# The Self-Organisation of the Information Society 2: Social Self-Organisation

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  Definition. Re-creative self-organisation, dialectic of agency and structure, reproductive and/or transformative social process, reconciliation of the feasible and the wishful, frictionless unity-through-diversity in humans

- A Specification Hierarchy of Social Self-Organisation

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# Social self-organisation. Critical Social Systems Theory (CSST)

- Definition

# Definition

Social self-organisation =def.
(1) re-creative self-organisation;
(2) dialectics of structure and agency;
(3) reproductive and/or transformative social process;
(4) reconciliation of the feasible and the wishful;
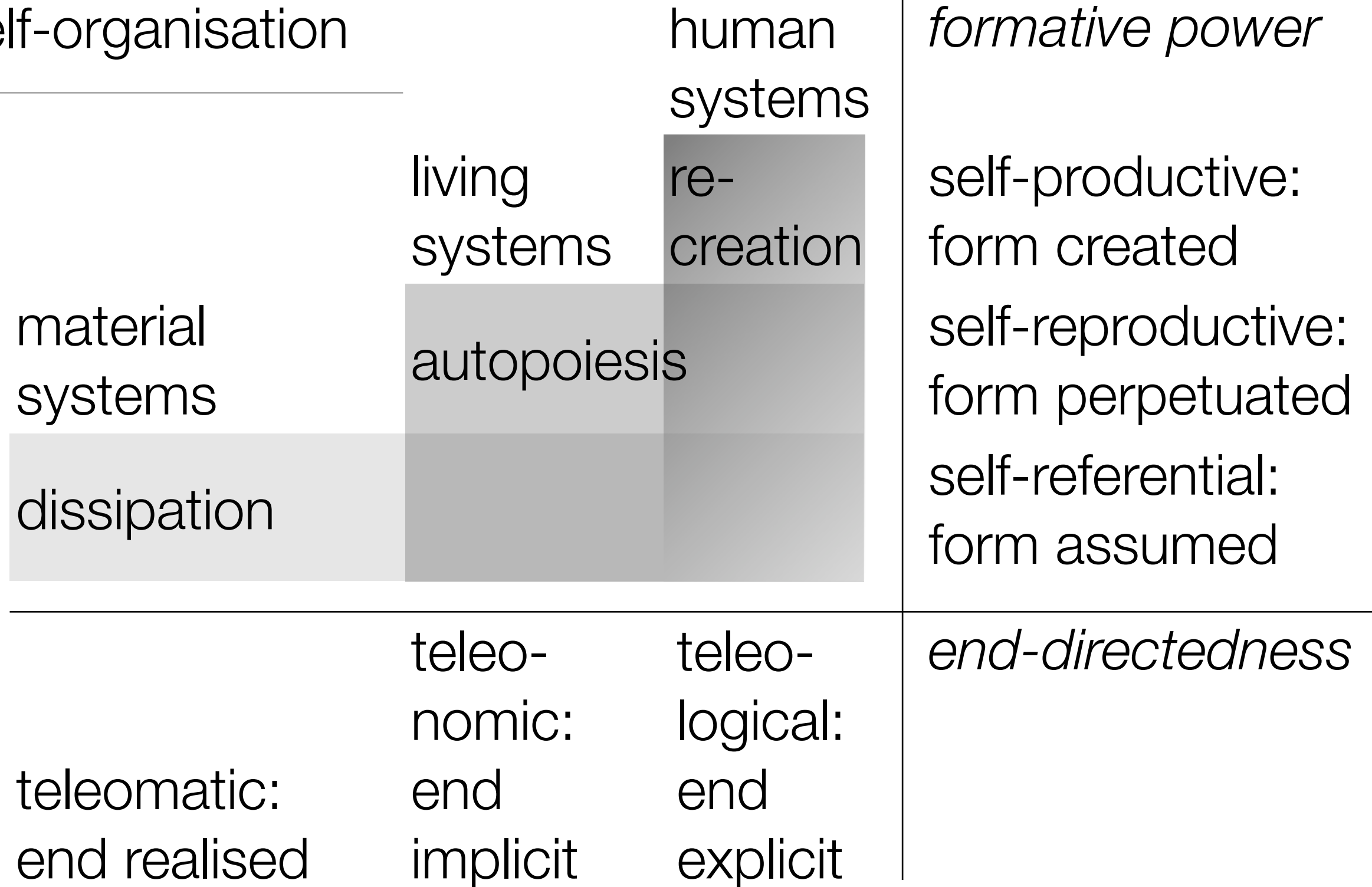(5) frictionless unity-through-diversity in humans.

# Re-creative self-organisation

- Social systems are but another kind of self-organising systems.

- Social systems = human systems.

- Human systems are living systems, living systems are material systems.

- The differentia specifica of self-organisation on the social/human level is, after Erich Jantsch, "re-creation": humans adapt to the natural environment by adapting the natural environment to themselves by which they create themselves again and again.

Re-creative self-organisation

| | | | *formative power* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | human systems | |
| | living systems | re-creation | self-productive: form created |
| material systems | autopoiesis | | self-reproductive: form perpetuated |
| dissipation | | | self-referential: form assumed |
| teleomatic: end realised | teleo-nomic: end implicit | teleo-logical: end explicit | *end-directedness* |

# Dialectic of agency and structure

- Social self-organisation works via an interplay of individuals and society.

- How to theorise the relation of individuals and society is the big question in social theory.

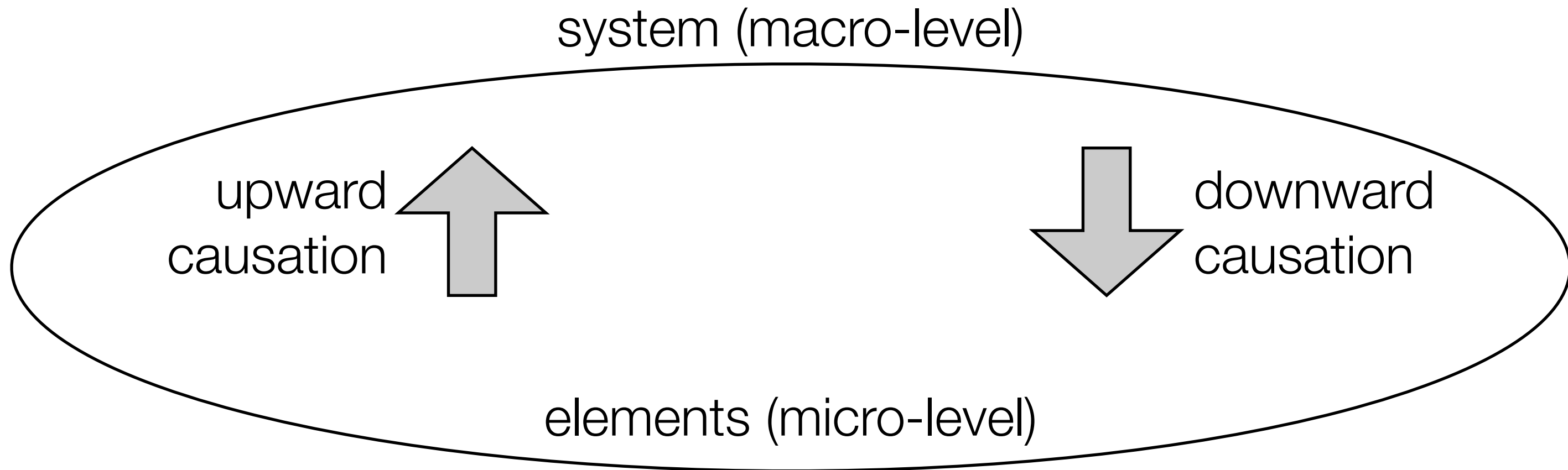# Dialectic of agency and structure

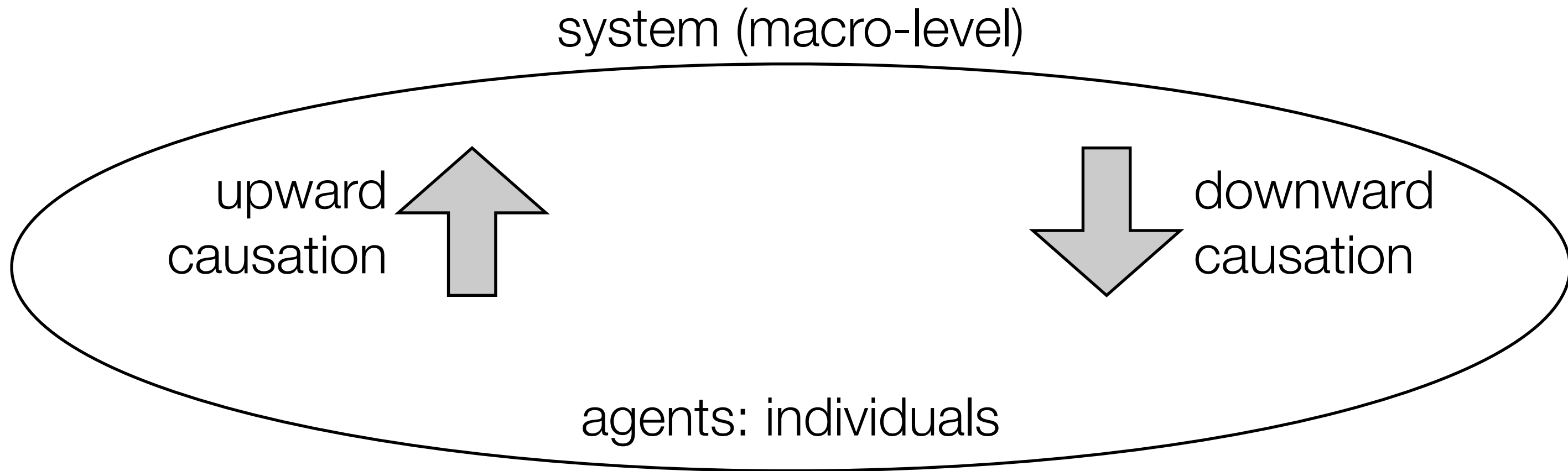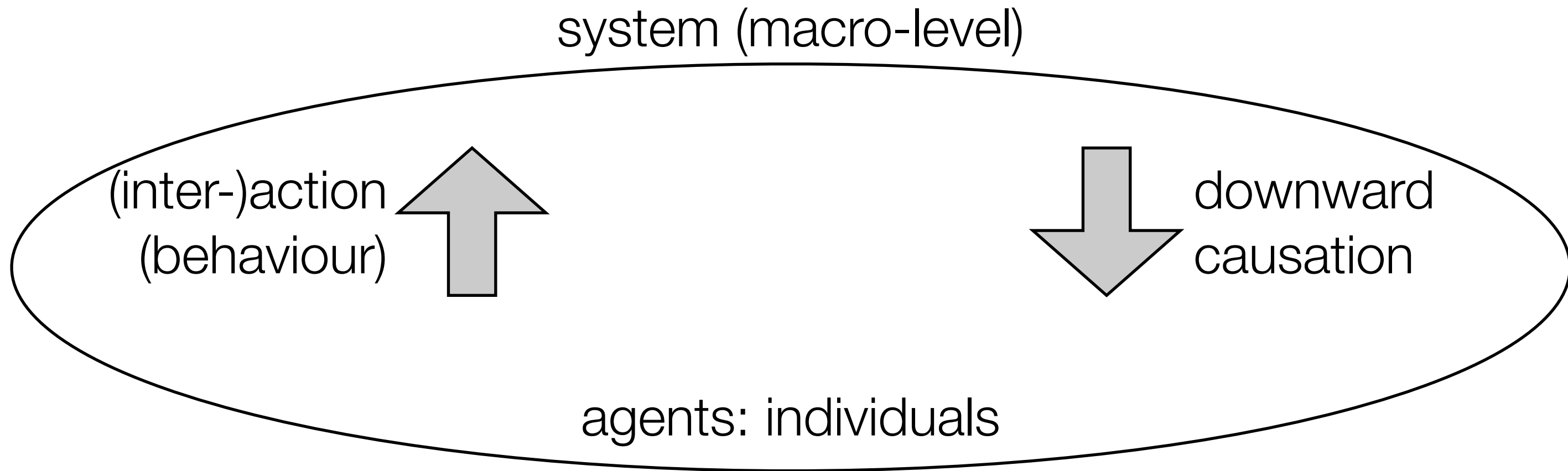| way of thinking | grand social theory type | how to relate … | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | … individuals … | … and society |
| **reductionism** | "individualism" (e.g., social action theory) | necessary and sufficient | resulting |
| **projectivism** | prevalence of society (e.g., structuralism, functionalism) | resulting | necessary and sufficient |
| **disjunctivism** | individual–society dualism (e.g. Luhmann's theory) | independent | |
| **integrativism** | individual–society dialectic | interdependent: society emerges from, and shapes, in turn, (the capacity of) individuals (to (inter-)act) | |

# Dialectic of agency and structure

system (macro-level)

upward causation

downward causation

elements (micro-level)

# Dialectic of agency and structure



system (macro-level)

upward causation

downward causation

agents: individuals

# Dialectic of agency and structure



system (macro-level)

(inter-)action
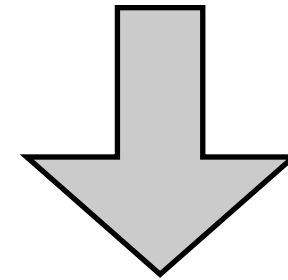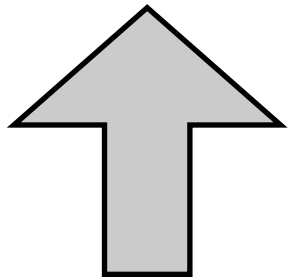(behaviour)

downward
causation

agents: individuals

# Dialectic of agency and structure

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action
(behaviour)
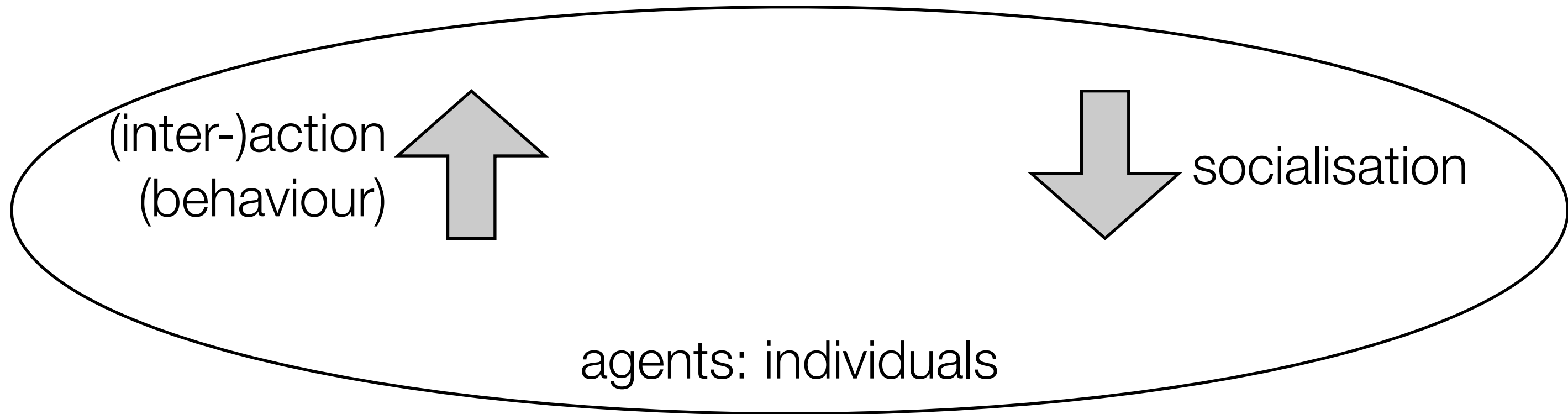
downward
causation

agents: individuals

# Dialectic of agency and structure

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action
(behaviour)

socialisation

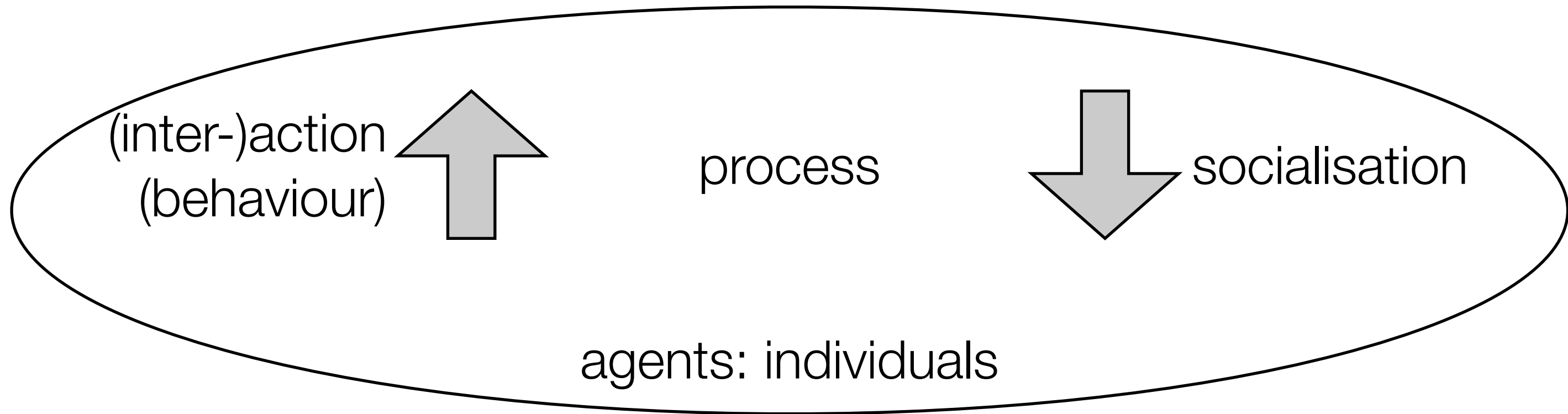agents: individuals

# Dialectic of agency and structure



structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action (behaviour)      process      socialisation

agents: individuals
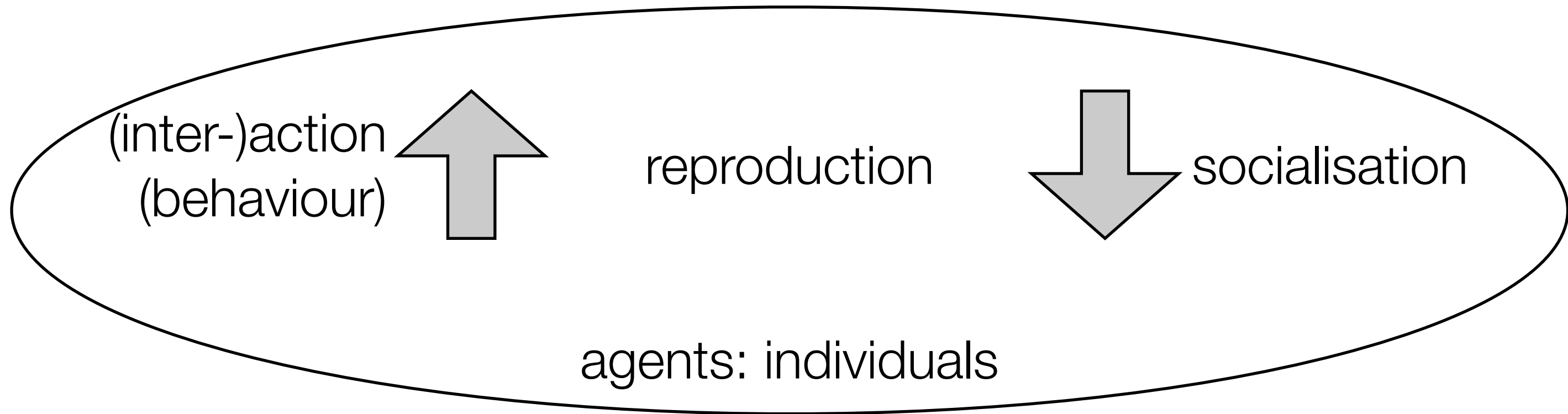
# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

- Less-than-strict determinism that holds, in self-organising systems, for both upward and downward causation allows social systems ample scope for social change.

- Agents need not only to reproduce the structure anew, but are also capable of producing a new structure by transformation processes.

# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

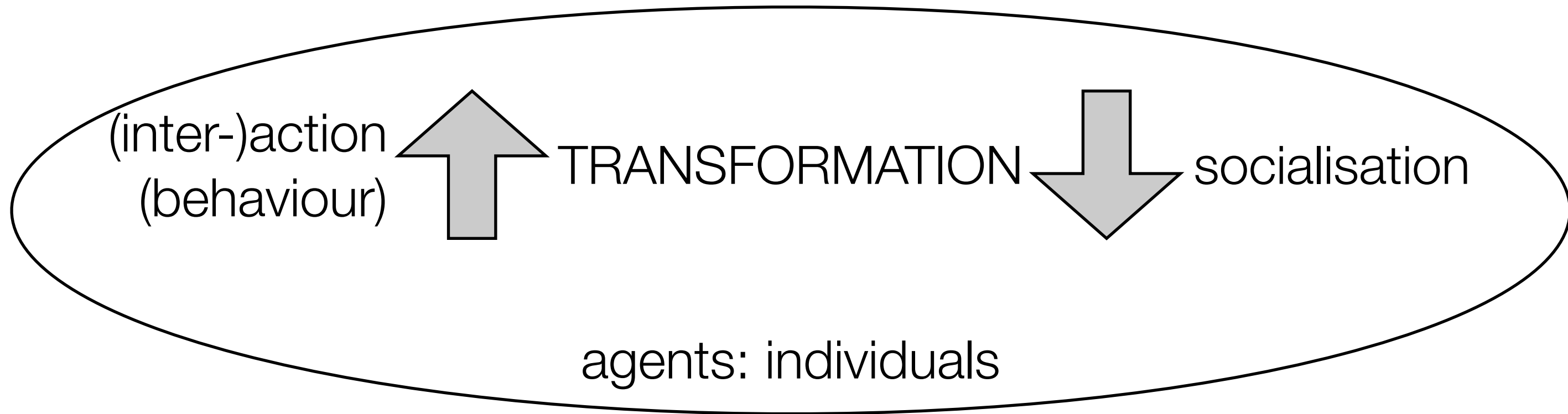(inter-)action (behaviour)    reproduction    socialisation

agents: individuals

# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action (behaviour) ⬆ TRANSFORMATION ⬇ socialisation

agents: individuals

# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action
(behaviour)  ⬆ TRANSFORMATION ⬇ socialisation

**agents: individuals**

# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action
(behaviour)    ⬆    TRANSFORMATION    ⬇    socialisation

**agents: individuals**

# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

*structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium*

(inter-)action
(behaviour) ⬆ TRANSFORMATION ⬇ socialisation

**agents: individuals**

# Reproductive and/or transformative social process

*structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium*

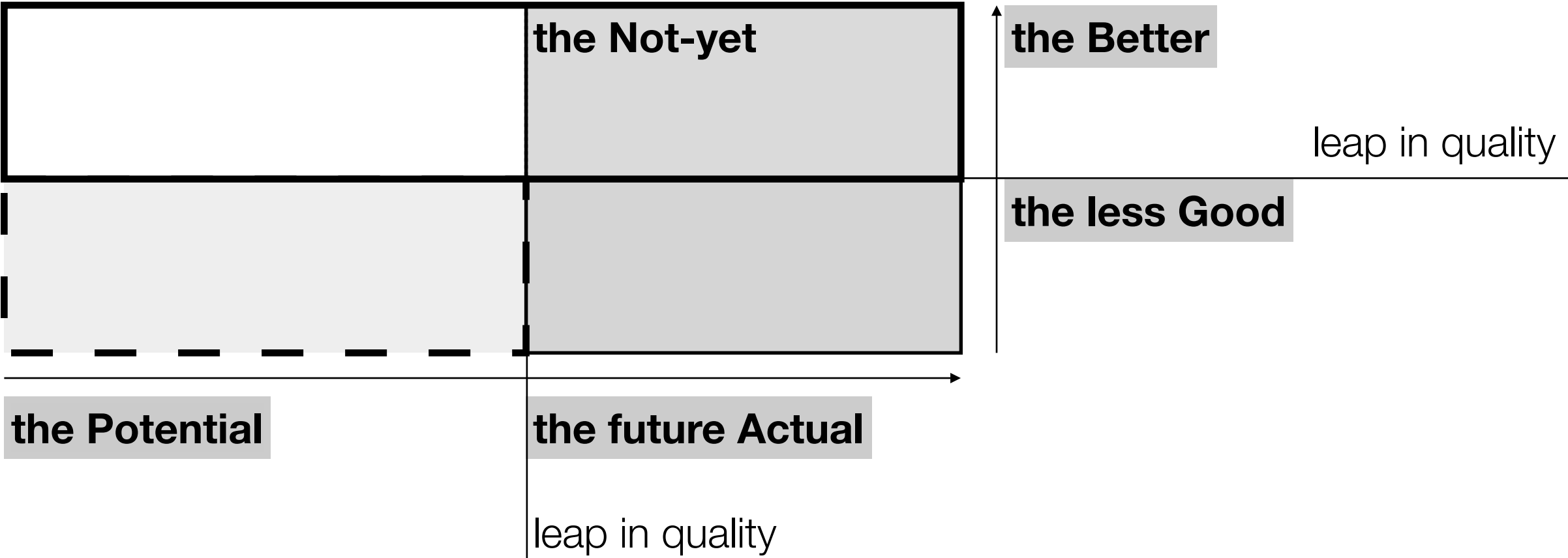(inter-)action (behaviour) **↑** TRANSFORMATION **↓** socialisation

**agents: individuals**

# Reconciling the feasible and the wishful

- Humans can take responsibility not only for identifying what is feasible but also for sorting out what is wishful.

- For the transformation that improves the social system, it needs both
  – an ascendence from the potential to the actual and
  – an ascendence from the less good to the better.

- After Ernst Bloch, the not-yet foreshadows a possible better future.

# Reconciling the feasible and the wishful



the Not-yet

the Better

leap in quality

the less Good

the Potential

the future Actual

leap in quality

# Frictionless unity-through-diversity in humans
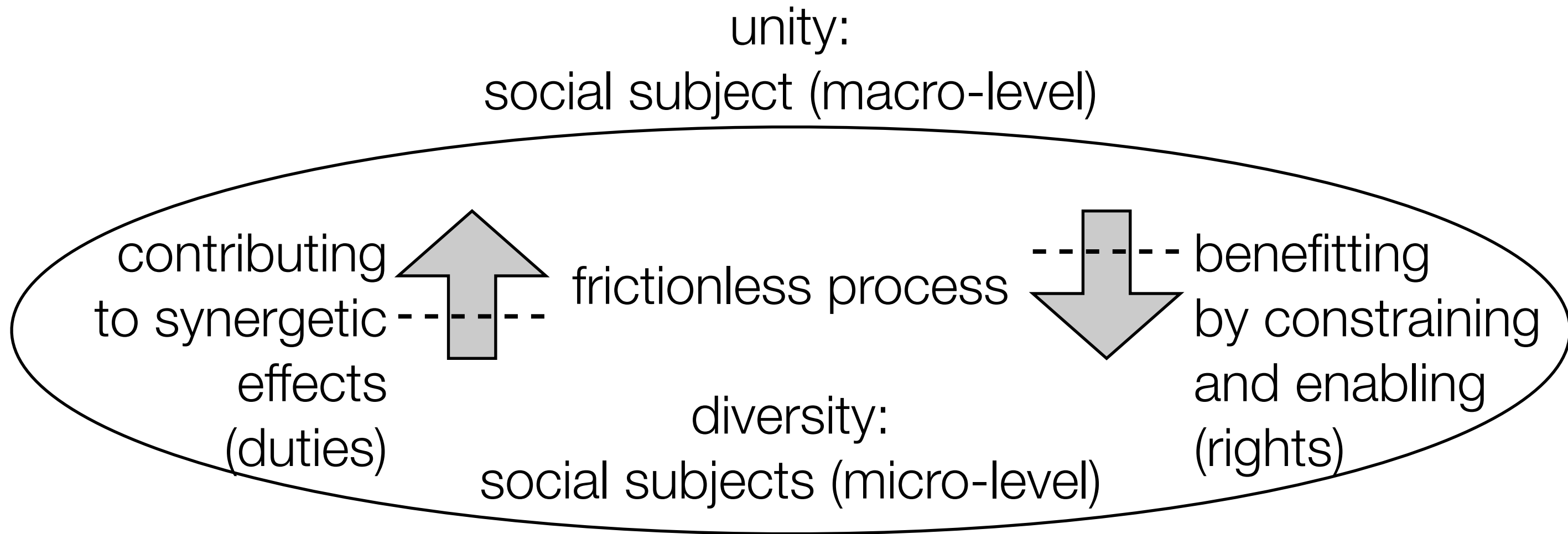
- "Self-organisation", applied to social systems, is not only a descriptive term but also a normative one:
  – Real social self-organisation corresponds to the ideal meaning of the term only to a certain extent. You can measure the extent to which the meaning is realised.
  – The ideal meaning of the term gives direction to possible realisations by transformations.

- Frictions characterise the suboptimal production/consumption of synergy.
  – Frictions appear, iff agents develop themselves at the cost of other agents.
  – Social relationships that condition the development of agents at the cost of other agents are called relationships of domination.

# Frictionless unity-through-diversity in humans

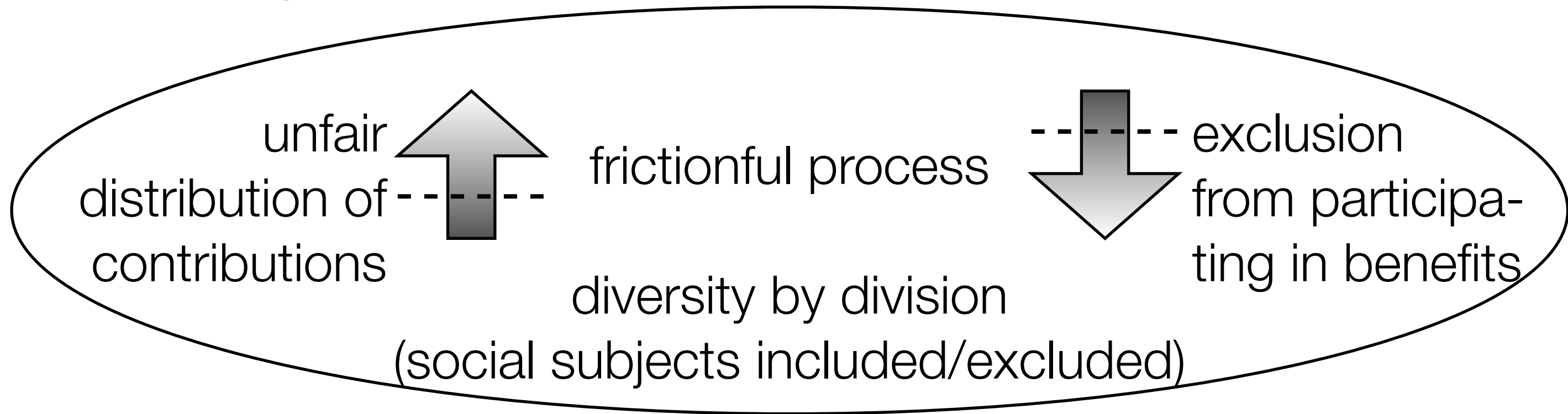unity:
social subject (macro-level)

contributing
to synergetic — — — — frictionless process — — — — benefitting
effects                                                      by constraining
(duties)                                                     and enabling
                                                             (rights)

diversity:
social subjects (micro-level)

# Frictionless unity-through-diversity in humans

# A specification hierarchy of social self-organisation

- Social systems, differentiated

- The architecture of the sociosphere (society in the broader sense)

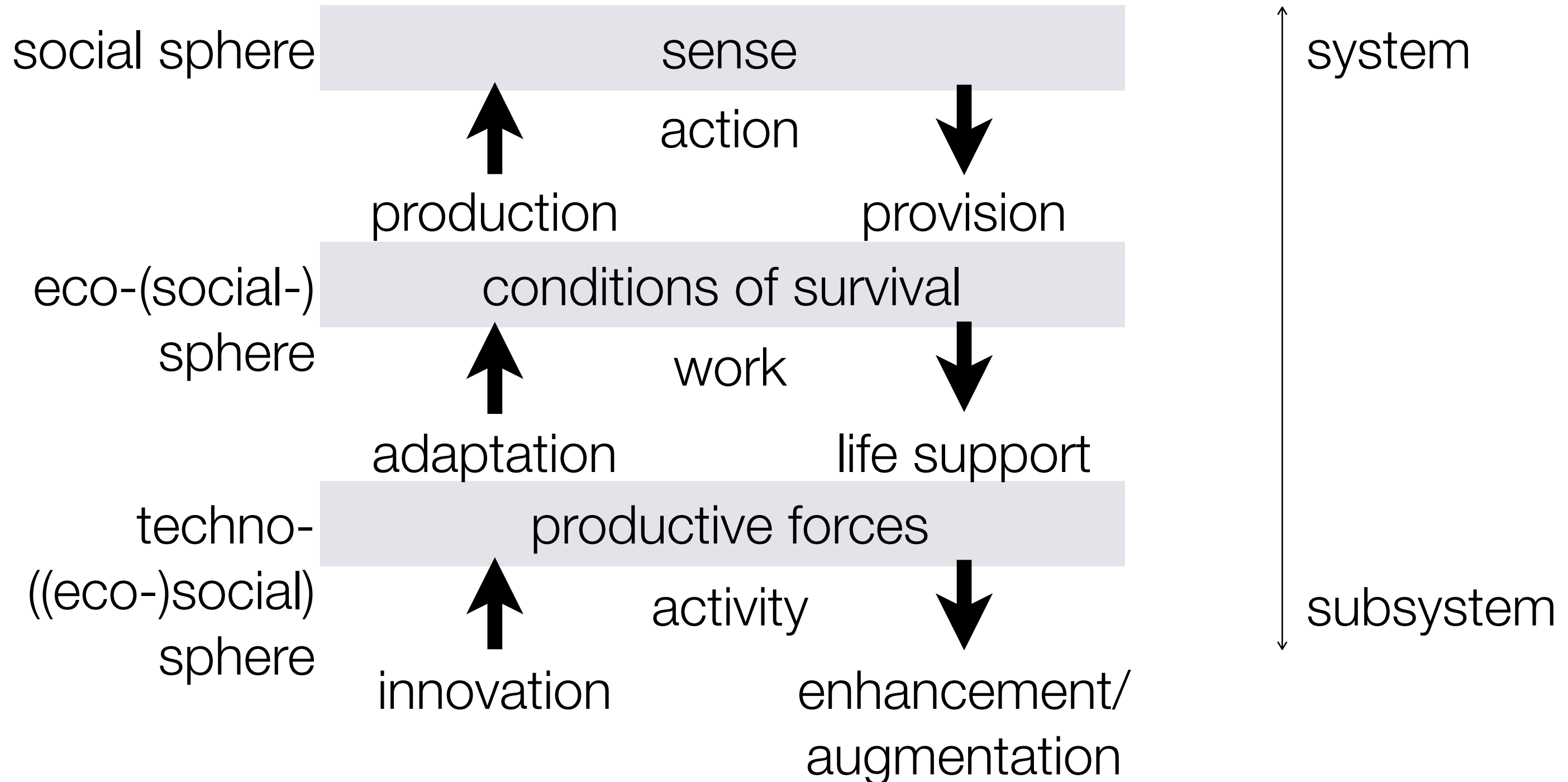- The architecture of the social sphere (society in the narrower sense)

# Social systems, differentiated

- Social systems are located in the so-called sociosphere (=def. space spanned by interactions of humans and nonhuman entities).

- The sociosphere (society in the broader sense) is made up of:
  – the social sphere (society in the narrower sense)
  – the ecosphere
  – the technosphere

- The social sphere (society in the narrower sense) is made up of:
  – the cultural sphere
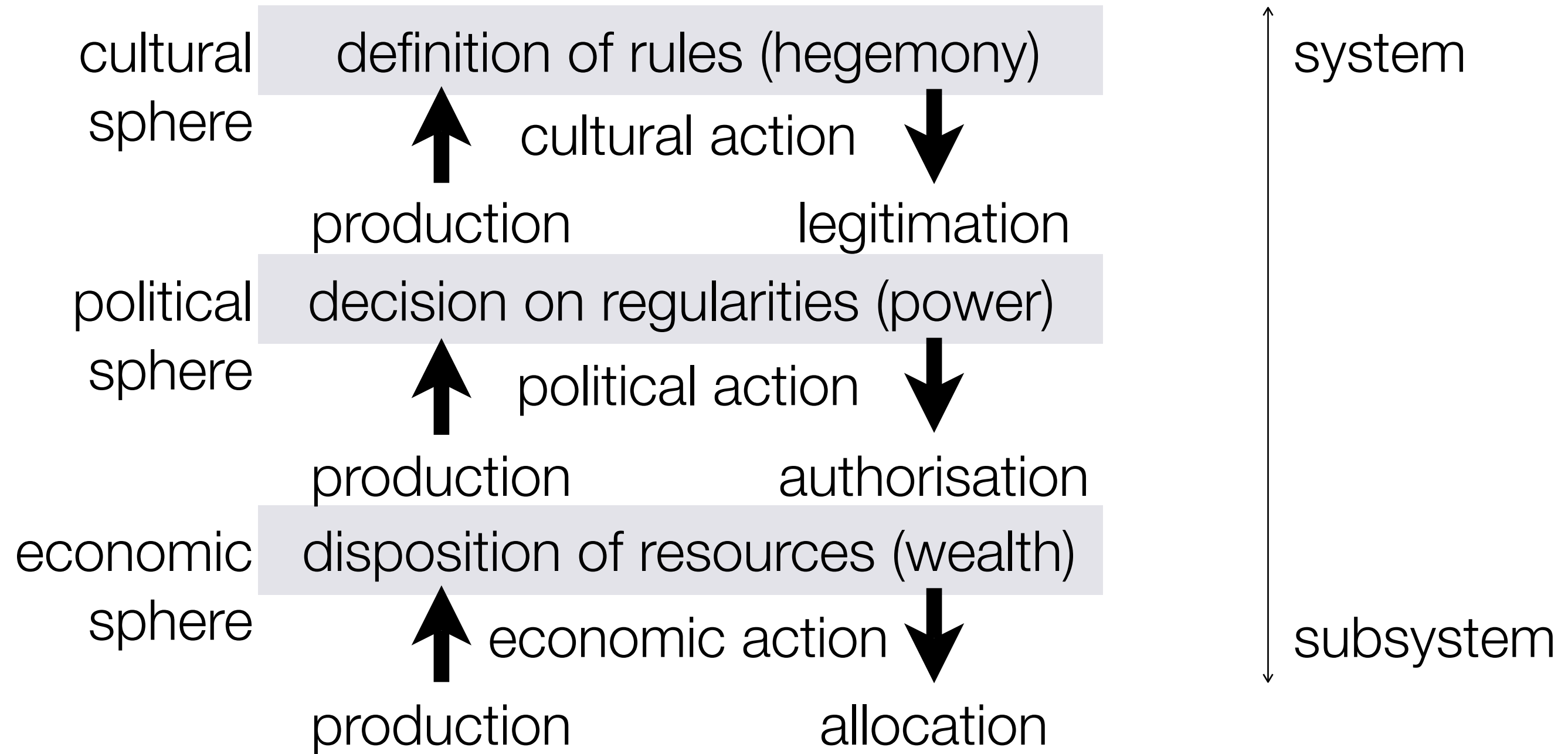  – the political sphere
  – the economic sphere

# The architecture of the sociosphere (society in the broader sense)



social sphere — **sense** — system

action

production — provision

eco-(social-) sphere — **conditions of survival**

work

adaptation — life support

techno-((eco-)social) sphere — **productive forces** — subsystem

activity

innovation — enhancement/ augmentation

# The architecture of the social sphere (society in the narrower sense)



cultural sphere — definition of rules (hegemony)

cultural action

production — legitimation

political sphere — decision on regularities (power)

political action

production — authorisation

economic sphere — disposition of resources (wealth)

economic action

production — allocation

system

subsystem

# Techno-social self-organisation

- Definition

- Being a subsystem

- Being social

# Definition

Techno-social self-organisation =def. social self-organisation that includes/is mediated by technology.

Technology =def. instrument to reach a goal:
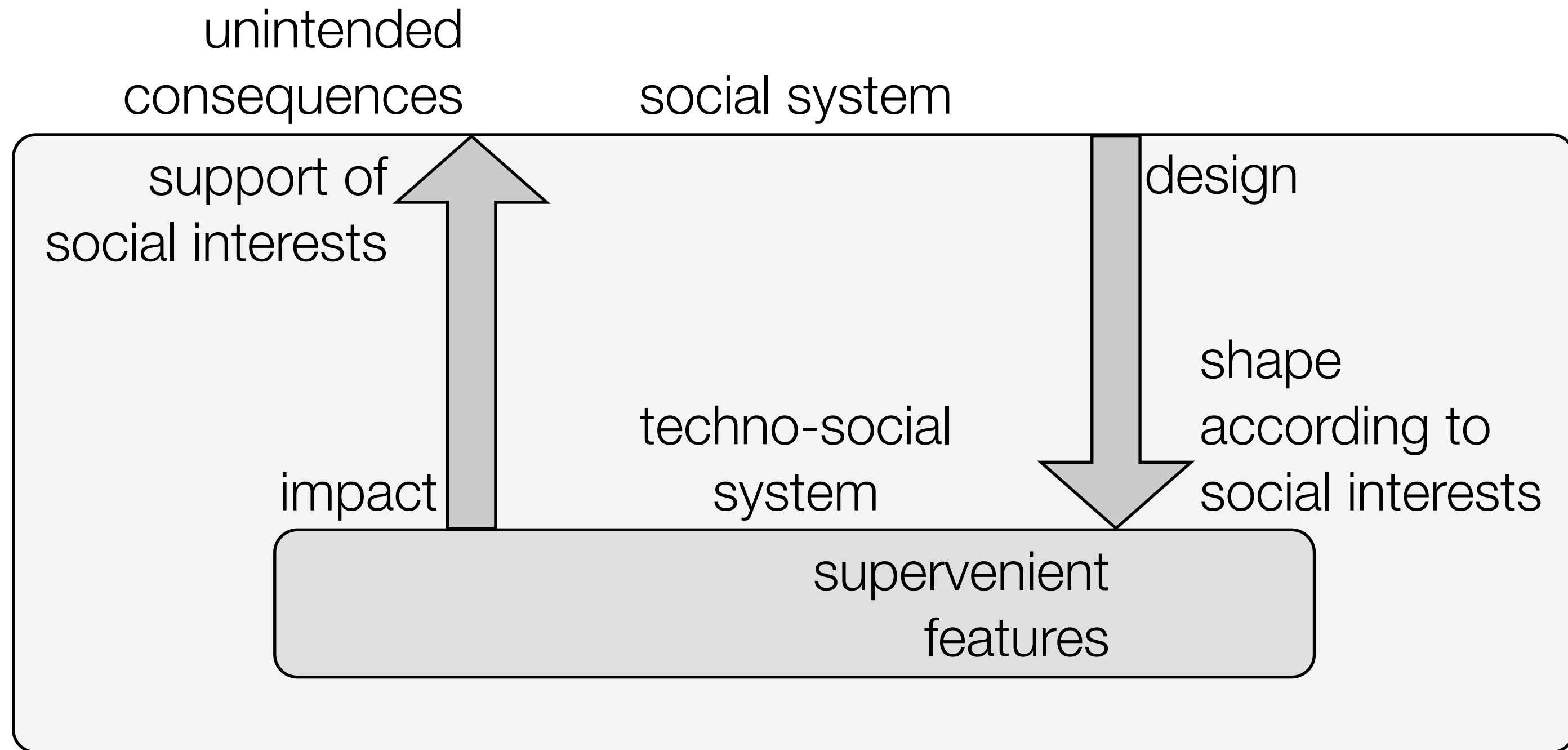– ideational method,
– realised procedure,
– reified tools.

# Being a subsystem

- A techno-social system is a subsystem of another social system.

- There is a dialectic of mutual shaping between the system and the subsystem.
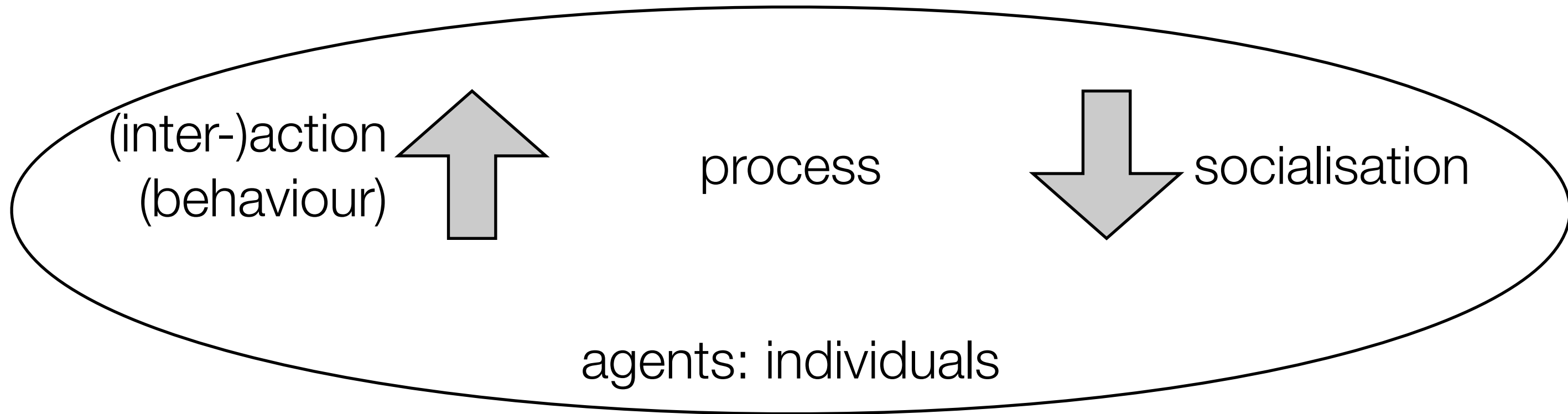
# Being a subsystem

# Being social

- A techno-social system is but another social system by its nature.

- It includes besides technology as structure – as ideational, realised or reified social relationship – humans as agents – as producers and users of technology.
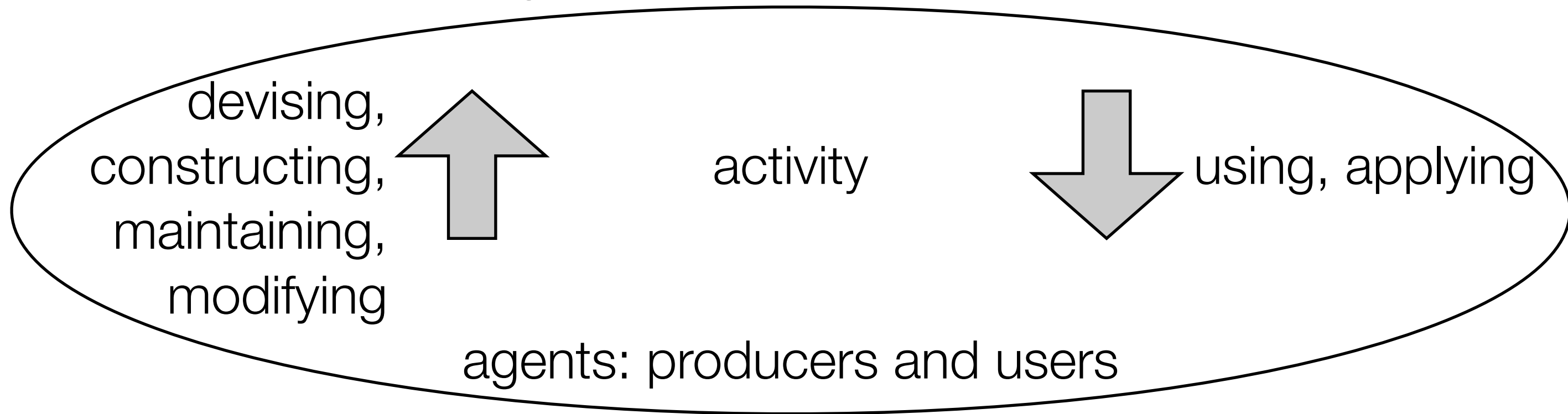
# Being social

structure (soci(et)al relationships): outcome and medium

(inter-)action (behaviour) ⬆ process ⬇ socialisation

agents: individuals

# Being social

structure (soci(et)al relationships):
technological methods, procedures, tools

devising,
constructing,
maintaining,
modifying

activity

using, applying

agents: producers and users

# Readings

- About social self-organisation:
  (2009) Autopoiesis and Critical Social Systems Theory. In: Magalhães, R., Sanchez, R. (eds.), Autopoiesis in Organization Theory and Practice, Emerald, Bingley, 111–129 [co-author Fuchs, C.]
  link: http://books.google.com

- About the specification hierarchy of social self-organisation:
  (2005) The Dialectic of Bottom-up and Top-down Emergence in Social Systems. In: tripleC 3/2, 28-50 [co-author Fuchs, C.]
  link: www.icts.sbg.ac.at

- About techno-social self-organisation:
  (2007) A Critical Social Systems View of the Internet. In: Philosophy of the Social Sciences, Vol. 37, No. 4, Dec., 471-500
  link: www.icts.sbg.ac.at

¡Muchas gracias por vuestra atención!