapter 2. Critical realism, as will be described, has strong advantages for a theory of change that includes transformation on the structural and individual level.

4 A Philosophy of Science for Agency

CR, the philosophy of science constituting the fundament of this thesis, provides a buttress for research that departs from the ontological individualism sketched above. Its background is the acceptance of an objective reality independent from cognition, while acknowledging that cognitive representations of that objective reality can be distorted, both by the knowledge producer and the characteristics of the considered object of analysis (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 2000; 2010). CR can thus be understood as third way between relativism and empiricism. Of utmost importance for this thesis is the rationale for CSS, which CR obtrudes with its prefix. For Sayer (2010, p. 160), emancipation means not only creating the right “[...] condition for the emancipation of [the] 'target groups' by enabling them to see how to replace 'unwanted determinations' by 'wanted and needed determinations'”, but blocking “[...] the mechanisms actually generating the problems”. In this sense, I consider the UBI to be a potential counterforce to block the neoliberal mechanisms (or conditions, as we will see in chapter 4.2) restraining agency, and thus to enable the agent to replace the ‘unwanted determinations’ of anthropogenic climate change and environmental degradation. This means that no neoliberalism but its effects are the subject of change in this thesis. In addition, I want to highlight that the structures responsible for the fall of agency and those causing environmental problems need not be the same. In other words: This thesis promotes the emancipation from one structure to create the agency necessary for the transformation of a (potentially) different structure.

Two differences between CR and the positivist reductionism underlying the linear behaviour change model outlined in chapter 2 are particularly relevant for this research: Firstly, the different understanding of causality. Secondly, the understanding of the structure-individual relationship. Yet, to understand these differences, an introduction into the three basic elements of CR seems necessary.

4.1 Real, Actual and Empirical

CR differentiates between *the real*, every existing object and its potential to be a cause, *the actual*, potentials that are activated, and *the empirical*, objects and activated or inactive potentials being observable (Sayer, 2010, p. 12). This holy trinity of CR – particularly the real and actual – is vital for the argument of this thesis, since it allows conceptualising a model that includes the *potential* to engage in social action for sustainability as opposed to *actually* being engaged: agency as unexercised power.

4.2 Causality as Mechanisms and Conditions

In CR, causality does not exist as causal relationship between an independent and a dependent variable. Sayer (2010) pictures a model of causation as causal relationship between a mechanism with causal responsibility, a subject of change and the conditions in which the relationship is embedded (see Figure 2).

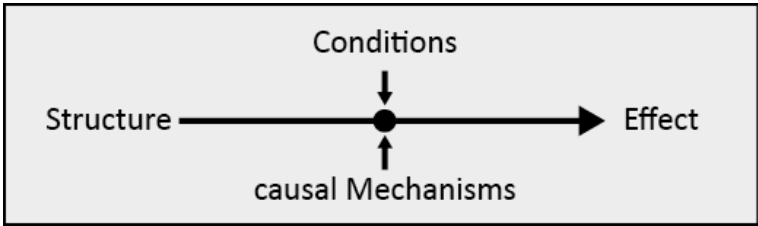


Figure 2: Critical realist view of causation (modified from Sayer, 2010).

In an open system such as a society, change is often due to multiple causal mechanisms and conditions can emerge out of an indefinite number of mechanisms, leading to contingency (Sayer, 2000, p. 108). Hence, for critical realists, A does not lead to B but is the reason for it to happen. This presumption leads to rejecting approaches build on the manipulation of behaviour (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Bhaskar, 1998) such as nudging – limiting the information base – or education –

extending the information base – to induce ‘sustainable behaviour’. Instead, this thesis has the humble aim to prepare the condition for deliberation and social action for sustainability based on a revival of agency. As critical realist, I am neither bound nor at odds with *the empirical*, which is why I do not refrain from empirical evidence for positivist causality to advance the MoT in its socio-psychological elements (see chapter 7.2). This, however, is not possible for the secondary effects of the UBI. These are speculative since no UBI examples exist that make the assumed effects *empirical* or at least *actual* (see chapter 8). The effects are ‘only’ part of *the real* and thus not ‘real’ in a positivist sense.

4.3 Dualist ontology of society and individual

The second, important difference between a critical realist approach analysing passivity towards environmental problems and individualist approaches are the former’s understanding of the structure-individual relationship (see Figure 3). Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p. 43) describe this understanding as “relational and emergent”. Bhaskar (1998) terms it *transformational*.

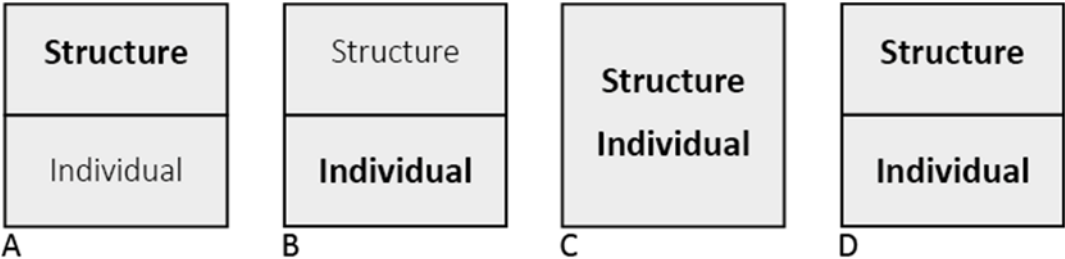


Figure 3: Visualisation of the four perspectives on the structure-individual relationship. Bold font illustrates attribution of determining power as opposed to total dependence. A = Structuralism, B = Individualism, C = Structuration Theory, D = CR, (own illustration).

The first perspective conceptualises individuals as mere imprints of structure and regards structure as independent from the individual (Bhaskar, 1998; Porpora, 1989/2013). Any argument conceding some degree of individual agency becomes impossible under this assumption. The decision space predefined by social structure, the playground of agency that is necessary for active, deliberate environmental action would become an empty space and transformation of structure impossible.

The second perspective conceptualises structure as aggregate of individuals and leads to what (Sayer, 2000, p. 94) calls “fallacy of composition”. This underestimation of effects from structural conditions and consequently overestimation of individual agency is my main point of criticism of the ecological citizenship idea developed by Dobson (2003, 2007a). As Valencia Sáiz (2005, p. 176) rightly

points out: "[...] the motif of [Dobson's] work is the individual citizen striving to be a better citizen. But surely the way in which citizenship is structured as well as the degree to which citizens can structure is critical."

The differences to the third perspective, Giddens's influential *Structuration Theory*, are less obvious, yet important, for without them, Structuration Theory would have been the theoretical framework of choice. The critical realist transformational perspective conceptualises structure and individual as distinct but interlinked concepts, whereas Giddens (1984) merges them into two sides of the same coin. Archer (1995/2013) calls this *central conflation* and emphasises the loss of difference between structure and individual and thus the loss of emergence in Giddens's theory (see Figure 3). One major implication of this differentiation is that, in CR, structure and individual can be independent objects of research (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009), while still being interdependent through structuring and (re-) producing relationships. The theory of transformation conceptualised by Archer (1995/2013) is based on this understanding of the structure-individual relationship. It unites the critical realist's approach to causality (see Figure 2) and the social theory of CR (see Figure 4).

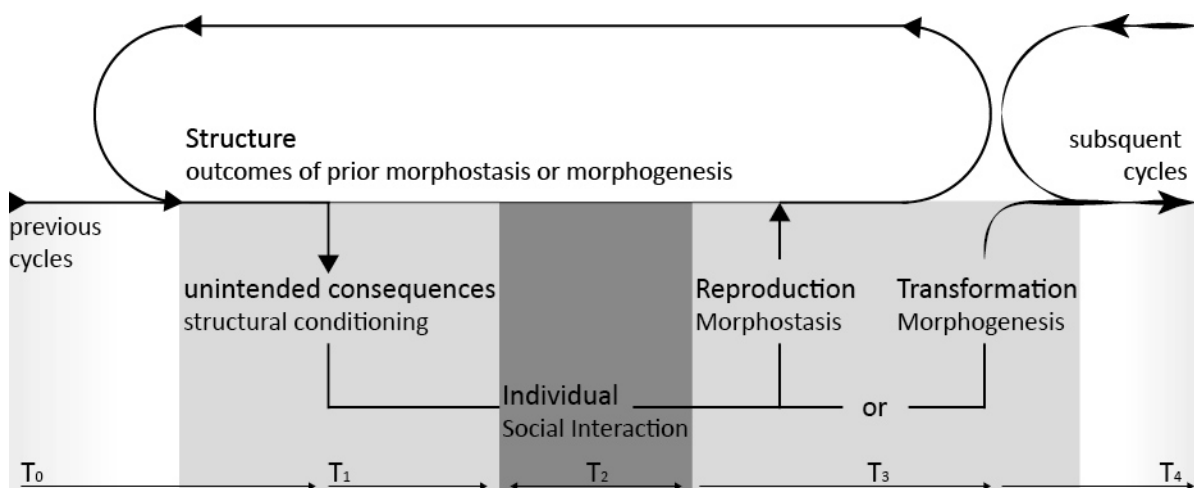


Figure 4: Transformational Theory of Social Action and Morphogenetic Cycle. The theory explains the successive cycles of the structure-individual relationship over time (T₀-T₄). Transformation/Reproduction depends on conditions and the individual agent (modified from Archer, 1995/2013).

Archer's theory forms the abstract skeleton for the MoT (see Figure 5). It also motivates interdisciplinary research, which is at the core of this thesis, combining sociological (structure, theory) and psychological (individual, empirical evidence) problems, research and solutions for the sake of sustainability. Yet, to acknowledge the existence of structure distinct from the individual demands applying a heuristic for the structure-individual relationship, which I take to be the habitus

concept of Bourdieu (1990, p. 53).⁹ Before elaborating on the advantages of the concept in chapter 5.1, the following subchapter discloses the normativity underlying this thesis and highlights its importance for sustainability science. This importance might at times be less obvious, since a good part of the CSS conducted connects to sustainability only through secondary effects; using the terminology of CR: this thesis goes beyond the empirical, it concerns the actual and revives the real, for “[t]here is more to the world [...] than patterns of events.” (Sayer, 2010, p. 15).

4.4 Sustainability Science and Normativity

"If critical realism [...] is to have emancipatory potential it cannot avoid engaging with normative thinking about the social world" (Sayer, 2010, p. 156). The same holds true for sustainability science (Lang et al., 2012), particularly sustainability science as critical research (Jerneck et al., 2011), and consequentially this sustainability science thesis. The normative stance guiding this thesis is mirrored in the desired state of a structural transformation into a sustainable human-environment system. It is also mirrored in the proposed way to get there: creating the conditions for human agency that are necessary for deliberate social action for sustainability.

Linking psychological, sociological and political research, I focus on the ‘society side’ of the human-environment system to “improve social capacity to guide interactions between nature and society toward more sustainable trajectories” (Kates et al., 2001). Utilising and connecting knowledge from a diverse scientific background is a core element of sustainability science (Jerneck et al., 2011; Kajikawa, 2008; Lang et al., 2012). Thus, I not only contribute with the research results but with the insight that psychological knowledge becomes much more valuable for sustainability science if it is embedded in a non-reductionist ontology that, in turn, benefits from a sophisticated social theory. This is the symbiosis of sustainability science and what Uzzell and Rätzl (2009) call *transformative environmental psychology* inspired by practice theory. Additionally, this thesis suggests an alliance between two so far distinct stakeholders of social and environmental sustainability: sustainability science and the quickly establishing socio-political vision of a UBI. Ultimately, I consider this thesis as a breeding ground for further research in sustainability science, since it is the first to draw a connection between the UBI as a potential mechanism for the development of a sustainable society.

⁹ The choice of a sociological concept is not only grounded in ontological assumptions but the finding, that psychological concepts are too reductionist and parochial to be useful for an integrative view on relationships in and across different levels of causality – from neoliberalism and environmental problems to individual emotions and behaviour.

Others have seen it in connection to social problems such as unemployment or inequality (see among others Robeyns, 2000/2013; Widerquist & Lewis, 2006; Wright, 2003), had an approach to its values for environmental sustainability limited to macro-economic arguments (see among others Andersson, 2010; Boulanger, 2010; Ferguson, 2013) or rejected its value for sustainability out of false reasoning.¹⁰

5 A Sociology for Agency

As has been mentioned in the afore-going chapters, this thesis makes use of Bourdieu's habitus concept. Furthermore, the concepts field and capital serve as heuristics to frame the structure-individual relationship. This emphasis on social theory is not only the result of unsuccessful attempts to create a MoT based on the confusingly diverse plethora of cognitional constructs used to explain behaviour in psychology. Instead, a psychological focus would have born the danger of falling back into the individual determinism and linear behaviour change model critiqued in chapter 2. Furthermore, the recourse to sociological concepts is in line with Fleming and Howden (2016) and Strunz (2012), who argue that vague concepts can be beneficial for interdisciplinary research.

5.1 Habitus and Field

Habitus: that is a habitat for the human mind; a space for the mind, determined by external forces, such as political and social conditions. For Bourdieu (1990, p. 53), the habitus are "[...] structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures [...]". He means, the habitus is a link between structure and action, and functions as both dynamic and stable entity dependent upon external pressures. Consequently, a change in external structure can lead to a new habitus based on structures and experiences of the past. As Wacquant (2014, p. 7) notes, the primary habitus is only a "[...] matrix for the subsequent acquisition of a multiplicity of (specific) habitus." Thus, there is no structuralist determinism inherent to the concept (Lizardo, 2004); a characteristic of the habitus that I attribute to it being its own entity but having no ability to 'act' in itself. In this sense, habitus, as *embodied social structures*, has causal responsibility for individual action but action still depends on

¹⁰ Unfortunately, countering the feeble objections made by Dobson (2007b, 87ff.) cannot be part of this thesis. The interested reader will find many counterarguments in Widerquist, Vanderborgh, Noguerra, and Wispelaere (2013).

other cognitional mechanisms and human agency must not be discarded. Or as Lizardo (2004, p. 376) writes trenchantly, the habitus concept allows to regard “[...] the social agent as a physical, *embodied* actor, subject to developmental, cognitive and emotive constraints and affected by the very real physical and institutional configurations [...]”. Habitus is thus not an explanation of the structure-individual dualism but a heuristic that must be filled with content by its user. It might be this emptiness of the ‘unused’ habitus concept letting scholars defame it as “*deus ex machine*” (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1464), “black box” or “folk concept with a fancy name” (Burawoy, 2012, p. 204). In this thesis, the heuristic is ‘used’ to explain the structuring causal responsibility of the neoliberalised WS+LM on the individual as well as the human agency emerging from a reformation of these structural conditions. The structures themselves are what Bourdieu conceptualises as *fields*, each having its own rules, practices and logic that engraill the habitus of those in its sphere (Lizardo, 2004). In this sense, the neoliberalised welfare system and the labour market are fields of practices, leading to a *disempowering habitus*.

5.2 Forms of Capital

Yet, the structuring connection between habitus and field is not only constituted by practices and unwritten rules of the latter – the *doxa* – but by different forms of capital.¹¹ Bourdieu distinguishes between social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital and equals them with *power* (Bourdieu, 1986). Understanding the forms of capital as different configurations of power is useful for the MoT, as its main argument is that agency has fallen victim to the DH that in turn gets shaped by a diminishing ‘flow’ of social, economic and symbolic capital – a power imbalance. For Bourdieu, social capital includes social relations based on trust and acceptance. Cultural capital includes education and can be a book, knowledge or a university degree. Economic capital includes anything that is directly convertible into money, such as property but also time. Lastly, symbolic capital is the representational form of capital. Bourdieu (1986, p.255) describes it as emergent of “[...] a relationship of knowledge [...] misrecognition and recognition [...]” between the ‘capital owner’ and the perceiver, determined by the habitus. As such, the symbolic capital of a welfare beneficiary is not only low because he or she has little economic capital but because he or she is recognised as unemployed by others with a *socially constituted* habitus associating unemployment with a lack of

¹¹ Lizardo (2004, p.390) describes the Bourdieuan *doxa* as „[...] mutual complicity between objective structures and embodied structures, [...] which accounts for the sense of “belief” and legitimacy of socially produced structural orders.“

education, motivation, with laziness or antisocial behaviour. I argue that while socio-democratic welfare systems in the past aimed to provide protection from a lack of economic capital, the restraining failure of the neoliberalised welfare systems to do so gives rise to the DH. This detrimental relationship is part of the MoT, which I present in the following.

6 The Fall and Rise of Agency: Model of Transformation

The MoT (see Figure 5) based on the Transformational Theory of Social Action and Morphogenetic Cycle (see Figure 4) explains the reproduction or transformation of structure over time and analytical levels (macro to micro) in dependence on conditions and the individual agent. It composes of a cycle of Reproduction, beginning and ending with the neoliberal structure (see chapter 6.1) on the macro level and being characterised by the DH on the socio-psychological micro level (see chapter 6.2). This is the current state of the world, with increasing economic growth and increasing emissions. The Cycle of Transformation, on the other hand, begins with neoliberal structures on the macro level and is 'open-ended'. An emancipative mechanism (the UBI) and the resulting agency break the lock-in of reproduction, opening a space for pursuing change (see chapter 6.3). As a result, structural transformation with a contingent final form becomes possible.

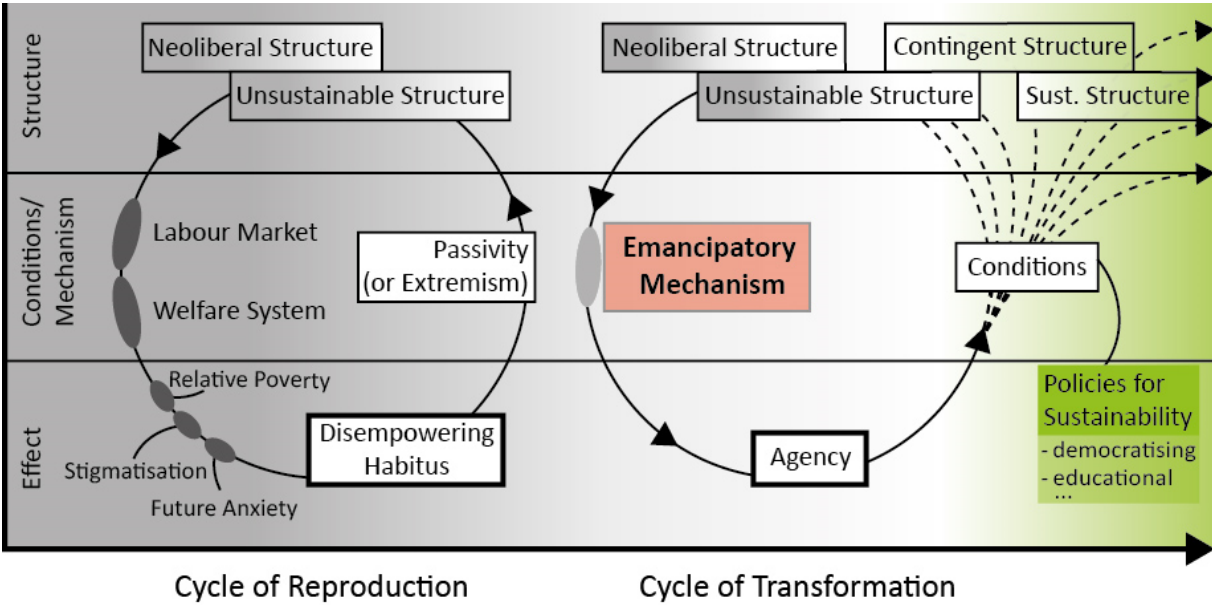


Figure 5: Model of Transformation (own illustration).

Whether the possibility of transformation created by the rise of agency gets utilised for the sake of environmental sustainability is not entirely controllable, but "[...] people can begin to question the *doxa* or taken-for-granted cultural frames of their own ways of life [...]" (Gough, 2015, p. 1198). Archer incorporated this uncertainty as *unintended consequences* in her model (see Figure 4). To decrease these unintended consequences in the case of this thesis, policies that should accompany an emancipatory mechanism such as a UBI implemented with the intention to create agency for sustainability need to be found in future research. These policies build supportive conditions for agents to trigger the necessary structural transformation. The decisive elements of the MoT will be further elaborated in the upcoming chapters, before the Model gets illustrated using the example of Germany in Parts III and IV.

6.1 The Fall: Neoliberalism

Everyone from advocates of neoliberalism to proponents of communism would agree that we live in a society that shapes and gets shaped by the market. Following a long tradition of critical social science along the arguments of Polanyi (2010), Harvey (2005), Sennett (1999), Went (2000) and many more, I regard the way market shapes society as mainly negative or with the words of Fourcade and Healy (2007) as *commodifying nightmare*.¹² The double movement Polanyi (2010) described has become a single movement of (neo-)liberalisation.

On this note, it must be mentioned that the ontological and epistemological neoliberalism debate is diverse and to speak of neoliberalism as a single movement is too narrowly considered. Collier (2012, p. 186) scrutinises the question whether neoliberalism should be understood as "macro-structure or explanatory background" or as one of many associated structures, and Peck and Theodore (2007) speak of *variegated neoliberalisms* in accordance with the strand of *varieties of capitalism*. This approach, the authors explain, focusses on the analysis of the 'production side' of the economic structure, rather than its 'output' in the forms of welfare or labour commodification. Since this thesis is only concerned with the 'output' of neoliberalism on the welfare system and labour market their conception seems less useful and a conceptualisation of neoliberalism based on a different strand of political economy is adopted; namely historical materialism. In historical materialism, "[...] neoliberalism is understood as a global regime of growth that has emerged following the destabilization of earlier, Keynesian-welfarist and national developmentalist regulatory

¹² This does not exclude any notion of positivity. Even a nightmare can invoke positive thoughts.

arrangements [...]” (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010, p. 190). This choice is made despite that the ontological understanding of neoliberalism is not affecting the argument of this thesis in any way. In this thesis, neoliberalism is the source of detrimental effects resulting in the withering of the welfare system and the liberalisation of the labour market (Beck, 1992; Harvey, 2005; Patterson 2005; Standing 2009, 2011; Wacquant, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Went, 2000). It is neither the subject of critique, nor the subject of change in this thesis. Not neoliberalism but the effects of neoliberalisation on the welfare system and labour market are subjects of analysis.

In this sense, neoliberalism is regarded as a *political project* (Harvey, 2005; Wacquant 2012b) and intrinsically destructive to the welfare state and labour security.¹³ Once neoliberal policies are implemented somewhere, a vicious circle of neoliberalism, as opposed to a “vicious circle of globalisation (Gray, 2004), begins. It is fuelled by neoliberal capital regulation policies and the “autonomous power of capital” (Neilson & Stubbs, 2016), resulting in *flexploitation* in the labour market (Gray, 2004) and *workfare* in the welfare system (Brütt, 2009; Mohr, 2012). Part III illustrates the power of these neoliberal processes for the case of Germany.

6.2 Agency lost: Disempowering Habitus

As a scientist working in the field of sustainability science my research is structured by the practices of the field, such as interdisciplinarity. Note that I use the term field in the Bourdieuan sense and not as synonym for scientific discipline. Consequentially, the MoT merges empirical, psychological findings about effects of relative poverty and job insecurity (see chapter 7.1.1 & 7.1.2) into the genuinely sociological DH. This interlinkage is new, since the self-understanding of psychology and sociology does not include interdisciplinarity. Instead, different concepts with relatively similar meaning exist in the different disciplines, such as habitus, self, personality or identity. Hence, no established method of translating socio-psychological relations into a habitus exists. As part of the MoT, habitus is understood as slowly, yet constantly transforming unity of salient socio-psychological experiences. “The habitus is a sediment of the past that functions within his present” (Crossley, 2001, p. 83) and the socio-psychological implications of neoliberalisation are the sedimentary particles that form the DH. With Bourdieu’s terms: economic, social and symbolic capital form the habitus. And their experienced, perceived or apprehended lack forms a particular habitus – the DH. Thus, not

¹³ Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as political project for the redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich. Wacquant (2012b) describes it as political project to reengineer the state.

'only' those living in precarious conditions but potentially everybody can develop a DH: it structures the agency of the unemployed, the precariously employed and those being afraid to lose their employment status, resulting in "[...] passivity as a social citizen" (Standing, 2009, p. 211).

6.3 The Rise: An Emancipatory Mechanism

The cycle of transformation is dominated by an emancipatory mechanism that protects the individual from the fall of agency. In this thesis, I analyse a UBI as such mechanism protecting from the liberalisation of the labour market by restructuring the welfare system. Yet, other emancipatory mechanisms are imaginable. The UBI is analysed as a mechanism allowing for the recovery of agency and it is, at first glance, a rather simple idea. It is the right to an income. Yet, this is where it gets complicated. Who should have a right to what kind of income, and why? It is not my aim to make an argument for the UBI per se. That has been done well enough (see the Journal of Basic Income Studies or Widerquist et al., 2013). However, to allocate myself in the spectrum of UBI proponents and counter some basic preoccupations the reader might have towards the reform, the following chapters elaborate on these questions. In doing so, I will also define the specifics necessary for the UBI to be an emancipative mechanism.

6.3.1 The Unconditional Basic Income

The UBI can be regarded as an alternative form of a welfare system with far-reaching consequences for, among others, the labour market. In fact, however, there is not one UBI but a vast range of different interpretations that, consequentially, have very different impacts on society. What all the interpretations have in common is that they regard the UBI as an unconditional right for everyone. This already excludes neoliberal proposals for a UBI such as the negative income tax by Milton Friedman (1968/2013), that depends on the income of the beneficiary. Another criterium important for the mechanism proposed to protect agents from the disempowering effects of neoliberalism discussed in this thesis is, that it is powerful enough to be emancipatory. In other words, the income provided needs to be high enough to eliminate the three constituents of the disempowering habitus: relative poverty, stigmatisation, future anxiety (whereas the latter two greatly depend on the first one). For the revival of agency, any UBI proposal providing an income below the threshold of relative poverty is useless. Blaschke (2012, p. 11) calls such a powerful UBI *emancipatory UBI*, as opposed to a *liberal UBI* that aims to improve the macroeconomic state. Lastly, it is crucial that the UBI is lifelong

for otherwise it will not be able to diminish future anxiety. This as well as the unconditionality of the UBI as emancipative mechanism become a problem when assessing experiences made with the UBI so far. UBI experiments up to date have always been exclusive (e.g. for the residents of one village) and limited in time (e.g. for 3 years in Canada, Calnitsky, 2016; 2 years in Namibia, Haarmann, 2009). Thus, I am not able to build on the scientific knowledge produced in such experiments that were aiming to increase the understanding of primary effects of the UBI, such as on employment rates or poverty.

6.3.2 Theoretical UBI Debate

The fundamental theoretical debate on the UBI taking place in political philosophy is concerned with citizen rights, duties, social contracts as well as freedom, justice and desirability in general (Jordan, 1992/2013; Levine, 1995/2013; Tideman & Vallentyne, 2001/2013; White, 1997/2013). Major points for discussion in the debate are the so-called reciprocity principle and exploitation objection as well as the presumed anthropology. The reciprocity principle states that “[...] those who willingly enjoy the economic benefits of social cooperation have a corresponding obligation to make a productive contribution, if they are so able [...]” (White, 1997/2013, p. 89) or in other words: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (*The Bible*. New International Version, 2nd. Thessalonians 3.10, 2011). The principle is a social contract between members of a community (e.g. a nation). White (1997/2013) argues the UBI violates the reciprocity principle because it provides a share of communal wealth to the *parasites* (van der Veen, 1991/2013, p. 135) not contributing to the wealth. Underlying this is the anthropology of a homo oeconomicus that does not want to contribute but happily free rides the communal production efforts to maximise his economic profit.

Against this critique of the UBI, several counterarguments have been articulated. Van Parijs (1997) and Widerquist (1999/2013) argue it is questionable how much of the communal wealth to be shared is actually generated by the labour of the potentially exploited. A UBI that shares wealth created by revenues stemming from communal assets does not violate the reciprocity principle. Such communal or *external assets*, as the two philosophers would argue, are assets that are not directly due to someone’s labour but have always been there (natural resources), have been created outside of the community (e.g. heritage), or are due to brute luck (wealth gained through circumstances such as congenital abilities). Following this egalitarian line of argumentation, only the redistribution of contributions made to the communal wealth based on *ability adjusted labour* – attributable to characteristics accessible to every member of the community – would fall under the exploitation

objection. In addition, the UBI can be regarded as a compensation for only “few – if any – external assets are left” (Widerquist, 1999/2013, p. 126).¹⁴ Other arguments against the exploitation objection refer to potential, positive effects of the UBI that outweigh the alleged ‘exploitation’: the UBI allows for higher wages, because it increases bargaining power (Robeyns, 2000/2013; Standing, 2009; Widerquist, 1999/2013) and it increases the chance to earn one’s salary in a personally more meaningful way because poverty or activation measures do not ‘force’ into wage-work anymore (McKinnon, 2003/2013; Standing, 2009). Furthermore, Widerquist (1999/2013) and van Parijs (1997) stress, that the reciprocity principle is in no way satisfied under the current welfare system, since individuals with enough economic capital – whether self-earned or not – can choose not to work and thus contribute but instead to be idle, whereas ‘poor’ individuals are forced into wage-work to escape starvation. One could say: The one who is unwilling to work shall eat if he can afford to.

6.3.3 Practical UBI Debate

How to shape a UBI is the question of a rather practical debate that takes place in public administration and economics (Anderson, 2001/2013; Calder, 2010; Friedman, 1968/2013; Jordan, 1994/2013; Widerquist, Lewis, & Pressman, 2005). It is concerned with the implementation, financing and conceptualisation as well as potential effects of the UBI and is thus contextually sensitive. The shape of the various proposals also depends on the political ideology of the proposer. Liberal ideologies favour a UBI below the poverty level combined with further liberalisation of labour protection and cutting welfare benefits aiming to diminish work disincentives from ‘too high benefits’. Egalitarians emphasise redistribution and would consequentially finance a UBI through reforming the tax system to the detriment of the wealthy.

On the other hand, the debate is concerned with effects of a UBI. Presumptions are based on different anthropologies ranging from the homo oeconomicus to the homo civicus, cooperativus or homo politicus (see Nyborg, 2000). While liberals stress the value of the UBI as a reform that eliminates the unemployment trap, egalitarians highlight its redistributive value. This thesis, on the other hand, puts an emphasis on the empowering capacity of the UBI, allowing the rise of agency. Consequentially, the debated effects on the individual range from free riding, idleness, increased

¹⁴ Widerquist (1999/2013) tells the story of a homeless person in Manhattan having to eat out of a garbage can and getting criminalised. Few centuries earlier, when external assets were not yet privatised, the same homeless person could have built a hut next to the Hudson river and fished to evade starvation.

consumption and mass immigration to more social commitment and better work performance.¹⁵ I allocate this thesis in the egalitarian tradition. I am also optimistic regarding the underlying anthropology. Firstly, chapter 9 presents policies that support cooperation and political participation. Secondly, notwithstanding its influence on agency, the UBI diminishes material worries and thus the compulsion to act based on purely economic rationales.¹⁶ Simultaneously to the introduction of an empowering or emancipatory UBI, additional policies should constrain those effects that are not conducive to a transition into a balanced human-environment system. This would be a fruitful line for further research but cannot be part of this thesis (see chapter 9.1 for a list of policies to be analysed in future research), which is focussing on the revival of agency.

Before turning to the illustration of the MoT in Part III, I want to refer to the *contextual sensitivity* (Sayer, 2010, p. 166) mentioned above. With the emancipatory mechanism, the MoT includes a placeholder. In this thesis, the placeholder will be 'filled' with a UBI adapted to the particular circumstances of implementation. A UBI with this contextual sensitivity allowing for some degree of concreteness is the essence of Part IV, which puts it into practice for illustrative purposes, while it remains abstract within Part II.

¹⁵ I do not raise claim to completeness for this list. However, a holistic overview of the causal responsibility of a UBI seems useful and an evaluation of (prospective) UBI experiments in this regard would be a fruitful line for further research.

¹⁶ This is consistent with research on scarcity and post-materialism by renown Ronald Inglehart (1981).

Part III – Critique: The German Case

“There cannot be a right life amidst the wrong.”

T. W. Adorno¹⁷

7 The Fall of Agency

After having introduced the reasoning and ontological as well as sociological underpinnings of the MoT, Part III applies the foregoing in a diagnosis and critique. This is the story of the emergence of the DH in Germany. It has two major chapters describing the fall of agency and the rise of the DH in a descriptive journey from the macro via the meso to the micro level.¹⁸ Before chapter 7.2 describes the undamped effects of WS+LM on the individual, the following explains the neoliberalisation of those fields.¹⁹ This is to demonstrate the mechanisms through which WS+LM deprive individuals of their agency.²⁰

7.1 Neoliberalisation in Germany

The political project of neoliberalism has been eroding the welfare system of the USA and the UK since the 1980s (Buch-Hansen, Pissin, & Kennedy, 2016; Giddens, 2013; Went, 2000), when right-wing governments under Reagan and Thatcher embraced the ‘old’ Hayekian ideas revived by the Chicago school. It began a global “race to the bottom” (Eckersley, 2004, p. 54), deteriorating the welfare system and labour rights that had been achieved before (Scerri, 2012; Schmidt, 2005;

¹⁷ This is the author’s translation. See Adorno (2005) for the less fitting, yet prevalent translation.

¹⁸ See Cash et al. (2006) for an in-depth explanation of cross-level and cross-scale interactions.

¹⁹ Note that the distinction between WS+LM is not as sharp as depicted in this paper for analytical reasons. For example, the German social security code earmarks subsidies for companies providing temporary work for unemployed – a labour market intervention – through SGB II, §16e (2003).

²⁰ The DH is not only determined by the elements of the MoT. However, to include the entirety of mechanisms with causal responsibility contradicts the practicality of models as simplified reflections of reality. It could, for example, be argued that the higher education system has opposing effects on the agent. However, I would disagree. For a short critique of the neoliberalised higher education system and its effects see Appendix B.

Standing, 2009).²¹ The race did not even spare the coordinated market economies [CME] that formerly provided generous welfare and negotiated wages (Brenner et al. 2010). Brenner et al. (p. 186) speak of the “infection of the CME model by neoliberalism.” In the wake of a discussion about Germany as worthwhile location for business, neoliberalism reached German politics. Bruff (2010) considers the Agenda 2010 reforms as preliminary culmination of this neoliberalisation in Germany. It shall be the main subject of the following chapters, even though neoliberal reforms have been introduced before. Hegelich, Knollmann, and Kuhlmann (2011) affiliate the Agenda with a new underlying assumption about the labour market, which Brütt (2009) pins down as: full employment is structurally possible and to be unemployed an individual failure.^{22,23} Hegelich et al. (2011) remark that a complete and detailed overview of the policy package does not exist, which I can confirm after having conducted an extensive search. Thus, I concentrate on reforms that I consider to be responsible for the DH based on the structure-individual relationship of the ToM.

7.1.1 Neoliberalism and Welfare

The neoliberalisation of the welfare system has had an impact on eligibility, means-testing, sanctions, lowered benefits and future pensions, introduced more rigorous activation and was accompanied by a stigmatizing discourse.

Reform of Eligibility and Means-Testing: To reduce the number of beneficiaries of the income dependent, and compared to *Arbeitslosengeld II* (ALG II; unemployment assistance) higher *Arbeitslosengeld I* (ALG I, unemployment benefits), the maximum period beneficiaries can receive the benefits was reduced (Bruff, 2010; Christensen, 2004; Lehnert, 2009). Additionally, eligibility criteria for ALG II were tightened during Agenda 2010 (Lehnert, 2009). In accordance with the second social security code (SGB II, §12(2)1, 2003), the so called *Schonvermögen* (allowance) must not be higher than 150 euro per year of age but at least 3100 euro in total and an additional 750 euro for special

²¹ Schmidt and Standing use the term globalisation to describe the driver of this development. To appreciate why I consider the development to be attributed to neoliberalism, the reader might refer to chapter 6.1.

²² Since Keynes stressed the refusal of „involuntary‘ unemployment“ in classical economics already in 1936, the assumption was not new at all.

²³ The political psychologist and psychoanalyst Bianchi (2009) recognises an opposing development; the abandoning of the goal of full employment in the wake of neoliberal restructuring of the state. However, his conclusion, that unemployment gets reinterpreted as individual failure is the same.

expenditures. A decrease by 50 euro per year of life compared to previous legislation as discussed by Bruckmeier and Schnitzlein (2007, p. 31).

Reform of Benefits: ALG II has to guarantee the socio-cultural subsistence minimum (SGB II, §20(1), 2003), which, prior to the reform, was the minimum for social assistance. On the one hand, this points towards a reorientation of the goals of unemployment benefits and on the other hand towards a decrease of the payment level. Indeed, the former unemployment assistance (an interim stage between income related unemployment benefit and a flat-rate social assistance) got merged into the social assistance to form the new ALG II, while the maximum period to receive ALG I was reduced from 18 to 12 months (Bruff, 2010; Lehnert, 2009). The standard rate for ALG II in 2017 according to the appendix of SGB XII §28 (2003) is 409 euro compared to around 560 euro in 2004 under the former legislation (estimated from figure 2 in Rudolph & Blos, 2005, p. 41). In 2015, the income disposable for a single beneficiary of ALG II, including cash benefits, payment for rent, heating and additional income from work or other social security benefits summed up to an average of 892 euro (Bundesagentur für Arbeit [BA; federal employment agency], 2015), which was below the relative poverty line of 942 euro in Germany in that year (Statistisches Bundesamt [SB], 2017a).

Reform of Activation: To bring unemployed back into paid employment, activation is a common approach in the neoliberal welfare paradigm. In this regard, the *threshold for reasonableness* functions as a criterion to decide under what circumstances a beneficiary can be forced into a job. It concerns the economic and moral elasticity of the unemployed (Brütt, 2009, p. 76). According to SGB III §140(4) (1997), this elasticity also includes forced relocation, if no reasonable job is within the range of a 2.5 hours commute. In addition, SGB II §16d (2003) allows employing beneficiaries in *Arbeitsgelegenheiten*: unsalaried jobs created by the BA to make them 'employable'. Lehnert (2009) further criticises the so called *Eingliederungsvereinbarung* (SGB II, §15, 2003) as illegitimate contract between the unemployed and the BA, since it is not based on a voluntary decision by both parties. Others, such as Etges and Lenger (2010) do not share this view on the contract. However, within their analysis of the *Eingliederungsvereinbarung*, another peculiarity strikes the reader: the contract is temporary and gets renewed every six months (Etges & Lenger, 2010). This is in line with the common practice of the neoliberalised labour market (see chapter 7.1.2).

Reform of Sanctions: To make the "trouble-making poor" (Wacquant, 2010, p. 201) obedient to the precepts of the BA, benefits can be reduced or withdrawn for up to three months. Such sanctions are particularly extensive for beneficiaries under 25 years: In accordance with SGB II §31 (2003), a 100 percent reduction of the cash payment is possible after the first *violation of duty*. The payment for

accommodation and heating can be cancelled after the second violation.²⁴ In 2015, 980,000 sanctions were imposed on 416,000 beneficiaries (BA, 2016b).

Reform of Pensions: In his analysis of the pension system after Agenda 2010, Ruland (2008) points towards the lively debate about poverty among elderly people. During Agenda 2010, public pensions have seen cuts rendering the system unable to secure the living-standard of future pensioners, note Hegelich et al. (2011). Instead, they write, individuals are encouraged to make use of *Riesterrente*, a new pension scheme that subsidises private savings.

Discourse: In addition to these bureaucratic threats, the political, public and media discourse are dominated by a rhetoric of exclusion (Jo, 2013). This rhetoric can be interpreted as indirect activation measure (Standing, 2009), as stigmatising (McKinnon, 2003/2013; Sen, 2001), marginalising (Johansson, Kahn, & Hildingsson, 2016; Siegmann & Schiphorst, 2016) or even criminalising (Wacquant, 2010, 2012a). In this regard, the framing of claimants as ‘customers’ of the BA or, as in the UK, the framing of benefits as ‘jobseekers allowance’ conveys a notion of obligation or exceptionality. On the other hand, terms used by politicians, the media and the public, such as *Parasit* (parasite), *Sozialschmarotzer* (scrounger) or *faule Arbeitslose* (lazy unemployed) impose guilt and social exclusion (see Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit, 2005 for an example of governmental stigmatisation; Dörre, 2014).

7.1.2 Neoliberalism and Labour Market

In addition to declining out-of-work benefits of the welfare system, deregulation and flexibilisation of the labour market in the wake of the Agenda 2010 reform gave rise to precarious employment demanding for in-work-benefits. The reforms were followed by a rise in a-typical forms of employment such as fixed-term and temporary agency work, the so called mini jobs (see Table 1).²⁵ These a-typical forms of employment are significantly correlated with precariousness and make the

²⁴ Violations can be failures to prove efforts to get employment or the termination of an employment, training or *Arbeitsgelegenheit* (SGB II, §31, 2003).

²⁵ I excluded part-time employment in my empirical analysis of the labour market, since it cannot be associated with a low-wage pay, job instability or other characteristics of precarious work (see Keller and Seifert, 2013). This is despite Lengfeld and Hirschle (2010) listing the growing share of part-time employment as reason for precarisation through low-income. It is noteworthy that, according to Steuerwald (2016), 21 percent of part-time employees would like to work more. I interpret this as evidence for the structurality of un- or under-employment and against the idleness critique of UBI opponents (see chapter 6.3.1) and activation proponents.

marginal or precarious part of the labour market (Keller & Seifert, 2013).²⁶ Thus, Lehnert (2009) rightly describes precarious employment as integral part of the reforms.

Table 1: Trends in selected forms of a-typical employment (own calculations).

A-Typical Employment	Increase from 2003-2016	Absolut numbers	
Employees in Mini-Jobs	37% ^a	Sept. 2016:	7.720.821
Employees in Temporary Agency Work	39% ^b	Jun. 2016:	1.005.713
Fixed-term employment	29% ^c	-	-
Total employees	18% ^d	Sept. 2016:	32.009.204

^a ^ddata source: BA (2016c), ^b data source: BA (2014, 2016a), ^c data source: SB (2017b). Numbers show only employees with social insurance number.

Mini and midi-jobs (marginal employment): The Agenda 2010 created these two a-typical forms of employment that allow a maximum income of 450 euro and 850 euro respectively. With an average hourly wage of 9.39 euro in 2014 (SB, 2016b), these are usually precarious or low-wage jobs without limit on weekly work time.²⁷ They were introduced as transition-jobs between unemployment and regular employment (Lehnert, 2009).

Temporary agency work: Temporary agency work is a triangular work relationship between employee, employer (Agency) and hiring company. After its deregulation, it was allowed to assign agency workers for an unlimited period of time and to dismiss and reassign them without period (Keller & Seifert, 2013).²⁸ The average hourly wage of temporary agency workers has risen from 1.13 euro to 2 cents below the relative poverty line between 2010 and 2014 (SB, 2010, 2016b). The average working period is three months (Keller & Seifert, 2013; Lehnert, 2009).

²⁶ Dörre (2014) and Keller and Seifert (2013) stress that a-typical and precarious work is not the same and define precarious work as work with an hourly wage below the line of relative poverty, without employment stability, without access to further training or without social insurance contributions (Keller and Seifert, 2013).

²⁷ A low-wage or precarious employment is a job with an hourly wage below two-thirds of the median hourly wage of all employees. For Germany, this is 9.32 euro per hour in 2010 (calculation based on SB, 2010) and 11.98 euro for 2014 (calculated based on SB, 2016b). Note that all reported hourly wages display gross wages.

²⁸ As a reaction to misuse, a limitation for temporary work assignments of 18 months and salary guidelines, temporary workers must receive the same payment as core workers after 15 months, were introduced in 2017 Deutscher Bundestag (2016).

Fixed-term employment: Fixed-term contracts are contracts that stipulate a fixed period of employment for up to two years (Keller & Seifert, 2013, p. 468). Steuerwald (2016) reports that 15 percent of employees work in fixed-term employment but Keller and Seifert (2013) emphasise that “almost half of all new employment contracts are fixed-term”. The average hourly wage of employees in fixed-term employment (13.53€) is below average, with 80 percent of all fixed-term employed earning less than the German average wage of 16.97 euro per hour (SB, 2016b, p. 86, 75). Legislation limits fixed-term employment to three rehiring in a row, which, in total, must not be justified by the company’s temporality of demand and exceed three years (TzBfG, 2000).

7.1.3 Interim Conclusion

The MoT conceptualises the fall of agency and the rise of the DH as result of the neoliberalisation of WS+LM. The causal responsibility of these fields of practice emerges from the many characteristics described above. The neoliberalisation of the welfare system reduces the beneficiary’s accessibility to economic capital through higher eligibility thresholds and reduced benefits. It pressurises beneficiaries into complying with imposed duties through activation measures (withdrawing symbolic capital) and punishes those who do not comply with sanctions, lowering the benefits from below to far below the relative poverty line (withdrawing economic and symbolic capital). The reduction of economic capital goes hand in hand with a reduction of symbolic and eventually social capital, as the precarious is unable to partake in society. Eventually, the reduction of economic, symbolic and social capital leads to even more discrimination and (self-) stigmatisation than the discursive framing alone. In addition, the neoliberalised pension system shifts risks towards the individual by withdrawing economic capital, while the neoliberalised labour market allows for wages below the relative poverty line and increases unstable employment in precarious jobs. In these conditions, created as part of the neoliberal project and mediated through WS+LM, the potential for social decline is omnipresent. The next chapter goes on to track the fall of agency from the characteristics specified above to the DH.

7.2 Emergence of a Habitus

I'm not a client, a customer nor a service user. I'm not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar nor a thief. I'm not a national insurance number or a blip on a screen. I paid my dues, never a penny short, and proud to do so. I don't tug the forelock but look my neighbour in the eye and help him if I can. I don't accept or seek charity. My name is Daniel Blake. I'm a man, not a dog. As such, I demand my rights. I demand you treat me with respect. I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen. Nothing more and nothing less.

Daniel Blake, protagonist in *I, Daniel Blake* (Loach, 2016)

The above quote from a multiply awarded 2016 movie about the struggles of a welfare claimant depicts his struggle to be himself or as one could argue, to have agency. The following chapters give an answer as to how the structural conditions, the micro politics of the WS+LM do not allow for agency; how they do not lead to a caring, open and helpful habitus, a claim made by the psychoanalyst Rudek (2009, p. 149). Or with the terminology of the MoT: they answer how the structural conditions forbid the Cycle of Transformation. I draw on psychological evidence to explain the nurturing of the DH as side effect of the reallocation of social risks through WS+LM.²⁹ Reading the following chapters, the reader should bear in mind that not only the objective, statistical changes in the WS+LM but also the subjective interpretation of them by those acting in them is important to the constitution of the DH.

7.2.1 Welfare and Habitus: The Condemned destitution

Psychology of scarcity is what Fromm (1966/2013) conceptualised as opposition to a *psychology of abundance* that produces initiative, faith in life, and solidarity. This psychology of scarcity and the socio-psychological effects of unemployment amounting to social exclusion are the dominant elements of the DH stemming from the welfare field; the lack of economic, social capital and, as Peillon (1998) remarks, symbolic capital. In fact, not only unemployment but being dependent on welfare benefits while working in a precarious employment is detrimental for economic, social and symbolic capital, as one still experiences labour market, economic, institutional, cultural or spatial

²⁹ The parochialism of psychology made this a venturesome and time-consuming endeavour. The bigger picture gets lost in a science obsessed with correlations and regressions. Thus, I did not try to represent the entirety of psychological concepts explaining the DH. Instead, I conducted a literature survey to iteratively find empirical evidence – particularly meta-analyses – on psychological components of the DH, as mentioned in chapter 1.3.

exclusion and social isolation (Dörre, 2014; Gundert & Hohendanner, 2014).³⁰ In reviews of the empirical, psychological unemployment literature, the detriments of a lack of economic and social capital, already recognised by Sen (2001, p. 21) in *Development as Freedom*, are well documented: among them effects on mental health – e.g. anxiety and depression –, physical health, self-esteem, self-confidence, and life-satisfaction (Griep et al., 2016; Kim & dem Knesebeck, 2016; O'Campo et al., 2015; Paul & Moser, 2009). Here, the close relationship between poverty and stigmatisation acknowledged by renowned scholars (Beck, 1992; Sen, 2001; Standing, 2011; Wacquant, 2012a) becomes obvious. Consequentially, Oxford-based Jo (2013) argues for including stigmatisation into the poverty definition. The author regards stigmatisation as influential to lack of social capital. The effects of stigmatisation are so strong that beneficiaries refuse welfare benefits to not suffer the *psychic costs* (Besley & Coate, 1992; Contini & Richiardi, 2012; Jo, 2013), thus further reducing their economic capital. These costs, however, do not only arise when experiencing practices of the welfare field but already when anticipating them, as the findings of O'Donnell, Corrigan, and Gallagher (2015), that anticipated stigmatisation correlates negatively with mental and physical health, show.³¹

7.2.2 Labour Market and Habitus: The spectre of destitution

Experiencing insecurity due to flexibilisation and precarisation, whether direct or indirect, is the dominant element of the DH stemming from the labour market field. This is the anticipation of a potential lack of economic, social and symbolic capital. Bourdieu (2003, p. 29) speaks of the “institution of insecurity” that “cows workers into submission.” Data from a 2015 survey shows that 32.2 percent of Germans worry and another 28.4 percent worry ‘a little’ about losing their job (International Social Survey Programme Research Group [ISSP], 2017).³² Garz (2012) finds slightly smaller numbers for the period of 2001-09 (58% affective job insecurity among Germans). This is in line with evidence of increasing job insecurity in Germany and elsewhere (Kalleberg, 2009; Lengfeld & Hirschle, 2010). Others suggest a rather horizontal development of job insecurity, with a peak after the implementation of the Agenda 2010 (Erlinghagen & Lübke, 2015).

³⁰ For a theoretical conception of social exclusion consisting of these exclusion-types see Kronauer (1998).

³¹ Some authors regard stigma as positive. For instance, economy and legal scholars Blumkin, Margalioth, and Sadka (2015) appreciate the economic effects of the stigmatisation of unemployed for the government budget.

³² This worrying is what psychologists call affective job insecurity, a combination of cognitive job insecurity – the perceived chance of losing once job –, cognitive and affective labour market insecurity – the perceived chance of not finding a new job – and income insecurity – the perceived change to lose one’s income (see among others Erlinghagen and Lübke, 2015; Anderson and Pontusson, 2007; Hipp, 2016).

In their meta-analysis of determinants of job insecurity, Keim, Landis, Pierce, and Earnest (2014, 275f.) found that temporary employed workers (fixed-term and temporary agency work) are more prone to affective job insecurity ($r = .20$, $p < .01$, $n = 24,000$ in 22 studies).³³ A finding Lengfeld and Hirschle (2010) also encountered in regard to fixed-term employments – and part time employees, albeit with a much weaker statistical effect – among the middle class. Other determinants of the strength of affective job insecurity are age (Anderson & Pontusson, 2007; Hipp, 2016; Keim et al., 2014) or personality traits (Keim et al., 2014; Witte, 2005), inter alia.

However, this thesis is less concerned with differences in job insecurity between different groups of employees than with the overall impact job insecurity has for those feeling insecure. In this sense, affective job insecurity is first and foremost a psychological stressor, as the pioneers of stress research, Lazarus and Folkman (1984), pointed out. As such, it is related to a range of stress reactions that result from an anticipated lack of economic, social and symbolic capital. Meta-analyses found significant negative effects on mental and physical health, well-being and work-related effects such as commitment and performance or exhaustion (Griep et al., 2016; Kim & dem Knesebeck, 2016; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2002; Witte, Pienaar, & Cuyper, 2016). On the other hand, stress, and thus job insecurity, triggers coping behaviour (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Witte, 1999) including drug (ab)use (Fullerton, Long, & Anderson, 2011) and workaholism (Spurk, Kauffeld, Meinecke, & Ebner, 2016). Such behaviour either distracts from the lack of capital or aims at increasing capital.

7.3 Disempowering Habitus

“The self-determined life becomes an individual reaction to the vagaries of the market and the failure of politics” (Müller, 2014, p. 27; own translation)

The DH explains the inexistence of action for sustainability by structuring individual agency based on its own structuring through experienced practices in the fields of welfare and labour market: Practices of precarity ranging from a life below the poverty line, discriminating stigmatisation and insecure employment to the permanent threat to become part of the *reserve army* (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 82; Dörre, 2007, p. 286) lying in wait for taking over a secure workplace. This latter expansion of the DH onto those in supposed security is what Lengfeld and Hirschle (2010, p. 184) call the spill-over effect. The effect can be understood as a power arising from the welfare system and precarious

³³ The use of psychological evidence comes with a string of consequences, such as the limited meaningfulness of correlations. As critical realist, I acknowledge these limitations while not rejecting the psychological evidence in its entirety.

employment that exerts discipline over those acting within the ‘secure’ realms of the labour market (Dörre, 2007, 2014; Lehnert, 2009; Lengfeld & Hirsche, 2010).³⁴ From this can be concluded that the DH structures the agency of the extended precariat: the unemployed, the precariously employed and those being afraid to lose their employment status. One is inclined to agree with Bourdieu’s *Precarity Today is Everywhere* (Bourdieu, 1998, 81f.).³⁵

Using the qualitatively derived typology of the precariat from the German sociologist Klaus Dörre (2007, p. 290) to estimate the number of individuals with DH, one finds 61.5 percent of Germans able to work have the DH (see Table 2). These numbers are comparable with the socio-psychological evidence from Garz (2012) and the ISSP (2017) in chapter 7.2.2 regarding affective job insecurity among employed (58-60.6%).

Table 2: Typology of the Integration Potential of Employment. Subcategories are only shown for the zone of integration, since only this zone contains both individuals with and without the DH. Numbers in italic display those types structured by the DH (Dörre, 2007, p. 290).

Zone of Integration (‘secure’ labour market)		% of Germans able to work
Secure Integration	“safe”	31.5
A-typical Integration	“unconventional”	3.1
<i>Disempowering Habitus</i>		
Insecure Integration	“insecure”	<i>12.9</i>
Integration at risk	“threatened”	<i>33.1</i>
Zone of Precarity (‘insecure’ labour market)		<i>13.8</i>
Zone of Decoupling (welfare)		<i>1.7</i>

Part III showed how the DH emerges in the German context as response to existential stress. The habitus resulting in efforts to cope with neoliberal rules of the welfare and labour market field, overpowers individual agency and “[...] may result in a frenzy of activity but engender passivity as a social citizen” (Standing, 2009, p. 211). Consequentially, to remove it and let agency rise as a prerequisite for social action (for sustainability), those conditions structuring the habitus need to be changed. Therefore, Part IV illustrates the UBI as emancipative mechanism of the MoT, tailored to German context.

³⁴ See Hipp (2016) for an empirical research on the country level that did not find this spill-over effect for cognitive (not affective) job insecurity: in countries with high employment protection, workers perceived their jobs as more secure when the national rate of temporary workers was relatively high.

³⁵ This translation of Bourdieu (1997) differs from the prevalent translation by Richard Nice (Bourdieu, 1998).

Part IV – A red reform for a green revolution

8 The Rise of Agency

How can the agency lost to neoliberalism be returned? How can the *actual* be changed into the *real*? These questions are vital for this thesis and sustainability science, for without agency, passivity towards sustainability will persist. Part IV is the emancipatory part of this thesis, which elaborates and illustrates the crucial element of the MoT: the emancipatory mechanism that converts the Cycle of Reproduction into the Cycle of Transformation. After a period of neoliberal expansion into WS+LM, an adequate UBI redistributes social, economic and symbolic capital, reviving agency for a transformation of unwanted, dominant structures. However, as mentioned in chapter 6.3.1, I am not able to build on the scientific knowledge produced in worldwide experiments make my case, since none of the UBI experiments has fulfilled all crucial aspect of an emancipative UBI (being unconditional right, lifelong and above the poverty threshold)

8.1 An Unconditional Basic Income for Agency in Germany

For the UBI to be effective against the DH, it needs to protect individuals from the structuring pressure of the neoliberalised labour market. Furthermore, its design needs to be radical enough to restructure the welfare system in a way that experiences of relative poverty and social exclusion are eliminated or in other words: that living without dignity becomes impossible. For this to happen, I regard a UBI effective that is *at least* as high as the threshold of relative poverty in Germany. A preliminary calculation with numbers from 2015 revealed that a UBI of 942 euro per month could be financed through the current social budget and the introduction of a wealth tax alone (see Appendix A for the detailed calculation). However, I want to mention once more that not only the economic but equally so the symbolic capital provided by the UBI is important for my case. Furthermore, while a higher UBI would be desirable regarding the normative stance of this thesis, it might also increase opposition to the reform. However, such statements regarding the achievability are speculative.

Regarding supporters and potential agents of change in Germany, I consider the following groups to be advocates of the reform. And while this is speculative, it leaves ground for optimism. I identify change agents for the UBI in the public, politics, academia and judiciary: Political actors debate the UBI as alternative to a welfare system coming more and more under fire (Gilroy, Heimann, & Schopf, 2013). Some of the major parties even have UBI working groups, with the Greens, the Pirates, the

Left and the Social-Democrats proposing an emancipatory UBI while the Christ-Democrats and the Liberals promote a UBI for economic reasons and in anticipation of advancing automation (for an overview see Blaschke, 2012). Courts have ruled in favour of a reform of the welfare system, arguing that benefits below the threshold of relative poverty (see chapter 7.1.1) contradict the German constitution (for a lawsuit regarding the practice of sanctioning see Sozialgericht Gotha, 2015, p. 7). Public, including church-based, actors (see Netzwerk Grundeinkommen, 2017, among others) advance the UBI debate in close contact to worldwide movements (see Basic Income Earth Network, 2017). Academia, while still debating on the questions touched upon in chapter 6.3.1, begins researching the pathways to a UBI, reflecting on the ideal, political decision-making process and benefits of alliances with feminism or sustainability, inter alia (Jacobi & Strengmann-Kuhn, 2012).

8.2 Causal Responsibility of the UBI

The UBI can be effective through the following mechanisms: it eliminates relative poverty and diminishes the stigmatisation attributed to it, thus also decreasing affective job insecurity and the fear of social exclusion – future anxiety. It is easy to comprehend how relative poverty will be eliminated through the increase in economic capital of those living in relative poverty. The elimination of stigmatisation, is first and foremost due to the UBI being a *right* and not dependent on a service in return. Thus, humiliating practices such as getting sanctioned, being forced to move or take up *Arbeitsgelegenheiten* as well as the current framing of those not in wage-work as scrounger or unemployed disappear. Yet, some of the effect will also be due to the rise in income that prevents the ‘poor’ from needing to engage in stigmatising practices of poverty (e.g. going to a food bank or begging). The unconditional right to a basic income implies that one cannot be stigmatised for benefiting from the communal wealth without being in or searching for paid labour. Thus, receiving the UBI does not assault symbolic capital. The decrease in fear for social exclusion is a combination of the above, as the UBI does not roll back flexibilisation or labour market competition but protects from the potential, detrimental consequences of it. This is the extension of the welfare systems as *effect modifier* (Benach, Muntaner, & Santana, 2007; O’Campo et al., 2015). Some authors found that higher welfare expenses are not significantly related with lower affective job insecurity (Anderson & Pontusson, 2007), however, as Sayer (2010) emphasises, the statistical insignificance of an empirically analysed causation does not rule out a causal relationship from a critical realist point of view. For example, the finding of Anderson and Pontusson can be interpreted in a way that none of the current welfare schemes in the 15 OECD countries analysed is generous enough to reach the threshold necessary to eliminate individual insecurity.

Part V - Conclusion

9 Thesis, Limitations and Further Research

The thesis started with the premiss that sustainability necessitates agency and I believe the argument has been substantiated. I showed that agency is needed but missing in (strong) sustainability (RQ1a, b), before elaborating the MoT on the fundament of CR and Bourdieu. I then demonstrated how agency gets deprived in Germany (RQ2) and how it can be revived (RQ3). I did not provide a vision for sustainability, but the agency to envision and act. Future research now needs to explore, the conditions that should accompany the revival of agency for sustainability needs.

9.1 Future research: Policies for a Green Revolution

Authors concerned with sustainability have proposed many policies that should accompany the introduction of a UBI to reduce the contingencies that emerged together with the agency. Some of these policies are supposed to allow the agency to unfold. Others could benefit from a revival of agency for without agency they only increase demand for research on the knowledge-to-action gap: the individualist trap criticised in chapter 2. Future research should thus analyse the value of those policies for strong sustainability, some of which are listed in the following.

In his green case for the UBI, Fitzpatrick (1999/2013) argues the UBI would only become a sustainable reform when it gets accompanied by other policies as part of a policy package. Others see the necessity for additional policies in their ability to protect the agency against new forms of unsustainable domination. In this sense, Erich Fromm (1966/2013) argues that a UBI can only contribute to a sustainable transformation, once the homo consumens is eradicated and Rudek (2009) perceives the fight against this manifestation of an unsustainable lifestyle as the greatest challenge for the green case of the UBI. However, in researching and designing supportive policies one should pay attention to the underlying argument of this thesis: No sustainability without agency. Consequentially, policies that aim for sustainability but constrain agency, such as mandatory civic engagement, as postulated by Atkinson (1996/2013), or (unfeasible) restrictions on how to use the income attained from the UBI, as advocated by Fitzpatrick (2009) do not need to be included in further research, as they are not recommended. I categorised the policies proposed by scholars and found in a literature survey as pro-sustainability, pro-democracy or pro-equality.

Democratic policies aim for increasing democratic citizenship through different means of motivation and activation. They include activating labour market policies on a voluntary basis as opposed to the involuntary activation in the neoliberalised welfare system. Active labour market policies have been shown to increase individual security (Chung, 2016; Chung & Mau, 2014) and could help to emancipate from the DH. Shutkin (as cited in Dryzek, 2013, p. 100), Jordan (1989/2013) and Rudek (2009) propose to accompany the new agency with new governance institutions that should increase possibilities for participation, such as citizen budgeting or referenda. This is only valid when additional democratic institutions establish a power balance that does not allow the manipulation of people's interest. For this reason, policies against lobbying and manipulative influences on politicians and citizens by the economy as proposed by Dryzek (2013), somewhat aiming for a Habermasian free speech situation should get researched. Such additional policies could include the prohibition of advertisement, as a-growth advocate van den Bergh (2011) advertises. On the citizen level, Standing (2010) argues for a moral commitment to vote, or in Boudieuian terms a doxa of democratic citizenship, whereas Dobson (2007a) argues for awarding civic engagement.³⁶ These citizen level approaches form another fruitful line of future research.

Other policies that could accompany the introduction of a UBI to increase its emancipating potential to target socio-economic inequalities. Calder (2010) argues for the supplementary introduction of free public transport, whereas the finding that equality leads to a reduction in consumption levels due to less status competition (Buch-Hansen et al., 2016) suggests the introduction of a UBI with a higher emphasise on redistributive finance schemes. Consequentially, a green UBI could be financed through taxes targeting the richer part of society (e.g. wealth tax, luxury tax). Here, again, future research is needed.

Nobel Prize laureate James Meade envisioned a UBI that directly contributes to sustainability through its finance scheme, including pollution, traffic and fertiliser use tax (Meade, 1990/2013, 201f.) as well as through its indirect taxation of environmentally harmful production through a value-added tax (Meade as cited in Pfouts, 1993). Whether this symbiosis of UBI and environmental taxation is viable should be investigated in further research. Focussing on the effects side of the UBI, the possibility to reduce working time and increase leisure time demands alternative and sustainable leisure-time activities. Future research in this matter should explore which activities are best suited. In this regard, Pullinger (2014, p. 16) argues for providing post-productivist leisure activities such as

³⁶ This is particularly noteworthy, since Dobson simultaneously rejects strategies of behaviour change through external motivation in his citizenship concept (Dobson, 2003).

mindfulness training. Lastly, policies could target the education system to enhance environmental knowledge, attitudes and values, inter alia (Dobson, 2003, 2007b; Nazir & Pedretti, 2015; Seyfang, 2006). With the new agency in place, these policies representing the individualist approach to sustainability could finally satisfy their premature praise, however, this relationship should be the subject of further research.

9.2 Limitations

I now indicate limitations that might curtail the elaboration, and valuable trajectories for further research. It is a crucial question whether the UBI has the ascribed power to revive agency. This depends especially on the integrity of the problem diagnosis made in this thesis. On one side, some individuals might not experience or perceive the risk that establishes itself in a DH. On the other side, the UBI might not be as efficient in reducing individual insecurity as assumed, for insecurity can have other determinants than those generally associated with precarity. In fact, the thesis focussed on effects of the WF+LM whereas practices in other fields such as the education system seem similarly influential but got only little attention. While this does not diminish the causal responsibility of the emancipatory mechanism, the critique and respective solution would benefit from an extension of the diagnosis into other fields of practice. In this regard, a structuring impact from the education system seems obvious.

In Addition, the viability of the UBI to allow agency to rise depends greatly on it ensuring a life in dignity. Whether the threshold for the UBI in this thesis is set too low to ensure such a life in dignity can only be speculated, as long as a satisfactory answer to the question of human needs and wants is not found. This thesis adopted the relative poverty line, as threshold for a life in dignity and thus a viable UBI; a widely held political consensus about relative poverty that has no scientific basis. The decision is based on practicality, since the academic debate on the prerequisites of agency is only insufficiently resolved and others concerned with identifying the prerequisites for agency circumnavigate a clear decision for a threshold with fuzzy adjectives such as ‘adequate’, ‘appropriate’ or ‘significant’ (Gough, 2015, p. 1196). In addition to this design-related problem, it is noteworthy that a UBI with emancipatory potential has not yet been introduced anywhere on the globe (neither has a liberal UBI been implemented beyond experimental scale). This brings into question, the role of agents of change for the reform. I have listed some potential actors for the German case on a speculative basis, however the UBIs achievability seem to be its weak point and the weak point of this thesis. I have only discussed the financial achievability, which I consider one of the biggest

barriers for the implementation of a UBI so far. Equally so, were questions about macroeconomic effects of the UBI not discussed in this thesis. Eventually, these points could be the most important limitation of this thesis and a reason to be humble in my expectations. However, since this is a theoretical thesis about agency rather than the UBI, I favoured a focus on the fall of agency, its neglect in the sustainability related debate, its necessity and how to revive it, over a lengthy discussion of effects the emancipatory mechanism might have and the practical achievability of it.

Before concluding, I want to shortly refer to the missing notion of discourse. The course of this thesis was dictated by CR and the sociology of Bourdieu. The problem of missing agency in sustainability could alternatively have been scrutinised with a poststructuralist, postmodernist ontology that emphasises discourse. However, discourse is implicit in the structuring of the habitus, which is why I choose this heuristic. It enabled me to include discursive elements into my analysis without the need to conduct a discourse analysis.

10 Concluding Remarks

With this thesis, I appealed to a core value of sustainability science, namely interdisciplinarity, to reveal a problematic relationship between structure and individual, sociology and psychology, economic policy and social action. So far, these dualities have not been related to the aim of advancing knowledge about barriers to sustainability. However, this contribution to academia was not the main aim of the thesis. The main aim, instead, was a solution oriented contribution to real world sustainability problems, with a profound diagnosis and the proposal of an emancipatory reform based on critical research. The problem of this thesis was the passivity towards environmental action and the insight that individualist solutions alone (e.g. tackling the knowledge deficiency) could not bring about the structural change necessary for sustainability. The implication is that the power of agency, once revived and accompanied by conditions conducive to sustainability, leads to environmental engagement beyond green consumption and the like; it leads to a democratic transformation of unsustainable structures.

This inference was reached by showing how structural conditions deprive the individual of its agency, rendering it unable to stand up for a structural transformation. To revive the agency necessary for strong sustainability, the thesis has introduced an emancipatory mechanism. Both fall and rise of agency were conceptualised in the MoT, consisting of the Cycle of Reproduction and the Cycle of Transformation. The Model was substantiated in a journey along the structuring relationship from neoliberalism via WS+LM to the DH. The journey then continued along the lines of the UBI that can

protect the precarious and the frightened – the extended precariat – from the deterioration of their social, economic and symbolic capital, before taking them to the open waters of a contingent structure. Sailing these waters, green policies should be given to the revived agents, the men and women, for them to navigate the waters and stand a chance against the structure. To find these should be the next step. It would be naïve to regard this thesis as bulletproof blueprint to sustainability. Yet, in my eyes it reveals the only way to defeat the great Leviathan.

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Appendix A

Calculation of budget for a UBI.

The calculation is based on a ceteris paribus assumption regarding social expenses and revenues after introduction of a UBI (e.g. after the implementation of the UBI, employees contribute the same amount of money to the social system as before the implementation of the UBI). The calculation ought not to be regarded as blueprint but rather as exemplification of the financial achievability. The UBI would substitute unemployment benefits, the statutory pension, child benefits and social security and would get paid to every German citizen and non-German registered in Germany, including refugees but excluding exchange students and similar short-term residents.

Social Expenses^{37,38}: 888.2Bn – programmes that can be cut after introduction of UBI (pensions, unemployment insurance and benefits, social insurance, child benefit but not health, casualty and nursing care insurance, child and youth care) = 583.9Bn; (left over expenses = **304,3Bn**)

Revenues of social budget³⁹: **935.5Bn** state contribution 313Bn., employer's (322.3Bn.) and employee's (283.8Bn.) contribution, other revenues (16.4Bn, e.g. dividend tax etc.)

935.5Bn. - 304,3Bn. expenses = **631.2Bn. for UBI**

82Bn/11304 (People eligible for a UBI⁴⁰/annual cost of basic income at the level of the 2017 relative poverty line⁴¹) = **928,9Bn.**⁴²

631.2Bn. are enough for:

Model 1: Full UBI for 55,838,641people = 68% of all Germans

Model 2: 50% UBI for those below 18 years: 86,68% of 631.2Bn. +13.32%⁴³ of 631.2Bn x2

³⁷ Sums are in Euro if not otherwise classified and rounded to one decimal place, even when calculations are partly based on complete decimal digits.

³⁸ Source: Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (2016, p. 6)

³⁹ Source: Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (2016, p. 13)

⁴⁰ Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2017c)

⁴¹ Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2017a)

⁴² Based on population numbers from 2015, including every person (Germans and non-Germans living in Germany at that time. Thus, the number and following results can be considered conservative estimates, since the actual number of citizens eligible to the UBI does not include, e.g. foreign exchange students.

⁴³ Source: Statista GmbH (2016)

- 547,1Bn (48,398,797ppl) + 84Bn (7,437,707people) x2 = 63,274,211ppl = 77% of all Germans

Additional demand:

Model 1: 32% of Germans or **297.3Bn.**

Model 2: 28% (including 13.32% under 18 years) of Germans (19,944,367people + 3,064,824people x2): 225.5Bn+ 17.3Bn =**242.8Bn.**

Option for Model 2: Finance through wealth tax:

242.8Bn = Equal to annual tax rate on wealth of below 10% (**8.22%**), based on simulation of Bach (2011) with 2007 SOEP data; including 250,000 allowance and 100,000 child allowance; targeting the richest 7,7% of Germans

Appendix B

Diagnosis and critique of the relationship between neoliberalism and the higher education system

The partly still on-going so-called *Bologna reform* that began in 2010 standardised studies across countries in order to increase *attractiveness*, *competitiveness* and *justice* of the European higher education system (Witte, Westerheijden, & McCoshan, 2011). By increasing the cultural capital of the student, it empowers students to avoid precarity. However, acknowledging the interdependencies between agents, Sayer (2000, p. 94) calls this the *fallacy of composition*: Bettering one's qualifications decreases the chances for someone else to find a job.

Other critics see the reform as instrumentalisation of science or neoliberalisation of education into a commodifying labour power factory (Standing, 2009, 128ff.) that shifts priorities of higher education to employability and economic capital instead of cultural capital, "critical thinking and self-reflection" (Musner, 2009, p. 207).⁴⁴ This critique, that the reformed education system devalues cultural capital in favour of economic capital, is visible in Bologna's target to increase the *employability* of graduates; A target that is explicit in several Bologna communiqués (Teichler, 2008; Witte et al., 2011). And while it is not incompatible with the advancement of theory, methodology, curiosity or critical faculty as Teichler (2008, p. 70) notes, it still constitutes a shift in educational goals. The author perceives the changes in the higher education system as reaction to labour market trends, the increased importance of knowledge, technology, lifelong learning and in general a zeitgeist, which, as I would argue, incorporates neoliberalism.⁴⁵ In practice, this has led to obligatory internships (Bargel, 2011) and an increase in practice oriented courses (Teichler, 2008), inter alia.

In opposition to the fields of welfare and the labour market, the field of higher education does not cause a lack of capital but is meant to increase cultural and symbolic capital as preparation for the labour market. The Bologna keyword is *employability*.

⁴⁴ I am lucky and happy to have been a part of the minority of students studying a programme that upholds these traditions of critical research at the alma mater of Habermas, which has otherwise been colonised by instrumental rationality, even naming some of its lecture halls after international banks.

⁴⁵ It is debatable whether this zeitgeist is a reason for the above average increase of the number of students of business studies relative to the average increase in all degree courses (45.5% and 36.5% from 2003/04 to 2015/16; calculation based on Statistisches Bundesamt (2004, 2016a).