The Rise of the Network Society

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WP 24/2003

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An outline of the dissertation *Coexistence Without Common Sense*

Contents

This paper provides an outline of my dissertation with the title *Coexistence Without Common Sense, Akademisk Forlag,* Copenhagen 2002. I will strive to keep it as brief and simple as possible.

I. Background: the existing sociality

The modern ambiguities. The background for the dissertation has been a number of ambiguities that we all experience and that we inevitably have to relate to today. These are rather specific ambiguities of the existing social condition which, therefore, seems to point in distinct, clearly separated, and rather different directions. I will only be able to stress a few of all the ambiguities included in the dissertation. But an important general and very brief introduction to all these ambiguities could be the following:

On one hand we often claim that we no longer share a set of shared societal values: that society in a number of ways seems to tend towards a loss of coherence and towards general dissolution; that everything appears to disintegrate, become insubstantial, intangible and difficult to perceive of to such an extent that we struggle to find our own footing and to comprehend even our own standpoint. In short, the world becomes unsurveyable and boundless. On the other hand, however, we can also experience that we are closely connected to each other and so closely interwoven that it almost seems difficult to breathe and act: that we almost suffocate.

On a more personal level, I can perceive myself as a modern individual who forms the centre of my own world and feels no obligation to answer to authorities outside myself that I do not recognize. I am a free, sovereign, and self-ruling person. At the same time I constantly experience that decisions are made for me. My point of departure is autonomy, the fact that I am a self-legislating person who passes judgment over my surroundings. But at the same time I experience the fact that something outside me has legislative power over me. I fall victim of heteronomy and powerlessness.

Why is that? Is it a mere result of an ambiguous and complex world? This might suffice as an answer. However, my feeling is that the accentuated contradiction which we experience between these elements are specific and that they represent something which characterizes us today. We seem to vacillate between radically different, but not arbitrary, specific possibilities.

The existing social bond. The ambiguities we experience have to do with the nature of that which ties us together today, with the nature of the existing social bond. There is no community or "Gemeinschaft" on which we can rely. No unifying and localizable agreement forms the basis of our general interaction. We are not able to point out a shared point in which we all become unified, a specific foundation on which we may build society.


Community; common sense

Instead, we seem to be unified by coherence or affinity in certain respects. The social bond that unifies us is woven of a number of different threads; and each of these threads functions as our creation, as constructions that we can pick up and remodel at our own convenience. They are temporary and insubstantial.

We cannot, however, pick up all of them at the same time. In their connectedness, the threads are unavoidable. We cannot obtain a comprehensive view of them or confront them *en bloc.* The existing social bond, therefore, assumes the general and unavoidable characteristic of the network. It takes the form of a network within which we exist and act.

This is part of the reason for my choice of the title *Coexistence Without Common Sense*: as a way to emphasize the existence of social relations or social exchange which do not rest upon or presuppose a specific common sense or reason. For that very reason social reality seems oddly intangible.

We do not have a shared space. What we do have is a sociality that we are entangled in and relate to but without necessarily knowing it in its entirety. This social bond ties us together by affecting the way we relate to things: the way we relate to each other – and to ourselves.
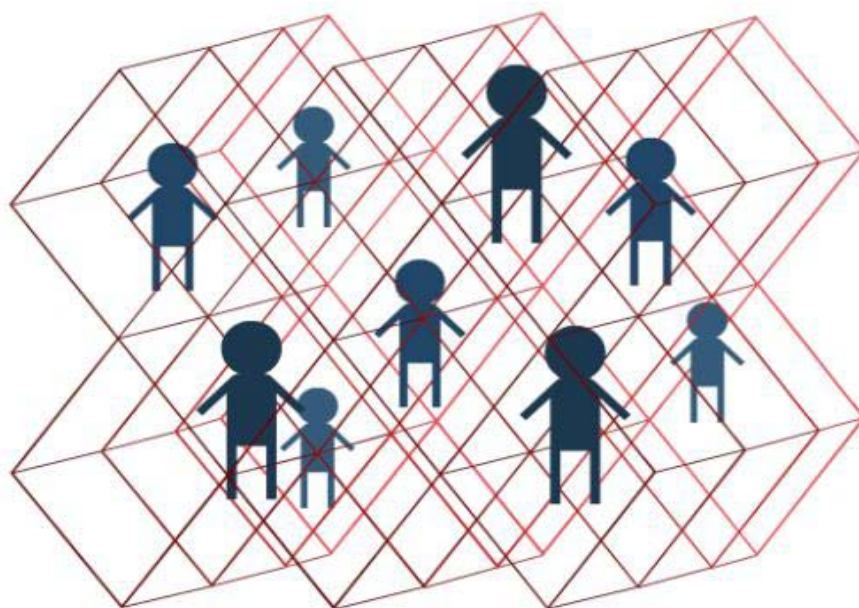
Network; sociality

In spite of its insubstantiality and intangibility the social bond can seem invulnerable and enduring. We experience ourselves as being bound together into a manifold intertwinedness of which we always already are a part, out of which we cannot extricate

ourselves, from which we cannot withdraw, even though we may desire to do so, and which has a determining effect on our actions and their consequences. We experience ourselves as participants in, and as subsisting in, an intangible yet unyielding fellowship of common destiny that we do not seem to be able to control; a fellowship that we can neither fathom nor escape. Today's Leviathan, our eternal worldly social idol, our immortal worldly God, binds us all – even its opponents – with fibres of the kind that the Nordic demigods, the Aser, once spun to bind the brother of Hel, the Fenris Wolf – that shadowy threat to the societies of men and gods. Yet it is a thread of subtle tensile properties, spun out of the sound of the footfall of the cat, of women's beards and of the roots of the mountain. In spite of the fact that community in the traditional sense of the word, formulated in terms of a fundamental agreement on certain basic intrinsic values, cannot be supposed, we do – as a matter of fact – experience a society in the shape of a tight-knit sociality into which all of us are inescapably interwoven.

The level of prescription. Initially, I do not pretend to present an exhaustive description of the way we actually relate to these issues today. Rather, the study of the social bond is a study of our normativity: of the measures that tie us together by affecting social actions and social events.

Thus, the dissertation represents, in my opinion, not a topical sociological analysis but a philosophical investigation. The investigation is concerned with the level of *prescription*. I study the guidelines for the way that we, together with the surrounding world, direct ways for us and our world to come into being, emerge and leave our traces. I focus on the normativity which is generated through our collaboration and which prescribes ways in which we conduct ourselves.

Accordingly, one could claim that the pretensions are more limited than in a traditional sociological or historical social study. I am not concerned with reality and never seek an exhaustive description of our actual conduct – of what we actually do and of what actually happens.

However, on a different level, the pretensions could be said to be higher since this level of prescription not only affects and determines our reality; it also affects and determines what we are able to perceive at all, what we are able to imagine – what is plausible and what can become real and come into being in a very broad sense.

I am concerned not with reality but with the level of prescription. But the level of prescription takes precedence over actuality; it is more important than reality; and it is more essential than being. I am concerned with a prescription that has always already had its effect before all this becomes a reality. That does not mean that all this is not essential. Neither in general, nor to my own study. All this is precisely what I am concerned with and try to relate to in the dissertation.

II. Access. The historical investigation

To point out that the existing social bond, the bond that ties us together, has the characteristics of the network, is to say very little. It merely provides a formal characterization. When attempting to provide a more specific description of this bond and further define it, one has to explicate some of the different central threads that form part of and constitute it. I have done this in each of the four main parts of the dissertation: "Justice and its decisions", "Law and its partition", "Discipline and its surveillance" and "Governmentality and its economy".

Each of these four main parts sheds light on a central element of the existing social bond and its characteristics through an historical investigation of their genealogy: an investigation of how they have emerged historically and have obtained the characteristics that seem to stick to them today. It is a history of articulation, differentiation and purification: a history of how different considerations in social conduct which used to be implicitly understood have been unfolded, purified and brought to perfection (Naturally, these considerations can only be accounted for in retrospect.)

Justice and Law. Throughout most of our history the justice has been the arrangement through which we have believed to find the foundation or basis for social exchange from the early Greek and Germanic courts at the beginning of historical time until modern constitutionalism expressed in a number of constitution proposals shortly after the French Revolution, in the French Code Civil (1804) and in the American Constitution. In Denmark, codification appears already during the absolute monarchy in the Danish Act of Succession (1665) and the Danish Law of King Christian V; and after the revolution of 1848 in the new constitution.

Part I and II of my dissertation, "Justice and its decisions" and "Law and its partition", both treat the court as radical social practices, but in completely different forms. I will briefly outline the contents of these sections of the dissertation by means of a number of central key words.

Part I. Common accusative justice and customary law. The legal practice that we might call common accusative justice is part of a sociality characterized by rivalry. It is activated when someone feels that they are not given a fair deal, believes to have been humiliated, or when disputes become unmanageable. In these instances, one can step forward publicly and insist on one's rights, and hence a legal controversy and litigation begins.

Thus accusative justice is conflictual justice but it is also ritual justice in that the process follows a set of ritually established guidelines. It is a legal trial of strength which can be settled by means of different legal tests, for example whether or not one party is willing to take an oath, or whether he can find twenty good men to back him up. This can be exemplified with an episode from *The Iliad*. Menelaos has accused Antilochos of having wrongfully won a race, a competition, by reckless driving: of having won on an irregular basis; and thus he asks him to take an oath. The purpose is to induce a decision, a conviction, in the particular case.

Accusative justice was also based on customary law. This law presupposed and appealed to a preceding agreement in individual settlements. They found their place within this universe. The old Danish world *lagh*, for example – a word that both *lov* (Danish for law) and *law* derive from – was originally in the plural and signified the already defined and established issues: the already established, that which has been laid down in the right way. Accordingly, law pertained to well-established facts. However, law per se was implicit or presupposed. The law in general was never formulated in words or presented as such. Law was only present in the sentences pronounced, in the decisions of single cases.
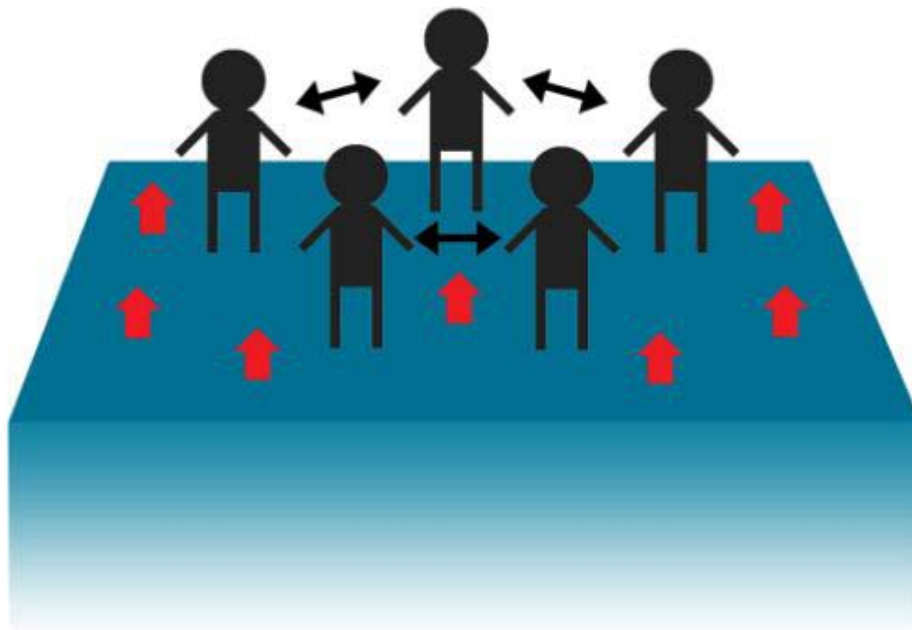
Presupposition of justice

Part II. Law. In the course of the Middle Ages, however, one notices beginning efforts to submit and formulate the basis for legal decisions by formulating the underlying general laws and making them public to the world.

Originally, this development was largely under the guidance of the Roman church in an attempt by the Holy See to establish itself as a counter-power to the secular rule and its forms of dominance by founding itself in terms of laws. It was an effort to establish a new kingdom of a hitherto unforeseen kind based on law. Gregory VII formulates these efforts in his *Dictatus papae*: "Only he [the Pope, *S.R.*] can lay down new laws". The Law thus constructed becomes the general mode of appearance of, and basis of justification for, the Roman Catholic Church.

Subsequently, this approach is assumed by the more centralized royal power that also appears at the end of the Middle Ages and defines itself against the network of feudal structures of dependence. The *Assizes of Ariano,* promulgated by Roger II of Sicily

in 1140, represents an early example of this development; whereas the German Emperor Frederic II as king of Sicily published the much more comprehensive *Liber augustalis* in 1231. On can trace the same development in France from the middle of the 13th century and a little later in England. The monarchy asserts itself against feudalism – with its ongoing disputes and mutual state of dependence – as a central power by formulating itself in terms of law.

Law, thus, begins to make itself felt and has a fundamental impact on sociality. Reinterpreted in this new way, it is characterized by a number of distinctive qualities. Prescriptive laws take the form of general restrictions or prohibitions, of commands pertaining to everybody that prescribe for people to do this, or more often, not to do that. In this way they establish a distinct and generally binding partition between what is prohibited and what is permitted. At the same time they institute and manifest a general representative order. They define what is right for people to comply with.

The modern Western European territorial states (and later nation states) rest on such an order in as far as these territories become centred on a capital and a supreme sovereign authority. The development, thus, may be described as a 'capitalization' of the territory through law. At the same time, the earlier persistence of conflicts is forced out of sociality with the result that society becomes neutralized or pacified: It becomes centred on and based upon the peace of Law. In return, the persistence of conflicts, the conflictuality, becomes isolated and concentrated at the national frontiers where it is intensified and develops into a permanent state or condition of war in the Hobbesian sense of the term: into an ever present "inclination" or "disposition" "to contend" conflicts "by Battell [battle]" *(Leviathan,* Part I, Chap. XIII).

This results in the development of the state in the modern sense of the word; and this modern state based on the rule of Law introduces a general hierarchisation and axiomatisation in society. By the end of the Thirty Years' War, this development is already at a rather advanced stage. "La Fronde", which was suppressed by Louis XIV between 1648 and 1650, was an expression of the last serious attempt by the high nobility to revolt against the peace established by Law in France.

In short, part II of my dissertation describes the way in which modern constitutional society comes into being through the presentation of Law. This development brings on a general transformation of social interaction so that it comes to rest on and be

formed by a specifically defined basis which draws a distinct line between what is permitted and what is prohibited. And at the same time the sentencing is formalized, which replaces the substantialisation previously used.

Presentation of Law
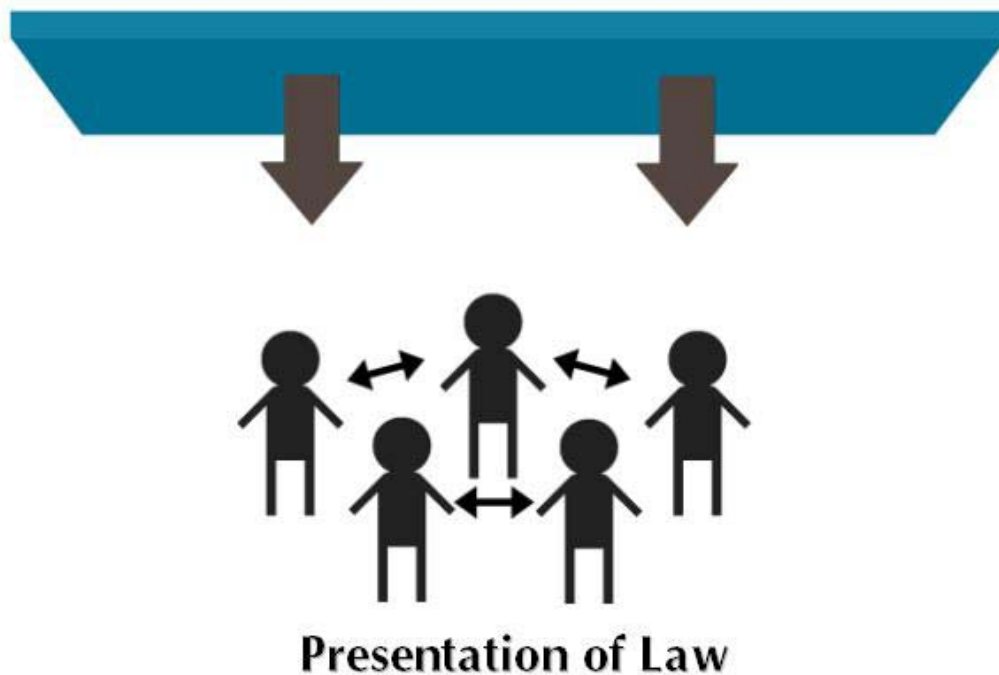
Reinterpreted in this way, Law and justice still largely inform our notions of social coherence and community. As stated, we still tend to conceive of coherence and communality as the merging at a common point, as agreement about a particular basis on which we rest. Moreover, our notions of rules and regularity are coloured by the law. The minute we describe a regularity, we tend to formulate it as a result of or as agreeing with general rules and find it difficult to conceive of community and regularity in any other way.

In short, the law has evolved into a modern metaphysics which tends to materialize everywhere and appears self-evident and inevitable. The law represents its own source. It is an entity which reappears in all human activity and comprehension.

Part III. Discipline. The next part of my dissertation, "Discipline and its surveillance" describes the origins, dissemination, and character of the disciplinary practice.

Shortly after the purchase in 1662 by Colbert of the tapestry workshops in Paris for the king, Louis XIV, an edict is issued with the provisions for a new school which is to be built in affiliation with the workshops. The edict maintains the principles for craft's apprenticeship. Upon the establishment of an apprenticeship contract the student enters into a global state of dependence on a master. After six years the students complete their training with one final test in order to justify, *en bloc*, their acquirement of a certain level of knowledge. If they pass, they can subsequently establish themselves as independent masters.

An edict issued in 1737 concerning the training of tapestry weavers with regard to drawing classes indicates, however, that the education is undergoing radical changes. The edict is substantially more detailed with regard to the process and form of the training. It stipulates a standard of two hours of teaching on every workday. Each class begins with a call-over of all the students in order to register the absent students, and the students are divided into three different classes depending on their level of proficiency. Moreover, the students were to hand in individual assignments on a regular basis. The best drawings were rewarded; and the total of the delivered products allowed for an evaluation of the relative progress of each student and his or her placement in relation to the other students.

These changes indicate an overall shift in the dissemination of knowledge and teaching relations. The focus is no longer on the teaching and representation to an undifferentiated mass of privileged and authoritative knowledge.

On the contrary, there is a beginning tendency to divide the schooled mass into groups of students of equal proficiency and to place these groups in separate rooms. Thus arises the modern school class: a group of students that is homogenous because the students partake in the same education and have a similar level of knowledge. This division is followed by a division within the class. The physical space of the class room is divided into a system of separate cells so that each student becomes tied to his or her own little space which allows for the teacher to simultaneously address the individual student and maintain a comprehensive view of the class. Moreover, in the 1600s, the schools begin to register the delivered performances in order to establish a form of ranking. In general, there is an increasing focus on definitions of what the students should be doing,

and when, and the stipulations are monitored. In this way, the school seeks to optimise the way students utilize their time.

The purpose of this kind of regulation is to enforce a predefined gradual genesis, a coherent development, in which the later steps builds on previous ones. It establishes a continual accumulating notion of progress; and the goal of this progress is to obtain a condition where the individual has developed specifically selected abilities as completely as possible. Unlike the irregular qualitative shifts of the apprenticeship, these changes represent the construction of an evolutionary timeline in the shape of a composed and detailed linear progression towards an ideal goal. Earlier, the purpose of the school had been to guide and instruct pupils, but now the school becomes a place, in short, for pupils to become educated by exposing them to training and disciplining.

The changes perceived between 1662 and 1737 bear witness to long-term changes in teaching relations. Discipline and surveillance are introduced. This introduction brings on the shift from the apprenticeship to the modern school. However, one can observe the concurrent introduction of discipline into warfare, for example with the establishment of military drills and modern war techniques. As a result, the modern standing army comes into being. And as a parallel development, the discipline is introduced into production relations with the result that the trades, which previously had been organized around guilds, are transformed into modern industrial production – with an analytical division of the production process and introduction of a division of labour. This leads to the modern manufacture or factory.

Over time, discipline and surveillance becomes widely diffused. Around 1800 these concepts have become so all pervading and general that society begins to define its punitive measures around discipline. Imprisonment replaces the public torture of earlier times (as known from the public executions through torments on the scaffold) as the punitive measure par excellence. This leads to the appearance of the modern prison. Imprisonment is a disciplinary punishment: an effort to reintegrate and resocialize the criminal by segregating him from the rest of society and subjecting his life to a disciplinary regime. Formally speaking, the nature and purpose of imprisonment is training and disciplining, even though it is not always very successful in doing so.

Generally speaking, discipline does not subject us to particular general provisions which we have to comply with at all times as in the case of the law. Instead,

time begins to play a role. Through discipline our lives become subject to particular limitations which constitute a process of learning in which our lives become directed towards a not yet realized regulative or ideal norm: a norm which we may never succeed in reaching, but which we relate to at all times – and to which we become related. This movement allows us to increasingly come into our own as the distinctive individuals that we are.

Regulative norm
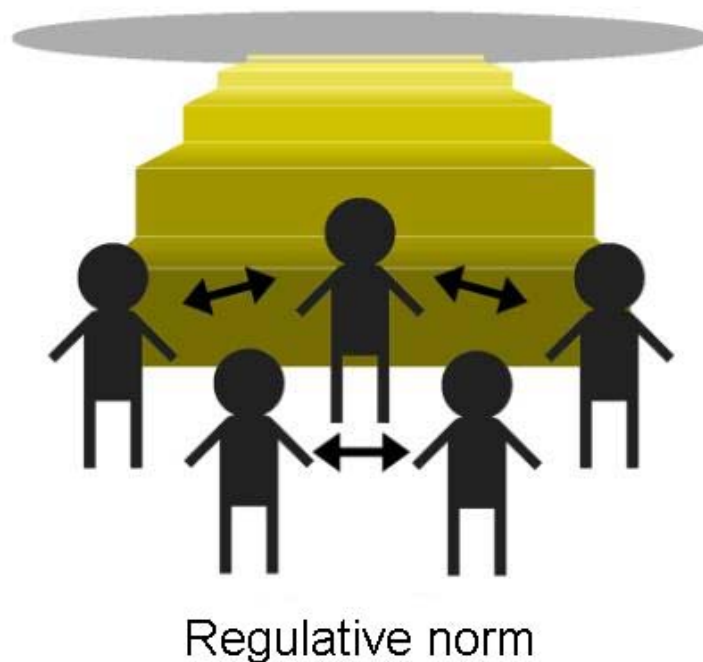
Part IV. The logic of the welfare society. The next part of my dissertation, "Governmentality and its economy" describes the formation, dissemination, and character of the logic of the modern welfare society.

In the pursuit of a general – and maybe somewhat hasty – notion of this logic, one could turn to a phenomenon like modern terrorism as it shows itself in cases like the September 11 attacks on New York City. Why is it that we respond so strongly to this event? In fact, on general socioeconomic consideration, the fact that two Boeing aircrafts fly into some skyscrapers in Manhattan poses a rather small problem. And to the extent that this is an exceptional phenomenon, the situation does not represent a serious security

problem to us as citizens at large. The risk for me as a citizen to be struck by this kind of phenomenon is far more minimal than the risk of me being hit by a car tomorrow, which means that, more than likely, we do not react to terrorism on the basis of a real and concrete threat to our individual lives.

A brief characterization of the phenomenon of terrorism could present it as a political form of action which seeks to shock the existing society through sudden acts of violence that strike unexpectedly and anywhere, even in the safest of places. The terrorist acts manifest a fundamental problem: Not only in nature but also in social relations do violent contrasts and violent conflicts break out which we cannot completely avert and secure ourselves against. Terrorism provokes fear and anger in society's leaders and citizens alike as a unifying emblem of an invincible violence and insecurity which, nevertheless, has to be fought with all means.

In this way, terrorism obtains a central position in our public space and causes strong and almost hypersensitive reactions precisely because it contests and activates on a symbolic level the existing social agreement, or 'contract', that traverses and becomes re-established in the institutions and social interaction of the welfare society. It affects and activates a mutual and diffuse agreement of care and welfare. This agreement provides the promise of continual care for the welfare of all of us and each of us; and in return, we all, and each of us, accept a rather detailed level of interference in our lives.

The welfare contract is embedded in a number of specific welfare-producing practices which have evolved over a long period of time and of which I shall only mention a few: Because people become ill, we have constructed health services; because accidents happen and damages occur and individuals or groups of people need to be indemnified, we have established insurance companies; and because people lose their jobs, we have created unemployment funds.

These practices, e.g. the insurance practice, seek to the greatest possible extent to take extraordinary events into account and allocate the responsibility for them. This is done by simultaneously relating the seemingly random events and adjusting them in relation to a general logic inherent in them, that is, in relation to a reasonable average. The event is seen in relation to a reality and to its inherent normativity in the shape of an average, or normality.

Normality
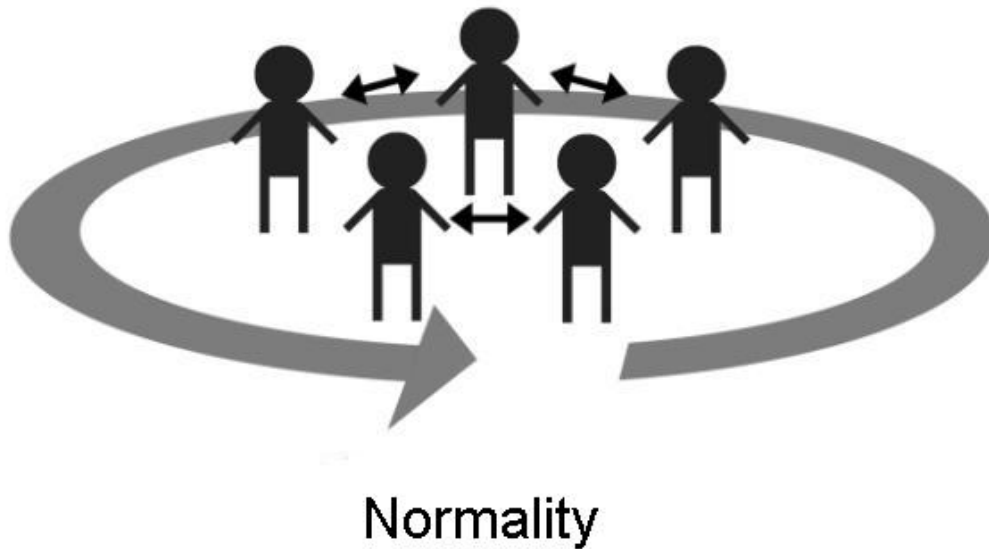
Today, we have established a consensus about a leader's responsibility of contributing to increasing the common welfare as well as the welfare of the individual. Leadership has become servile; it exists for the benefit of all and each of us. And there is a consensus of opinion that it is obvious for leaders to define their role in a way so that they optimise their own welfare as well as considers and contributes to the welfare of the contexts that they partake in. Modern terrorism shakes and contests this mutual agreement. However, this does not cause us to abandon the agreement, quite the reverse. The challenge reactivates and strengthens the agreement.

Currently we see the outlines of an international political system based on the welfare agreement. This manifests itself in a number of concrete political and military actions around the world in places where we detect threats: the Balkans, Afghanistan, possibly Iraq – who knows? These political and military actions are perceived and presented as police actions. Their purpose is to detect and eliminate threats against humanity, either primarily in the shape of the humanity of the local population as in the Balkans, or primarily in the shape of our own humanity as in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, I only deal with the logic of the welfare society in a very limited and superficial manner in *Coexistence without common sense;* but I plan to continue these investigations.

Part V: Negotiation. Lately, another fundamental practice has begun to manifest itself. Embedded in a number of societal institutions and social conventions is a perceptible and unavoidable commitment to negotiation: a practice of negotiation.

The exchange that takes place in this negotiation practice includes values and morality not as a basis but as input to be processed. The participants constantly seek to advance a range of diverging values and standards of action; and only within the negotiation game is the question of the proper division and connection among them answered. The interaction of the negotiation does not represent a space for shared values because the exchange puts values at stake; they are the subject of negotiation. Values and morality do not have the character of a unifying metaphysics. Rather, the participants seek to gain control over each other by simultaneously re-establishing the basis for social interaction and the direction of this interaction. And by this simultaneous attempt to control the acts of others and to recreate reality the participants become mutually prescribing while recreating the social space. Whereas the welfare logic is ordered around a specific reality and its normality, the dissemination of the negotiation procedures implies an obvious mutual prescribing which introduces a re-artificialisation of this reality.

I do not treat the negotiation practice independently in my dissertation, but I have analysed it before, for example in the article "Reorganizing Society."[1]
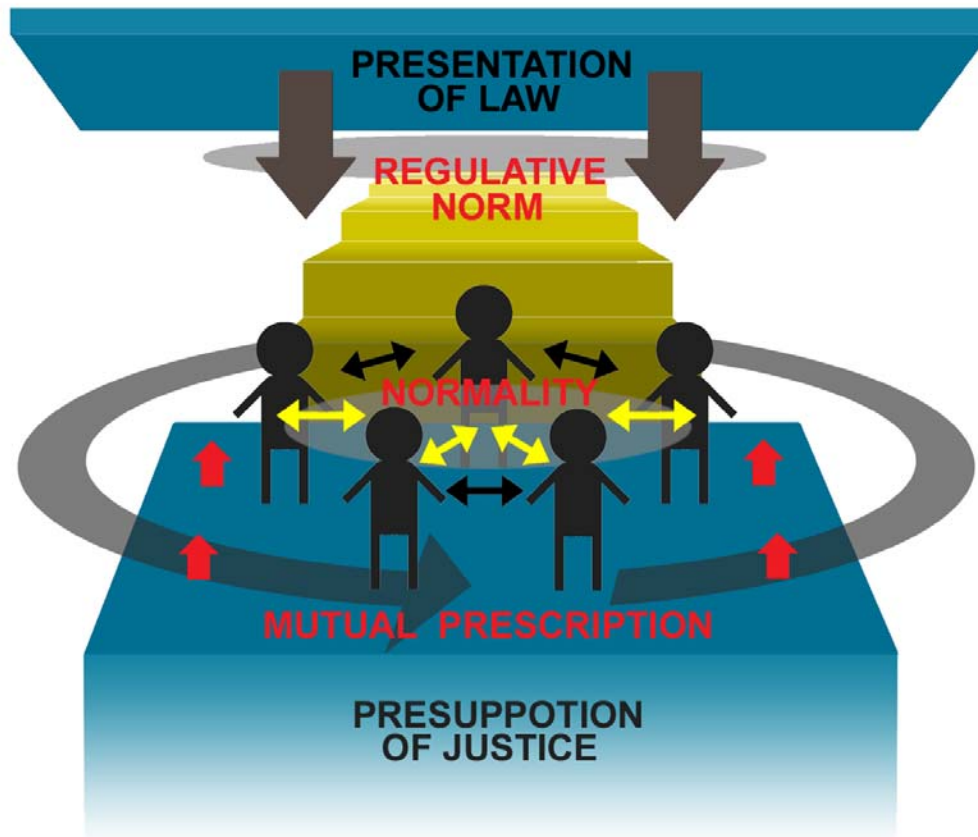
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[1] Sverre Raffnsøe and Ove K. Pedersen: "Reorganizing Society", in Karlsson & Jonsson (ed.): *Law, Justice and the State, Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie,* Berlin 1996.
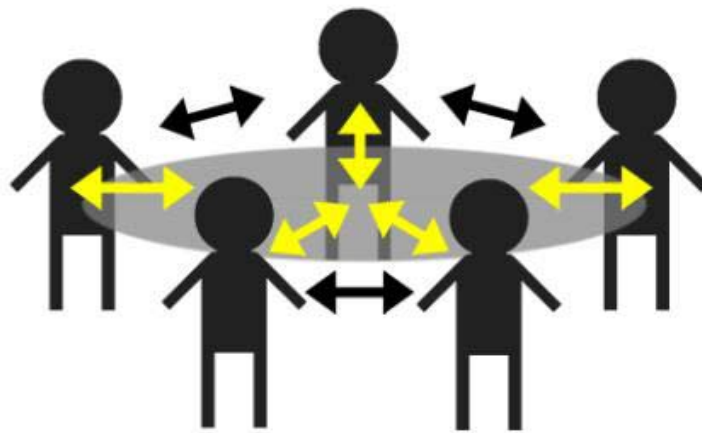
Mutual prescription

III. Conclusion. Characteristics of the existing sociality

The below drawing incorporates the layers I have outlined in one simple figure:

I hope it provides a sense of the kind of social bond I have tried to illustrate: on one hand, the complexity, unsurveyability and boundlessnes that we face; and on the other hand, the structural interconnectedness that we find ourselves in.
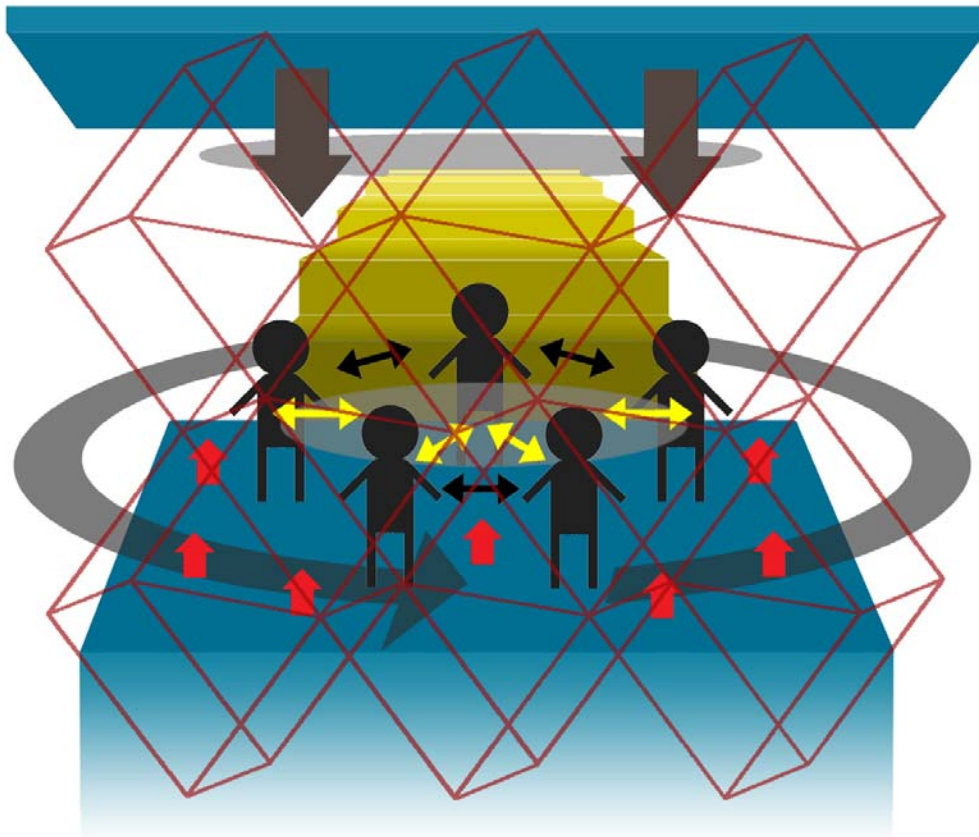
The interconnectedness and complexity have grown over a long period of time. However, we can see the outlines of some general and fundamental shifts through the emergence of the general practices which I describe.

The immanence and de-substantialisation of normativity. Normativity becomes increasingly immanent through the development described in the dissertation. This is not the same as saying that it disappears; rather, it becomes increasingly widespread; An increasing amount of responsibilities and an increasing amount of forms of responsibility, but the character of the responsibilities changes.

As the original transcendental becomes more and more immanent, however, we can trace a radical shift with regard to metaphysics: In accusatory and customary justice it was confidently presupposed. In the universe of the Law it was formulated and presented. In discipline it was transferred to an anticipated future as a goal

we anticipated and strove to realize. With the rationality of the welfare governance, normativity is designated with the characteristics of a normality, an average that everybody relates to and creates through apparently individual and unique actions. In the practice of negotiation we all act mutually prescribing.

This implies a concurrent *de-substantialisation*: the fact that the substance, that which seems unchangeable, transcendent, or sublime in what we do, the untouchable, disappears. It becomes still more difficult to refer to a permanent being that can be presupposed. Metaphysically speaking, that which *is* – that is 'being' – increasingly obtains the characteristics of interaction; it becomes something that we create amongst us and a score that we settle between us. Being has become a human creation which is increasingly the subject of negotiation.

Humanity and the dissemination of sovereignty. As a part of this development towards greater immanence, humanity is put at the centre and raised to the last and absolute (judicial) authority. This development could be described as a growing deification of humanity. But it could also be described as a dissemination of sovereignty. Sovereignty no longer merely refers to or is limited to the highest authority in social life which is free and can freely rule and define society above the rest of us. We have all become sovereign individuals, self-dependent and autonomous entities who not only have the ability to pronounce judgement on our surroundings but who are responsible for doing so.

Provisionality and frailness. This produces a new form of *provisionality*. Anything we experience appears as a human creation which demands to be addressed and to which we have to relate as a simple suggestion. And at the same time, a new frailness emerges. With the decline of the transcendental and with the deification of humanity, everything appears as pure human creation which cannot refer to anything deeper and more substantial. And the human constructions, the thoroughly humanised universe, appear as a creation with nothing else of a more fundamental nature to fall back upon. Thus, there is a growing sense of lack of fixed points of reference, an increasing manifestation of a boundlessness and groundlessness.

Inclusion and subsumption. This development, however, is counteracted by another shift. The immanent and humanised universe that I describe seems to increasingly prove unlimited. It displays an increasing capacity for *inclusion*: for the re-integration and re-assimilation of that which appears to be on the borderline and about to fall beyond. Thus, the in-substantiality, groundlessness, frailness and provisionality become counteracted by an increasing capacity for subsumption: for adaptation and subordination of differences – not in the name of a defined universal, not in the name of anything given, but in the name of the different working logics of which I have described some.

The norm of change. Under the general heading of *the norm of change*, we might further comprise a range of pronounced characteristics of the modern sociality which, however, I will only conclusively address in short entries.

1.*Modernity* has been discussed as an uncompleted project: a program which presents us with the task of completing it in order for us to become truly autonomous and enlightened beings in control of our own lives. However, following the line of thought I have outlined here, we might conclude that modernity from its beginning and in essence was and will continue to be *an uncompleted and unfinishable project.* Modernity represents a project which is inherently abortive and deviates from its apparent intentionality.

But this does not cause us to give up the project. On the contrary, it means that it has to be continually reassumed in order to reintegrate or re-assimilate that which seems to be escaping it. From the beginning, the abortive nature of the project is an integral and inherent part of it as an invitation to its continuation. By virtue of its abortive nature, modernity continually calls for more of itself. It requires more – not of the total repetition, not of the very same, but of the similar.

2.In this context, we might also observe *change and adaptability* as something characteristic of today. We often present and perceive this demand for continual development and readjustment as an external "natural" condition to which we are subject. But in my opinion, and if we investigate the emergence of the phenomenon, it is not a condition but a *normativity that we are subject to.*

There is a need for a Copernican turn in the analytical method since these are demands which we are both subject to and have created ourselves. It is a historically created social fact. Change has come into its own and begun to appear 'as such' through

modernity – both as an obligation and a possibility, as 'freedom' and 'necessity'. However, this is a supplementary history which deserves more thorough attention.

3. In any case, today the continual reintegration and change appears to manifest itself in a continuously repeated *movement of suspension and mediation*. In that sense, we have all become common Hegelians: We strive to repeat, reintegrate and change our failures in a continuous movement of "Aufhebung". But this does not make them disappear: instead, it means that the failures manifest themselves in the same way, only at increasingly higher levels, creating *a never-ending spiral.*

4. As emphasized at the end of my foreword of the dissertation, the continual efforts to suspend *tragedy* in human existence do not lead to its extinction. It means that tragedy remains present, only in a different way, in a suspended form, that is, in a displaced or – ultimately – historical form.

As an example, this becomes obvious in our relationship with death. In the *memento mori* of the Middle Ages we were still, at least to an extent, able to dance on the grave of death and commemorate its presence. Today, we seem to avert our face whenever we are confronted with or consorting with death in an effort to eliminate it: to suppress or at least postpone it. But death, too, – at least hitherto – returns to manifest itself on an even higher level, ever more sublime, as in the endless modern project of the health system. In modernity we all become nurses for each other and cure ourselves to death.

In the second half of the 18th century when the outline of the present human condition was drawn, Goethe sensed this and told Frau Stein: "Ich halte es für wahr, daß die Humanität endlich siegen wird, nur fürchte ich, daß die Welt ein großes Hospital und einer des anderen humaner Krankenwärter werden wird." ("I believe that humanity and humanism will eventually prevail, but I fear that at the same time the world will turn into a big hospital and we into one of the other humane wards.")

Foucault and the dispositive analysis. In my exposition I have focused mainly on presenting my argument and the issue itself (or the 'object' of the analysis) not as it exists, but as it reveals or unfolds itself in the dissertation. But for the sake of

comprehensiveness, I should say a few words about the method of approach – and about the approach to the approach.

The dissertation represents a *dispositional analysis*. And this approach has largely been unfolded with inspiration from Michel Foucault. In the works of Michel Foucault one finds an analysis of the way social dispositives develop through our social interaction and come to define - or organise – what we are able to do. Moreover, one finds a range of concrete historical analyses that I have further interpreted and built upon.

However, the Foucault whom I chose to build upon is also very much a thinker which does not simply exist but emerges in the dissertation. This Foucault has been the subject of some very important reformulation, modification, and grafting – to make his thought correlate with my concerns and my objectives.