„Community" – Where to from here?
From „Networked individualism" towards „Community networks"

RC 51 „Modernity 2.0"
Urbino, 29.6.-5.7.2009

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Contents

1 Community-building between eutopianism and distopianism

- *Object-level research question:*
  What is the impact of „Social Networking" tools on community-building?

  Object-level hypothesis:
  ICT-mediation makes human relations thinner rather than thicker; the potential for community-building is undermined rather than supported. (Willson 2006)

- *Meta-level research question:*
  How does a system theoretical approach frame the object-level research question?

  Meta-level hypothesis:
  A system theoretical approach does justice to the ambiguity of the ICTs-and-Society relationship as to
  - what is the driver in this relationship;
  - which is the nature of the respective impact (positive/negative)

1 Community-building between eutopianism and distopianism

	membership	communication
„traditional communities"	no choice	face-to-face
„modern communities"	choice	traversing geo-graphical space
„postmodern communities"	extended choice	computer-mediated

after Willson 2006

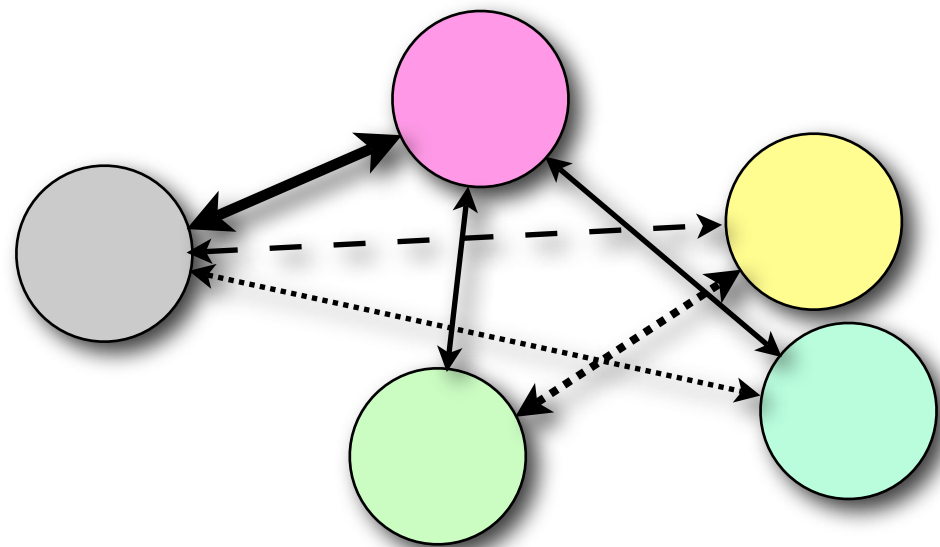# 1 Community-building between eutopianism and distopianism

	eutopianism	distopianism
techno-determinism	networked individualism	fragmentation
social constructivism	virtual communities	instrumental rationality

1 Community-building between eutopianism and distopianism

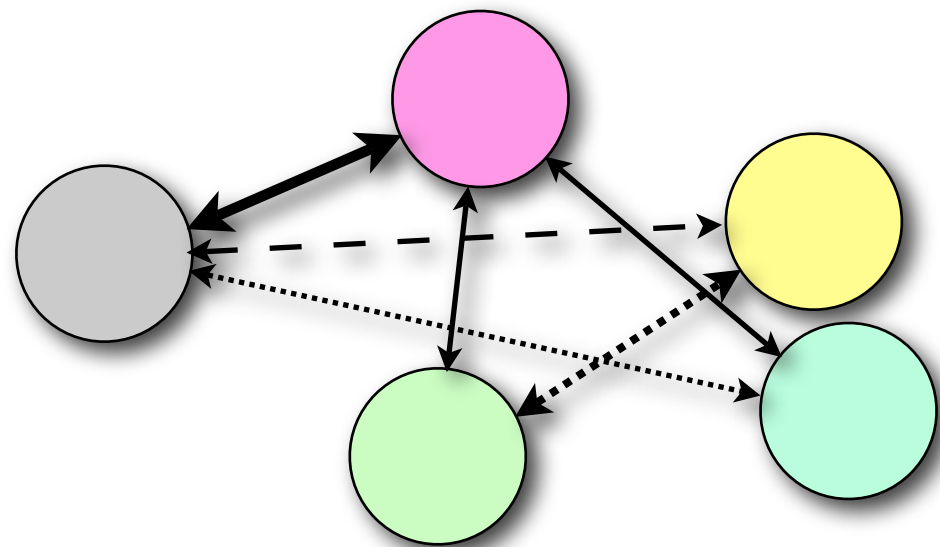|	eutopianism	distopianism	pro-active vision
techno-determinism	networked individualism	fragmentation	-
social constructivism	virtual communities	instrumental rationality	-
integrative view	-	-	„communities of action"

2 (Re-)Constructing a critical social systems view of community-building

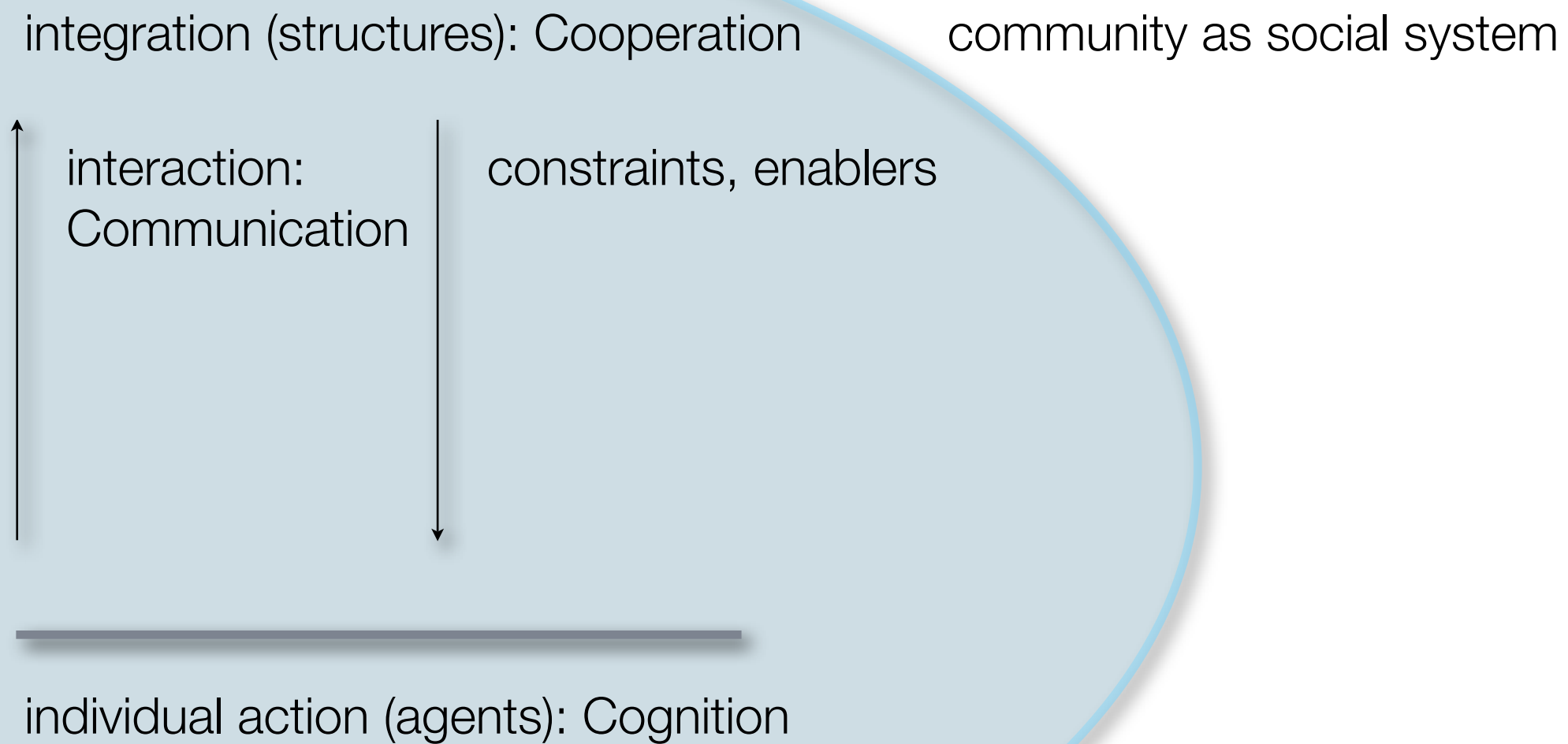# 2.1 Locating „community" in the triple-C model

individual action (agents)

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individual action (agents)

2.1 Locating „community" in the triple-C model

integration (structures): Cooperation   community as social system

interaction: constraints, enablers
Communication

individual action (agents): Cognition

2.1 Locating „community" in the triple-C model

structures: „Social Web"   virtual community as technosocial system

interaction:
devising,
constructing

constraints, enablers:
using

action: „Produsing"

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2.2 Empirical findings

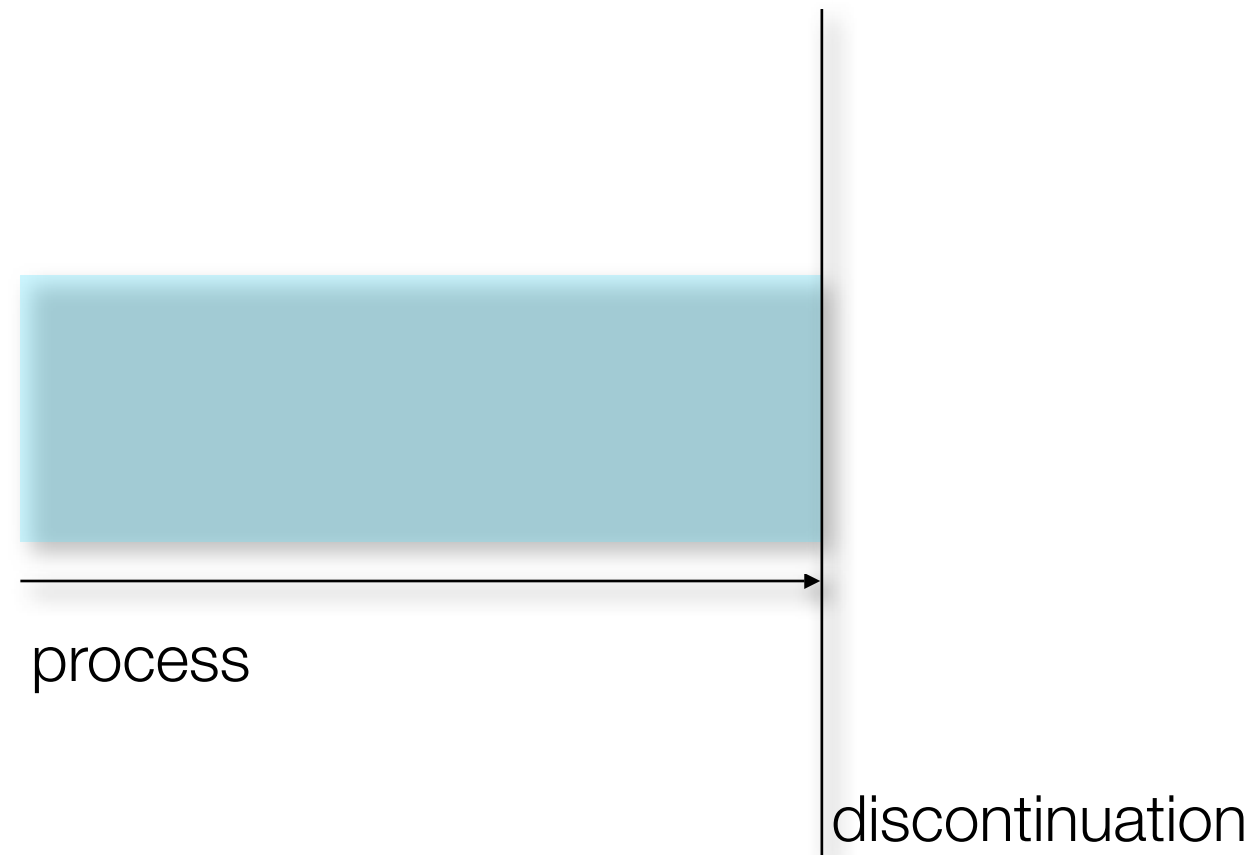|		
cognitive function	information management	Matthew principle as wisdom of the crowds?
communicative function	identity management	self-marketing in the attention economy?
cooperative function	relationship management	individual freedom instead of radical relationships?

after Schmidt 2008
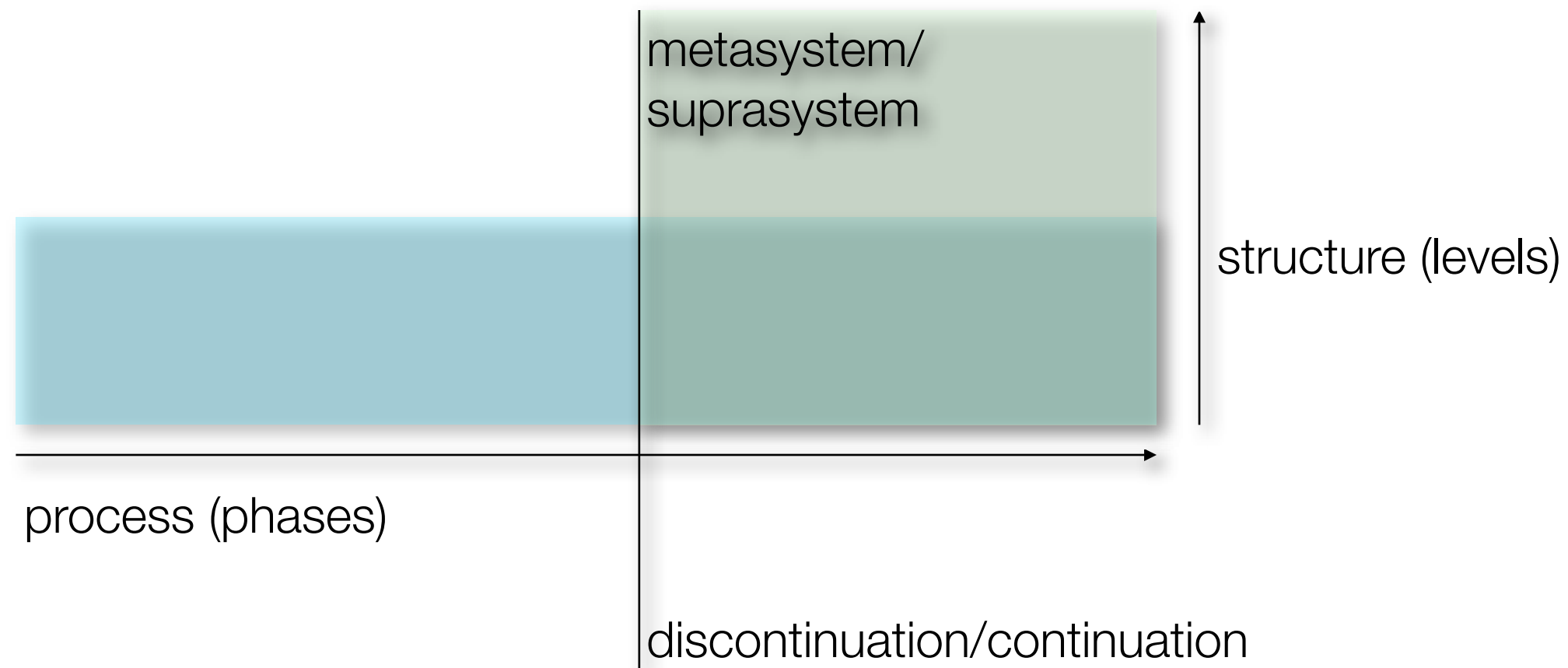
2.2 Empirical findings

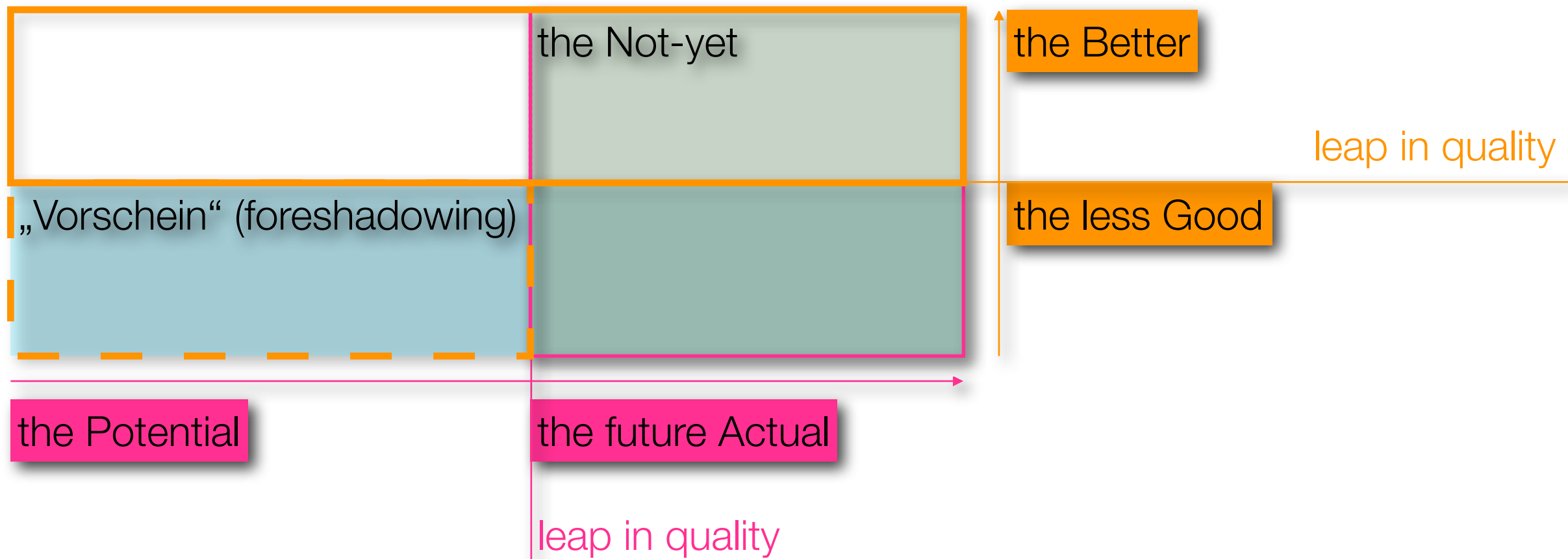|	
techno-determinism	community technology shapes social networks/social capital
social constructivism	social networks/social capital shape community technology
integrative view	social networks/social capital and community technology shape each other

after Williams/Durrance 2008

2.3 „Communities of action" as Bloch's Not-yet

process

discontinuation

2.3 „Communities of action" as Bloch's Not-yet

metasystem/
suprasystem

structure (levels)

process (phases)

discontinuation/continuation

2.3 „Communities of action" as Bloch's Not-yet

2.3 „Communities of action" as Bloch's Not-yet

		Collective Intelligence (Wikis)	co-operative function
	online communities (Social Software, FOSS, OA)	eParticipation (group blogs)	communicative function
hypertext individuals	folksonomy (social bookmarking, podcasting, RSS)	socio-semantics	cognitive function
„Web 1.0": Tools for Thought (J.C.R. Licklider)	„Web 2.0": Medium of communication	„Web 3.0"?: Technologies for Co-operation (H. Rheingold)	

2.3 „Communities of action" as Bloch's Not-yet

Conclusion:

A system theoretical approach as described here frames

- ICTs („Social Web") as component of a technosocial system that comprises humans and is, in turn, a subsystem of society;
- ICTs („Social Web") and society as mutually shaping;
- ICTs („Social Web") as providing a potential for true community-building shining forth as glimpses of a better future and society as providing impeding conditions for the actualisation of this potential which are, in principle, removable

Willson's (2006) argument, for example, suits a framework like this in that

- a community is an entity with emergent properties that might or might not be mediated by technology;
- „postmodern communities" constitute a dominating overlay over historically predecessing forms;
- not only current forms of ICT contribute to thinning out relationships but also the current use of ICTs is socially motivated;
- the overall objective is to contribute to strengthening „radical relationships" instead of instrumental ones

Thanks!

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www.triple-c.at
www.bertalanffy.org

www.icts-and-society.net (The ICTs and Society Network)

http://ir10.aoir.org/?page_id=166 (Critical Internet Theory workshop)