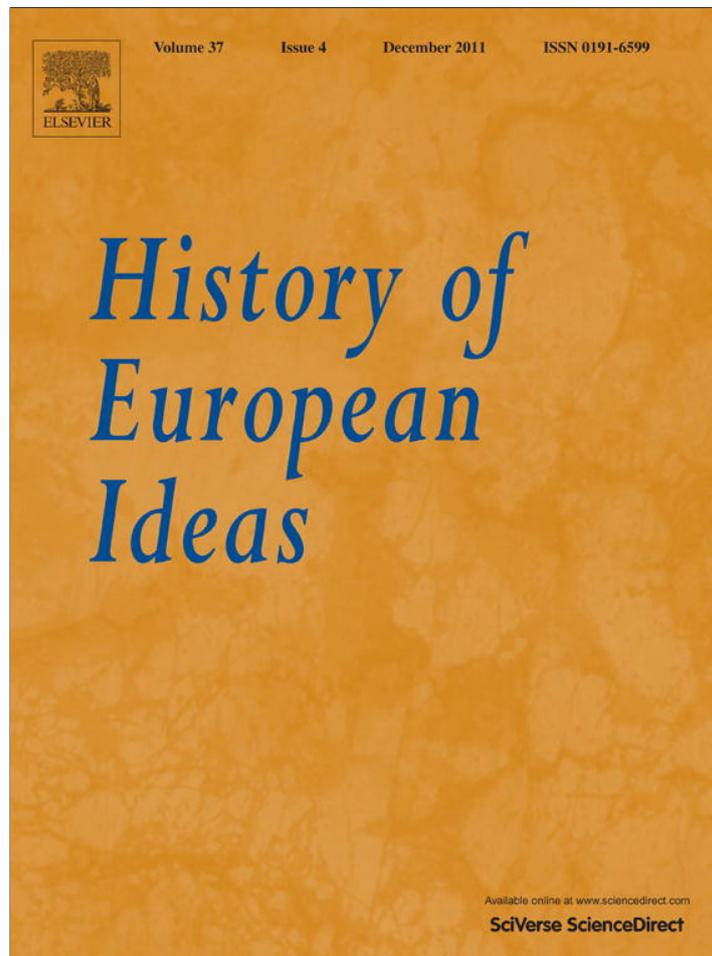


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Vergemeinschaftung and Vergesellschaftung in Max Weber: A reconstruction of his linguistic usage[☆]

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ABSTRACT

When Max Weber made use of the terms “Vergemeinschaftung” and “Vergesellschaftung” in the first chapter of “Economy and Society”, he was among other things alluding to Ferdinand Tönnies’ well-known usage of “Gemeinschaft” and “Gesellschaft”, as well as to related conceptions in the work of Georg Simmel. However, Weber’s usage not only differed from the senses in which Tönnies and Simmel used these terms; he had himself altered his own usage since the early draft of this chapter, published in 1913 as “On some Categories of Interpretive Sociology”. The tangled resonances that result from this are carefully identified and separated, and in so doing light is shed upon the nature and status of Weber’s intentions in writing his important chapter on “Basic Sociological Categories”.

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The two versions of the “Basic Sociological Concepts” and their significance in Max Weber’s writings¹

For some time now efforts to subordinate Max Weber’s writings to the kind of social theoretical readings which take their orientation from Marx, Durkheim, Parsons and Luhmann have

[☆] This is a translation of “Vergemeinschaftung” and “Vergesellschaftung” bei Max Weber. Eine Rekonstruktion seines Sprachgebrauchs”, *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* Jg. 29 Heft 6 (December 2000) pp. 423–43. Translated by Keith Tribe (Department of History, University of Sussex, United Kingdom, e-mail address: tess@dircon.co.uk).

¹ Since the object of this paper is to explore Weber’s linguistic usage, its variation and development, the key concepts are here left untranslated, so that the reader might be able to see clearly the relevant connections and discontinuities. There are two separate problems. Firstly, while *Gemeinschaft* can be relatively straightforwardly translated as “community” together with its cognates, to translate *Gesellschaft* simply as “society,” or “the social” is misleading, not least that *Gesellschaft* was never the central concept for Weber that this might imply. Moreover, between 1913 and 1920 he changed his usage towards *sozial*; but for example to render *Vergesellschaftung* as the English “socialisation” violates Weber’s own distancing from Simmel’s use of the term, as Klaus Lichtblau demonstrates below. There is an argument for the use of “sociation” as a translation of *Vergesellschaftung*, as Lawrence Scaff does successfully in his essay “The ‘Cool Objectivity of Sociation’: Max Weber and Marianne Weber in America”, *History of the Human Sciences* Vol. 11 No. 2 (1998) 61–82, espec. 64 citing a passage from the 1906 essay on “Churches” and “Sects”. However, to use this translation in *Economy and Society* Ch. 1 §9. would be quite misleading and undermine the arguments which Klaus Lichtblau here advances. Secondly, the prefix “ver-” can be added to German verbs to convey a sense of movement or process: *fahren* (to travel), *verfahren* (to become lost); *rutschen* (to slip); *verrutschen* (to slip over, or at least experience a sudden unexpected slip); and nouns can be formed in many cases from these verbs, as happens with *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*. Hence these two nouns imply a process, not primarily a condition. The reader also needs to be aware that *Handeln* should be consistently read as “action”. [trans.].

become strikingly uncommon. Instead, attention has turned to the fact that Weber, in contrast to other classical sociological writers, consciously avoided the concept “society” (*Gesellschaft*). As a consequence, the interpretive sociology that he founded is no longer promoted as a contribution to a theory of society, but is now increasingly understood as a conceptual sociological approach which was intended to be placed alongside, and serve, the development of historical research.² We should also not be misled by the decision of the editors of the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* to retain, after all, the familiar *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* as the main title for Weber’s contributions to the *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik*, rather than the substantially more fitting and long-favoured *Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte*. For this editorial decision does not represent a reversion to the previous interpretation of Weber’s writings as so many contributions to social theory. Firstly, new research related to editorial work on the *Gesamtausgabe* demonstrates the degree to which the texts collected under the title *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* escape any such interpretation. Secondly, Weber’s contribution to the *Grundriß* has come down to us in two separate fragmentary

² Johannes Weiß, “Georg Simmel, Max Weber und die ‘Soziologie’”, in O. Rammstedt (ed.) *Simmel und die frühen Soziologen. Nähe und Distanz zu Durkheim, Tönnies und Max Weber* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 1988) 36–63; Hartmut Tyrell, “Max Webers Soziologie – Eine Soziologie ohne ‘Gesellschaft’”, in G. Wagner, H. Zipprian (ed.) *Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre. Interpretation und Kritik* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 1994) 390–414; Klaus Lichtblau, “Soziologie und Antisozioologie um 1900: Dilthey, Simmel und Weber”, in Peter-Ulrich Merz-Benz, Gerhard Wagner (ed.) *Soziologie und Antisozioologie* (Universitätsverlag Konstanz, Konstanz, 2001) 17–35.

versions, and these fragments compel us to recognise the differences between the two different versions in responding to such questions, before moving on to seek a comprehensive interpretation of the manuscripts in question.³

A differentiated approach of this kind is needed not only in respect of the material part of Weber's sociology, but also with regard to the basic sociological concepts that he employed. For the terminology used in the older and more extensive part of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* remains closely linked to the conceptual distinctions he employed in his 1913 essay "Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie", and not to the "Soziologische Grundbegriffe" of 1920 published as Ch. 1 of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* in the newer section of the work. There are therefore not only two different versions of Weber's contribution to the *Grundriß*, but two different versions of his basic sociological concepts; and these must be clearly and precisely distinguished if we are not to create enormous confusion in dealing with the final "great book" that Weber left at his death.⁴ The implications of this historical approach to the texts can be clarified by taking one simple example that gives some indication of the material problems arising. It is well-known that Friedrich Tenbruck, to whom we are indebted for many very significant contributions to our better understanding of Max Weber, repeatedly emphasised that, just like Georg Simmel, Max Weber preferred the concept *Vergesellschaftung* to that of *Gesellschaft*. Tenbruck argued that both Simmel and Weber sought in this way to mark themselves off from the nineteenth century tradition of speculative theories of society, while at the same time stating their opposition to the reified use of collective concepts in the social sciences.⁵ But Tenbruck neither told us how Weber and Simmel actually employed the concept of *Vergesellschaftung*, nor did he ask himself why Weber, and not Simmel, had gone further and used the related and equally important concept of *Vergemeinschaftung*. This basic conceptual distinction in Weber's work about which Tenbruck had nothing to say relates of course not to Simmel, but to Ferdinand Tönnies, whose early sociological text *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* of 1887 employed a corresponding categorical distinction, even if Tönnies himself did not employ the concepts of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*.⁶

Answering the question regarding the degree to which Weber's use of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* was influenced

by Tönnies is however hindered by the fact that Weber's own linguistic usage did not remain unchanged. There is instead an earlier and a later version of his use of these basic concepts for his sociology of *Verstehen*, both of which are expressly linked to Tönnies' book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.⁷ Unfortunately, however, neither the relation of the two different usages of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* in Max Weber's writings has been clarified, nor is there in the commentary any consensus on how strongly Weber's usage of these terms can in fact be traced back to the distinction that Tönnies made between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. A recurring failure to take sufficient account of the difference between the older and the newer versions of Weber's basic sociological concepts has made it difficult to properly evaluate the textual consequences of both usage and difference. Opinion ranges from a clear recognition of Tönnies' influence on Weber, as in Talcott Parsons and Robert Nisbet,⁸ to René König's supposition that the 1913 essay on categories represents a "uniquely oblique polemic against Tönnies".⁹ By contrast, there prevails among those who do clearly distinguish Weber's two conceptual versions the view that it was only in the later, 1920, version that Weber's usage approached Tönnies' own, while Weber's earlier use of the terminology is thought to be unconnected to Tönnies.¹⁰ In this regard Stefan Breuer is an exception, taking the opposing position: that it is especially in the 1913 essay on categories and the older sections of *Economy and Society* that Weber is strongly influenced by Tönnies, later moving away from Tönnies in the first chapter of *Economy and Society*.¹¹ No agreement has even been reached on the repeatedly-expressed supposition that Weber replaced Tönnies' contrast of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* with a tripartite conceptual construct. While Parsons took the view that Weber's category of "struggle" or "conflict" represented a third form of social relationship alongside *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* and so overcame Tönnies' dualism, René König was of the opinion that Weber distinguished himself from Tönnies by treating struggle and force as a constitutive element of associational and social action, and so radically separated himself from Tönnies quite evident glorification of *Gemeinschaft*.¹² There has also recently been controversy over the question of which of the two versions of the basic

³ Wolfgang Schluchter, "Max Webers Beitrag zum 'Grundriß der Sozialökonomik'. Editionsprobleme und Editionsstrategien", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 50 (1998) 327–43; Wolfgang Mommsen, "Zur Entstehung von Max Webers hinterlassenem Werk 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Soziologie'", Europäisches Zentrum für Staatswissenschaften und Staatspraxis, Berlin 1999; Klaus Lichtblau, "Der Fortschritt einer Edition. Zur Wiederkehr von 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' innerhalb der Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe", *Soziologische Revue* Bd. 23 (2000) 123–31.

⁴ The "hinterlassenes Hauptwerk" whose status as such Friedrich Tenbruck vigorously questioned – "Das Werk Max Webers", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 27 (1975) 663–702 [translated as "The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber", in Keith Tribe (ed.) *Reading Weber*, Routledge and Kegan Paul (London, 1987) 42–84]. The idea that *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* was a final "great book" can be traced originally to Marianne Weber's biography, reinforced by Johannes Winckelmann's essay, "Max Webers Opus posthumum. Eine literarische Studie", *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* Jg. 105 (1949) 368–87. This view can be treated today as unquestioned, so long as it is recognised that there is no coherent and complete book, but instead a series of significant textual fragments that were written as part of Weber's contribution to the *Grundriß*, and which have therefore to be placed in a broader and historical understanding of Weber's writings which is still developing. Important for this are the various parts of MWG Bd. 22, which assemble Weber's scholarly *Nachlaß*.

⁵ Friedrich Tenbruck, "Emile Durkheim oder die Geburt der Gesellschaft aus dem Geist der Soziologie", *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* Bd. 10 (1981) 337; *Die unbewältigten Sozialwissenschaften oder: Die Abschaffung des Menschen* (Styria, Graz, 1984) 133ff., 203; "Gesellschaftsgeschichte oder Weltgeschichte?" *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 41 (1989) 422ff., 428ff.

⁶ See on this Niall Bond, "Ferdinand Tönnies und Max Weber", *Annali di Sociologia* II, 49–72.

⁷ In both the 1913 essay on sociological categories and in the first chapter of *Economy and Society* Weber referred to this book very positively, and emphasised that deviations in conceptual structure from the linguistic usage of Tönnies and other writers was not necessarily founded upon a divergence of views – see his remarks in the first footnote to "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" (trans. Edith Graber) *Sociological Quarterly* Vol. 22, 179; and *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (trans. Alexander Henderson, Talcott Parsons) (William Hodge and Co., London, 1947) 80. In comments at the 1910 meeting of the Sociology Society in Frankfurt he went so far as to call *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* "one of the founding works of our modern social-philosophical perspective" – *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik*, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) (Tübingen, 1924) 470.

⁸ Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action. A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*, Second Edition (Free Press, New York, 1949) Vol. II, 640–94; Robert Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (Heinemann, London, 1970) 71–82.

⁹ René König, "Die Begriffe Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft bei Ferdinand Tönnies", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 7 (1955) 369.

¹⁰ Günther Roth, "Introduction" to Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978) CII; Werner J. Cahnman, "Tönnies and Weber" in his *Ferdinand Tönnies. A New Evaluation. Essays and Documents* (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1973) 259; Cahnman, "Tönnies, Durkheim and Weber", *Social Science Information* Vol. 15 (1976) 847; Cahnman, "Tönnies and Weber: A Rejoinder", *European Journal of Sociology* 22 (1981) 154; and Bond, "Ferdinand Tönnies und Max Weber", *European Journal of Sociology* 22 (1981) 67ff.

¹¹ Stefan Breuer, "Max Webers Staatssoziologie", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 45 (1993) 200ff.

¹² Parsons, *Structure of Social Action* (Free Press, New York, 1949) 653, 694; König, "Die Begriffe Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 7 (1955) 368ff.

sociological categories can be thought to be substantially more elaborated. When working out the principles of his “theory of communicative action” Jürgen Habermas was inclined to regard the first version as the more developed, since it anticipated what he considered to be the central dualism of “outcome-oriented action” and “compromise-oriented action”. Wolfgang Schluchter by contrast took the opposite viewpoint: the more recent version of the basic concepts was more differentiated and materially productive, since in the older version the typology of differing orientations to action was missing.¹³

Hence the question of the extent to which Weber was influenced by Tönnies is closely related to the question regarding the relationship of these two different versions of his basic sociological concepts. In addition to this, we need to take account of Weber's linguistic usage in the older section of *Economy and Society*. For it is by no means the case that this corresponds in every respect to the 1913 essay on categories, since the texts contained in the older sections of *Economy and Society* were assembled from manuscripts that had been composed at different times, and these manuscripts were themselves at different stages of revision and development.¹⁴ A distinction has therefore to be made between those sections of *Economy and Society* whose basic concepts correspond to the 1913 essay on categories, and those which do not, or no longer do so.¹⁵ Using a lexico-statistical analysis Hiroshi Orihara has sought to demonstrate that the terminology employed in the older sections of *Economy and Society* broadly corresponds with few exceptions to that to be found in the 1913 essay on categories. He has also pointed out some important changes that Weber made to his basic concepts in 1920. Orihara has not however claimed to have examined these changes systematically, nor has he conducted a substantive investigation of the semantic shifts involved.¹⁶ The following will seek to do so by taking just two concepts, *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, and reconstructing Weber's use of them. It is recognised that these concepts are not only to be found as sociological basic concepts in the writings of Max Weber, but also in the specialist literature upon which his work draws. Since Weber developed the foundations of his interpretive sociology at a relatively late stage, it was only natural that he would among other things critically examine the corresponding theoretical principles of Tönnies and Simmel. We will deal first of all with Tönnies contrast of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, and the manner in which Simmel employed the concept *Vergesellschaftung*; this will enable us to isolate and

compare the two difference versions of Weber's use of the concepts *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*. The question will also be raised of the consequences arising from these different versions for a better understanding of the interpretive sociology that Max Weber initiated.

Weber's later comparative and universal historical investigations were emphatically dedicated to the question of the origin and specificity of occidental rationalism, together with the particular cultural and social development of Western Europe and North America. He took account in so doing of the growing conviction in the writings of Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel and Werner Sombart that the transition from tradition to modernity could be reconstructed in terms of a comprehensive process of rationalisation and disenchantment.¹⁷ His basic conceptual distinction between *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* was therefore quite clearly aimed at the wider process of social rationalisation. For *Rationalisierung* and *Vergesellschaftung* are interchangeable concepts in Weber's linguistic usage. Within the sociological basic concepts that he developed there are two distinct forms of social order, reflecting the early nineteenth-century contrast of “civil society” and “state”, which have especial importance: *Marktvergesellschaftung* and *anstaltsmäßigen Vergesellschaftung*.¹⁸ Although from the very first Weber was concerned to ascribe an equal conceptual status to market and to bureaucracy, he did not manage in the first version of his sociological basic concepts to embed these two fundamental forms of a “rational” social order within a unitary terminology. As will be shown in the following, it was only in the second version that Weber was able to define his basic concepts in such a way that bureaucratic rule and the way in which the market balances interests could both be described as a central form of *Vergesellschaftung*.

The use of the concepts *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* and *Vergesellschaftung* in Tönnies and Simmel

From the second edition of 1912, Tönnies' epochal book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* carried the subtitle “Basic Concepts of Pure Sociology”.¹⁹ This new subtitle not only represented a distancing from an earlier self-understanding that remained strongly inflected by social philosophy, which strongly marked the first edition of 1887; Tönnies also had in mind a relationship between modern economics and sociological theory, in which the latter played the role of an auxiliary discipline for the former.²⁰ Although this relation between the two disciplines was thereby established *ex post*, closer examination of his original conceptual counterpoint of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* reveals that from the very beginning Tönnies sought to relate his key terms to the substance of contemporary political economy. *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* not only corresponded to the distinction between natural and money economy, but also to that between household economy and a modern society based upon labour and exchange. In this respect Tönnies' concept of *Gesellschaft* is identical to that of “civil society” current in eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosophy, and which went on to mark early nineteenth century classical political economy; while his understanding of

¹³ Jürgen Habermas, “*Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns. Bd. I: Handlungsrationalitytät und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1981) 377ff.; Wolfgang Schluchter, “Handlungs- und Strukturtheorie nach Max Weber”, *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* Bd. 10 (2000) 125–36.

¹⁴ Schluchter, “Max Webers Beitrag”, *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* Bd. 10 (2000); Mommsen, “Zur Entstehung”, *Europäisches Zentrum für Staatswissenschaften und Staatspraxis*, Berlin 1999.

¹⁵ Strictly speaking the 1913 essay itself falls into two parts: an older part (4–7), and a new part (1–3) which Weber wrote especially for publication in 1913 and which anticipates in substance much of the opening passages of *Economy and Society* Ch. 1. Weber later completely replaced the theoretical terminology employed in Sections 4–7, retaining from the older usage only the terms *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* together with *Anstalt* and *Verband*, while altering their meaning. This prompted Wolfgang Schluchter to ask a justifiable question: whether the 1913 essay is in fact the real starting point for the older sections of *Economy and Society*; or whether Weber planned to compose one, but in fact never did. It is for this reason that the *Gesamtausgabe* does not include the 1913 essay in the volumes devoted to *Economy and Society*, as argued by Hiroshi Orihara in his “‘Max Webers Beitrag zum ‘Grundriß der Sozialökonomik’. Das Vorkriegsmanuskript als ein integriertes Ganzes”, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* Jg. 51 (1999) 724–34. Instead the essay on categories is placed where it was originally planned, in the still unpublished volume devoted to “Verstehende Soziologie und Werturteilsfreiheit. Schriften und Reden 1908–1920”.

¹⁶ Orihara's arguments are usefully summarised in “From a ‘Torso with a Wrong Head’ to ‘Five Disjointed Body-Parts without a Head’: A Critique of the Editorial Policy for Max Weber Gesamtausgabe I/22”, *Max Weber Studies* 3.2 (2003) 133–68.

¹⁷ See Gerhard Oexle, “Kulturwissenschaftliche Reflexionen über soziale Gruppen in der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft: Tönnies, Simmel, Durkheim und Max Weber”, in Christian Meier (ed.) *Die okzidentale Stadt nach Max Weber. Zum Problem der Zugehörigkeit in Antike und Mittelalter, Historische Zeitschrift Neue Folge* Bd. 17 (1994) Beiheft; Stefan Breuer, “Von Tönnies zu Weber. Zur Frage einer ‘deutschen Linie’ der Soziologie”, *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* Bd. 6 (1996) 227–45.

¹⁸ Very approximately “market” and “institutional” sociation. [trans.]

¹⁹ The first 1887 edition had been subtitled “A Treatise on Communism and Socialism as Empirical Cultural Forms”.

²⁰ Ferdinand Tönnies, “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage”, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt, 1979) XXXIV–XXXV.

Gemeinschaft retains an allegiance to the tradition of the “house” which was a central form of rule in older European society, and for which Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl created a lasting literary monument in his *Naturgeschichte des Volkes*.²¹ The Aristotelian distinction of householding from acquisition remains therefore of formative importance for Tönnies' contrast of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*: the first rests chiefly on the household and village community, while the latter is characteristic of the modern city and civilisation formed by commerce and the international exchange of goods and money.²² The basic forms of *Gemeinschaft* are *family* and *kinship* together with *neighbourliness* and *friendship*, whereas all social connections constituted by *Gesellschaft* are marked by *exchange* and *contract*. For Tönnies therefore *Gesellschaft* is the epitome of all “rational legal relations” and all “rational social relations”, so that one enters it “as if into alien territory”.²³

Tönnies demonstrated the existence of this basic counterpoint between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* using literary, economic and historico-legal sources, while also seeking to lend it a new meaning associated with the transition from tradition to modernity which had transformed European society. Although conceived as pure concepts, they were characterised by specific historical experiences, so that in Tönnies this counterpoint is at once linked to a comprehensive theory of social change. We should not be distracted from this by the fact that he subordinated these two concepts to two distinct and fundamental forms of “social will” – natural will (*Wesenswille*) and artificial will (*Kürwille*). His attempt to found different forms of social unity upon a doctrine of human will owes a great deal to the tradition of rational natural law, but in Tönnies it has the theoretical function of genetically linking “apparently transcendental structures” to human thought and will. The antitheological and antidogmatic tendency of this voluntaristic foundation of different forms of social life conforms in this respect to the same aim as Max Weber's programme of tracing all collective structures back to meaningfully-oriented action by individuals, even if Tönnies differed from Weber by employing a “psychological” explanatory strategy, rather than one that invoked a theory of action.²⁴ His description of the two forms of social will consequently correspond to the contrast he makes between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*: the first represents a “natural” unity rooted in “real and organic life”, the second represents by contrast an “artificial” unity and so involves a purely “ideal and mechanical construction”, is in other words an “artefact”.²⁵ Communal (*gemeinschaftliches*) life is thus characterised by the prevalence of intuitive, “sentimental” relationships between persons, while social (*gesellschaftliches*) life is dominated by “calculative” understanding and the purposive-rational considerations associated with it. Corresponding to these Tönnies introduces a series of further counterconcepts: hereditary *consensus* versus *contractual agreement*, *tradition* and *custom* versus *convention* and *natural law*, *fellowship* (*Genossenschaft*) versus *formally-organised association* (*Verein*) and so on.²⁶ Like Henry Sumner Maine before him, Tönnies saw here a universal-historical development from lives hitherto marked by lineage and tradition to contractually agreed orders; or in Maine's words, a shift from status to contract. He conceived this to be part and parcel of a

displacement of “communal culture” by “the civilisation of state and society”, although Tönnies did lay emphasis on the possibility of new communal forms of living emerging within modern society, connecting this to hopes for the future socialist reform of society.²⁷

Tönnies' conceptual opposition of *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* was therefore in this respect not only ideal typical in character, but was founded upon a historico-philosophical construction which he had adopted from nineteenth-century socialist theorists. In contrast to Simmel and Weber he did not of course make use of the concept of *Vergesellschaftung*, but his understanding of society was constructed in such a manner that he was able to conceive the continual emergence of new social tensions and conflicts, together with an all-encompassing developmental dynamic, as the mark of a progressive process of *Vergesellschaftung*. While Tönnies considered exchange and contract to be the central features of modern society, Simmel sought to lend the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* a much more general significance. True, Simmel thought that exchange was an elementary form of *Vergesellschaftung*. But in his own sociological studies he added a whole series of other forms of *Vergesellschaftung*, such as the creation of new hierarchies, the division of labour and competition, delegation and the formation of parties; furthermore, he expressly declared these various forms of *Vergesellschaftung*, or “forms of sociation”, to be the proper object of modern sociology.²⁸ His concept of *Vergesellschaftung* is here identical to the concept of “reciprocity” that he draws upon to describe social relationships. For he considered that an elementary form of *Vergesellschaftung* already existed if two or more individuals became involved in a relationship, or entered into reciprocity. Simmel thought the underlying motives and interests that prompted individuals to engage in such reciprocity, and hence initiate a process of *Vergesellschaftung*, to be irrelevant. This was because the version of sociology that he developed involved a conceptual distinction between the (material) *content* and a given particular *form* of *Vergesellschaftung*, a distinction which consciously abstracted from the concrete psychic motivations of acting individuals. His sociological approach deals with these motivations only insofar as they have already been “socialised” (*vergesellschaftet*), that is, are capable of being described in purely formal terms.²⁹ In so doing he distinguished individual instances of *Vergesellschaftung* according to their durability, from the brief moment of a chance meeting to the emergence of lasting social configurations. He was especially interested in the way that the most diverse action frameworks were characterised by constantly recurring formal similarities, and he sought to distil these into a formal set of sociological principles. In this context Simmel consciously avoided using the concept of “society” as a collective subject. For Simmel, *Gesellschaft* is something which is already present when two individuals engaged in reciprocity, so that his concept of society is purely nominalist, being the sum total of all such reciprocal activity.³⁰

Parallel to this formal sociological perspective Simmel also emphasised the theoretical aspects of socialisation in such processes of *Vergesellschaftung*. It was not by chance that he used the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* to characterise the social structures and processes associated with the progressive *process of socialisation* of an individual. For this reason it was the

²¹ Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik Bd. 3: Die Familie*, Cotta, Stuttgart 1855.

²² Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, trans. Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) 22ff., 52ff.

²³ Ferdinand Tönnies, “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage”, XXXIII; Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) 18.

²⁴ Ferdinand Tönnies, “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage”, XXXIIIf; Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) 95ff.

²⁵ Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) 7ff.

²⁶ Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) 32, 63, 233.

²⁷ Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) 192, 257–8; Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society and its Relation to Modern Ideas*, 10th edition (John Murray, London, 1887) 170.

²⁸ Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 6, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 209ff.; *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 11, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 54f.

²⁹ Simmel, *Soziologie, Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 11, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 17ff.

³⁰ Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes*, 210; *Soziologie*, 23f.

opposition of “individual” and “society”, and not that between “community” and “society”, which was of central importance to his understanding of *Vergesellschaftung*. In this connection Simmel laid express emphasis upon the fact that *Vergesellschaftung* did represent a “psychic phenomenon”, since it was based primarily upon an “inner linking” of the contents of consciousness. The way in which we come to terms with the ineluctable separateness of the other was, for Simmel, the “most profound, psychological-epistemological schema and problem of *Vergesellschaftung*”, with which he sought to deal in his famous essay from 1908 “On the Problem: How is Society Possible?” by setting up three “sociological *a priori*”.³¹ According to Simmel, the existence of singular forms of *Vergesellschaftung* is mainly bound up with the consciousness of becoming socially involved, or of being socialised. Accordingly for the social position of the individual the principle holds that “the nature of his condition of socialisation . . . is determined, in part of in full, by the nature of his condition of not being socialised.”³² A “perfect society” (*vollkommene Gesellschaft*) would therefore be one in which the inclinations of an individual encountered an objective correspondence in a social position which was ideal for the future development of these inclinations. If the individual does not succeed in finding such a correspondence, then “that individual is not socialised, the society is not the seamless reciprocity that it conceptualises.”³³ Simmel’s understanding of *Vergesellschaftung* is consequently a very specific combination of the inner orientation of the individual with respect to the state of being socialised to the existence of an objectively given social structure in which that individual must find a corresponding “position”.³⁴ At the same time the individual human being is always more than a socialised being. Simmel explicitly recognised this circumstance, itself indicative of a conscious self-limitation of his formal sociology; and this led in turn to his involvement in a philosophy art, culture and religion which complemented this unyielding opposition of individual and society.³⁵

The distinctive nature of Weber’s linguistic usage in the 1913 essay on categories and in the older part of “Economy and Society”

Like Tönnies and Simmel, Max Weber avoided the attribution of abstract and general concepts to real acting subjects. Consequently, he sought to relate the empirical validity of the conceptions of order linked to these concepts to the meaningful and interpretable action of individuals participating in given social relations and processes. By lending his interpretive sociology a theoretical foundation in concrete action Weber underlined the probabilistic nature of the actual construction of individual forms of social order. The basic conceptual distinction that he made in the essay on categories between *Gemeinschaftshandeln* and *Gesellschaftshandeln*,³⁶ together with the related use of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, is thus primarily influenced by Tönnies book, Simmel’s conception of *Vergesellschaftung* having only a marginal role in Weber’s conceptual terminology. For Weber repeatedly criticised the concept of “reciprocity”, so central to Simmel’s formal sociology, on the grounds that it was too abstract and

indefinite to grasp the specific character of social structures and processes, since his criterion of the meaningful relatedness of action played no great role in Simmel’s use of the concept.³⁷ By contrast, Weber did adopt Simmel’s distinction of form from content, and the significance of this will be considered in the conclusion to this essay.

Although the types of action that Weber discussed in the essay on categories are clearly related to Tönnies’ distinction of *Gemeinschaft* from *Gesellschaft*, Weber’s own conceptual schema is a great deal more complex and differentiated than the dualism offered by Tönnies, so that the core concepts related to this dualism cannot be directly related to each other. In addition to this we should note that Weber did not only distinguish three different types of action; but treated one of the types as a special case within the tripartite construction while also using it for the most general concept for his typology of action. Understanding of the distinction, closely related to the foregoing, of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, is also made more difficult by the way in which Weber switches back and forth between dualistic and tripartite conceptual constructions, on top of which he makes quite clear that he wants the related types of action to be understood in terms of a developmental history linked to the related process of social rationalisation. It is therefore advisable to begin with the distinction of individual types of action, as Weber himself did in the essay on categories, turning then to the closely related conceptual usage of the older part of *Economy and Society*.

In the essay on categories Weber understood *Gemeinschaftshandeln* to be human action which is related to the behaviour of others in a subjectively meaningful manner, or in other words, is related in a subjectively meaningful way to the expectation of particular behaviour in others, this latter case representing for Weber only the “rationally limiting case” of *Gemeinschaftshandeln*.³⁸ In contrast Weber understood *Gesellschaftshandeln*, or a *vergesellschaftet* action, to be an action which is meaningfully related to expectations rooted in the existence of *social orders* whose rules have been developed on a purely purposively-rational basis in respect of the consequent expected action on the part of the *vergesellschaftetes* individual. Weber added the qualification that the meaningful orientation to convention and rules has also to be subjectively purposively-rational.³⁹ Action which brings about an agreement, or a social order arising from such agreement, was called *Vergesellschaftungshandeln* by Weber, so that he might terminologically distinguish this from *Gesellschaftshandeln*, which is action oriented to an already-existing social order. This materially corresponds to what Weber described in his study *Die Stadt*, the formation of a medieval town community through the swearing of a ritual oath (*coniuratio*) being an “acute act of *Vergesellschaftung*.”⁴⁰

Gemeinschaftshandeln is therefore the general concept and *Gesellschaftshandeln* the concept which aims to specify *Gemeinschaftshandeln* to the extent that it is oriented to a rule-based social order. *Vergesellschaftungshandeln* on the other hand

³⁷ Max Weber, “Ueber einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 6th edition, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) (Tübingen, 1985) 454; Max Weber, “George Simmel als Soziologe und Theoretiker der Geldwirtschaft”, *Simmel Newsletter* No. 1 (1991) 9–13; Lichtblau, “Kausalität oder Wechselwirkung? Max Weber und Georg Simmel im Vergleich”, in Wagner and Zipprian (eds.) *Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre, Interpretation und Kritik*, 540ff.; Hartmut Tyrell, “Max Webers Soziologie”, *Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre. Interpretation und Kritik*, 408ff.

³⁸ Weber, “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 441ff.

³⁹ Weber, “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 442.

⁴⁰ Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 749; “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 448; *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* Bd. I.22–5, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) (Tübingen, 1999) 125.

³¹ Simmel, *Soziologie, Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 11, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 35f., 45f.

³² Simmel, *Soziologie, Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 11, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 51.

³³ Simmel, *Soziologie, Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 11, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 59.

³⁴ Hence it is appropriate here to use the term “socialisation”. [trans.]

³⁵ Cf. my book *Georg Simmel* (Campus Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 1997) 68ff.

³⁶ While the first could be translated as “communal action”, the latter cannot be translated as “social action” since Weber would in time himself replace *Gesellschaftshandeln* with *Sozialhandeln*, and we need to understand why. [Trans.]

characterises action which forms such a rule-based order in the first place, Weber arguing that this could occur either by agreement (*Pakt*) or compulsion (*Okroyierung*). Although these two types of action, closely related to the concepts *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* were not further defined in the 1913 essay, it is possible to read out of the context in which he used these two basic sociological concepts at least their implicit but characteristic distinctiveness. For Weber, a *Vergemeinschaftung* arises if the action of two or more persons is meaningfully interrelated; a *Vergesellschaftung* exists by contrast if the action of two or more persons is not only meaningfully interrelated, but that furthermore this meaningful orientation of their action is based on the existence of an established social order, or alternatively, such actions brings an order of this kind into being. The first definition involves a demarcation with respect to pure mass behaviour, which is itself not meaningfully oriented; the second, by contrast, a demarcation from *Gemeinschaftshandeln* which is not meaningfully oriented to the existence of a rational social order. The concepts are therefore cleanly and precisely delimited, but at the same time linked together through a supervening semantic continuum, since *Gesellschaftshandeln* and *Vergesellschaftungshandeln* are, according to Weber, both phenomenal forms of *Gemeinschaftshandeln*. It is for this reason that in his pre-war manuscripts Weber also made use of the concept of *Gemeinschaft* as a general concept for quite varied social groups and formations: for example, the family; the ethnic and political community; the religious community; as well as market community, characterising in this way those social unities in respect of which a *Vergemeinschaftung* or a *Vergesellschaftung* occurs.⁴¹ In this connection Weber distinguishes, like Simmel, between occasional (“ephemeral”) and enduring (“perennial”) forms of *Vergesellschaftung*, but not between corresponding forms of *Vergemeinschaftung*, even though this would seem the obvious thing to do.⁴² Weber did also talk of all-encompassing *Vergesellschaftung* if a single *Vergesellschaftung* did not form an independent social formation, but was instead part of a more comprehensive *Vergesellschaftung*.⁴³ The “rational ideal type” of an enduring *Vergesellschaftung* was according to Weber the *Zweckverein*, the association formed with a specific end in view; this was based on a rule-governed order and disposed of media, aims, funds for the prosecution of its aims and also a “coercive apparatus” with which it could carry out its aims. All the same, the existence of a *Vergesellschaftung* is not necessarily dependent on the existence of such a *Zweckverein*, since according to Weber there was a set of stages from the occasional *Vergesellschaftung* to the *Zweckverein*, their common characteristic being that they rest on an agreed order.⁴⁴

The distinction that Weber makes in the 1913 essay between *Gemeinschaftshandeln* and *Gesellschaftshandeln* is related to Tönnies’ own usage, insofar as Weber also sees the existence of an *agreed social order* to be the central mark of a rational *Vergesellschaftung*. In his text *The City* Weber refers consciously to a *gewillkürte Vergesellschaftung*, to make clear the semantic connection to Tönnies’ concept of *Willkür*⁴⁵ as used in the first and

second editions of his book.⁴⁶ In older German law *Willkür* signified the self-made law which medieval German towns sought to make part of their corporate statutes in opposition to the legacy of “legitimate” powers.⁴⁷ Weber ascribed great significance to this self-made statutory act for medieval urban development, and he marked this by distinguishing in his legal sociology between contracts of purpose (*Zweckkontrakt*) and contracts of status (*Statuskontrakt*). He described the first as serving the regulation of trade in money and goods within the framework of a *Marktvergesellschaftung*; the second involved for the most part “fraternal contracts” through which a particular social group sought to assume corporate status, or first formed themselves into an independent corporation with legal capacity. Weber suggested that the “status contract” was a central element in the universal-historical development that Henry Sumner Maine had described in terms of “status to contract”, since of course only status groups with legal capacity are in a position to make independent contracts.⁴⁸

While underlining the strictly voluntaristic character of such a *gewillkürte Vergesellschaftung*, the concept of *Vergemeinschaftung* remains by contrast remarkably abstract and indefinite, at least in the 1913 essay. Moreover, Weber mostly used the concept in direct relation to a *third* type of action which he introduced in the 1913 essay; this third type was to some extent located between the other two – *Gemeinschaftshandeln* and *Gesellschaftshandeln* – and was given the name *Einverständnishandeln*, “action based on implicit understanding”. Weber clearly thought that he had to introduce this type of action because the definition he makes of *Vergesellschaftung* in the 1913 essay is not capable of including that domain of reality that remained central for Tönnies’ use of the concept *Gesellschaft*, and which also remained of key importance for Weber’s understanding of “rational *Vergesellschaftung*”: the reconciliation of the interests of two or more individuals through the *market*, and through the money economy which rested upon it. Both exchange and market process elude a definition of *Vergesellschaftung* oriented to the ideal type of the purposive association (*Zweckverein*), which is why in the case of isolated exchange Weber wrote of “inorganic *Vergesellschaftung*”. In addition to this, Weber made plain that *Vergesellschaftungshandeln* embodied in an exchange, *qua* an action bringing about a *Vergesellschaftung* “. . . does not necessarily have to be oriented to the expectations of those engaged in the *Vergesellschaftung*. Rather, as in the example, also to the expectation that an uninvolved third party will ‘respect’ the outcome of the exchange, the ‘transfer of ownership’.”⁴⁹

Isolated exchange also represents a form of *Vergesellschaftung*, because it involves an agreement which has *de facto* force even in the absence of a legal order. Market process and the use of money involve therefore, according to Weber, a form of *Gemeinschaftshandeln* which in the 1913 essay was dubbed *Einverständnishandeln*, “action based on implicit understanding”. Characteristic for such a specific form of *Gemeinschaftshandeln* is said to be the circumstance that, while not founded upon any purposive rational agreed order, it runs its course *as if* such an agreement had taken place, the action of participants being meaningfully related to this shared imputation.⁵⁰ This commonly-shared imputation is called

⁴¹ The central role of the concept of community in Weber’s pre-war manuscripts is documented in the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe Bd. I-1, entitled *Gemeinschaften* and edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen with Michael Meyer; J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) (Tübingen, 2001).

⁴² This qualification applies however only to the 1913 essay. In the older part of *Economy and Society* Weber did develop a commensurate terminology relating to his conception of community – *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 516.

⁴³ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 449. There is no direct connection here with the concept of comprehensive (*übergreifende*) *Vergesellschaftung* that Weber used in the older part of *Economy and Society*, despite the verbal association; this will be discussed below.

⁴⁴ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 447ff.

⁴⁵ See for a discussion of this term Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001) lii–liiii. [Trans.]

⁴⁶ Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 744; Max Weber Gesamtausgabe Bd. I.22–5, 111; Tönnies, “Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage”, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, XXXIII and XXXVIII.

⁴⁷ See Wilhelm Ebel, *Die Willkür. Eine Studie zur Denkformen des älteren deutschen Rechts*, Schwartz, Göttingen 1953; Oexle, “Kulturwissenschaftliche Reflexionen”, *Die okzidentale Stadt nach Max Weber*, 148ff.

⁴⁸ Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 401ff., 417; Günther Roth, “Introduction”, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, LXXXI.

⁴⁹ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 451.

⁵⁰ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 452.

by Weber an *Einverständnis*, an implicit understanding. This involves the idea that action oriented to the expectation of the behaviour of others has an objective chance of a successful outcome because the other parties to the interaction commit their own action to this expectation, without any explicit agreement having been made by the parties involved. In this way Weber excludes the question of the *motivation* for the formation of such a demanding form of co-ordinated action, in much the same way as he had excluded the question of the motivation leading to the creation and persistence of a *Vergesellschaftung* from the underlying investigative approach of the 1913 essay. What really interests him is the chance of the *factual* occurrence of such an implicit understanding which extends to include a meaningful relatedness to the action of unknown third parties.⁵¹ If such an implicit understanding exists, then *Gemeinschaftshandeln* based upon it creates an *Einverständnisgemeinschaft*, or an *Einverständnisgemeinschaft* which is distinguished from a rational *Vergesellschaftung* by the absence of a rules-based order. To this extent Weber can also say that *Gesellschaftshandeln* becomes a “special case” of *Einverständnishandeln* by virtue of this adherence to a rules-based order. Analogously, in the 1913 essay Weber distinguishes between institution (*Anstalt*) and corporate group (*Verband*), both of which represent the typical “rational orders of a *Vergesellschaftung*”. He defines an *Anstalt* as founded upon a rules-based order, but distinguished from a purely purposive association (*Zweckverein*) by the fact that membership is not voluntary. *Verband* on the other hand depends not on rules, but upon action oriented to an implicit understanding. Hence the *Anstalt* is a special case of the *Verband*, or a “partially rationally ordered corporate group.”⁵²

As a concrete example of the existence of an *Einverständnis-Vergemeinschaftung* in the 1913 essay Weber introduces among other forms a market community (*Marktgemeinschaft*) and a linguistic community (*Sprachgemeinschaft*). Why does Weber here talk in terms of *Vergemeinschaftung*, and not *Vergesellschaftung*? Surely the market is one of the most rational conceivable forms of the reconciliation of interests? And does not the use of a language rest upon rules which can be specified “systematically”? In the first case Weber introduces the argument that the use of money is oriented to the expectation that even future participants in a market will accept money. Nonetheless, this involves no orientation to a rules-based order specifying the form in which the needs of those involved will be met. It is more the case that the *absence* of any such explicit organisation of need and satisfaction represents a precondition for the use of money, which nonetheless as a rule leads to an outcome “as if” it were the orientation to an order that resulted in the needs of all being met.⁵³ It is in the interest of individual market participants that other participants behave just as rationally as they do themselves, but Weber sees in this no reason to talk about the existence of a *Vergesellschaftung*, because in 1913 he had not yet defined the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* by

the criterion of a rational perception of self-interest, he rather defined it in terms of an order founded upon formal agreement. This latter definition is not however the precondition for the existence of a linguistic community, since the use of language is generally based only on an expectation “as if speakers orient their behaviour to grammatical rules arrived at through deliberate agreement.”⁵⁴ Codifications of this kind therefore indicate nothing about the *actual* language use in which an interpretive sociology is primarily interested when seeking to explain the specific form of the *empirical validity* of social norms.

The conception of *Einverständnis* that Weber introduces here should in no regard be read as a “settlement” reached through voluntary agreement or solidaristic pledge. He deliberately conceives the concept so broadly that he can include within it not only *conflict* but also the acceptance of an *imposed* order.⁵⁵ It is for this reason that in the 1913 essay he contrasts *Vergemeinschaftung* based upon *Einverständnis* with *Vergesellschaftung* based upon an *agreed* order, even if as always Weber, when constructing ideal typical concepts, emphasises that there are fluid transitional states between individual types. But does this mean that in Weber this distinction of *Einverständnis-Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* has replaced Tönnies’ own distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*? We could go along with this line of argument only if Weber had actually used the concept of *Gemeinschaftshandeln* *exclusively* as a general concept for *Einverständnis-* and *Gesellschaftshandeln*, while making *Vergemeinschaftung* dependent on the prior existence of an *Einverständnis*. This is quite clearly not the case. For Weber vigorously emphasises that not every *Gemeinschaftshandeln* belongs to the category of *Einverständnishandeln*, and that alongside *Einverständnis-Vergemeinschaftung* there is also something like an *amorphous Vergemeinschaftung*. And so it is here a matter of an action which either is conditioned *en masse* or is simple *Gemeinschaftshandeln* without prior implicit understanding.⁵⁶

Unfortunately Weber does not let us know in his 1913 essay what he means by the limiting case of an “amorphous” *Vergemeinschaftung*. A preliminary indication of the substantial meaning of this type of *Vergemeinschaftung* can be read out of his concept of *Gemeinschaftshandeln*, which he defined very simply in terms of its inherent meaning, so that he might distinguish it from pure action *en masse*. In this Weber noted that in reality the transition from action *en masse* to *Gemeinschaftshandeln* was fluid, and in this respect there was “an entire series of transitions” between these two types of action, although he did not elaborate these.⁵⁷ Quite clearly Weber reserved the concept of an “amorphous” *Vergemeinschaftung* for this “entire series of transitions” between pure action *en masse* and explicit *Gemeinschaftshandeln* so that he might be able to mark it off from *Einverständnis-Vergemeinschaftung*.⁵⁸ With this he wished to make the point that the sociological basic concepts he used not only related to each other *logically*, but also according to a *developmental history* expressive of the degree to which its inherent social potential for rationalisation had been realised. It was not by chance that the 1913 essay also includes *Verbands-* and *Anstaltshandeln* alongside the three types of action outlined above.⁵⁹ This conceptual distinction is not only related to a *theory of rationalisation* of a

⁵¹ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 456, 459f. It is worth noting that Weber’s concept of *Einverständnishandeln* is closely related to one of the conceptual differentiations that Tönnies introduced. Tönnies distinguished between the consensus (*Verständnis*) underlying a community, and the formal agreement (*Einigung*) characteristic of a society, reached by discussion and contract. Such an agreement can be made explicitly, or depend on the implicit understanding: “This agreement can also be tacitly assumed, as if it had been made, if the outcome is of this kind; it can therefore *per accidens* be implicit.” (Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt, 1979) 19; this passage is on 35 of the English translation but suppresses the phrasing “as if” [trans.]) Weber called this implicit kind of agreement *Einverständnis* without making clear this parallel with Tönnies. Quite possibly his own usage was influenced by Hans Vaihinger’s *Philosophie des Als ob*, Reuther and Reichard, Berlin 1911.

⁵² “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 467.

⁵³ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 453.

⁵⁴ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 453.

⁵⁵ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 463, 468.

⁵⁶ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 458, 462.

⁵⁷ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 455.

⁵⁸ For the corresponding distinction of pure action *en masse* and *Gemeinschaftshandeln* on “the basis of tacit understanding” to Weber’s analysis of classes and status groups see *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 533.

⁵⁹ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 467.

kind that Tönnies had in mind, but also a *theory of differentiation*, which was implicitly linked to the relevant arguments of Dilthey and Simmel regarding the “intersection of social circles”. For in this connection Weber states quite clearly:

The more numerous and varied milieus are in respect of the constitutive chances to which the individual *rationaly* orients his action, the further advanced is ‘rational social (*gesellschaftlich*) differentiation’, the more it assumes the character of *Vergesellschaftung*, and so the further “rational social *organisation*” is developed.⁶⁰

The form of conceptual construction that Weber chose to use in the 1913 essay takes account of this universal-historical development, its course being not always and everywhere unambiguous, but whose general sense of direction can be described as being in the direction of an increasing “rationalisation of orders of a community”.⁶¹

These historical-developmental implications of the first version of his sociological basic concepts are also reflected in the manuscript on “The Economy and Orders”, published in the older part of *Economy and Society* and which in substance relates closely to the 1913 essay. Here Weber continued the critique of Rudolf Stammler’s “supersession” of the materialist conception of history that he had begun in 1907, and sought to explain a few constantly recurring regularities of human action by reference to the type of social orders of which they were characteristic. Weber pursued a historical-developmental perspective here as well, beginning with a form of mass action tied to “the habitual” (*das Gewohnte*) and moving on to describe the development of contents corresponding to “implicit understandings” within “mass communal action”. Corresponding to the logical relationship between mass action, communal action, action based on implicit understanding and social action (*Gesellschaftshandeln*) there is a developmental-historical sequence of normative orders, beginning with custom and leading to law via convention. In the case of law Weber made an additional distinction between *purely customary law* (*Gewohnheitsrecht*) and *statute law*.⁶² Weber thereby put custom, which was for Tönnies the essence of *Gemeinschaft*, in the “amorphous” area bordering upon pure mass action and communal action, and in so doing separated it clearly from the existence of “the prevalence of

implicit understanding”.⁶³ Weber’s conscious distinction between a form of communal action based upon time-honoured custom and the formation of tradition based upon conventional rules demonstrates that, even here, he thought of *Einverständnis-Gemeinschaften* only as a *special case* of *Vergemeinschaftung*, so that these *Einverständnis-Gemeinschaften* did not cover the full range of “transitions” associated with the concept of *Vergemeinschaftung*.⁶⁴

The concept of *Vergemeinschaftung* is therefore open to other uses; Weber did in fact extend it to cover a whole variety of mixed types and developmental-historical transitions, while the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* remains relatively clearly defined in the pre-war manuscripts: as a “rational order” of communal action and action based on implicit understandings which in regard to developmental history “tended to emerge latterly.”⁶⁵ It was for this reason that Weber always emphasised the “increasing scope of rules-based orders” as a “particular characteristic component of that process of rationalisation and *Vergesellschaftung*” whose progressive development could be detected in all social spheres.⁶⁶ But in what exact sense did Weber use the term “comprehensive communalisation” (*übergreifende Vergemeinschaftung*) in the older part of *Economy and Society*? Doesn’t this conflict with the general developmental-historical assumption linked to the first version of his basic sociological concepts? And in what sense does Weber talk not only about *Marktvergemeinschaftung* but also of *Marktvergesellschaftung* in the early fragment on “the market”? Are these concepts ultimately interchangeable in dealing with market process? Or is there perhaps a way of making a clear and indisputable distinction, as would be suggested by the way that Weber took such pains with semantic distinctions of this kind?⁶⁷

There is in fact a terminological deviation from the 1913 essay in the manuscript on the market, where Weber uses the concept of *Einverständnishandeln* implicitly rather than explicitly. As a

⁶⁰ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 461. The basic outlines of this theory of differentiation were first developed by Wilhelm Dilthey. He had taken from Schleiermacher the idea of the individual as a “point of intersection of a majority of systems”, systems which with the advance of culture became ever-more specialised. Simmel of course later took up this idea and called the number of individual circles to which the individual belonged as the “measuring rod of culture”. Weber only needed to give this specifically “modern” inclusion of the individual in a large number of “systems” or “circles” an action-theoretical twist and so treat the increase of options for action as an increase in the degree of rationality. It is also worth noting that Weber took the idea that one and the same action could in principle belong to several systems of meaning – Wilhelm Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften. Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte*, 2nd ed., B. G. Teubner, Berlin 1923, 37, 51; Simmel, *Soziologie, Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, 464; Hartmut Tyrell, “Zur Diversität der Differenzierungstheorie. Soziologehistorische Anmerkungen”, *Soziale Systeme* Bd. 4 (1998) 138ff.

⁶¹ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 471. In this connection Weber had registered “an ever more wide-ranging purposively-rational ordering of *Einverständnishandeln* according to rules, and especially a progressive transformation of *Verbände* into purposively-rational *Anstalten*.” (“Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 471) The line he drew here with respect to the historical and cultural philosophy that Tönnies represented implies his view that it was not possible to speak here of an unambiguous “substitution” of *Vergesellschaftung* for *Einverständnishandeln*.

⁶² Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 187ff.

⁶³ Tönnies also distinguished “custom” from any kind of “implicit understanding” and, like Weber, defined it in terms of “imitation” and “legacy”. In his essay on custom he wrote in connection with “awe” (*Ehrfurcht*): It is based in and of itself not on “custom” but actually on nature, on ‘natural law’, an implicit understanding of what has to be, an implicit understanding which follows from actually existing relationships and as such becomes at once a challenge: it is ‘taken for granted’ and also necessary.” (Ferdinand Tönnies, *Die Sitte*, Rütten & Loening, Frankfurt a.M., 1909, 19) Tönnies sent Weber a copy of this essay in August 1909 – it was published in a series edited by Martin Buber called *Die Gesellschaft*. Having read the “little book” he wrote to Tönnies that he would have to go back to an intensive re-reading of the “original”, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* – Letter from Weber to Tönnies, 29 August 1909, *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* Bd. II/6, 238. Quite obviously Weber’s critical analysis of Tönnies was reflected not only in the 1913 essay, but also in the manuscript on “Economy and Orders”.

⁶⁴ Weber described the developmental-historical relationship between *custom* and *tradition* as follows: “Conventional rules are normally the way in which existing regularities of action – hence simple ‘custom’ – are transmitted as binding norms, usually guaranteed initially by psychic compulsion. ... Once convention has absorbed the regularities of action, so that ‘mass action’ becomes ‘action based on implicit understanding’ – for that is what the process involves, translated into our terminology – we will speak of ‘tradition’.” (Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 191f.) Nonetheless, this does not mean that, according to Weber, that it is only at the stage where tradition is formed that there is a *Vergemeinschaftung* for those involved. Weber states quite explicitly that even mere “custom” can promote the formation of *Gemeinschaften* (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 187). The case that he mentions here of “ethnic fellow feeling” will be dealt with below when discussing the concept of comprehensive *Veergemeinschaftung*.

⁶⁵ Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 193.

⁶⁶ Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 196.

⁶⁷ The confusions that continually arise in this regard are due to the fact that insufficient attention is paid to the differences in Weber’s usage of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* in their pre- and post-war versions. In the outline for his contribution to the *Grundriß* that Weber wrote in 1914 this section was announced under the title “Die Marktvergemeinschaftung”. Marianne then published the relevant manuscript in the edition of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* she prepared under the title “Markt”, while Johannes Winkelmann opted to entitle the same material “Die Marktvergesellschaftung”. The editors of the *Gesamtausgabe* by contrast favour “Die Marktgemeinschaft”.

consequence all those circumstances which are, according to the terminology of the essay, assigned to *Einverständnisgemeinschaft* are instead all assigned to *Vergemeinschaftung* without any distinction between them being made. It is true that Weber does use the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* in this manuscript as an ideal type in relation to the rational marginal case of the existence of a rules-based order. To this degree he can talk of a *Vergesellschaftung* in respect of market process which this process is secured by a binding legal order.⁶⁸ As in the 1913 essay, Weber also subsumes under the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* occasional exchange unconnected to the existence of a legal order, since this represents an occasional *Vergesellschaftung* based upon a corresponding agreement between the exchanging parties. Nonetheless, Weber assigns both the haggling over a price which precedes the exchange and the use of money to the category of *Gemeinschaftshandeln*, since there is a meaningful relationship to the potential action of third parties, which in the 1913 essay was still a criterion for the existence of an *Einverständnisvergemeinschaftung*. For this reason the “*Vergemeinschaftung* by virtue of the use of money” is countered conceptually to the “*Vergesellschaftung* through rational formal agreement or imposed order”, since in the first case only the criterion characteristic on implicit understanding can prevail, “as if an order had been created expressly for this purpose.”⁶⁹ It is only for this reason that Weber can now describe a fully-developed money economy as a form of *Vergemeinschaftung*, for which the *Marktgemeinschaft* is a special case to the extent that it represents the most “impersonal” form of human relationship possible. The “absence of fraternity” and economic “autonomy” which prevails in the market process represents in this case not the sign of “rational *Vergesellschaftlichkeit*”, but involves a specific marginal case of *Vergemeinschaftung*, “naked market *Vergemeinschaftung*.”⁷⁰ Weber’s linguistic usage in the remaining fragment of the manuscript on the market does not in every respect correspond to the 1913 essay, and moreover involves a complete reversal of Tönnies’ terminology, since he talks of a rising tide of “market community” against the restriction of trade by “sacred taboos or monopolistic *Vergesellschaftungen* exercised by the *Stände*.”⁷¹

It is a different matter with the conception of “comprehensive communalisation” (*übergreifende Vergemeinschaftung*) that Weber uses in the pre-war manuscripts. There is here a formal correspondence with the concept of *übergreifende Vergesellschaftung* as used in the 1913 essay; but it relates substantially to a special case of *Vergemeinschaftung* which Weber developed in terms of the label *übergreifendes Einverständnishandeln*. Weber here used the example of a bowling club to describe the emergence of “conventional” consequences for the behaviour of members to each other. This *übergreifende Einverständnishandeln* arises, following this terminology, because here the emergence of a communal action oriented by an “understanding” is causally determined by a pre-existing *Vergesellschaftung*.⁷² The concept of *übergreifende Vergemeinschaftung* used analogously in the older part of *Economy and Society* is however even more general, since it does not only relate to the special case of an *einverständsmäßige Vergemeinschaftung* but also to quite varied conceptions of *Vergemeinschaftung*. The one example of an *übergreifende Vergemeinschaftung* that Weber cites concerns the *Vergemeinschaftung*

that is formed if membership of purposive groups (*Zweckverbände*) which are purely objective or value rational in their orientation, such as a limited company or religious sects, also depends on personal standing, upon particular evaluations of the “complete person”; or when the existence of such membership is of importance as proof of personal integrity.⁷³ In this case we have the kind of mixture of *objective* and *personal* criteria that prompted Weber to coin this concept. But this particular differentiation played no part in the 1913 essay, whereas in the fragment of the manuscript on the market Weber distinguishes between the more personalised and purely objective, “nonfraternal” forms of *Vergemeinschaftung*. All the same, this distinction was placed within the framework of a quite “comprehensive” terminology of *Gemeinschaft*. Another example was introduced in the context of his discussion of “ethnic community relations”. Here he was concerned with the representation of the emergence of a “belief in ethnic communality”. Assuming that rational *Gesellschaftshandeln* is not that widespread, Weber thought that a quite arbitrary form of *Vergesellschaftung*, such as might for example underlie the formation of political communities, is often the basis for a consequent “comprehensive communal consciousness in the form of personal fraternalisation.”⁷⁴ Here then we have an “artificial” form of group formation which produces *emotional* communalisation and fraternities, all of which Weber included under “comprehensive communalisation”. However, neither of these last two special cases alter the general developmental-historical sense of direction which Weber, in the first version of his basic concepts, assumed that the orders of *Gemeinschafts-* and *Einverständnishandeln* were being increasingly rationalised.

The alteration of Weber’s linguistic usage in the 1920 basic sociological concepts

In the cases just discussed Weber made little use in the older part of *Economy and Society* of the conceptual distinctions he had introduced in the 1913 essay, or even in some cases deviated from these distinctions. In relation to this and other terminological issues, it has been suggested that there is already here a material anticipation of the terminological distinction between *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* that later appeared in Ch. 1 of *Economy and Society*.⁷⁵ In my view this applies only to the special case of “emotional communalisation”. More important is the suspicion that Weber did not always make consistent use in the older part of *Economy and Society* of the conceptual armoury developed in the 1913 essay because among things he fluctuated between a dualistic and tripartite conceptual construction, and because when he was drafting some of his pre-war manuscripts he had not yet worked out the differentiations he made in the 1913 essay. When Weber resumed work after the war on his contribution to the *Grundriß*, he had good reason not only to thoroughly revise the “old manuscript”, but also to make related adjustments to his basic sociological concepts. In the first version of these concepts he had not succeeded in placing a market order characterised by the rational harmonisation of interests at the same developmental-historical level as the “institutionalised *Vergesellschaftung*” which the bureaucracy embodied. For he did not think at that time that such a form of the rational acknowledgement of interests was a criterion for *Vergesellschaftung*, but instead a characteristic of *Vergemeinschaftung*, the special case of *Einverständnis-Vergemeinschaftung*. Weber had therefore really only two possibilities: either he had to define these two basic concepts in such a way that no unambiguous

⁶⁸ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 198, 382ff.

⁶⁹ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 382.

⁷⁰ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 383.

⁷¹ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 384. Although this does not involve a material deviation from Tönnies, but rather a reversal of his use of language. In this case Tönnies had written of a rising tide of “market society” against religious and *ständische* limitations to trade on the part of the “community”. See *General Economic History* (Greenberg, New York, 1927) 349ff. for the context that Weber had in mind.

⁷² “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 461, 470.

⁷³ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 205.

⁷⁴ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 237.

⁷⁵ Orihara, “From a Torso”, *Max Weber Studies*.

developmental-historical statement could be linked to them; or he had to decide on a new version of these concepts so that the form of rational equilibration of interests embodied by the market had the same conceptual status as bureaucratic rule. A precondition of the latter strategy was that he would have to replace the original tripartite distinction between *Gemeinschafts-*, *Einverständnis-* and *Gesellschaftshandeln* (together with their linked forms of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*) with a dualistic construction.

If we consider the final version of the basic sociological concepts from this perspective then it becomes apparent that Weber followed *both* strategies. He now did without an unambiguous developmental-historical ordering of the concepts *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, but he also opted definitively for a dualist conceptual construction. True, in the new version the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* is identical with that of rationalisation. Nonetheless, what in the older version of *Economy and Society* had been referred to in terms of *übergreifende Vergemeinschaftung* is now opposed to rational *Vergesellschaftung*, weakening the developmental-historical approach associated with the original formulation of these terms.⁷⁶ It is also apparent that he no longer uses *Gemeinschaftshandeln*, *Gesellschaftshandeln* and *Einverständnisshandeln*, but introduces the basic concept of *soziales Handeln* and defines this in the same way that previously *Gemeinschaftshandeln* had been. Furthermore, Weber now distinguishes between four “defining motivations” of action, or meaningful orientation of action, two of which had already been mentioned in the 1913 essay and two of which were taken from his *Herrschaftssoziologie*. According to this typology, social action can now be determined purposively-rationally, value rationally, affectively or traditionally, although Weber did lay express emphasis on their combination in reality.⁷⁷ A new term is “social relation” (*soziale Beziehung*), which represents an extension of his usage in the 1913 essay insofar as it for the first time makes clear the common criterion through which *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* can be defined: by the reciprocity of the action orientations characteristic of each. The distinction of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* is therefore first introduced by Weber at the level of social relation, which is distinguished from “social action” by the fact that it already contains a minimum of *reciprocal* meaningful orientation to the action of two or more persons.⁷⁸ Reciprocal meaningful orientation of action is in this respect constitutive of all *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*.

For this new definition of the two basic concepts of his interpretive sociology Weber also draws on the four modes through which action can be oriented, which he pairs up and orders in conformity with Tönnies’ model of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. By *Gemeinschaft* Weber now understands a social relationship based “upon subjectively **felt** (affectual or traditional) **mutual belonging** among those involved.”⁷⁹ By *Vergesellschaftung* Weber understands by contrast a social relation “if and to the extent that social action is directed to a **balance** of rationally-motivated (whether value rational or purposively rational) interests, or to the **connection** of interests motivated in the same way”.⁸⁰ The central place hitherto ascribed to an “agreed order” in defining *Vergesellschaftung* is now downgraded and replaced with the new criterion of a rational acknowledgement of interests. Hence *exchange* sheds its limitation to *Gelegenheitsvergesellschaftung* and is now placed as an ideal type alongside both the *Zweckverein*, the association formed for a specific purpose possessing its own

rules-based order, and the value rational *Gesinnungsverein*, the association formed on the basis of common inner commitment.⁸¹ Compared with its usage in the 1913 essay, the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* now has a much broader meaning. This is clear not only by the way that Weber subsumes the *market* and the modern commercial economy arising on its foundation, but goes so far as to emphasise its role as “the most important type of reciprocal influence of action by naked **interests**, as is characteristic of the modern economy.”⁸²

The supposition, often repeated in the secondary literature, that Weber introduced “conflict” as a third form of social relation alongside *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, hence replacing Tönnies’ dualism with a new tripartite conceptual construction, is based upon a misunderstanding of the ideal typical character of Weber’s concept formation. First of all, alongside *conflict* he places *legitimate order* as a special form of social relation, before he makes the distinction between *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*; so if we followed this line of argument we would end up with a quadripartite, not even a tripartite, conceptual structure. Second, in both the 1913 essay and in Ch. 1 of *Economy and Society* Weber emphasises that both “violent” struggle as well as competition, which he defines as “peaceful struggle”, can be a constitutive component of any *Vergemeinschaftung* or *Vergesellschaftung*, but do not necessarily have to be. The conceptual characteristics are in this case so consciously selected that their application to one and the same circumstance is *not* mutually excluding. It is for this reason that one cannot oppose social relations marked by conflict and competition to *Vergemeinschaftung* or *Vergesellschaftung*, despite the fact that this latter pairing is at least *ideal-typically* a very strongly contrasted one, and defined in a mutually exclusive way.⁸³

Does then the form of social relation subsumed to the concept of *Einverständnis* that we find in the 1913 essay and the older part of *Economy and Society* simply vanish from Weber’s interpretive sociology? Not at all – it just re-emerges in Ch. 1 of *Economy and Society* at a different point: where he discusses *legitimate order*. Under this category we can find the co-ordination of action which had previously been called “implicit understanding of influence”, or “implicit understanding of legitimacy”.⁸⁴ Quite plainly Weber now defines the concept of “legitimate order” also by means of a hypothetical “as if” construction, for he does not consider of any importance for the influence of a social order the question of whether it actually exists, or not. He considered that so far as sociological analysis was concerned it was sufficient that a social relation depended upon the idea, or “belief”, that such an order existed. This rendered void his earlier distinction between “action based upon an implicit understanding” and *Gesellschaftshandeln*, since it no longer made any sense within this new conceptual framework to distinguish between the factual existence of a legitimate order and a pure presumption of legitimacy. For this reason Weber could redefine his concepts of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, since their original distinction, based on

⁸¹ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 22.

⁸² *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 23.

⁸³ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 20ff.; “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 463f. Schluchter’s proposal that *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* should be brought together as “solidaristic relations” and contrasted with “relations based upon compulsion” fails to recognise that the first are in no respect based only upon “solidarity”, but are quite capable of involving “compulsion”. While this reclassification might at first sight seem to be a good idea capable of bringing some order to the multitude of distinctions that Weber introduced, in this case it has no basis in his actual linguistic usage – Wolfgang Schluchter, “Replik”, in A. Bienfait, G. Wagner (eds.) *Verantwortliches Handeln in gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen. Beiträge zu Wolfgang Schluchters “Religion und Lebensführung”* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1998) 354f.

⁸⁴ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 16ff., 188, 516; “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 460.

⁷⁶ See *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 22f.

⁷⁷ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 12f.

⁷⁸ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 13.

⁷⁹ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 21.

⁸⁰ See footnote 79.

whether an agreed order existed or not, became likewise redundant. By using the typology of action orientation for the redefinition of these concepts, and also for the distinction of the four forms of legitimate order, Weber abandoned the purely formal nature of his concept formation as practised in the 1913 essay, introducing instead four different types of meaningful orientation of action. Here it was of no relevance for the existence of a social relation to consider what kinds of subjective motives, interests and “inner dispositions” it might rest upon, which was why previously Weber thought that the establishment of a prevailing subjective “inclination” was a task for a “substantivist sociology.”⁸⁵

What theoretical consequences follow from this new form of concept formation? It should first be noted that the concept of *Vergemeinschaftung* gains a precision that it lacks in the 1913 essay, so that it could not only be now opposed in a purely formal sociological sense to *Vergesellschaftung*; it has also gained its own substantive criteria of definition which Weber took from his typology of action orientation. The removal of the idea of action based upon implicit understanding means that the previous tripartite structure has been reduced to a strictly dualistic construction, in which the key concepts are clearly and sharply opposed. Nevertheless, simplification with respect to the previous tripartite conceptual structure has not necessarily enhanced the empirical applicability of the ensuing typological distinction. Weber lays great emphasis upon the fact that the great majority of social relations involve features both of *Vergemeinschaftung* and of *Vergesellschaftung*. Even in a family community it is not unusual to find that there is a purposive-rational acknowledgement of the interests of one or more members. On the other hand, even in a group organised purely in terms of purposive rationality it is possible for an emotionally-coloured sense of fellow-feeling to emerge among the participants, so that they become “*vergemeinschaftet*.”⁸⁶ It is also characteristic of the new conceptual structure that, at least on the empirical level, the boundaries between *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung* are fluid. This proviso is already true of the terminology used in the 1913 essay. When talking of money economy Weber had there emphasised that this form of economy included social action, communal action and also action based on implicit understanding.⁸⁷ In addition, it becomes plain that the inclusion of the different forms of action orientation lends the concept of rationalisation a greater resonance than it possessed in the first version. This lends confirmation to the thesis that Weber later became more careful in assigning his basic sociological concepts a developmental-historical framework. He still sees a developmental-historical transition from custom to convention and to law, transitional phases whose borders are fluid and to which he countered the rational recognition of interests in the market as the purest form of purposive-rational action. He did however add the following comment:

An important component in the “rationalisation” of action is the replacement of this inner conformity to habitual custom by planful adaptation to given interests. This process does not however exhaust the concept of the “rationalisation” of action. For in addition the process can be positive where there is a conscious rationalisation of values; negative where it is not only at the expense of custom, but also of affective action; and ultimately can also work in favour of nihilistic, instrumentally

rational action at the expense of action linked rationally to absolute values.⁸⁸

The secondary literature has questioned which of the two versions is the broader and which the narrower; but there is no clear answer to this question. Whether the older or the newer versions is considered the more complex is a matter of perspective. If, like Schluchter, we start from Weber's typology of action orientations, then of course the later version is the more substantial treatment. If, on the other hand, we follow Habermas and direct our attention to Weber's distinction of *Gemeinschafts-*, *Einverständnis-* and *Gesellschaftshandeln* plus *Vergesellschaftungshandeln*, then naturally it is the earlier version of Weber's theory of action which is richer, together with its complex “as if” construction. Of course, one should not equate Weber's category of “implicit understanding” with a normatively-charged concept of “concord”,⁸⁹ as Habermas does, a point which in fact Weber had himself emphasised in his 1913 essay; but this seems to have passed Habermas by. Weber himself thought his older conceptual armoury the more demanding and more differentiated version; as he wrote in the preamble to the first chapter of *Economy and Society*:

The terminology has been simplified as far as possible by comparison with my *Logos* essay, and has therefore been altered in many respects to make it as easy to understand as possible.

Greater intelligibility gained at the cost of textbook simplification runs the risk however of being yet further reduced to cliché, which would be quite inappropriate for Weber's conceptual schema. It is for this reason perhaps an advantage that we do not have two different versions of Weber's contribution to the *Grundriß*, but just two versions of the sociological basic concepts, even if such a lack creates difficulties in dealing with Weber's texts.

Concluding remarks

It is only possible to deal with the controversial issue of how far Weber's linguistic usage might have been influenced by Tönnies and Simmel by considering the kind of textual differentiations we have considered here. Simmel's concept of *Vergesellschaftung* clearly played a quite marginal role in both versions of Weber's basic concepts, since it was oriented to the contrast of individual and society and not to the contrast of tradition and modernity which was central for both Tönnies and Weber. Tenbruck was however correct in arguing that both Simmel and Weber favoured *Vergesellschaftung* over *Gesellschaft* so that they might avoid reifying this collective concept and instead employ a conceptual construction that emphasised the processual character of social phenomena. Weber also followed Simmel in using temporal duration as a way of distinguishing forms of *Vergesellschaftung*; accordingly, he set up a scale which went from purely casual and fleeting *Vergesellschaftung* to enduring social structures. But Weber did not explicitly adopt Simmel's association of *Vergesellschaftung* with a theory of socialisation. Instead, a central point in his own typological distinctions was Tönnies' opposition of *Gemeinschaft* to

⁸⁵ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 460.

⁸⁶ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 20. Here Weber takes up, in a modified form, a train of thought that he had previously developed in terms of “comprehensive *Vergemeinschaftung*.” But now the corresponding developmental-historical contextualisation of these two basic sociological concepts is missing, which is why in the new version Weber no longer makes use of the term “*übergreifende Vergemeinschaftung*.”

⁸⁷ “Ueber einige Kategorien”, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 462.

⁸⁸ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 15–16. See for a discussion of the related “end of custom” in Max Weber's writing Stephen Turner and Regis Factor's “Max Weber und das Ende der Sitte”, in Wagner and Zipprian (eds.) *Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre, Interpretation und Kritik*, 390–414; they discuss Weber's distinction between usage, custom, convention and law as well as the related developmental-historical assumptions, and contextualise this by introducing the relevant concepts from the work of Rudolf Ihering, Nietzsche and Tönnies.

⁸⁹ *Verständigung*, which involves the idea both of an understanding reached and the communicative means by which this is effected. [trans.]

Gesellschaft; Weber used this in the 1913 essay, the revised Ch. 1 of 1920, and also the older part of *Economy and Society*, even though he altered the way in which he used it over time. In the 1913 the concept of *Vergemeinschaftung* remains relatively indistinct, not being distinguished from *Vergesellschaftung* by any criterion specific to it. Later the introduction of the different action orientations if anything lent the distinction an even stronger affinity with Tönnies' usage. All the same, it should be emphasised that Weber did not share Tönnies' harmonic conception of communal life, and later refused to embed the concepts in an unambiguous developmental-historical perspective.

There is also no simple answer to the related question of the extent to which Weber made consistent use in the older part of *Economy and Society* of the sociological concepts developed in the 1913 essay; instead, we need to introduce some distinctions. For one thing, the frequency with which these concepts are used in the unpublished papers varies substantially. There is no mention in the manuscript on *The City* of *Gemeinschafts-*, *Einverständnis-* and *Gesellschaftshandeln* at all; while *Vergemeinschaftung* only arises in the verbal forms *Vergemeinschaftungsformen* and *Sondervergemeinschaftung*. He does on the other hand here use the concept of *Vergesellschaftung* in the sense it has in the 1913 essay. By way of compensation, he uses "fraternisation" as a central concept in *The City*, a term which is entirely absent from the 1913 essay.⁹⁰ Much the same is true of the chapter on the sociology of religion in *Economy and Society*, where Weber makes no systematic use of the concepts elaborated in the 1913 essay. Comparison of the older version of *Economy and Society* with the concepts employed in the 1913 essay brings out the way in which the individual unpublished manuscripts vary from each other in this regard. Of course, it is just such a systematic comparison that facilitates proper understanding of these conceptual variations, because this can usually be reconstructed from the degree of divergence and of the specific meanings arising from this.

A final comment is needed about the status of the concept of *culture* in Weber's interpretive sociology. He distinguished in the older parts of *Economy and Society* between the "general structural forms of human communities" and "individual cultural content", such as art, literature and science. This corresponds to the distinction he made in the 1913 essay between *general* and *substantive* sociology, a distinction that he justified by arguing that it was only the latter that permitted examination of the given prevailing motivation of acting individuals.⁹¹ Although Weber did not follow Simmel in treating *Vergesellschaftung* as a theory of

socialisation, there is an affinity with Simmel's formal sociology, at least in the 1913 essay. Simmel also distinguished between the "content" or "substance" and the "form" of *Vergesellschaftung*, explicitly excluding from his formal sociology the motives and aims of acting individuals. The kind of "substantivist sociology" that Weber had in mind would have placed in question Simmel's attempt to make sociology an independent science especially concerned with the forms of *Vergesellschaftung*; this would have permanently institutionalised the competitive relationship with the human sciences. Weber later backed away from this rigid distinction of "general" and "substantivist sociology", introducing the typology of different action orientations into the core of his sociology; all the same, this meant that he left hanging the status of a "sociology of material culture" (*Soziologie der Kulturinhalte*) and of the role of the concept of culture in his interpretive sociology. Not long ago Wolfgang Schluchter suggested that this concept should also be promoted to the status of a sociological basic concept, adding by way of compensation for this lacuna a hypothetical reconstruction which brought it into line with the contemporary state of concept formation in the cultural sciences.⁹² My own thinking leads in a different direction. I believe that Weber could have decomposed the concept of *Kultur* in much the same way as he did for *Gesellschaft*, splitting the latter into a series of subcategories so that he might avoid hypostasising this general concept as a collective subject. But he conducted this decomposition with the framework of his "basic sociological concepts"; the decomposition of the concept of culture would probably have had to be done within a corresponding special sociology. His sociology of religion, which can of course be treated as part of his "sociology of material culture", does this in exemplary fashion, avoiding a definition of religion but introducing a series of *specific* conceptual distinctions to which the study of the sociology of religion can be oriented.⁹³ Clearly he had the same sort of idea with respect to art, literature and science, although he never had the opportunity to develop these systematically after the manner of his treatment of religion, law and rulership. There is probably no general answer to the question regarding the relationship of his basic sociological concepts to his various special sociologies; and this certainly would not involve a highly generalised conception of society and culture. Instead, the question has to be put to each of his special sociologies in turn. And in this there is a promising challenge for a comparative historical sociology that acknowledges its debt to Max Weber's work.

⁹⁰ MWG Bd. I/22-5, 20ff., 371.

⁹¹ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 212; "Ueber einige Kategorien", *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 460.

⁹² Schluchter, "Handlungs- und Strukturtheorie", *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* Bd. 10 (2000) 132f.

⁹³ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 245ff.