

The Re-Invention of Socialism

Paper, presented by Michael Brie
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At the conference

The re-formation of revolution
Freedom. Equality. Difference
For a 21st Century Socialism



The main issues of the paper

1. The general formula of capitalism and socialism in comparison
2. Capitalism, socialism, and the engine of modernity
3. How can all individuals become owners of the means of production and reproduction in modern societies?
4. Some simple conclusions

1. The general formula of capitalism and of socialism in comparison



The general formula of capital



Money (M) – Commodities (C) – increased amount of Money (M')

$M - C - M'$

„Logic“ of Capitalism

“Quite apart from all technical conditions, reproduction here depends on purely social considerations: only those goods are produced which can with certainty be expected to sell, and not merely to sell, but to sell at the customary profit. **Thus profit becomes an end in itself, the decisive factor which determines not only production but also reproduction.** Not only does it decide in each case what work is to be undertaken, how it is to be carried out, and how the products are to be distributed; what is more, profit decides, also, at the end of every working period, whether the labor process is to be resumed, and, if so, to what extent and in what direction it should be made to operate.”

Rosa Luxemburg: The Accumulation of Capital

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1913/accumulation-capital/ch01.htm>)



Famous definitions of socialism

- "Socialism is not about big concepts and heavy theory. Socialism is about decent shelter for those who are homeless. It is about water for those who have no safe drinking water. It is about health care, it is about a life of dignity for the old. It is about overcoming the huge divide between urban and rural areas. It is about education for all our people. Socialism is about rolling back the tyranny of the market." Chris Hani, secretary general of the SACP, assassinated in 1993
- „In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.“ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels



General formula of socialism

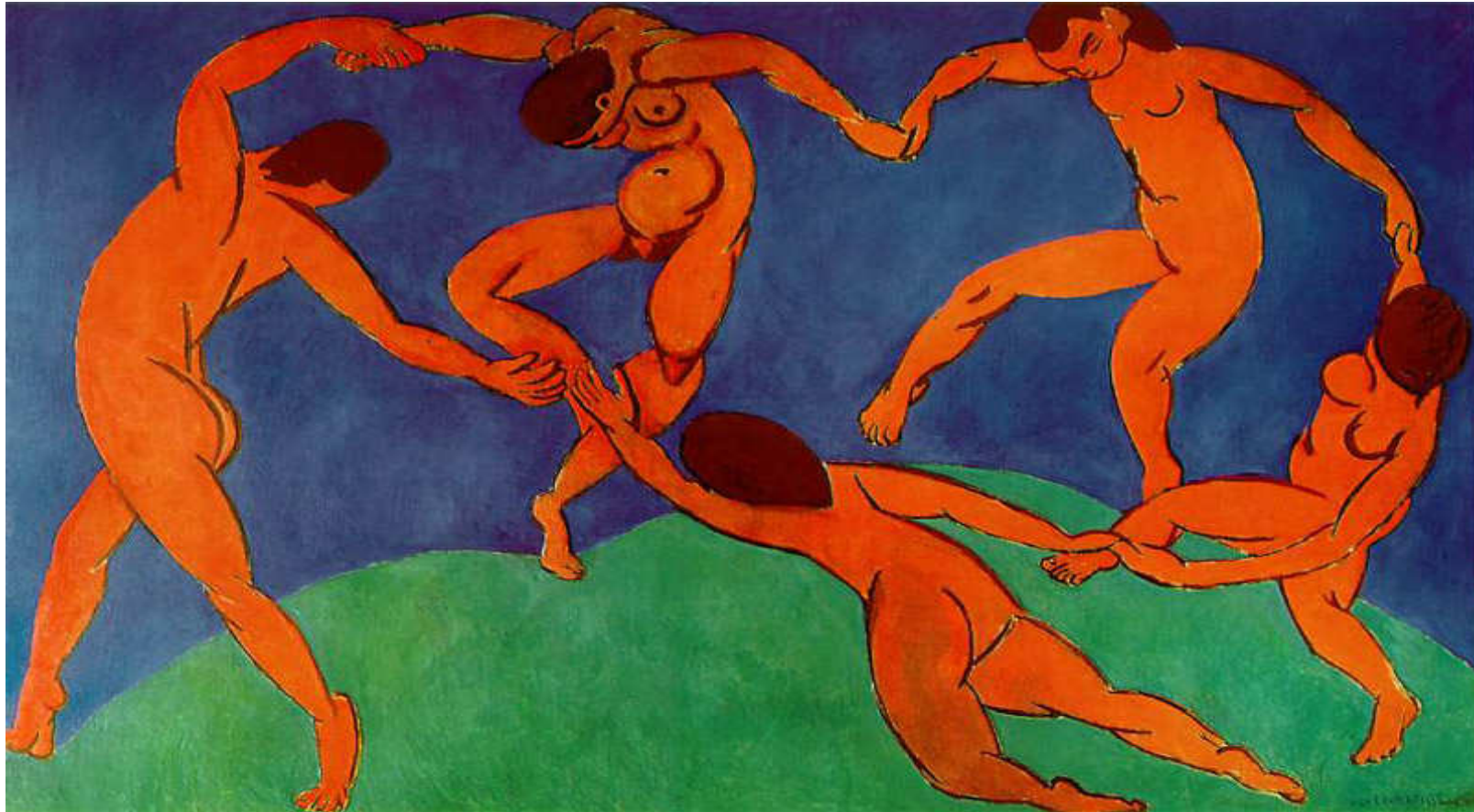
Dignity and free development of each
human person (I)

– solidary development of all (S) –
enriched development of everybody (I')

I – S – I'

„Logic“ of Socialism”

The socialist movement as the radical expression of all movements directed against capitalist exploitation, patriarchal rule and sexism, racism and fascism, destruction of nature ..., as a movement for the creation of the necessary social conditions for the full realisation of human rights – a new power and property order.



Henry Matisse: *The Dance* (1910)

“Only through the process of the lively interrelation between each other are we able to overcome the borders of our individual existence – taking part in the dance of life.” Erich Fromm

2. Capitalism, socialism, and the engine of Modernity



The necessity to transcend capitalism



“Even those large majorities suffering under capitalism are not going to follow a project that falls behind that (productivity of capitalism M.B.). Such critical measuring of capitalist productivity does not embellish it, but harnesses people’s own forces in the project of progressive elimination of capitalism in a production for the sake of the people and the maintenance of the inhabitability of our planet.”

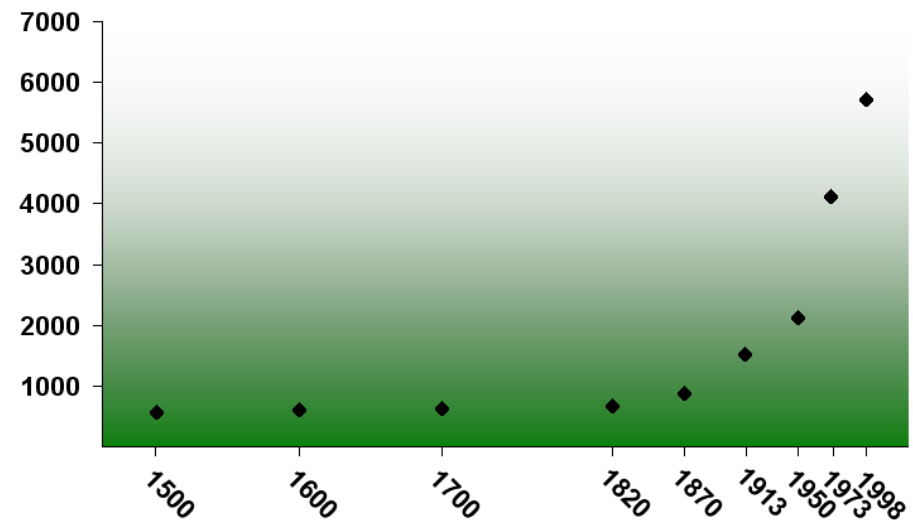
Wolfgang Fritz Haug

The revolutionary side of capitalism

- Breakthrough from stagnant traditional societies to modern innovative societies
- Long-lasting economic growth over two hundred years
- Creation of an industrial and information society
- Expanding individual freedom

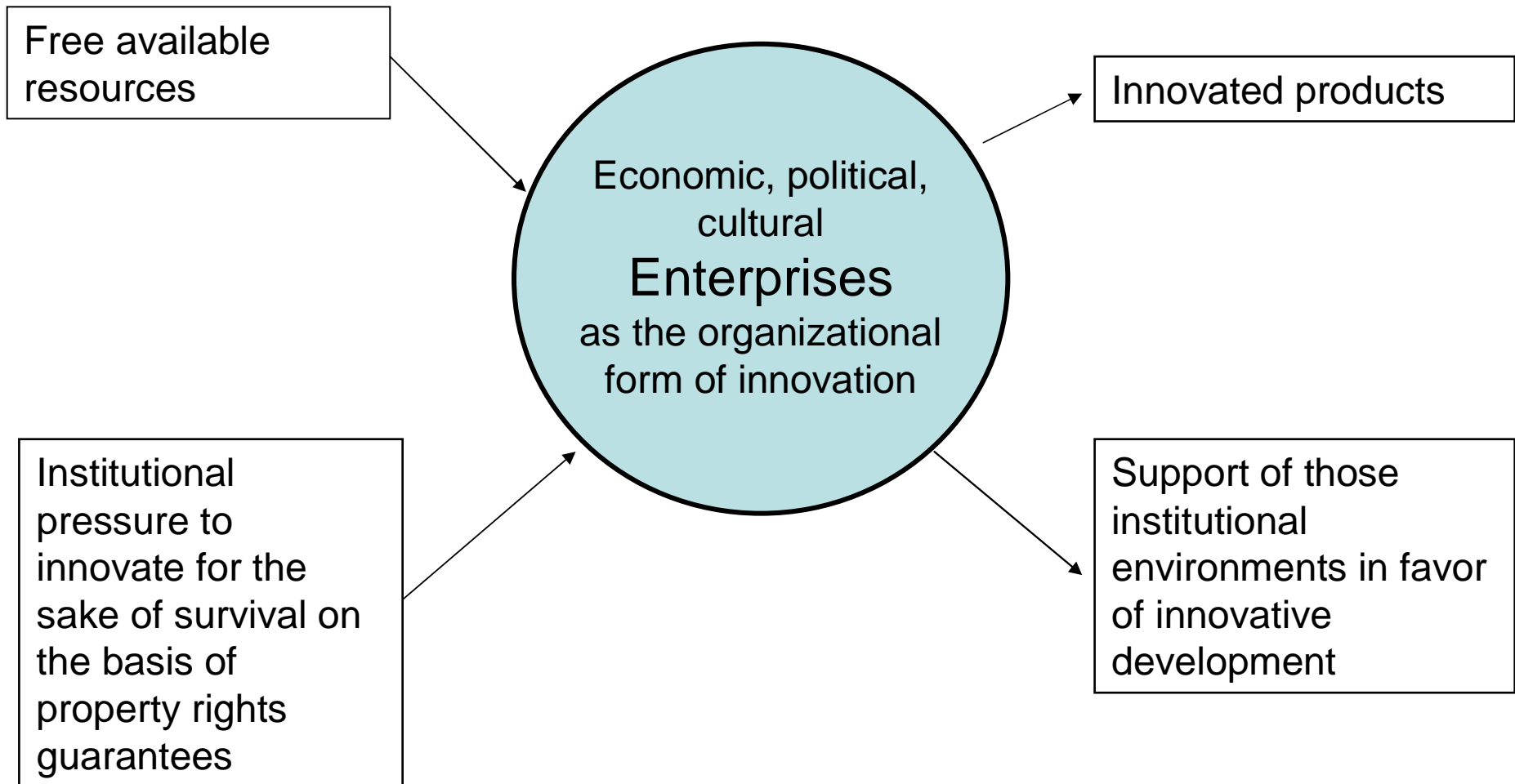
For the love of freedom! And the glory of human creativity!"

**Sunday June 3, 2007, is
International Capitalism Day
2007!**



World's [GDP](#) per capita shows exponential acceleration since the beginning of the industrial revolution

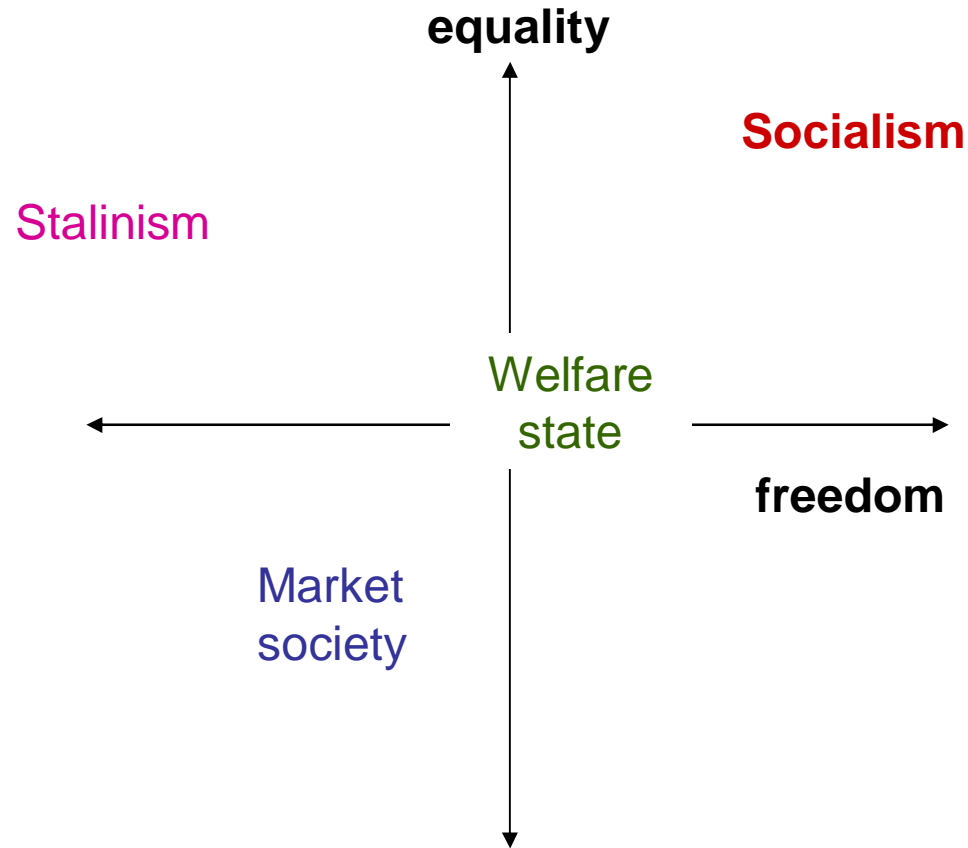
The engine of Modernity



The capitalist form of innovative development

- Subordination toward the accumulation of capital (innovation as a solely mean to increase profit)
- Reduction of development to the unlimited increase of the production of commodities and the shaping of needs and ability toward instrumentalism and consumerism
- Destruction of the preconditions of development ([wo]men, nature, the Public ...)

Criteria for a transformation beyond capitalism



Criteria for a progressive transformation

- 1) Higher degree of individual freedom for a larger part of the population;
- 2) Stronger transfer of this freedom into solidary development of all;
- 3) long-term sustainability

3. How can all individuals become owners of the means of production and reproduction in modern societies?



What do individuals need for free development?

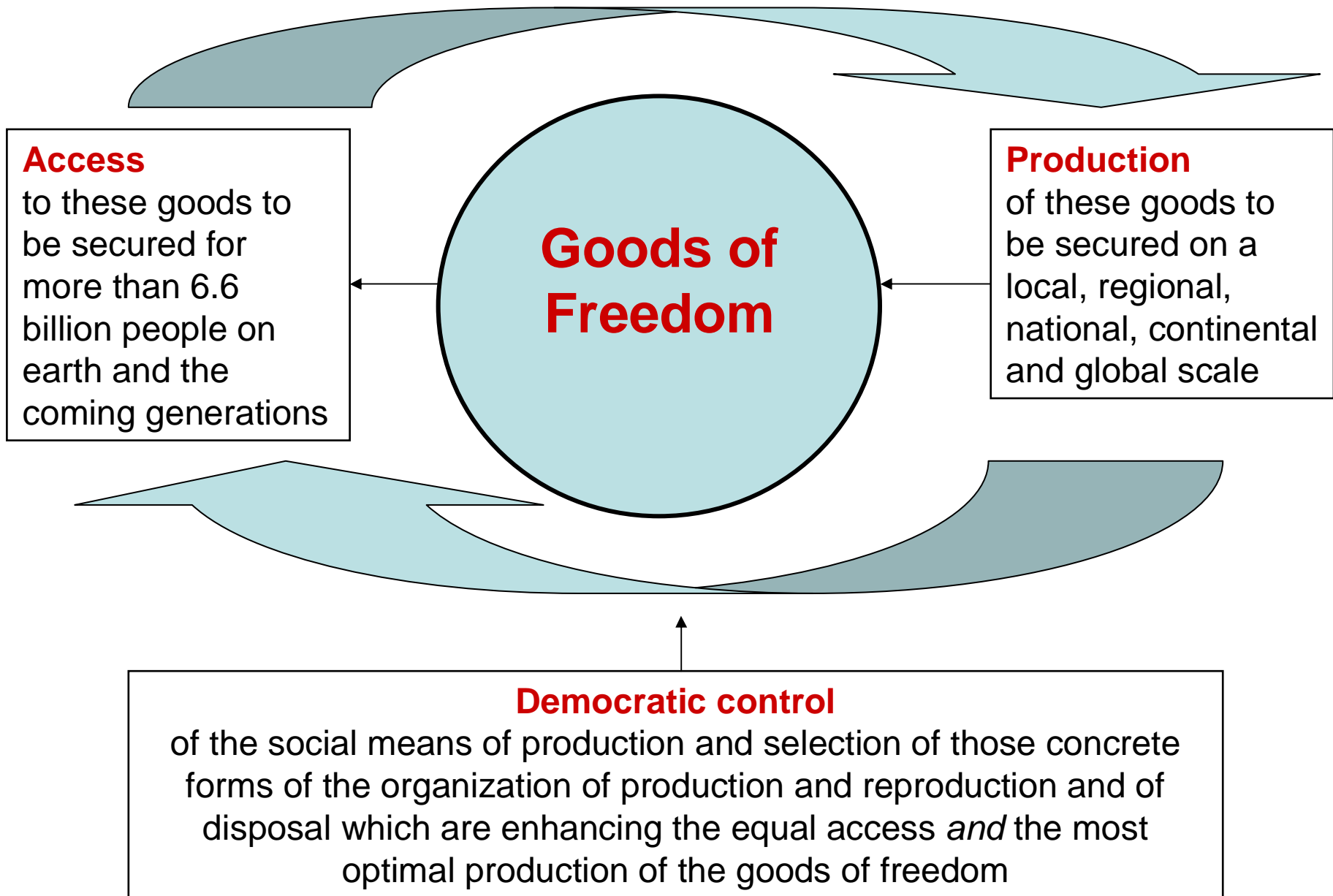
They need the free access to the most important **Goods of Freedom** :

- Goods for the basic needs and services (food, housing, education, health...)
- Democracy
- Good work and social security
- Clean Environment
- Peace and public security

Definition of socialist property

Socialist property rules in a society, if

- the individuals become the main subjects of the appropriation of the social wealth (goods of freedom) and
- commonly, in a solidary and democratic way control the social means of production accordingly
- the engine of modernity is redirected toward the new goals



Capitalist and socialist property in comparison

	Capitalism	Socialism
<i>Main goal</i>	Accumulation of capital	Free development of everybody
<i>Main contradiction between ...</i>	accumulation of capital and reproduction of (wo)men and nature	free development of everybody and the solidary development of all
<i>Main instrument</i>	Private control of the credit system and private enterprises	The democratic and participatory control of the Public and open public spaces and the public regulation of the economy

The concrete forms of disposal in accordance to the produced goods

High benefits of inclusion

Public goods

(information, knowledge, culture...) – their use increases and does not decrease the value of the product

Associated goods

(collective use of the means of production in enterprises) – their collective use is the basis for production, the asset owners should control it accordingly to their specific role

High costs of exclusion

Open pool resources

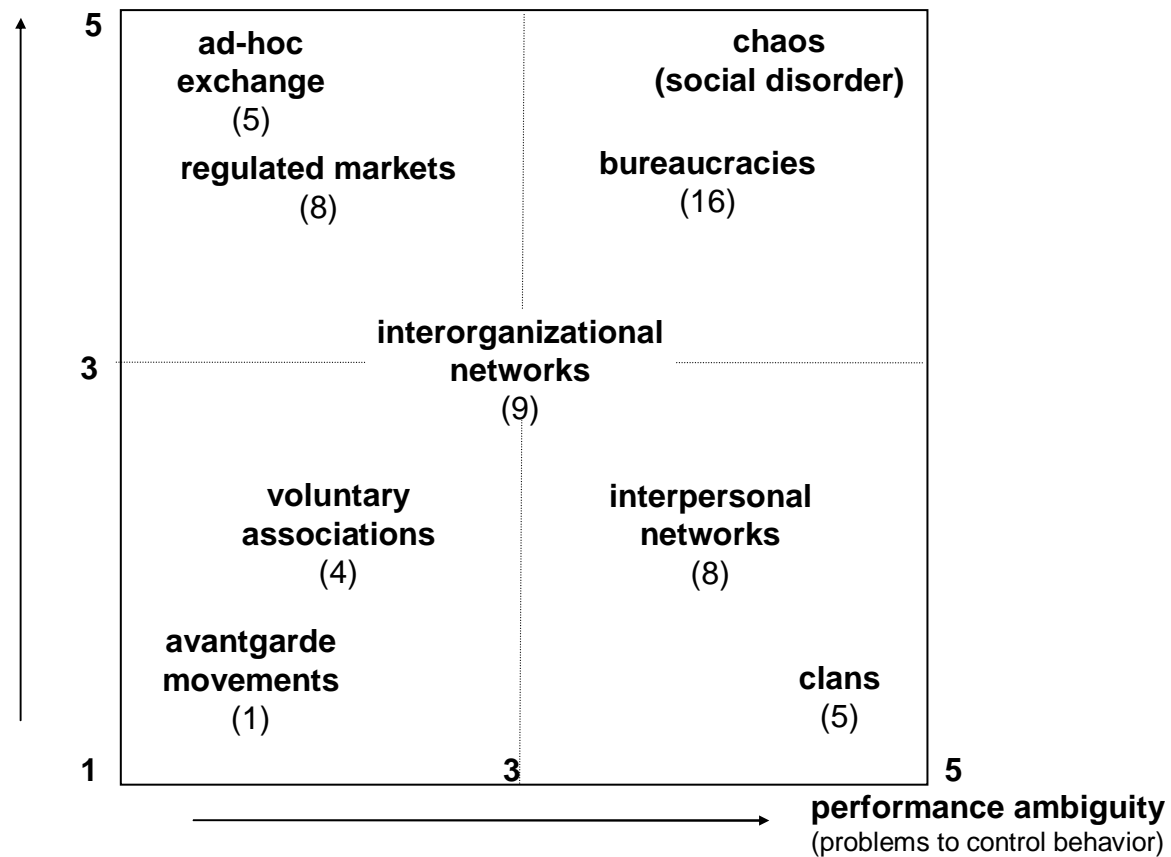
(social security systems...) – their use is costly, but a basic condition of life and security

Individual goods

personal belongings like flat, clothes ...) – their use decreases the value of the product and they are fundamental for a personal life in independence

The concrete forms of organisation in accordance to the tasks to be solved

goal incongruity
(problems to coordinate goals)



4. Some simple conclusion



Negatio est determinatio (Baruch Spinoza)

1. There is no single institution or form of property which is per se „socialist“ – socialism means a new logic of development (I – S – I') and should be based on a plurality of institutions and property forms.
2. The transformation toward socialism means overcoming the dominance of capital accumulation and achieving the dominance of a solidary development, overcoming the dominance of the production of goods and achieving the dominance of culture.
3. In this time of a hegemony crisis of neoliberalism the common vision of a New Radical Left may be summarized in the slogan: **Reclaim and Renew the Public!** – By far reaching democratization, public control, extension of public spaces, public services, public social security systems, public infrastructure, public steering of economic and ecological restructuring ...



"Another world is not only possible, she's on the way and, on a quiet day, if you listen very carefully you can hear her breathe." [Arundhati Roy](#), January 2003, WSF