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A New Perspective to Integrate Different Social Capital Concepts[1]

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ABSTRACT

The debate about 'social capital' is presented in brief. It is assumed that the discussion about it reissues the since the Enlightenment existing debate about the relation between individual and society. In this debate two lines of argumentation can be identified. On the one hand, a rather individualistic concept exists which sees social capital as an individual resource; and on the other hand, a rather collective understanding which sees social capital as pan-social phenomenon. The main goal of this article is to offer a new perspective that makes the integration of these two paradigms possible. Therefore new insights from the field of analytic philosophy are used to modify the concepts of social capital, focussing on the individualistic direction and in particular on Becker's human capital theory. The resulting new perspective turns social capital into the core social category and is also calling for a new understanding of economics and management.

Keywords: Social capital, Becker, homo oeconomicus, identity capital, strategic interaction management.

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INTRODUCTION

The debate about the very popular concept of social capital did not develop on the base of a certain publication or a certain theory within the 20th century. It rather emerged from the works of various authors in different contexts and decades more or less independent from each other. So the social capital concept is a classical example of a repeated and parallel invention of the same concept (Lichter, 1998).

'The Community Center' (1920) written by Hanifan is one of the earliest source which can be identified. But at that time the concept did not make its way into the scientific discourse. Forty years later a rather casual reference followed within the city-sociological analysis made by Jacobs (1961, p.138), in which she traced the formation of community and relationship-networks back to the routeing and configuration of streets and roads and the architecture of housing areas. Also using a city-sociological perspective Hannerz, a Swedish anthropologist, applied the concept of social capital within his survey dated in 1969. But unlike Jacobs Hannerz uses the concept in a more network-theoretical manner by defining social capital as useful information given by friends within a network (Hannerz, 1969, p.52).

In 1977 the concept of social capital was used for the first time in economic science. Loury defined it as the amount of resources, which belong to family affairs and social organisations of a community and which support children's and adolescent's cognitive and social development. By using economic models Loury (1977) tried to show that being part of a certain ethnic group as well as a certain socio-economical background affects economic success later on in life. Some fundamental publications followed soon after. Bourdieu (1983) for example discussed the term in a sociological way and integrated social capital in his social theory as a symbolic kind of capital and showed the interdependency of the different kinds of capital. Later on, Coleman (1990) integrated the asset of 'social structure' by means of the social capital term into a rational-choice-approach and founded his social theory upon it. And finally Putnam (1993) as well as Fukuyama (1995) showed the importance of social capital for the democracy and prosperity of a country.

The use of the term was intensified during the 1980s and 1990s and increased the number of publications on social capital from different fields of research, dealing with theoretical questions about democracy or economy as well as the relation of social capital, education and occupational careers respectively, social capital and minorities, social capital and environmental policy, social capital and health or social capital and gender-questions. Actually an inquiry showed an exponential growth of social capital related studies between 1995 and 2000 (Isham, Kelly & Ramaswamy, 2002). But despite the enormous use of the term a clear and consistent definition was not produced. Putnam for example defines: "By 'social capital' I mean features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together mire effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1995, p.664), in comparison Glaeser, Laibson and Sacredot describe social capital as "a person's social characteristics – including social skills, charisma, and the size of his Rolodex – which enables him to reap market and non-market returns from interactions with others" (2001, p.4).

A further review of the many definitions can be found at the homepage of the Worldbank and the Socialcapitalgateway website or in Haug (1997); Woolcock (1998); Feldman and Assaf (1999); Portes (1998); Dasgupta and Seralgedin (2000); Lin (2001) or Adler and Kwon (2002).

So it can be stated that the term social capital is not clearly defined (Haug, 1997, p.9) and there is neither an obvious operationalisation nor an integration of the term in a formal, deductive theory (Diekmann, 1993, p.23; Durlag, 2002). It seems as if social capital is just a metaphor for the "relevance of the social" (Haug, 1997, p.40).

But if one takes a closer look at the line of arguments within the numerous publications it becomes obvious that the discussion about social capital and its importance consists of two basically different courses of argumentation (Haug, 1997, p.37; Astone, Nathanson, Schoen & Kim, 1999, p.13; Ostrom & Ahn, 2001, pp.6-10). Representatives of the first course indicate that social capital is some kind of resource for the individual which can be used in an economical rational way; representatives of the other line of arguments understand social capital as an aspect of social macro-phenomena or societies in general. While the former just sees the social aspect and its meaning to an individual and his/her benefit, the latter does perceive it as 'sui generis', an own entity which is the foundation of societies and for this reason it becomes relevant for individuals only as parts of this society. This indicates that the discussion about social capital in fact is a remake of the debate existing in the western world more or less since the period of enlightenment on the part and whole relationship and more precisely of an individual and the society (Parsons, 1961, p.91; Francis, 1965; Vanberg, 1975; Bohnen, 1975; Polanyi, 1977, p.185; Dumont, 1991, p.74). The underlying patterns of thoughts and quarrels draw through sciences and political tendencies and were eminently pointed in philosophy and political theory in the context of the debate between communitarism and liberalism at the end of the 1980s (Portes, 1998, p.21; Täuble, 2002).[4]

The conflict of these two perceptions is still not solved (Beck, 1994, p.27). The logical problem of the model behind it, which deals on the one hand with the old question of Hobbes why individuals who are self-determined should build social macro-phenomena which they cannot control and which limit their self-determination (Hobbes dilemma) and on the other hand with the problem of how and why total social macro-phenomena like 'society' should allow the existence of self-determined individuals, still waits for a theoretical logical solution up to today. So the main goal of this article is to offer a new perspective that makes the integration of these two paradigms feasible and therefore opens up new opportunities for the interdisciplinary cooperation of sociology and economics.

In the following paragraphs we will focus especially on the individualistic thread of concepts and most of all G.S. Becker's concept which is geared to the approach of rational-choice. The aim is to afford modules and show ways which allow bringing it together with the other perspective on social capital, which understands it more as an entity itself e.g. a norm or culture.

RATIONAL-CHOICE-APPROACHES FOR THE MODELLING OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Coleman's model is very important for the rational choice oriented branch of the thread about social capital concepts. Coleman shows how unintended side-effects and interdependencies within a micro-macro-micro-model lead to decisions which are individual and rational (micro) but cause collective phenomena (macro). This development again functions as recursive restrictions and/or conditions for individual activities (micro). That way structural reproduction and structural changes can be characterised by one model. In doing so a 'structure-individualistic' logic of explanation becomes possible. In other words Coleman aims for a "peaceful coexistence of man and society, as two intersecting systems of action" (Coleman, 1990, p.5).

Coleman's theory of action is based on an assumption which is orientated at the rational choice approach: In the context of social relations between individuals and groups resources under the control of actors are exchanged on the basis of purposeful, benefit maximising ways of interacting. Actors, resources, control and interests form four analytical elements which -

[4]) It is underlined that the problem behind this current discussion is not new. See also Etzioni (1997, p.18 and p.25); Freudenthal (1982, p.251) and Tönnies (1996, p.14).

according to Coleman – can be used to characterise any social action. As the actors cannot control every resource he/she is interested in, they need to agree into transactions to exchange their right to control a resource for the right of other actors. Coleman distinguishes between four types of resources: (a) private (separable) commodities, (b) events (which also mean actions and special skills), (c) information and (d) social capital.

According to Coleman social capital is an aspect of a social structure which consists of a facilitation of action for individuals. So the existence of the 'whole' marks an advantage for the individual as well. "Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure" (Coleman, 1990, p.302). Some network theorists like Weesie, Verbeek & Flap (1990) or Burt (1997) argue in a similar way as well.

In contrast to Coleman, Becker and his colleagues trie to model social phenomena as side-effects of individual rational actions by homo oeconomici as an individual resource and not as independent, nearly autonomous structure. Unlike Coleman social capital does not function as an external restriction but can affect the individual behaviour as an internal category, as an equal capital stock accompanying physical, financial and other capital stocks. In the following Becker's so called 'extended-' or 'human-capital' theory will be explained.

THE HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY

Individuals that did not act in a rational way, when not using their 'obvious' economical advantage, caused explanation difficulties for the neoclassical economy and therefore caused new ideas during the 1960s. For example: By investigating shortfalls in the development of the poor in developing countries from an agrarian economists point of view, Schultz tried to answer the question, why broad sections of population did not use the perspectives of modern agricultural techniques of the 'green revolution'. He pointed out that economists are focussed only on the accumulation of financial capital (Schultz, 1980, p.640). The exclusion of central human areas like marriage, family and household from theories of growth and production processes and its perception only as the consumption sector in national economy caused serious shortfalls in explaining the behaviour and points at a blind spot within the neoclassical theory (Habisch, 1998, p.33).

Therefore Schultz, Becker and others extended the economic model to activities within the household and the social sphere (Becker, 1962; Schultz, 1973; Stiegler & Becker, 1977).[5] They applied methodological strength by sticking to the economic logic even if behaviour at a first glace seems to be irrational. The task was to find objective and subjective constraints (called restrictions) which made the observed behaviour rational.

For this purpose the classical forms of capital, labour, money and tangible man-made means, were accompanied by human capital. Human capital is composed of individual knowledge and individual abilities. Using the concept of human capital makes it possible to integrate knowledge acquisition, education, fostering of family and friends in the economical rationality concept of capital stocks. Persons who do not invest into maximising cash or man made goods will use their resources in order to maximise their human capital. They will invest e.g. into their education or family (e.g. Becker & Murphy, 1996, p.220). Becker uses the term 'human capital' as a generic term for intangible individual resources. Individual knowledge and abilities (human capital in its narrow sense), previous consumption, personal experiences from the past (personal capital), but also social aspects like the influence of past actions by peers and others in an individual's social network and control system (social capital) are subsumed hereby (Becker, 1996, p.4).

One reason for the need of these adjustments was the so called 'problem of homogenous restrictions', non-consistent (opposed) response of people to changes in prices or laws which changes opportunity costs (see also Akerlof, 1970; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Becker had introduced human, personal and social capital as an individual, internal restriction in order to explain why people with the same accoutrement of classical capital and therefore obviously the same individual restrictions do react differently to uniform changes of external restrictions caused by changes in prices or laws. Influencing factors of the individual past and social environment, which are changing during a period of time and which are individually different can now be modelled and influence the individuals behaviour as internal restrictions (Habisch, 1998, p.41). Different assets of social and personal capital which occur in the course of life affect the behaviour in otherwise identical situations and can therefore explain opposed behaviour between people as well as varying behaviour of one person at different points in time with otherwise 'ceteri paribus' conditions (Becker, 1996).

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5 In the following a composite model will be shown which is based on Becker's works from 1962 to 1996.

After incorporating Becker's new forms of (human) capital stocks the utility function at any time depends not only on the different goods x, y and z which are consumed by the individual but also on the stock of personal (P) and social capital (S) at that moment: $U_t = U(x_t, y_t, z_t, P_t, S_t)$

This leads to the so called household-production-model: An individual does not solely optimise and accumulate money and man-made capital but also invests into the creation and preservation of human capital (personal and social capital) by investing available individual resources like time and labour.

> Human capital analysis starts with the assumption that individuals decide on their education, training, medical care, and other additions to knowledge and health by weighting the benefits and costs. Benefits include cultural and other nonmonetary gains along with improvement in earnings and occupations, whereas costs usually depend mainly on the forgone value of the time spent on these investments (Becker, 1993, p.392).

Following this economic model it is no longer irrational to spend time together with friends or acquaintances, for your personal health care or at school instead of using the time to earn money by working. The expanded 'homo oeconomicus' defined by Becker does just use a part of his resources (time, labour, capital stocks) in order to consume (building up man-made capital) and wagework (building up money capital). Another part of his resources will be invested into the development of his human capital stocks. Now the theory can deal with the case that individuals invest man-made and money capital for personal health or a festivity with friends. This can now be interpreted as an investment of one sort of capital stocks to build up human capital. With this concept Becker assigned the individual private sphere and the family household a central function especially within the social area (Habisch, 1998, p.35).

CRITIQUE AND NEED FOR ENLARGEMENT

However, also in Becker's approach the fundamental and logical problem behind the 'Hobbes dilemma' cannot be solved. It is still the question why self-determined economic individuals trying to maximise their profit should invest into social interactions and built up social macro phenomena? In the following section the logical problem will be demonstrated and discussed explicitly with a pinnacled focus on the model-logical core.

In opposition to models which e.g. were represented by Durkheim (1976, p.203) and demonstrated in a very pointed manner under the name 'homo sociologicus' by Dahrendorf (1973), in which the society as 'sui generis' acts through individuals, who as individuals are will-less executors of collective structures and can due to this never be regarded as several, self-determined individuals (Wilson, 1973, p.55) stands the homo oeconomicus model (Pareto, 1906; Tullock & MacKenzie, 1984; Persky 1995; Kirchgässner, 2008). Within this model other individuals are not relevant for the existence and the actions of the individual looked at. An economic individual is never other-directed, it always controls his world which is limited by the restrictions completely in order to realise its preferences. It is the origin and purpose of all actions and therefore the methodological centre of all explanations. According to this it is assumed (in strict models) that the homo oeconomicus possesses complete information and realises adjustments because of market or environmental changes instantly. The homo oeconomicus knows everything about his world, has got a full foresight and knows the consequences of his activities exactly. Risks because of an individual's activity like the transfer of resources are impossible. It is not possible that something unmeant happens during his activities. The homo oeconomicus acts just because of this axiomatic assumption and maximises his benefit. If it was differently and we would assume other individuals as well that would interact with the individual we want to look at and those would have their own will and nature the homo oeconomicus would not be able to get all information and therefore could not foresee and control their actions. This indeed would be a violation of the axiom of self-determination (Weimann, 1987). In fact as the individual does no longer have perfect information and foresight and therefore no longer complete power over the consequences of his activities because of the existence of other hominess oeconomici it cannot act within social interactions anyway. Although there are numerous modifications of the homo oeconomicus model (Wolf, 2005), which cannot be dignified here in detail (cf. Simon, 1955; Cyert & March, 1963; Meckling, 1976; Selten & Klopstech, 1984; Lindenberg, 1985) this logical problem persists.

Therefore the social interaction equals the prisoners' dilemma as every social interaction always consists of a problem caused by time and information (Preisendörfer, 1995, p.264). That means the provision of services by interacting partners is generated one after the other so that one individual always has to deal with insecurity whether the other partner stands to the implicit and/or explicit agreement, whether he/she provides an appropriate service in return because of the provided starting activity. This insecurity prevents that the optimal solution is implemented through cooperation as both actors underlie the incentive of using this situation for self-seeking purposes (to defect). Luhmann calls this a "problem of a risky advance" (Luhmann, 1989, p.23) and Parsons' research on the problem of "double contingency" (Parsons, 1951, p.15) points to the same direction. One can conclude that from an actor's rational perspective on an activity no exchange will take place as long as the problem of social order is not solved. That means the fulfilment of the commitment to exchange is not guaranteed (Kappelhoff, 1995, p.5). But this would mean that social macro-phenomena have to be presupposed and it would not be possible to derive them individualistically or within the strict model logic.

This logical gap can be seen in Becker's model of the human capital theory, too. Even though Becker's model takes social capital as a motor for social interactions this cannot tide over existing problems of time and information. It remains unexplained why an individual according to the strict economic model needs to invest into the build up of a social network even if he/she does not know (1.) if the additional value of integrating the other individual into his own social network succeeds and (2.) which goods will be available in a better or cheaper way in the future trough this expansion of his/her social network.

REQUIREMENTS TO BE AN INDIVIDUAL - A PHILOSOPHICAL AND LOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

However, in the following it will be shown that seemingly logical incompatible models of an absolutely self-determined but anti-social economising individual and of a social but no longer self-determined individual in reality do not have to be contradicting. The reason is that some logical necessities were assumed as given within the model of the homo oeconomicus and also within Coleman's and Becker's model but are not integrated into the model. By including them it is possible to solve the above demonstrated set of problems without changes at the core of the models. For this purpose some formal and logical cognition from analytic philosophy have to be kept in mind. Modern philosophical theories like the interpretationism (Abel, 1995) and similar concepts (Wittgenstein, 1971, paragraph 2.0233 and 2.02331; Spencer-Brown, 1973; Jokisch, 1996; Schmidt, 2003; Zierhofer, 2002; Wiesing, 2004, p.146) have shown that a 'world' is logically not imaginable without differentiation or distinction. According to this something can just *be* if it is distinguished from something else. If it is not distinguished, something would not be 'nothing' but one was not even able to think about it. By using this distinction approach it becomes possible to form terms which are silhouetted against their background.

Further on a distinction and therefore the formation of a term cannot result from itself but by other terms. Otherwise a term has to be something and at the same time also that what makes it distinguishable. Thus a term cannot define itself from nowhere and cannot lift oneself up by one's own bootstraps. For this Wittgenstein gave the example of the visual field whereupon an eye cannot see that it sees (Wittgenstein 1971, paragraph 5.6.3.3.). This can just happen by using another term: No white without black, no top without a bottom, etc.

In order to transform the homo oeconomicus into a term that is logically imaginable one has to abstain from the assumption of a totally isolated virtually solipsistic individual. Instead also other self-determined homines oeconomici have to be accepted as existent within the model. A rational economic individual is logical dependent on the being with ‘things’ and ‘individuals’. Just about this it can be defined as an individual and can define itself respectively. Only by distinguishing other objects or creatures and following the distinction from other economic individuals, it becomes in the course of this distinction a specific, economic individual. Thus, Mead’s statement that one person has got an identity just with regard to the identities of other members of this social group (Mead, 1934) becomes ontologically and logically radicalised.

So it is possible to state two points for the model of a homo oeconomicus: (1) The model has logically to consist of more than one homo oeconomicus and they have to notice each other. Otherwise, it is impossible to focus on one specific model individual and (2) according to the process of differentiation and building up an identity respectively it is necessary that an interaction in the sense of ongoing mutual distinction between these model individuals takes place.

A RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION OF ECONOMICAL INTERACTIONS

If the logical necessity of a distinction is taken up and integrated into Becker’s economical model of the homo oeconomicus it becomes possible to solve the dilemma of investing in and therewith the beginning of social interactions, which is explained above.

The concept which has to be introduced consists of two parts. To begin with the stimulus that causes social interactions at a functional level will be explained by introducing a distinction benefit. Then it will be shown that the introduction of identity capital into the capital theory can enhance its area of implications and its possibilities to explain phenomena in the social sphere. It shall become apparent that identity capital and the distinction benefit make an important contribution to the completion of the integration of the social capital idea into the rational choice approach of the economic theory. At the same time identity capital and distinction benefit can be seen as a brick for bridging the micro level of individuals and the macro level of the social sphere.

FUNCTIONAL POINT OF VIEW: DISTINCTION BENEFIT – RATIONAL ENGINE OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

As mentioned before the dilemma of investing into social interactions and therefore also in establishing social capital mainly consists of the fact that there is an insecurity. Will a starting activity be replied so that a profit can be realised or not? The logical consequence would be that a homo oeconomicus has no stimulus to decide for an investment into social interaction. The costs of initiating social interactions are fronted only by the possibility of realising a profit from developing the own social capital or getting a reward (see figure 1).

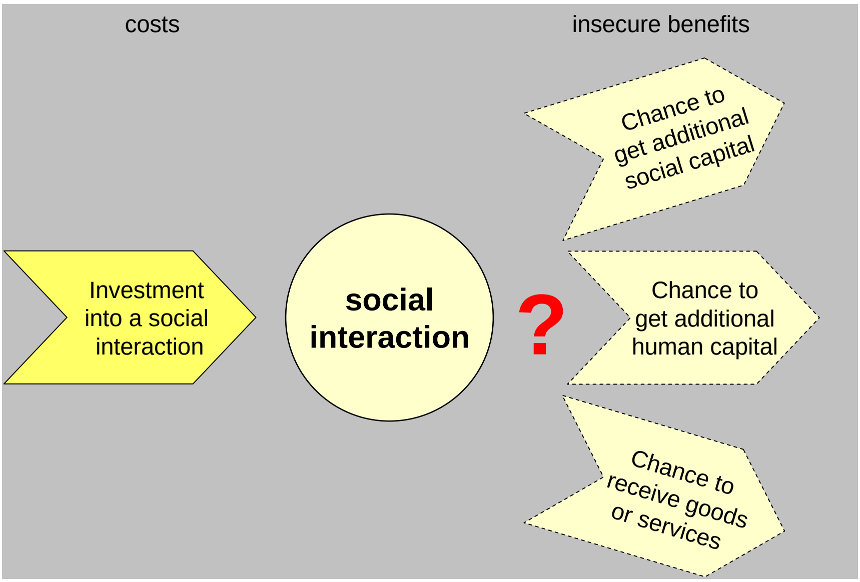

Figure 1: The analysis of its costs (investments) and the attainable benefit in terms of reflux of capital (social-, human capital or goods) is the basis for the functional economical reconstruction of an interaction between two individuals. The central problem is the liability for risks of all these possible categories of benefits.

In order to bridge this gap and explain from an economic point of view why all these different daily social interactions exist, the individual needs a stronger, direct stimulus to invest into social interactions. In order to solve this fundamental logical problem a reward for the beginning activity is needed which is greater than zero and has to be absolutely certain. Therefore, the functional concept of distinction benefit is suggested.

In order to make the idea of distinction benefit understandable the logical necessity of the alternating distinction which is explained above has to be integrated into the model. Every individual needs 'characteristics' or 'features', which differ from other individuals, in order to be defined. This can be the naming as an 'other individual'. The allocation of characteristics, e.g. as a person giving or taking a service is an unavoidable process between two interacting individuals and generates the distinction benefit for the individuals by alternating allocation of characteristics. This means it will also happen if the exchange of goods is not successful or if the interaction is denoted as 'negative' or 'unsuccessful' in a common use of language, like e.g. an argument emerged from the interaction. Because a distinction benefit will always occur, a reward greater than zero is guaranteed logically. Therefore, a social interaction becomes rational by always making a contribution - the distinction benefit - to the individual's own identity. This benefit is not dependent on an activity of the other individual. By investing into a social interaction the individual earns a distinction benefit and has moreover a chance to attain goods.

Against this background an individual also gains a distinction benefit when it provides a contribution to a public good or when it generates social macro phenomena, because it will gain more characteristics, like being contributor, a member of a group or behaving conform to norms and standards. The gap between the logic of the model of a self determined benefit maximising homo oeconomicus and supra-individual macro phenomena can be bridged that way.

Moreover, both strings of discussion of the social capital debate can be connected because social capital can now be seen as any other social entity, an individual or a greater social unit like an organisation or a norm, that gives a person (or any other social entity) the opportunity to distinct itself from it and so to gain a distinction benefit and further on immaterial and material goods.

IDENTITY CAPITAL

Furthermore, this new perspective on social capital allows the introduction of a new type of capital into the human capital theory which can be called 'identity capital'. The usage of identity and interaction with an economic connotation does not occur for the first time. Akerlof and Kranton (2005, p. 12) for example put a person's identity into the context of the existence of social behavioural norms and then define costs and benefits which come into being because of behaviour which is consistent or inconsistent with identity. They use this concept in order to highlight incentives within organisations and to explain within the principal-agent discussion, which other incentives, in addition to monetary ones, are provided in organisations in order to satisfy the employer's expectancies. Wichardt (2006) as well modelled the advantages of the existence of a preference for behaviour, which is consistent with identity, within a social exchange-model that constitutes co-operations and social standards. Benabou and Tirole (2004) designed an agency model that, in order to produce pro-social behaviour, integrates material benefit and also individual aspects of altruism, social and individual identity. And finally, Cote and Levine (2002, p.143) introduced the term 'identity capital' for tangible assets like degree credentials, fraternity/sorority membership which can function as passports into other social and institutional spheres and intangible assets like ego strength.

These approaches of considering identity aspects within economic contexts allow, together with the functional economic reconstruction of social interactions and social capital as shown above, the introduction of identity as an extensive and very basal cost-benefit theory. Identity capital in this regard combines an individual's supply of identity-building and stabilising characteristics and attributes, which were gained within social interactions. Within the concept of distinction benefit, the necessity to preserve and develop the own identity by distinction from and interactions with others, next to nourishment, warmness and other biological caused basic requirements and wants, can be ranked as a meta-preference. Therefore, all individual's characteristics, acquired by interacting with other individuals, can be recognised as its identity capital stock (Freese, Euler & Marggraf, 2008).

CONCLUSION

This article is based upon the assumption that the term of social capital is not clearly defined and that there is a lack of investigating and embedding problems of isolated social interactions into a formal, deductive theory.

Based on this it is assumed that the discussion of the term social capital reissues the since the Enlightenment existing debate about the relation between individual and society. On further consideration of the debate about social capital two different discussion cords were highlighted. One concept, which is rather individualistic and sees social capital as an individual resource; and another point of view, which is rather collective and for which social capital is a pan-social phenomenon. It was further surveyed which contribution social capital concepts, which are oriented at the rational-choice approach, can make in order to solve the dispute between individual and society. In doing so, it became obvious that Coleman's as well as Becker's approaches were not able to fully solve the logical problem in a satisfactory way. By taking into account the logical necessary operation of distinction (distinction benefit) for generating the individual within the homo oeconomicus model it is shown that the dilemma of investing into social interactions and also the logical discrepancy between individual and society can be resolved by using slightly modified concepts.

Implications for action. Although the presented argumentation is just a first suggestions and has to be discussed and elaborated more in detail the new perspective on social capital allows some advanced considerations: First of all it gives a logical basis for those empirical findings which showed that heterodox and varied networks with both weak and strong ties lead to more economic success. For example, Meyerson (1994); Apinunmahakul (2007); Brandt (2006) as well as Erickson (2001) and Seibert, Kraimer and Liden (2001) have shown that, to put it simply, those persons with more diverse networks will find a new and well paid job easier and faster than others. The same results occur if one analyses the social capital of entrepreneurs (Birley, 1985; Aldrich, Rosen & Woodward, 1987; Cooper, Folta & Woo, 1991; Aldrich & Reese, 1993; Hansen, 1995; Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998; Baum, Calabrese & Silverman, 2000; Davidson & Honig, 2003; Elfring & Hulsink, 2003; Lechner & Dowling, 2003; Pages & Garmise, 2003; Bosma, van Praag, Thurik & de Wit, 2004, Witt, 2004; Jansen, 2005;). Those entrepreneurs with the more varied network relationships, interactions and network structure are more innovative and successful than others.

According to our new perspective on social capital these findings are plausible because people with many different characteristics and many different relationships as well as interactions gain more distinction benefit and are better able to get access to different kinds of resources. Those people with a manifold stock of characteristics and relationships are also a more interesting interaction partner because one can get easily a lot of distinction benefit and access to all the other resources by interacting with these people.

That's why this nexus also might be an explanation for the interdependency of different types of capital as it was mentioned by Bourdieu (1983).

On the other hand this result can lead to an action plan for individuals and also a wider understanding of what management is about because from an economic point of view one actually has to become a 'strategic interaction manager' to be successful. That means economic players have to understand that interactions are the central economic variable even more than in concepts like the 'customer relationship management' or the 'stakeholder relationship management' (Freeman, 1984). Therefore, they have to manage their interactions, relationships and so their social capital very aware and rational in order to pursue and achieve their own desires. "We therefore assume that companies elevate the exchange and/or the mastery of exchange processes, i.e. interaction capabilities to the status of strategic maxims. This ability (…) becomes a strategic success factor for a successful market existence (…)" (Blecker, 2000, p.3).

That's the reason why the strategic interaction management will have to take up and advance those tools which were offered e.g. by the 'interaction approach' (Hakansson, 1982; Turnbull, Ford & Cunningham, 1996) like network analysis or bridging instruments (Euler, 2007) or why professional strategic interaction managers ought to support the economic players by offering 'Know-how' and 'Know-who' about the ways to design their social capital (Gemünden & Walter, 1995).

So after all the new perspective on social interactions and social capital means on the one hand, that the problems which arose from the 'Hobbes dilemma' can now be solved on a common basis and a new interdisciplinary co-operation of sociology and economics is possible. Now social capital can really be seen as an "umbrella concept" (Adler & Kwon, 2002) and as the fundamental social category for individuals and societies at all. On the other hand, it becomes possible to generate results which are important for numerous topics in the tension field of economy and society. One topic may be the understanding of identity and also the discussion about the problem of public goods like democracy or environmental protection may gain a new dynamic.

Finally, the presented solution carries a moral and ethical statement as the logical necessity of distinguishing requires a plea for tolerating and accepting others. It does not matter whether other people differ in their opinion, background, belief, gender or appearance. All these differences are important for everyone's existence because they are the source for individuality and they enrich ones life in the true sense of the word (Euler, 2006b).

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