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The Politics of Anthony Giddens's Social Theory:
Utopian Realism and Late Modern Social Democracy
Beyond the Third Way

Peter David Alexander Kolarz

Thesis submitted for the qualification of DPhil in sociology

University of Sussex

May 2011

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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SUMMARY

This thesis takes a new approach to understanding the works of Anthony Giddens, specifically his theory of structuration, his analysis of late modernity and his political project, the Third Way. It will show that the creation of a reflexive, empowered, late-modern self is not, as a face value reading of his work would suggest, a social reality he describes, but rather a normative goal, with significant political implications. This thesis will trace this goal, as well as its theoretical background to the theory of structuration and to his analysis of late modernity, and will show that his social theory depends strongly on the creation of a political project aimed at realising the creation of this late-modern self. It will also show what the basic characteristics of such a project need to be, in order for his work to be consistent and empirically sound. This thesis will then critique his Third Way, based on those characteristics, and having shown that these are not fulfilled by the Third Way, will then show that this disjuncture is best explained by the non-adversarial character of the Third Way, and provide an outline of an alternative political project based on Giddens's work. This thesis offers a contribution to the critical literature on Anthony Giddens, and also to the literature now emerging, which tries to understand the failures and demise of the Third Way as practiced by governments in the UK and elsewhere, as well as to the debates about what shape centre-left politics in the late modern age might take. This thesis points out some key weaknesses of Giddens's work, most notably a significant disjuncture between his Third Way and previous work, whilst at the same time showing how his previous work can be used successfully to construct centre-left political platforms quite distinct from his Third Way, and rooted in an empirically justified and consistent sociological analysis.

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Abbreviations

Following their first citation, the most frequently mentioned texts by Giddens will be abbreviated in the following way:

The Constitution of Society (1999)	<i>CoS</i>
The Consequences of Modernity (1995a)	<i>CoM</i>
Modernity and Self-Identity (1995b)	<i>MaSI</i>
Beyond Left and Right (1995c)	<i>BLaR</i>
Runaway World (2002a)	<i>RW</i>
The Third Way (2000a)	<i>TTW</i>
The Third Way and its Critics (2000b)	<i>TWaC</i>

Introduction

Context

This thesis is based on the premise that sociological analysis can inform and benefit the formulation of political agendas, platforms and ideologies. Aside from an understanding of economics and political philosophy, a sociological understanding of the society that is sought to be governed – the structural features and constraints that exist within it and the social transformations it is going through – are influences worthwhile including in the construction of political projects.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the UK, the US, Germany, Australia and a few other countries witnessed the implementation of a political outlook that was explicitly based on strongly sociological influences: the Third Way. Leggett notes specifically:

The Third Way is not based primarily on political-philosophical claims about what makes the ‘good society’. Instead, it is derived from an account of large-scale, rapid social transformations that the centre-left must adapt to... (Leggett, 2005: 13)

‘The Third Way’, as Leggett uses the term, is rather general, acting as a blanket term for a political platform with various, quite different incarnations across the globe. The differences and national and regional specifics of various ‘Third Ways’ have been documented in some detail (see e.g. Giddens, 2001).

From its early electoral successes in the mid 1990s onwards, the Third Way in all its nation-specific incarnations, intellectual influences, and indeed as a general concept, has been subject to vast amounts of critique. More recently, especially since the electoral defeat of New Labour in 2010, an additional cluster of literature has been rapidly emerging, still critical, but more aptly described as an ‘autopsy’ of the Third Way. With the additional beauty of hindsight, which earlier critiques of the Third Way by definition did not have, these works try to establish ‘what went wrong’, and also contemplate the possibilities for reconstructions of centre-left politics beyond the

various perceived social, economic and electoral failures of the Third Way (see e.g. Atkins, 2010; Leggett, 2010; Jordan, 2010).

Several academics have influenced its formulation, with varying degrees of significance in the various countries that had a Third Way experiment. Leggett mentions Etzioni, Gray and MacMurray as key thinkers behind the Third Way (2005: 37). Whilst these thinkers had considerable influence on Third Way thought the world over, others were quite specific to individual countries' Third Way experiments. Hombach, whose ideas on the Third Way were quite specific to the German context is an example worth mentioning here (Hombach, 2000). Yet, the most notable academic figure in the formulation of the Third Way is the sociologist Anthony Giddens.¹

Giddens has published a large number of books and articles that comment on the Third Way in various nations, though most often in the UK, shedding some sociological light on the agendas of Third Way governments and providing suggestions as to what exactly these governments should do (see e.g. Giddens, 1998; 2002b; 2007). But more significantly – and this is one of the key elements that sets him apart from many of the other Third Way authors – Giddens did not only comment and add input to the various Third Ways practiced by governments in various countries; more explicitly than any other author, he constructed his own Third Way, presented primarily in his books *The Third Way* (2000a) and *The Third Way and its Critics* (2000b). These two works – and sections of a few others – outline policy-positions on many key political issues such as economic agenda, welfare, public services, foreign policy, crime, democratic reform and civil society. Giddens's Third Way texts are effectively an extended political manifesto, underpinned by sociological claims relating to what he views as important transformations of our time – most notably globalisation, individualisation, post-traditionalism and reflexivity. These sociological claims provide background and justification for the policies and approaches he outlines. Though he refers to centre-left governments in the UK and elsewhere occasionally in these works, the result is a stand-alone political agenda, or as he refers to it, "...an outline [...] of an integrated political programme..." (2000a: 69), which governments are free to consider and utilise as they wish.

Prior to constructing his Third Way and engaging ever more in political commentary, Giddens was already established as an important figure within the discipline of sociology and social theory. Starting with contributions on the sociology of suicide (see e.g. Giddens, 1965) and the study of classical sociological theory (see e.g. Giddens, 1972), Giddens then went on to produce large bodies of work on two main areas: firstly, on the subject of meta-theory, culminating in the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1999). After that, starting in the 1980s, he produced several works on the analysis of late modernity (see e.g. Giddens, 1995a; 1995b). Much like his Third Way, these two clusters of Giddens's work have been subject of intense debate and critique.

Giddens's Third Way influenced the approach of governments in many countries, though most notably New Labour in the UK, where Giddens has been described as former Prime Minister Tony Blair's political 'guru' (Driver and Martell, 2001: 43). Differences between Giddens's and New Labour's Third Way do of course exist, given the existence of several other Third Way intellectuals, as well as differing beliefs and priorities between Giddens and the politicians who sought to utilise his work (ibid: 43-45). Although there are arguments claiming that the relationship between Giddens and New Labour may have been over-stated for purposes of mutual benefit (see e.g. Morrison, 2004: 168), there is evidence for significant commonalities and close ties between Giddens's work and the socio-political outlook of New Labour. Simply comparing some of Giddens's texts with Tony Blair's texts and speeches highlights some common themes, especially globalisation, the knowledge economy and detraditionalised individuals (see e.g. Giddens, 1995c; 2000a; Blair, 1998; 1999). An article by Giddens with the rather telling title *Did They Foul Up my Third Way?* (2004) highlights further ties in terms of New Labour's outlook, which are once again reiterated by Giddens after New Labour's electoral defeat in 2010. Reflecting many themes from his own work that will feature heavily in this thesis, he notes:

From the outset, the architects of New Labour offered a compelling diagnosis of why innovation in left-of-centre politics was needed [...]. [...] intensifying globalisation, the development of a post-industrial or service economy and, in an information age, the emergence of a more voluble and combative citizenry, less deferential to authority figures than in the past (a process that intensified with the advent of the internet). Most of Labour's policy prescriptions followed from this analysis. (Giddens, 2010b)

So despite the existence of other influences upon New Labour's agenda, Giddens's Third Way, as well as the sociological narrative that underpins it, nevertheless acted as a crucially important influence on the programmes of the centre-left government in the UK during the 1990s and 2000s. This in itself is one key reason why Giddens is a social theorist especially worthwhile examining: an understanding of Giddens's social theory and its relationship to his politics can also contribute to an understanding of New Labour's sociological outlook.

Approach, Aims and Structure

This thesis will take a fresh look at the work of Anthony Giddens, and in doing so will contribute to the understanding and critique of his work, whilst also highlighting problems with his Third Way and – crucially – showing how his pre-Third Way work can be used to construct a very different political project.

The critical literature on all aspects of Giddens's work is of course ample. However, the vast majority of the literature in this field views the various clusters of Giddens's work – structuration theory, the analysis of late modernity and the Third Way – in isolation, or at most focuses on one of these three elements with short and often quite superficial reference to a second. Very few attempts have been made to study all three of these areas at once, and to gain a deeper understanding of how they fit together and inform each other (or fail to do so). This is precisely the approach that this thesis will take. Those works that do exist in this vein either focus on a relatively narrow theme and track it through the different stages of his work (e.g. Bagguley, 2003; Mouzelis, 2001) or give a comprehensive overview of all stages of his work but lack a critical approach to the implications of one 'cluster' of his work for another (e.g. Kaspersen, 2000).

Aside from the lack of literature that takes this approach, my rationale for doing so can for now be summarised as follows: at face value, Giddens's analysis of late modernity and his claims about globalisation, post-traditionalism, reflexivity and individualisation are unconvincing, and are contradicted by large quantities of empirical evidence. If his analysis of late modernity is to be taken as anything other than overly optimistic day-dreaming, it is necessary to read it in such a way that his lack of engagement with issues

relating structural constraint can be explained and accounted for. Such a way of reading his analysis of late modernity is in fact available from comments made on critical social theory both in the main works on structuration theory and in the early stages of the analysis of late modernity itself: utopian realism. An often over-looked or neglected feature of his work, utopian realism, as we shall see, is Giddens's answer to historical materialism; it is effectively his approach to facilitating transformative critical social theory in the absence of telos or any clearly designated and historically determined transformative agency. As such, utopian realist theory needs to have a heightened focus on highlighting precisely where transformative agency might lie, and what kind of desirable ends might actually be possible, leading to a strongly agency-centred theory, which nevertheless shows awareness of structure and constraint, but views these issues as more of a political challenge than an analytical focus.

As we will see, Giddens's utopian realist approach allows for a sociological narrative that pays relatively little attention to issues of structural constraint, but only if it is supplemented with a political project that shows how the constraints that do exist might be overcome. Such a political project can be inferred in large part from the analysis of late modernity itself, but given its lack of engagement with structure, constraint and emancipation, it is necessary to also utilise the theory of structuration, where more thoughts on these matters are available.

I will show that this emphasis on utopian realism is necessary if Giddens's work is to be viewed as coherent and empirically justifiable. Within this approach to Giddens, his Third Way is then not simply a random occurrence, which he could just as easily have refrained from; a political project, I will show, is necessary for the completion of his utopian realist analysis of late modernity. Without a corresponding political project, this analysis is fatally flawed and effectively meaningless.

However, the key question that results from my reading of Giddens will be whether his Third Way actually fulfils the demands and criteria set by the utopian realist approach. The answer, as I will show, is a resounding 'no'. This will in turn open up the question of what a political project genuinely consistent with his analysis of late modernity would look like.

Given the context and the approach I outlined above, this thesis pursues three key aims. Firstly, I aim to produce an original contribution to the critical literature on Giddens's work, especially to the somewhat limited literature that considers more than just one element of his work, and to show that a deeper understanding of his work can be gained through my approach to it. Secondly, I aim to show that Giddens's work can be utilised to construct a model of centre-left politics that is very different from his Third Way. Thirdly, I aim to contribute to what I referred to earlier as the 'autopsy' of the Third Way.

I need to stress at this point that this is not a thesis about New Labour, or about the Third Way as a blanket term referring to all the various centre-left governments that associated themselves with that term. This is chiefly a thesis on Giddens's work, and how his specific version of the Third Way relates to it. Nevertheless, given the fact that Giddens's Third Way had considerable influence on Tony Blair and New Labour, this thesis can contribute to an understanding of why the Third Way of New Labour and other governments failed, especially in terms of their sociological underpinnings which, if taken from Giddens's Third Way rather than his previous work, are likely to have been disastrously misunderstood.

The core argument of this thesis is that whilst Giddens's Third Way is highly flawed, even when contrasted to his own previous work, the sociological analysis on which it is based, if read in a particular way, is not. In fact, it can be used to construct a new centre-left political project, quite independent from the Third Way and with very few similarities to it.

This thesis is divided into three main parts, each containing two chapters. The first part will act as a review of Giddens's structuration theory and his analysis of late modernity, as well as the critical literature on these two bodies of work. After establishing the empirical indefensibility of his analysis of late modernity, the second half of chapter 2 will then point to the utopian realist approach as a way of reading Giddens in such a way that the critical responses to him can be answered. In doing so, I will also show that a political project with a distinct aim is necessary to complete his utopian realist social theory.

But this approach to Giddens's work will lead to some further questions, which need to be answered in order to ascertain what a political project that successfully completes his social theory needs to look like beyond the relatively simple matter of its fundamental aim. Firstly, it will be necessary to ascertain, how structure and structural constraint could be conceptualised within Giddens's work. It is especially on this point that I will examine structuration theory to provide some answers. Secondly, the distinction he draws in both *Consequences of Modernity* (1995a) and *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1995b) between emancipatory politics and life politics will need to be assessed in detail, since the relationship between these two concepts will turn out in Part 1 to be unclear and in need of further analysis. Thirdly, it will be necessary to further examine Giddens's views on globalisation. Part 1 will show that whilst the utopian realist approach to Giddens's work does allow for a response to his critics on most issues, it does not immediately accomplish this on the issue of globalisation, specifically its economic dimensions, i.e. issues such as rising global inequality, the power of transnational corporations and global economic pressures.

In the second part of this thesis I will deal with these three issues. Subsequent to that, I will then outline a general framework, with which a politics that completes Giddens's utopian realist analysis of late modernity must be consistent. This framework will be based on my analysis in the second part, but will also include some considerations that will be evident from the first part of this thesis.

In the third part of this thesis, I will then turn directly to Giddens's Third Way, and critique it against the framework developed in the previous two parts. I will show that the Third Way is in large parts inconsistent with the utopian realist reading of Giddens's previous work, and as such does not provide a successful completion of his utopian realist social theory of late modernity. To summarise as briefly as possible: the key shortcomings I will highlight in the Third Way vis-à-vis Giddens's pre-Third Way work are (1) its view of capitalism as an un-transformable structural feature, (2) its view of reflexivity and individualism as a universal social reality, (3) its complete lack of engagement with access and distribution of information and communication technology, and (4) its rather bleak implicit view of human nature, evident from its emphasis on concepts such as 'moral hazard' and 'no rights without responsibilities'.

Having established that these four characteristics of the Third Way stand in direct contradiction to the framework on which my critique is based, thus not leading to a successful utopian realist analysis of late modernity, I will look at possible reasons for this disjuncture. I will show that the best explanation for it lies in the non-adversarial character of the Third Way, that is, its underlying assumption that politics in the late modern age is no longer a contest between different, often directly adversarial political doctrines. I will show that all four points of my critique are consequences of this viewpoint.

Finally, based on the framework I will establish over the first two parts of this thesis, as well as on my four critique points on the Third Way and my explanation for its inconsistency with Giddens's pre-Third Way work, I will set out an alternative political project, termed 'Integrated Giddensian Politics' (IGP), which does provide a successful and empirically sound completion of Giddens's utopian realist social theory. I will then conclude by summarising the arguments and findings of this thesis, contextualising them in relation to other important debates and briefly considering some further research, which could build on what I show here.

Though it is implicit in this structure outline, I need to stress here that I will not look at Giddens's Third Way until the third section of this thesis. Given the title of this thesis, this may initially seem like a counter-intuitive thing to do, but I take this approach for a good reason: I take the 'politics of Giddens's social theory' to refer not so much to the Third Way itself, but to the political implications of his pre-Third Way work. A key contribution of this thesis will be to establish what exactly these political implications are, and then to read his Third Way against them. So whilst this thesis will contribute to the critical literature on the Third Way, I will chiefly show that the politics of Giddens's social theory goes far beyond his explicit political project. Another key motivation behind looking specifically at Giddens is that it is possible to use his social theory to construct egalitarian, inclusive and redistributive models of centre-left politics, quite separate from his Third Way, but rooted not in class solidarity, nationhood or similar concepts frequently associated with social democracy, but instead centred firmly on the individual in the context of globalisation, detraditionalisation and reflexivity.

Key Terms and Concepts

Before commencing, there are a few key terms worth discussing, as they will feature heavily and might not be immediately clear in their meaning and origin.

Foremost worth mentioning here is the concept of the ‘reflexive, empowered, knowledgeable individual’. Giddens never uses this term in full as I do. Yet, I use it, as it best describes what I will highlight as the central theme in his work. Featuring as a distinct type of agency, this individual is ‘knowledgeable’ due to the vast quantities of information available in the age of globalisation; ‘reflexive’ because this individual is able to relate the available knowledge to their own life; ‘empowered’ because this individual is able to incorporate that knowledge not only into their thoughts and understanding of the world, but into their lifestyle as such, and hence, to transform their life. I will show that the beginnings of this notion in Giddens’s work can be found in the theory of structuration, although in this cluster of his work it is made quite explicit that the degree of possible knowledge, reflexivity and empowerment is always in question, and is indeed very low in some societies. I will also show that there are beginnings of normative connotation attached to this notion of the individual, which are then decisively strengthened in the analysis of late modernity. As such, fostering the widespread emergence of this type of individual becomes the key focus of any politics based on, and consistent with Giddens’s pre-Third Way work. Since it is a rather lengthy term, yet one which will have to be referred to frequently, given the importance of this type of agent throughout Giddens’s work, I will often simply refer to it as the ‘late modern self’.

Since I have rarely seen it used,² ‘Giddensian’ is another term worth discussing briefly, as it will feature a lot, especially in the latter stages of this thesis. By ‘Giddensian’, I do not mean ‘written by Giddens’; I mean instead ‘rooted firmly in the work of Giddens’, most notably his pre-Third Way work, i.e. structuration theory and the analysis of late modernity. In a sense, this term therefore corresponds loosely to the term ‘Marxist’ or ‘Marxian’: conventionally, these terms can be applied to works that Marx himself did not write, and may well even have been critical of, so long as they are rooted in the fundamental assumptions of, say, historical materialism. Thus, a Giddensian political project is one, which is based on the theoretical assumptions and underpinnings of Giddens’s past work. Naturally, this definition could easily mean that Giddens’s own

political project, if it turns out not to be informed by these underpinnings, might not actually be Giddensian. Indeed, to briefly frame a key point of this thesis in the context of this term: I will show that in many ways, Giddens's Third Way is in fact not Giddensian. I hope this brief definition will avoid any confusion when I use this term.

One final point worth making before commencing concerns the issue of my own political leanings, and more generally of normative dimensions of critique. I broadly situate myself in the social democratic tradition, by which I mean that I view capitalism as a legitimate and potentially useful element of society, but also as one which cannot be relied on to organise social life, and which indeed needs to be regulated in order to produce desirable social outcomes. I wholeheartedly identify with the principles of emancipation, equality and empowerment, viewed by various authors as historical covenants of the 'left' (e.g. Bobbio, 1996; Schecter, 2007). However, it is my belief that the state needs to play a key part in achieving these ends, as it is in many cases the only agent sufficiently powerful to help overcome the obstacles preventing their advancement. This may initially suggest a strongly statist position; but it is furthermore my belief that action on the part of the state can and should take place on the basis of communication with the public sphere and civil society. Put simply, whilst the state is often best placed to achieve empowerment, equality and emancipation for its citizens, it is the citizens themselves who ought to dictate what kind of empowerment, equality and emancipation are desired. Although my political outlook is strongly reminiscent of established social democratic traditions, I furthermore believe that social context of this outlook, the possibilities for social change and the areas of social life worth addressing in this context have changed considerably in recent times, in ways, which I hope to convey during the course of this thesis.

Unlike many critiques of the Third Way (both Giddens's and New Labour's), where the basis of critique is strongly grounded in the political orientations of the authors, my critique of the Third Way does not place much emphasis on this, at face value at least. Whilst, for instance, accusing the Third Way of neoliberalism (see e.g. Cammack, 2004) is only a point of criticism if the author (and the reader) happen to view neoliberal doctrines unfavourably, my critique here will generally avoid this type of normative critical angle. Though I make no secret of my own political leanings, which are doubtlessly considerably to the left of the Third Way, my critique is not based primarily

on these leanings, but instead is based on the normative view that is demonstrably present in Giddens's own pre-Third Way work. As such, what is to follow might best be termed a Giddensian critique of Giddens's Third Way. However, to pretend that my motivation for writing this thesis has not in some part stemmed from the fact that my own political standpoint is similar (though not identical!) to what I will show to be the politics of Giddens's social theory, would of course be futile.

Part I:

Giddens's pre- Third Way Work: Themes, Criticisms, Solutions

In this section, I will review Giddens's work prior to the Third Way. The central aims will be (1) to highlight the idea of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as a central theme of his work, and to evaluate the differing functions of this theme in the context of structuration theory and in his analysis of late modernity; (2) to critically evaluate the empirical validity of this notion of the late modern self, and (3) to show that the notion of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is inevitably bound up with the necessity for a political project, without which his discourse on this theme is of little meaning.

The purpose of this first section is therefore to show why a political project is essential to the internal coherence of Giddens's work, and to also outline the fundamental aims, which a Giddensian political project needs to pursue.

This section will consist of two chapters. The first will give an overview of the two key clusters of Giddens's work that are of interest in this thesis: structuration theory and the analysis of late modernity. In doing so, the overarching theme of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual will be highlighted as a central element of his work, and the normative connotations attached to this theme will be outlined.

The second chapter will look at empirical objections to Giddens's analysis of late modernity, specifically to those elements, which supposedly cause the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. I will then show that the vast bulk of these objections can be answered through Giddens's concept of utopian realism and the idea of the sociologist as a transformative agent. I will also show that this utopian realist angle on Giddens ultimately requires a political project.

To summarise the fundamental argument of this part: there are many objections to Giddens's arguments about the empowered, knowledgeable, reflexive individual. However, Giddens's rationale of utopian realism provides us with an explanation, by which he is not saying that this type of individual is taking hold in a universally unhindered fashion, but that there is merely scope for this type of late modern self, which needs to be fostered by a political project.

Chapter 1:

The Empowered, Reflexive, Knowledgeable Individual: A Central Theme in Giddens's Work

The purpose of this chapter is to give an initial overview of Giddens's work on structuration theory, and his analysis of late modernity. In doing so, the aim is to highlight a central theme of this thesis: the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. This theme, I will argue, is of the utmost importance throughout Giddens's work, both at the meta-theoretical level of structuration theory, and in the more substantive context of his analysis of late modernity.

In this chapter, I will also discuss critiques of his work, most notably on the relationship between structure and agency, the limitations and use of structuration theory and on Giddens's approach to critical social theory. All these elements will be important for the discussion of several points later in this thesis. In this chapter, I will omit those critiques that challenge the specific theme of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, as I will deal with this at length in chapter 2. Through this omission I can focus here on showing how this type of individual forms a central theme in Giddens's work, as well as evaluate some further key concepts that will be relevant to my arguments, while the next chapter will then look at objections to this type of individual, ways of defending against such critiques, and explain how the resulting picture has direct political implications.

Structuration Theory and its Critics

Giddens's early works will be largely excluded from the analysis here. My main reason for largely excluding some of his early works is because they are generally precursors to structuration theory. As my focus here is structuration theory itself, and its explanatory capacity for his analysis of late modernity and the scope for Giddensian politics, these

precursors are only of indirect importance. Nevertheless, this exclusion demands some justification.

With the exception of *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (1973) and just a few other pieces, Giddens's early work generally focuses on the canon of classical sociology and on the problems encountered with its main authors: Durkheim, Marx and Weber (Giddens, 1971; 1976; 1981; 1982). One may of course quite easily make an attempt to precisely trace the origins of the content and motivation behind structuration theory to these early works. Indeed, simply by noting that Durkheim and Weber – who heavily emphasise structure and agency respectively (Held and Thompson, 1989: 3; Tucker, 1998: 37) – feature heavily as objects of analysis in these works, the roots of Giddens's motivation to reconcile these two emphases can already be pointed to. The link between extensive analysis of these canonical figures and fundamental methodological problems in social theory on the one hand, and the attempt to create a new theory that accommodates both structure and agency in a coherent manner on the other is an un-problematic one. Simply put, regardless of the criticisms that have been levelled at structuration theory, it is immediately clear that the motivation behind it, as well as the perceived importance of the problem it is designed to address, can be directly linked to the vast majority of Giddens's early works (see also Tucker, 1998: 14-15; Bagguley, 2003). Held and Thompson further support this positioning of Giddens's early works:

[Giddens] has examined the major traditions of classical and contemporary social theory, identified their strengths and weaknesses, and drawn from them a range of lessons and ideas which inform his own constructive proposals. The centre of these proposals is what he calls the 'theory of structuration'. (Held and Thompson, 1989: 3)

Two points therefore emerge: firstly, as this thesis aims to assess the links between Giddens's social theory and his Third Way project, it becomes clear that his early works are thematically not of significant importance here. Indeed, those elements from the early works, which may be of importance here, are also present in the works that outline structuration theory. Secondly, it is also evident from these points that the early works are a distinct precursor, both chronologically *and thematically*, of structuration theory, and are in that sense only indirectly relevant to those elements of Giddens's work that will be of interest here.

Due to these two points, Giddens's early works can be largely disregarded here. It will of course be useful to keep in mind that structuration theory – which in turn will be shown to have profoundly influenced many of his later works – is grounded in earlier writings, but that these early writings themselves are highly unlikely to be of much direct relevance to issues surrounding Giddensian politics.

Where exactly these texts functioning as forerunners to structuration theory end, and where its formulation as such begins is a matter of some contention. *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976) and *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979) are pointed to by Held and Thompson as containing the beginnings of its formulation (Held and Thompson, 1989: 3). However, *The Constitution of Society* (1999), with its explicit aim to set out the theory of structuration in a comprehensive fashion (ibid: xxvii), will be of most interest here. Even if this work cannot categorically be treated as the cut-off point between assessment of fundamental problems in classical social theory and the attempt to solve them, it is certainly the clearest and most purposeful example of such an attempt within Giddens's early social theory.

It will be useful to present a concise summary of structuration theory at this point. Craib notes that this task of producing a clear definition is problematic:

...[structuration theory] is not, nor does Giddens claim or want it to be, a tight, logically deduced and interrelated theory. This makes exposition difficult: it could – almost – be set out in any order... (1992: 33)

Nevertheless, it is possible to outline the key concepts here, and then to move on to various specific elements that are of interest to this thesis later on:

Fundamentally, Giddens produces a theory which seeks to overcome the gulf between structural determinism on the one hand and methodological individualism on the other. This is accomplished by focussing on what he calls the 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1999: 25), implying that structure is at once created (or re-produced) by actors, as well as affecting their actions. This is deduced from the idea that structure only comes into existence when instantiated by the agent, or more precisely, where 'structural properties' are defined only abstractly as 'rules and resources', which are then instantiated, and thus contextualised by the agent into 'systems' (ibid: 24-25). As Craib

notes, social practises thus become the focal point of sociological analysis in the structurationist approach (1992: 34). What is especially significant here is the role of knowledge, on which the agent draws in order to produce, reproduce or indeed transform the structure. This emphasis on stocks of knowledge initially suggests a strongly culturalist definition of structure, but as we shall see later on in this thesis, this is not necessarily the case, especially when we consider the significance of ‘resources’ rather than ‘rules’. The term ‘structuration’ itself is then defined by Giddens in a direct manner as part of a glossary of key terms:

The structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure (Giddens, 1999: 376)

Thus, structuration implies an engagement with the transformation or reproduction of structure, crucially – and this is the final key element of structuration theory worth noting here at the outset – over time and space. This latter criterion has in itself been subject to extensive comment by those interested in temporality in the social sciences (Carlstein, 1997; Storper, 1997; Elchardus, 1997; Urry, 1997a). Yet, it is worth highlighting here as a central component of the overall theory, as the situated-ness of structure in time and space results directly from the notion of its instantiation.

Whilst this preoccupation with structuration does signify an attempt to solve the structure/ agency debate implicit in classical social theory, thus attempting to solve one particular dilemma this subject area has been faced with since its early days, Giddens specifically notes:

The theory of structuration, of course, is more than just an exploration of the idea of ‘structuration’ itself. I came to see that an ‘ontology of social life’ must supply a detailed understanding of the nature of action, together with what in post-structuralism is described as a ‘theory of the subject’; and that, likewise, the notion of ‘structure’ itself is a complicated and difficult one. (Giddens, 1991: 203)

And also:

Specifically, [structuration theory] is the label I attach to my concern to develop an ontological framework for the study of human social activities. By ‘ontology’ here, I mean a conceptual investigation of the nature of human action, social institutions and the interrelations between action and institutions. (ibid: 201)

In *CoS* Giddens goes to some length to explain how ultimately, most (if not all) methodological and ontological traditions are considered within structuration theory. Thus, starting with the structure/ agency debate, *as well as* the perhaps equally divisive problem of social sciences' comparability to natural sciences, he explains that those traditions which emphasise 'structure' can generally be associated with the positivist tradition, specifically in the cases of structuralism and functionalism. Meanwhile those traditions, which emphasise the role of the agent – hermeneutics and interpretative sociology in its widest sense – reject any connection between social and natural science (Giddens, 1999: 1-25; see also Held and Thompson, 1989: 3). Having effectively taken the two most-debated problems of the social sciences, as well as most of its main methodological and ontological traditions, and placed them all into an astonishingly neat bi-polar framework, the starting point of structuration theory is established. With this backdrop, structuration theory appears to some extent as a grand unified theory of the social sciences, comprising solutions to its central problems and drawing upon most of its traditions. Kaspersen concurs with this view, and in doing so, offers a convenient starting point to assess some critiques:

Giddens's structuration theory [...] is unique in its scope. Giddens applies the entire spectrum of classical and modern social theory as the basis of his grandiose attempt at reconstruction. No one other than Giddens has been able to combine elements from Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mead, Goffman, Parsons, Merton, Schutz, Offe, Heidegger, the Swedish geography of time, Freud, Eriksson, Foucault, etc. into an apparently coherent theoretical approach. It is precisely the enormous, ambitious character of the project which is also Giddens's weakness, creating flaws and gaps in his argumentation. (Kaspersen, 2000: 186)

One illustrative example – though only peripherally related to the subject matter of this thesis – of how the ambitious nature of Giddens's project leads to 'gaps', is given by some critiques of his concept of space-time. Gregory, himself a geographer rather than a social theorist, notes that Giddens's definition of the concept simply falls short of taking into account the vast discourses existing on this subject matter within the field of human geography. Specifically, drawing on Harvey and Lefebvre, he notes a failure to adequately take into account both the 'production of space', as well as the symbolic and normative aspects of spatial representation (Gregory, 1989). Similar critiques on this particular subject matter are also offered by other authors, including Gregson (1997) and Urry (1997a). Here, there is a clear example of an immense discourse outside of Giddens's own formal subject area, which he simply cannot fully assess and coherently

integrate into his own framework without simplification. As Kaspersen notes flippantly, but with some justification:

Giddens is like a tightrope walker who attempts a backwards flip while balancing in a high wind with water below. This is too ambitious, even for Giddens! (Kaspersen, 2000: 186)

Several other examples of this nature abound, for instance the charge of simplification and consequent misrepresentation of contemporary French social theory (Boyne, 1997) or a once again incomplete appreciation of the ‘unconscious’ (Wilmott, 1997). But before focussing in more depth on those problematic elements of structuration theory that are directly relevant to this thesis, it is also worth noting one rather more general line of critique: Archer highlights that whilst constructing theories that attempt to solve the problem of action versus structure is essentially desirable, such theories nevertheless ought to keep these two elements analytically separate. Arguing for ‘dualism’ rather than ‘duality’, she outlines the morphogenetic approach (1995) and directly contrasts it to Giddens’s structuration theory (Archer, 1982). The key problem she sees with the central conflation of structure and agency is that

...the relative independence, causal influence and temporal precedence of [structure and agency] have been eliminated at a stroke. (Archer, 1995: 94)

Contrasting the central conflation of structuration theory with her own approach, in which structure and agency are both considered, but kept analytically separate, she then notes that her approach

...makes it possible to *theorize about variations* in voluntarism and determinism (and their consequences), whereas conceptual insistence on the simultaneity of transformative capacity and chronic recursiveness inhibits any theoretical formulation of the conditions under which either will predominate. (Archer, 1982: 477)

We will see at subsequent points in this thesis that Giddens’s work as a whole can in fact accomplish such tasks, albeit indirectly and only in combination with his works that followed the formulation of structuration theory. Nevertheless, I mention Archer’s line of critique here in order to indicate that even within the task of solving the action/structure problem – a cause to which Archer is clearly sympathetic (ibid: 477) – there is an antithetical position to the ‘conflationist’ character of structuration theory, which may of course ultimately lead to political implications quite different from those that I

will highlight in Giddens's work. Above all, agents' distance from their structural context, and their potentially heightened ability to therefore criticise and transform it could be a crucial source of difference in this respect. Though once again, as we shall see Giddens's subsequent work can mitigate such issues.

Following this brief overview of structuration theory and the related critical literature, I will now address those specific elements that are of the highest importance for this thesis, and which therefore need to be looked at more closely: Giddens's definition of action and structure respectively, the capacity of structuration theory to aid (or inhibit) social critique, and its use for empirical research. By assessing these components, I will show that structuration theory is neither especially convincing as a grand unified theory of social science, nor as a blueprint for empirical research, but that it does contain the early stages of a normative project centred on the empowerment of the individual, which, once developed into the context of substantive first order theory, leads to a critical social theory with significant political implications.

Structure and agency

The first two elements – structure and agency themselves – have rarely been critiqued separately. At times, the 'duality of structure' has been the object of investigation (e.g. Urry, 1997b; Shoter, 1997) but here too, the agent is also inevitably situated within the critique. Nevertheless, some critics allow disentanglement of these two concepts. Thus, Thompson (1989) notes a highly reductionist view of 'structure', defined by Giddens as 'rules and resources'; this definition, once again, is characterised as somewhat opaque and incomplete. In a similar vein, Bauman (1989) notes that Giddens's definition of structure amounts to little more than a conceptual shift "...from the realm of objects to the realm of rules..." and that now structure operates "...in the algebraic rather than the mechanical sense." (1989: 42).

But whilst structure is criticised as being insufficiently defined and lacking consideration of alternative conceptions of 'structure', critiques of Giddens's ideas on 'agency' are centred not so much on incompleteness of definition, but rather more on an

excessive degree of optimism regarding the agent's capacity to act freely. Bauman gives perhaps the most concise description of Giddens's intentions regarding agency:

The goal is [...] on the one hand to dethrone the concept of 'structure' as an external, pre-existing determinant of action; on the other, to deny the random or entirely self-propelled character of actors' behaviour. (Bauman, 1989: 42)

This quote already suggests an element central to structuration theory, and indeed to the subject matter of this thesis: one of the fundamental tenets of structuration theory is that the individual has power. Bauman's quote here only vaguely alludes to this, but some further investigation confirms this. On the concept of 'power' itself, Giddens notes:

The study of power cannot be regarded as a second-order consideration in the social sciences. Power cannot be tacked on, as it were, after the more basic concepts have been formulated. There is no more elemental concept than that of power. [...] power is the means of getting things done and, as such, directly implied in human action. (Giddens, 1999: 283)

In the context of structuration theory, this of course means that it is of crucial importance to Giddens himself that the power to affect the reproduction of structure is in the hands of the agent. Importantly – and in contrast to post-structuralism, to which some of Giddens's theories might otherwise be compared – the individual does so as an active, reflexive, knowledgeable social agent (Giddens, 1999: 15; Tucker, 1999: 56; 80-81). At the same time, Giddens is cautious not to portray the notion of power as an entirely positive concept. Whilst he separates the concept of 'power' from that of 'domination', he does note that power is tied to exploitation and coercion as well as to freedom, emancipation and interdependence (Tucker, 1998: 114-115; Giddens, 1999: 257). However, he also explicitly notes that there is such a thing as 'social constraint', limiting an individual's capacity to influence specific processes or states of affairs (Giddens, 1999: 14-15). So whilst empowerment of the individual is a central theme here, the question that structuration theory may immediately demand in the study of any society is 'how much power does the agent have?' It is therefore certainly not the case that structuration theory sees power as an unproblematic notion, seemingly limitless regardless of structural forces such as class, gender or ethnicity. But nevertheless, he has a squarely agent-centred understanding of the notion of power. The extent of individual empowerment in any given society as a key area of investigation for structuration theory is further highlighted when he explicitly rejects the idea of power as a 'zero-sum' game, where structure exercises power over the agent just as much as the agent has power to

change structure (1999: 15). Speaking in the context of power, he also notes with regard to potential ‘confining’ aspects of structure:

...it is of the first importance to recognise that circumstances of social constraint in which individuals ‘have no choice’ are not to be equated with the dissolution of action as such. (ibid)

Finally, Giddens is very clear about his bottom-line stance on power:³

...we can say that action logically involves power in the sense of transformative capacity. In this sense, the most all-embracing meaning of ‘power’, power is logically prior to subjectivity... (ibid)

Thus, the creation of a theoretical framework, according to which empowerment of the individual is the key site of investigation, begins to transpire as a central theme within structuration theory. Indeed, this idea is deepened when examining critiques of Giddens’s concept and use of ‘action’: it has often been claimed that Giddens characterises the actor as too free, too independent, even within the context of his own theory. Thus, Kilminster (1991) draws together considerable evidence to conclude that despite his insistence upon a ‘duality of structure’, Giddens still appears as an action-theorist and therefore a subjectivist (ibid: 84-98; see also Johnson et al, 1984) with relatively little attention to how structure can ever affect the agent. Nevertheless, Giddens does provide several sections in which structure and constraint are considered, and I will return to these in chapter 3 of this thesis. But what is important to mention at this early stage is that many of his critics attribute his insistence on empowerment not so much to his methodological, but to his normative outlook:

...structuration theory articulates, with an implicit normative stress, the dominant self-experience and public code of behaviour of highly self-controlled individuals in advanced industrial societies. But it is unable to show how this kind of individual came to develop in the first place. (Kilminster, 1991: 101)

According to this line of critique, Giddens cannot be viewed as being fully successful in creating a synthesis of past methodological/ ontological traditions, and is placed squarely back in the realm of subjectivists; a rather weak one at that, since he has no comprehensively subjectivist rationale, whilst his notion of the duality of structure – which, as shown, is supposed to bridge the object-subject divide – fails to ‘synthesise’. Other, more benevolent critics, such as Bauman (1989) are less critical of the duality of

structure itself; but Bauman also concludes that Giddens has gone too far in his attempt to reconstitute the actor as a knowledgeable, independent focal point for sociological enquiry. Kaspersen (2000) concurs with this sentiment, noting that the "...leeway..." (ibid: 161) Giddens gives to the agent in relation to the potentially constraining aspects of structure is one of the central problems of structuration theory, and points to some other authors, specifically Archer (1982), Layder (1985) and Livesay (1989) who all have similar concerns.

Within the context of his own theoretical framework, Giddens leans heavily towards the agent as the locus of both power and social enquiry. According to some critics, this is to the point that his framework becomes problematic, even unworkable; according to others, it simply pushes Giddens further towards a subjectivist approach. It is unclear why Giddens, despite attempting to reconcile opposed traditions within social theory, tends towards empowering the individual agent to such a strong extent, according to some even in defiance of his own claims on the duality of structure. Despite discussing issues of structure and constraint, Giddens ultimately posits the individual at the centre of his theory, as somewhat of a creator and transformer of structure. The result is a theory that does not synthesise existing traditions to the effect of being a general theory. Though unrelated to the centrality of agency and the individual, the charges we saw on vagueness and incomplete definitions of several key concepts compile the difficulty of ascertaining what exactly structuration theory might be useful for, and what further developments of it may involve. But we already saw that some critics identify normative connotations in Giddens's centrality of agency and the empowerment of the individual. By further investigating these, we can begin to see what is effectively the meta-theoretical foundation of Giddensian politics. Giddens is clear about his position that sociologists should be concerned with influencing the difference between 'what is' and 'what might be' (Giddens, 1991: 119-120; 1999: 353). He is also clear about the reflexivity of individuals, and indeed of sociological texts (Giddens, 1995a: 15). I will show now that the centrality of the empowered individual within the theory of structuration is linked to this outlook.

Critique and critical theory

These deliberations have served to outline Giddens's structuration theory, its various components, and critical responses to the short-comings of those components that will be of interest in this thesis. This has helped to show, which elements of structuration theory are problematic, and it has also helped to generate some suggestion of what elements are of particular importance to Giddens, and what elements of it we might expect to recur in his subsequent works. However, in order to examine the potential for continuity more closely, two further aspects of the literature on structuration theory need to be looked at, both of which relate more directly to understanding the roots of Giddensian politics: firstly, its capacity for social critique; secondly, its potential to aid and direct empirical analysis.

Bernstein notes that Giddens distances himself from Habermas's conception of critical social theory (Bernstein, 1989: 29; see also Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 72). Held and Thompson allude to the fact that this is especially striking, given that these two authors are to some extent thematically related (Held and Thompson, 1989: 5; see also Holmwood, 1996: 30-32). Thus critical social theory as envisaged for instance by the Frankfurt School, i.e. attached to a programme of normative grounding of critique, is clearly not achievable and not intended within structuration theory. But, Bernstein argues, the theme of social critique is not altogether absent from structuration theory. Rather than taking an overtly anti-Habermasian stance, whereby social theory should have little critical capacity, there is a clear capacity for social critique, albeit in what is frequently termed a 'minimal' sense (Bernstein, 1989: 30; Bryant, 1991: 200).

For Giddens, Bernstein argues, the capacity of social theory to be critical stems from the reflexive nature of sociological texts. To summarise briefly: even if a sociological text is not of a critical nature and does not have a normative grounding for critique in and of itself, its transformative capacity ensures that it can nevertheless act as a starting point for critical theory. In this sense, Giddens himself claims, all social sciences are inherently critical (Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 74). Therefore Giddens's theory is of course not a fully constituted critical theory in itself, but merely forms a starting point for critique that ultimately only comes about through reflexive processes. Bryant concurs with Bernstein in acknowledging the potential for this kind of social critique

within Giddens's work, and in fact traces this idea back to authors who advocate an 'interactive model of applied sociology' (Bryant, 1991: 177-187; Scott and Shore, 1979; Lindblom and Cohen, 1979; Weiss and Bucuvalas, 1980). The critics mentioned here acknowledge that there is some merit to Giddens's approach, even though there is doubt as to whether this really makes Giddens's theory a critical one, a line of argument, which McLellan also considers at some length (McLellan, 1997). Bernstein denies Giddens's approach any critical character, reflecting on the example of Machiavelli (Giddens, 1999: 350):

...Giddens confuses the issue of the practical consequences of social science on the social world with its critical impact. [...] Now although I agree with much of what Giddens says about Machiavelli and the ways in which his discourse was appropriated and embodied in social reality, I fail to see how this is sufficient to clarify the critical function of social science and theory. (Bernstein, 1989: 30)

Giddens himself responds directly to the concerns raised by these authors, and notes that there are various forms of critical theory – intellectual critique, practical critique, ideological critique and moral critique – and goes on to explain that the concerns raised by these authors almost solely concern the last of these four types (Giddens, 1989: 289-291). In effect, this means that the extent to which structuration theory is of an inherently critical nature depends on how much emphasis one wishes to place on the importance of moral critique as opposed to other possible forms outlined by Giddens. This debate, whether in relation to Giddens's work or not, is doubtlessly set to continue, and examining it further goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

Aside from this issue, it is worth stressing that Giddens does view his theory as being of a critical nature, but that at this stage of his work, he is unclear about normative dimensions, noting simply:

I don't really think that I'd support any programme of trying to ground critical theory, but nor will I support the opposite, that is the idea of a purely immanent critique or ungroundable form of critique. I would probably work more from within a sociological conception which would seem to me to suggest that some things are clearly noxious and other things are clearly desirable and that it isn't necessary to ground them in order to proclaim this to be so. (Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 72)

Here we see an example of Giddens trying to synthesise two opposed methodological traditions with very little justification for the end-result as such. This is where previously mentioned characterisations of vagueness and evasiveness apply most

acutely (see also Bernstein, 1989: 28; Bryant, 1991: 190). Thus, the directly normative claims that Giddens does make, clearly lack a well thought-out basis. Ultimately, between this conception of normative social critique and the potential for social critique derived from the transformative power of text, Bryant gives a summary that appears fair, based on the arguments compiled here:

Structuration theory is critical in a minimal sense in so far as it suggests that human agents can always act otherwise that they do; but it will not be critical in a fuller sense, until a normative [...] theory is supplied to warrant either the philosophical anthropology that currently informs it or some more historical successor. (Bryant, 1991: 200)

Though ‘minimal’ in Bryant’s assessment, we can see here the early stages of a normative project: there is an intention within Giddens’s work to somehow inspire, or at least provide a starting point for critical transformative action through sociological work. Giddens in fact makes this intention quite clear:

I want to follow the strategy of, so to speak, firing critical salvos into reality and attempting to focus them around these issues that I mentioned before: the distinctiveness of the modern world, the implications of that by contrast to the traditional world, what this leaves in the way of obvious formulae for political theory and then how one can, as it were, spin a web around them. (Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 72)

It is clear then that Giddens has distinct critical intent, and that the emphasis he places on agency and the empowered, reflexive individual is in some way connected to this. As we shall see later on, Giddens’s analysis of late modernity can supply the ‘normative theory’ postulated by Bryant. Yet, structuration theory in and of itself is, in Bryant’s words, critical in a minimal sense at best. Within structuration theory, there is little idea of how the individual as an analytical focus translates into ‘critical salvos’ centred on the ‘distinctiveness of the modern world’. There is effectively something missing, in order for Giddens’s thoughts on critical theory, coupled with his emphasis on the individual, to translate into an actual transformative critical social theory. So far, we have seen what might be termed the beginning of Giddens’s normative critical intent. By looking now at the issue of empirical research, we can not only weaken the case for structuration theory as straightforward research guidance, but at once also strengthen the case for structuration theory as the beginning of a normative critical undertaking, and ascertain more precisely what kind of further work on his part might lead to its completion.

Empirical research

Looking at this area is necessary for two reasons; firstly, it is relevant in terms of contextualising the next set of Giddens's texts to be investigated here. Secondly, it will be shown that there is a link between the implications for empirical research and the previously discussed aspect of structuration theory as social critique. Crucially for the main arguments of this thesis, examining this subject matter will enable a deeper understanding of how structuration theory and the next main cluster of Giddens's work – his analysis of late modernity – are linked.

Held and Thompson deliver a good starting point for this discussion, reflecting on a range of critical responses to structuration theory:

Although the theory of structuration, and Giddens's related work on time and space, have generated considerable theoretical debate, they have received a more cautious response from social scientists engaged in empirical research. For there are many who feel that Giddens's work, however interesting it may be on a general theoretical level, is too abstract and formal to be of much use in carrying out empirical research projects. (Held and Thompson, 1989: 9)

This rather loose summary of critiques may initially seem to present grounds to dismiss this dimension of structuration theory as one which is unlikely to be of much significance. However, although Giddens himself does not make much reference to the use of his work to empirical research (Gregson, 1989: 238), he does note the importance of the link between theoretical and empirical work relatively early on in his career (Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 74). Indeed, in *CoS*, he finally elaborates on this importance, and dedicates a chapter heading and several entire sub-sections to structuration theory in relation to empirical research, even going as far as stating bullet-point rules, according to which structuration theory is to inform and guide empirical research (Giddens, 1999: 281-285). Therefore, evidence showing Giddens's interest in, and commitment to, empirical research are evident. Yet, critiques of structuration theory in this particular respect are especially ferocious. This warrants a closer look.

One of the most damning – and certainly the most comprehensive – critiques of structuration theory in relation to empirical research is offered by Gregson (1989). Her critique broadly divides into three components: firstly, Giddens's 'advice' on empirical

research is internally inconsistent and unclear; secondly, it contains nothing new; thirdly, it is too abstract to be of any direct use. Given the importance of the question of what structuration theory might actually be useful for, and how it might need to be developed at substantive levels, her arguments are worth looking at in some detail.

Gregson begins with Giddens's explicit points on empirical research – the ten 'structurationist' points, and the three guidelines for empirical research (Gregson, 1989: 239; Giddens, 1999: 281-285) – and concludes that it is unclear how the three guidelines relate to the ten points and indeed, that it is unclear why he reduces ten points to three guidelines, because "...the ten specific points suggest, at the very least, ten specific guidelines for empirical work." (Gregson, 1989: 239) This criticism is not without merit; for example, point number 9, the importance of the analysis of power struggles (Giddens, 1999: 283), is in no way implicit in the three guidelines, which simply refer to the importance of (1) the ethnographic moment, (2) of agents' skills, and (3) of time-space relations (ibid: 284-285).

Secondly, Gregson notes explicitly that Giddens's guidelines offer 'nothing new' (Gregson, 1989: 242), and indeed, that Giddens's characterisation of certain empirical projects as 'structurationist' is flawed. In this context she focuses on Willis's *Learning to Labour* (2000), an example used by Giddens to illustrate the use of structuration theory (Giddens, 1999: 298). Contrary to Giddens's claims, whereby this study is an example of how structuration theory aids empirical research, Gregson notes that whilst there are traces of Giddens's guidelines to be found in *Learning to Labour*, the study goes well beyond the scope of those guidelines and, more importantly, is not theoretically informed by Giddens, but rather by Gramsci, Althusser, Lukacs and Marx (Gregson, 1989: 242). Thus, it follows, the structurationist dimension that Giddens observes in *Learning to Labour*, was readily available for Willis in the work of previous theorists. Gregson concludes:

Perversely then, the situation is one in which, on the one hand, Giddens needs works such as Willis's to demonstrate that structurationist concepts can be illustrated in an empirical context but, on the other, Willis [...] has no need of structuration theory whatsoever. (Gregson, 1989: 242-243)

Finally, there is the issue of structuration theory being too abstract. Gregson summarises her point on this matter, reflecting on Giddens's three guidelines:

...whilst few would disagree that social research has an ethnographic moment, that people demonstrate a vast number of skills in the course of daily life and that temporal and spatial structures are critical, for the purposes of empirical research the key questions concern which 'actors', which skills and which temporal and spatial structures we choose to investigate; and how we investigate these, where and when. [...] Fundamentally, the guidelines which Giddens presents [...] reflect ontological rather than empirical concerns and, as such, are of limited use to empirical research. (ibid: 240-241)

These then, are three central points relevant to the issue of structuration theory in the context of empirical research. All three points are justified to a large extent: the section in *CoS* in which Giddens makes the points referred to by Gregson is fairly concise and the concerns she raises will readily transpire as sensible to the vast majority of readers. Clearly then, structuration theory does not necessarily serve well as a 'blueprint' of any kind for empirical research.⁴ However – aside from providing a minimal set of 'guidelines' – there is no indication by Giddens himself that this is a priority. His statements on this matter, as mentioned above, relate more generally to the important and close relationship between theory and empirical research. The question of how structuration theory conceptualises this relationship – fundamentally an expression of the issue of theory and practice – is also discussed by Gregson, with some highly illuminating results. Her answer takes us back to the issue of critical theory and the normative connotations of empowered individuals.

She notes that there initially appears to be an inconsistency within Giddens's variously stated views on this relationship. At times he concurs with the rather uncontroversial stance that there needs to be a dialogue between theory and empirical research, i.e. that theory can introduce concepts and analytical angles which inform empirical studies, and that empirical work reversely can inform and help to generate or modify theory. Yet, in the case of structuration theory, she notes that Giddens does not treat this as an equal relationship, and instead, empirical research can pick potentially useful elements from an effectively unalterable theory (Gregson, 1989: 244). Initially, this summary of Gregson's arguments highlights a mismatch between a widely-held viewpoint that Giddens also endorses, and Giddens's own reflection on the empirical use of structuration theory. This in itself appears like somewhat of a dead-end for the concern of what might be the use and aim of structuration theory; but Gregson offers an

insightful conclusion on this matter, which points the way forward for the subject matter at hand in this thesis.

Based upon its level of abstraction, Gregson places structuration theory squarely in the realm of ‘second-order theory. She explains:

[Structuration theory’s] concerns are not with theorising the unique (i.e. with explaining events or contingencies of particular periods or places) but with conceptualising the general constituents of human society (i.e. agency, structure, time, space, power...). [...] Many of the theoretical concepts used in empirical research in social science [...] are first-order: they suggest concepts which can be transferred immediately into an empirical setting (for instance wage labour, the labour process, industrial restructuring, masculinity/femininity...). (Gregson, 1989: 245)

Thus, in order for structuration theory to genuinely become part of an equal dialogue with empirical research, Gregson concludes that it needs to change to a lower level of abstraction, to be modified into first order theory. Gregson makes one further, crucial remark on this subject matter. She notes that a critical social theory must have emancipation ‘at its heart’ (Gregson, 1989: 247). To achieve this emancipatory nature, she continues, it must, at some point, “...cut into the empirical world.” (ibid) This point from Gregson’s critique summarises the key elements that will contribute to the further development of my argument on this matter. To remind the reader: the conclusions drawn earlier in this chapter on the empowerment of the agent already suggest that emancipation is of importance to Giddens, and indeed, this will be made even clearer in the latter stages of this chapter and in chapter 2. Meanwhile, it was also shown earlier that Giddens sees his theory as being of a critical nature (although his definition of ‘critical’ was contested). It was further shown, both here and in Gregson’s text, that Giddens places a lot of importance on the link between theory and empirical research, even though there is little evidence of a successful creation of direct link in the case of structuration theory.

Therefore, this proposed movement from second-order to first-order theory has the capacity to decisively move structuration theory forward. Deriving first-order concepts from structuration theory could be a viable link to empirical research, and in doing so, the potential for a critical dimension – especially as Giddens’s defines it – would be heightened considerably. In fact, although it may not be the only way, introducing first-order concepts appears as a possible way of inspiring transformation through reflexivity

and the double hermeneutic, which, as shown, is precisely Giddens's definition of a critical theory. Reflecting on this move from what she squarely defines (with considerable justification) as 'ontology' to theoretical discussions on concrete matters, Gregson concludes aptly:

This is the magnitude of the task which confronts Giddens if he wishes to construct a critical social theory out of structuration theory. It is also what is required before most social researchers need begin to look to structuration theory for any form of guidance in their empirical research. (Gregson, 1989: 248)

Summary

Giddens has continued to write about central problems of classical social theory and in this context has continued to defend structuration theory against its critics, for instance in some sections of *Politics, Sociology and Social Theory* (1995d). But this section has now drawn together the key constituent works concerning structuration theory, as well as some of Giddens's main follow-up texts on the subject (see Giddens, 1989; 1991). I will look in more depth at some further elements of structuration theory in chapter 3, specifically his definitions of structure and constraint. But for now, by examining these texts as well as a range of critical responses to them, it is possible to outline the implications, which this area of Giddens's work has for his subsequent writings.

As a general rule, the criticisms aimed at structuration theory rarely attack the theory as a whole,⁵ but instead tend to criticise and point out contradictions, limitations and vagueness on specific elements contained within it: Giddens's definition of structure, his analysis of the subconscious, his definition of social critique, to name but a few. This in itself explains the relatively large amounts of follow-up comments Giddens has written in response to his critics, attempting to tackle each criticism one at a time and clarifying his view on many of these 'sub-components' of structuration theory. Yet, the basic skeleton of structuration theory has not been subject to any significant modification by Giddens himself (Bryant and Jary, 2001a: 229). The definition of structuration theory aside – for this has now been dealt with at length – the analysis conducted here has produced a number of points on structuration theory, which can now be concisely stated here for the sake of clarity:

- Despite structuration theory often being characterised as a synthesising project, Giddens places heavy emphasis on agency. There is a strong sense of empowerment of the agent throughout the works on structuration theory. Indeed, some critics note that Giddens leans too heavily towards this notion within the context of his theory. Whilst such comments are contestable, Giddens certainly goes out of his way to make the empowerment of knowledgeable, reflexive agents a central theme of his theory.
- Rather than being theory for its own sake, structuration theory is intended to be of a critical nature, in the sense that its purpose (among others) is to facilitate social critique and thus social transformation; not in the classical sense of critical theory as postulated by the Frankfurt School, but – controversially – through the transformative power of text. This point, as mentioned, will be expanded on considerably in chapter 2.
- Structuration theory itself is neither intended to, nor hardly capable of, directly guiding empirical research. However, given Giddens's stance on the theory-empirical research relationship, a likely use in this area would be for structuration theory to somehow contribute to first-order theory. Crucially, progressions along these lines would also expand the scope for Giddens's definition of critical social theory.

The centrally important finding here is that there are normative motivations involved in the heavy emphasis on agency, demonstrable through Giddens's ideas on transformative critical theory. So, rather than viewing structuration theory chiefly as an attempt at a general theory, or as a blueprint for empirical research, it is the effectively incomplete critical dimension of structuration theory and its implicit normative elements that appear most worthwhile tracing in his subsequent work. As we saw, the critical dimension of structuration theory requires a shift into first order theory, which would most likely be centred once again on the empowered individual in some form. In chapter 2, I will return directly to the issue of critical transformative theory. But now I will show how the theme of the empowered individual is contextualised in Giddens's more substantive contributions.

Agency in Context: The Late Modern Self

In the theory of structuration, we saw that the theme of the empowered, knowledgeable, reflexive individual is more implicit than explicit. Looking at some critiques helped to fully understand how central this notion is in Giddens's theory. We saw that, according to some critics, Giddens places so much emphasis on the empowerment and reflexivity of the agent that his theory on the duality of structure begins to become problematic. Yet, we also saw that this emphasis of Giddens, coupled with his early thoughts on critical theory, may well form the early stages of a transformative critical social theory, to be further developed in his later, more substantive work.

In this section, I will examine Giddens's more substantive contributions. Here, it is not necessary to utilise critiques for the purpose of exposing the centrality of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, as this now becomes far more explicit. Whilst in the theory of structuration there was an implicit emphasis on it, where at face value structure and structural constraint were considered at some length, it now becomes the explicit point of investigation in Giddens's work. Many of Giddens's arguments that I will note here will immediately strike the reader as highly contestable. Indeed, the next chapter will deal with objections to the existence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual at great length, because it is precisely the empirical objections to the proposed existence of this type of individual that will lead me to an alternative reading of Giddens, based on his approach to critical theory, from which the need for a supplementary political project will be demonstrated. For now, the purpose is to highlight the continued centrality of this theme in Giddens's work, while critique of this theme will follow later on.

Here at the outset, it will be useful to give a brief thumbnail sketch of Giddens's analysis of late modernity. Leggett delivers a conveniently short summary of what Giddens views as the key social revolutions of our time:

The key process Giddens points to, from which the others flow, is *globalisation*. Communications technologies have led to a stretching of global social relations, with the effect that all local action has global social consequences. [...] Through this, we experience the second revolution: *detraditionalisation*. With the proliferation of information and the visibility of a range of lifestyle choices, institutions and practices can no longer justify themselves through traditional means [...] The third and fourth social revolutions result

from the loosening of traditional structural constraints that detraditionalisation brings about. *Individualisation* is presented as a decline of collective attachments and the increasing desire for individual autonomy. This process occurs as, in the face of the retreat of traditional practices, identity becomes a matter of active self-creation. Individualisation itself occurs against the backdrop of *social reflexivity*. Reflexivity refers to the ability of agents, on the basis of a proliferation of information about the social world, to constantly filter that information. In so doing, they can act in a way that influences the conditions for future reflection and action. (Leggett, 2005: 16-17)

One slight issue with this otherwise apt synopsis of Giddens's analysis of late modernity lies in the inferred causal links between the various 'revolutions', which are not quite as 'smooth' as the above passage might initially suggest. Most of the links made by Leggett here doubtlessly have considerable merit. But this passage should not be read as attributing an essentialist character to Giddens's work, where, for example, globalisation is the direct root cause of all the other 'revolutions'. As we shall see shortly, other factors, such as the rise of mass literacy often feature as important prerequisites for all the other revolutions. Indeed, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, many of these 'social revolutions' can, in various cases, exacerbate each other in many different combinations. Nevertheless, this passage for now delivers a useful starting point for the purpose of this chapter. Scope for social transformation within Giddens's analysis of late modernity will be explored in chapters 3 and 4, whilst objections to the empirical validity of his 'revolutions' will be dealt with in chapter 2. For now, we can continue to the importance of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual in Giddens's work.

Even in the above passage, we can see how this theme is contextualised in its most general terms: globalisation, detraditionalisation and social reflexivity contribute to individualisation, which here is understood as self-creation in the context of reflexivity and availability of information. Reflexive, knowledgeable individuals clearly emerge as an important notion. These indeed are well-known features of Giddens's analysis of late modernity; I re-iterate them here for the sake of clarity. What is less clear here is the notion of empowerment, which was of course a key component of the type of agent posited in structuration theory. In order to understand in more detail, how the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is transferred from the meta-theoretical realm of structuration theory into more substantive contexts, it is useful to look at one of Giddens's works on a rather more specific substantive matter than the analysis of late modernity as a whole.

The Transformation of Intimacy (1992), though highly problematic in terms of its conclusions, is a useful text to look at in this context. Even though it is thematically only peripherally related to the subject of this thesis, this text gives some good insights in a particularly clear manner into the way in which the basic underpinnings of structuration theory, and chiefly the theme of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, are operationalised. Swiftly, the reader of the text will become aware that Giddens does indeed try actively to apply structuration theory to a first-order context – that context in this case being the topic of sexuality, intimacy and relationships. Much of the language Giddens uses is already familiar from the texts I considered earlier: knowledgeable, empowered agents, reflexivity and transformation are all key themes and terms explicitly used frequently in the text. A closer look highlights some distinct parallels with the conclusions drawn earlier on structuration theory: unlike in *CoS*, Giddens gives a substantive explanation of how reflexive, empowered individuals come about. At several instances he explains that with the emergence of scientific knowledge and the advent of more-or-less fully literate populations, the resources were finally available to create empowered individuals, able to engage in reflexive processes (see e.g. Giddens, 1992: 24). Crucially, he also notes that this capacity was therefore not always universal: in pre-modern times, he notes, sexual liberation and individuals (crucially including women) able to pursue their sexual desires at will did exist, but only within the very top social strata, and even here only to a limited extent (ibid: 39). In this sense, it begins to emerge, Giddens’s conception of agency cannot be seen to apply universally, but is a definition quite specifically attributable to modern societies. This reflects my earlier points on structuration theory, where the extent of reflexivity and empowerment were identified as key societal features worth investigating.

Thus the empowered, reflexive agent supposedly characteristic of late modern societies is posited; the case for a clear application of Giddens’s notion of the ‘agent’ is also strengthened when considering alternative theories on the subject Giddens writes about. Early on in the text, he devotes a chapter to Foucault’s theories on sexuality. Giddens characterises Foucault’s theory as placing much emphasis on structure and its constraining nature, where power, its substantive locus ill-defined, lies squarely in the realm of structure, while agents are effectively viewed as ‘docile bodies’ (ibid: 18-34).⁶ Throughout this chapter, and at many points in the rest of the text, Giddens makes it

quite clear that he disagrees with this sentiment and wishes to construct an alternative theory.

So, the significance of empowered, reflexive individuals is clearly a theme from structuration theory that recurs in this work. But of course, these points also serve to highlight an additional aspect of this theme. Here, in the more substantive context, it becomes evident that Giddens's concept of the agent is not a timeless feature of all societies. There are specific conditions, it follows, that need to be in place for such agents to exist. In *Transformation of Intimacy*, widespread literacy is often implied as one such condition (1992: 26; 40). Access to information of all kinds may be inferred here as a more general criterion, literacy itself being part of that 'access'. Various other such preconditions for Giddens's concept of agency will be pointed out later; but this example alone shows contextualisation of one of the most central elements of structuration theory: Giddens is aware that certain preconditions must somehow come into being for a certain type of agency to hold. But, very much in line with Gregson, substantive contributions are necessary in order to establish what exactly these conditions are. Moving this issue ever closer to the foundations of Giddensian politics, we can extract two central questions relevant to Giddens's work: what are the various preconditions for his notion of the individual to exist, and indeed, are there certain developments (of whatever kind) that might either advance or obstruct these preconditions? This latter question is of course of pivotal importance, and will be a central concern of chapters 2 to 4.

Meanwhile, the previously discussed issue of critical social theory and transformative power is also traceable in this text. A particularly clear example is given when Giddens discusses the appropriation of the term 'gay', characterising this as a reflexive, transformative process (ibid: 14). The availability of and access to relevant literature is cited elsewhere as a key precondition for such transformations to occur (ibid: 24). Further on, Giddens also notes explicitly:

An expansion of institutional reflexivity is a distinctive characteristic of modern societies in the relatively recent period. Increased geographical mobility, the mass media and a host of other factors have undercut elements of tradition in social life which long resisted – or became adapted to – modernity. The continual reflexive incorporation of knowledge not only steps into the breach; it provides precisely a basic impetus to the changes which sweep through personal, as well as global contexts of action. (ibid: 29)

This passage draws together some of the most relevant points on structuration theory and what now transpire to be its first-order applications: social agents are knowledgeable, reflexive, empowered beings with much capacity for transformative action. However, this definition only becomes evident in the contemporary context, where several factors are given that enable individuals to be characterised as such. The reflexive nature of knowledge is of paramount importance in this context.

We can now clearly see how the conclusions drawn earlier from structuration theory have been adapted here, and it is evident that there is a great deal of continuity especially of those elements of structuration theory that were shown to be of particular importance as underlying assumptions for later works. In the case of *Transformation of Intimacy*, it is of little use to further assess the substantive conclusions that Giddens ends up drawing based on this application of structuration theory. For although it is clear that the term ‘application’ is suitable, the book as a whole is ultimately both problematic (See e.g. Jamieson, 1999; Giminez, 1993), and is also, as mentioned, only peripherally related to the subject of this thesis.

This brief look at *Transformation of Intimacy* has helped to give a general idea of what first-order applications of structuration theory might look like, and has indeed shown how some key tenets of structuration theory that were uncovered earlier, most notably the theme of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, re-appear in Giddens’s later work. Regardless of the doubtlessly justified criticisms that have been made about the data used and the conclusions drawn in this book, it is nevertheless visibly informed by Giddens’s earlier work.

In order to deepen and extend the analysis of Giddens’s substantive writings prior to his writings on politics, two more of his texts can be looked at to yield some further points that will be of use later: *CoM* (1995a) and *MaSI* (1995b).

In *CoM*, Giddens strings together some of the key substantive themes that are to recur in his later works, and in doing so forms a key part of his narrative on late modernity. *CoM* transpires as a crucial mid-point in Giddens’s writings: this work is clearly informed by structuration theory, drawing on many of its elements and explaining in more detail, yet with a broader thematic focus than *Transformation of Intimacy*, how the principles of

his earlier work are to be understood in a substantive context; and at the same time, the foundations for Giddens's later works are laid here (see also Rosenberg, 2000: 87-91).

To give just one example of how an element of structuration theory is concretised: it was mentioned earlier that the theme of space-time is of importance to the formulation of structuration theory. But whilst these terms are previously discussed abstractly, Giddens now contextualises the terms 'time' and 'space', explaining how, during the modern period, time and space have become standardised and conceptually altered, citing concrete examples such as clocks, time-zones and maps (Giddens, 1995a: 17-21). For the first time in Giddens's work, the reader is therefore given an understanding of how time and space are to be understood, how these elements must be viewed specifically in the present age, and thus, how they might affect the agent's perception of the social world, and how they might affect social forces and interactions in general.

Meanwhile, late modernity – the central theme of this book – transpires as a key issue to be considered in the context of this thesis. As was already suggested in the above discussion of *Transformation of Intimacy*, much of Giddens's theory hinges on his definition of late modernity. Giddens famously rejects the idea of post-modernity, and instead introduces the idea of 'late' or 'radicalised' modernity (Giddens, 1995a: 149), i.e. a conception by which the basic characteristics that have frequently been used to define modernity are still in place, but are supplemented by increased reflexivity, triggered by increased access to resources which make such reflexivity possible. We need not go into the post-modernist objections to this theory, as this would be well outside the scope of this thesis; suffice to say, Giddens clearly takes sides on what has to be seen as one of the central disagreements in contemporary social thought. Yet, what needs to be understood here are the implications of Giddens's idea of radicalised modernity. Giddens explicitly sets out to contrast his idea with that of post-modernity, going even as far as setting out respective bullet-point lists. In them, he notes:

Post-modernity:

[...] Sees the self as dissolved or dismembered by the fragmenting of experience.

Radicalised Modernity:

[...] Sees the self as more than just a site of intersecting forces; active processes of reflexive self-identity are made possible by modernity.
(Giddens, 1995a: 150)

Here, we can now see definitive confirmation of what was initially just a vague supposition in the more specific context of *Transformation of Intimacy*: Giddens's notion of the knowledgeable, reflexive, empowered agent should not be understood as a universal, timeless constant; this type of agent is explicitly facilitated in the context of modernity, and specifically of late modernity.⁷ It is therefore evident that there must be distinct substantive components of late modernity that enable this type of agent, and presumably, there is therefore the possibility of factors that may inhibit the existence of such agents. This conclusion of course has *massive* implications for whatever political projects might later on be based on these earlier writings of Giddens, and will in many ways form a central concern of this thesis.

Many of the points made here also recur, at times in a more elaborated form, in *MaSI* (1995b). Here, once again, late modernity is described as an era whose characteristics enable (or perhaps even enforce) the emergence of the kind of individual Giddens talks about. Furthermore, the capacity for social transformation through the interplay between the availability of information (ranging from academic literature to all forms of mass media) and the actors' capacity to access it and to integrate it into their lives are also mentioned once again. This feature, along with its increasingly 'globalised' nature, contribute to Giddens's notion of late modernity, which now, rather confusingly, is also described as 'high', 'radicalised' or 'reflexive' modernity (ibid: 1-9).

This brief face value examination of Giddens's substantive contributions has already highlighted the continued importance of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. Understanding the importance of this theme, and its normative origins already found in structuration theory is crucial to my argument, precisely because much of the remainder of this thesis rests on the fact that the existence of such an individual is highly contestable. Indeed, we can deepen the importance of this theme, as was done in the examination of structuration theory earlier, by giving an initial overview of some critiques.

Interestingly – postmodernists aside (e.g. Lemert, 1992),⁸ who, given Giddens's openly adversarial stance on the post-modernity thesis (see e.g. Giddens, 1995a: 149), will most likely squarely disagree with his entire analytical framework – the vast bulk of critiques levelled at his analysis of late modernity are strikingly similar in character to

the objections raised to structuration theory. Many critiques put forward charges of ambiguity, vagueness, generalisation and incomplete definitions. To give just a few brief examples of this: just as geographers and psychologists were earlier shown to have highlighted a lack of knowledge on their subject areas with Giddens's structuration theory, there is now the charge that he has a limited understanding of media research. This lack of understanding causes problems for his assertion that mass media creates a world-wide 'unitary framework of experience', thus contributing to his definition of globalisation through altered time-space relations (Kaspersen: 2000: 170-171). Another example is the charge of an insufficiently detailed definition of 'reflexivity' (Beck et al, 1994). Then there is the charge of generalisation: Giddens rarely goes into detail on the possibility of globalisation and growing capacity for reflexivity affecting different parts of society – or indeed of the world – in differing ways and to different extents, leaving the reader with the impression that all these processes are unitary, undifferentiated experiences (Kaspersen, 2000: 169).

To contextualise this rough overview of objections to Giddens's substantive contributions: it was shown in the analysis of structuration theory that whilst there is ultimately a heavy emphasis on the agent, Giddens's central aim is nevertheless to somehow bridge the action-structure divide. Whilst, despite the charge of over-emphasis, structuration theory goes to some effort to consider the element of structure, thus creating a synthesis of sorts, Kaspersen goes as far as noting that in Giddens's more substantive contributions, including foremost his analysis of late modernity, this is not happening:

In [Giddens's] analysis of modernity it has been an underlying intention to base this analysis on the theory of structuration in order to provide a more adequate diagnosis of modernity without falling into the actor or structure gap. This ambition is not fulfilled. His analysis of self-identity, life political choices, and the transformation of intimacy does not specify the constraining aspect of structures. (Kaspersen, 2000: 169).

If true, this is a serious charge, leaving (1) a major flaw in Giddens's work in terms of it being vulnerable to critiques that demand an awareness of the 'constraining aspect of structures', and (2) a clear inconsistency between this purely agent-centred analysis on the one hand, and a genuine attempt – all be it skewed – at synthesis in Giddens's earlier work.

As I have already shown, and as any reader of his work will swiftly notice, the vast bulk of Giddens's work on late modernity – be it the highly specific projects, exemplified by *Transformation of Intimacy*, or the more general works such as *CoM* – does focus on the individual as an agent, or more specifically, on the increased scope for reflexivity, self-creating individuals and self-actualisation. But now, this quick overview of critiques has shown that once again, Giddens's works appear to be so skewed towards this notion of the individual that they become hugely problematic, ultimately verging on action-theory with seemingly no awareness of structural constraints leading to limited applicability of his claims about the late-modern individual. So, to summarise the findings of this section:

- There is a strong sense of continuity between Giddens's structuration theory and his analysis of late modernity – even in terms of the kinds of critiques levelled respectively at the two areas of his work. As postulated in the previous section of this chapter (mainly through Gregson's critique), he has made the move from second to first-order theory.
- In doing so, the notion of agency as posited in structuration theory is now contextualised within the era of late modernity. An understanding is developed, which explains that there are prerequisites for this type of agency to come into being, thus also opening up the possibility to identify forces that may inhibit this type of agent.
- This issue of substantive prerequisites, as well as potential barriers to empowerment and reflexivity in late modernity form a possible basis for the further development of Giddens's approach to critical theory.

The Way Ahead

I have shown that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is a central theme, both in Giddens's meta-theory and in his substantive contributions. Not only is this theme visibly important in terms of sheer amount of page numbers dedicated to it (as compared for instance with discussion of structure, which receives considerably less

attention); this theme is viewed by many critics as so dominant that – at face value at least – it causes various problems for both the usefulness of his meta-theory, and the empirical validity of his substantive contributions.

The evident importance of this theme has two major implications for this thesis:

- Any type of Giddensian politics – be it his own political project, or an alternative Giddensian politics, which I will propose in chapter 6 – must show a profound awareness of, and engagement with this theme.
- Critical objections to the empirical validity of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual will have to be considered in depth, in order to make meaningful claims about Giddensian politics.

The next chapter will consider critical objections to this theme, and in doing so, will show that this theme, in conjunction with its critiques, has direct political implications. I will also show that politics, Giddens's late-modern individual, and objections to it, can all be placed into a coherent framework through another key element in Giddens's work that was highlighted here: critical theory based on the transformative power of text and reflexivity.

Chapter 2:

Criticisms, Utopian Realism and Politics

Outline

The last chapter highlighted the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as a central theme, both in Giddens's structuration theory and in his substantive works, and also showed that the emphasis on this theme has some normative connotations that may form the early stages of a distinct type of transformative critical social theory. The purpose of the last chapter was of course not to launch straight into a critique of Giddens's claims, but merely to show that the theme in question is of pivotal importance in his work. However, since placing the notion of empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals at the heart of a sociological analysis of late modernity is self-evidently highly controversial, it is now time to consider objections to the sociological basis of this type of individual. Thereafter, I will consider whether and how Giddens's work might be able to answer to these objections.

To tackle these points, this chapter will therefore consist of three main elements: firstly, I will critically evaluate Giddens's ideas on the late modern self by outlining and summarising several key texts, which either implicitly or explicitly criticise the notion of this type of individual, and indeed, the processes that supposedly lead to its existence within late modernity: globalisation, post-traditionalism and reflexive individualisation. Secondly, I will show that it is possible to read Giddens in such a way that these criticisms are answered to. This way of reading Giddens, I shall argue, is suggested by his stance on critical social theory that we saw in chapter 1, and which in his later works is decisively developed into what he calls 'utopian realism'. Using this notion, I will argue that the idea of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, as well as the 'social revolutions' that supposedly lead to its emergence, should not be understood as absolute, but instead as tendential, and far from un-inhibited by structural constraint. Thirdly, I will show that this utopian realist reading of Giddens leads to the necessity

for a political project, geared towards facilitating the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual.

Ultimately, the overall aim of this chapter is to show two ways of reading Giddens: the first way – and perhaps the more obvious one – makes him appear as a weak and virtually indefensible action-theorist; the second is more defensible, but results in the need for a political project, without which his work remains simply utopian and hardly informed by sound sociological analysis. I will show that within his own work, there is evidence that it should be read in the second of these two ways. This chapter will thus open up the question of what a Giddensian political project needs to look like in order to complete the utopian realist reading of his work, and indeed, whether the political project he devised in the late 1990s meets those criteria. These issues will be covered in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

The Empowered, Reflexive, Knowledgeable Individual: Critical Objections

To contextualise briefly: we saw that the individual as an empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable agent is given much significance in Giddens's meta-theory. In his more substantive contributions this is contextualised, by saying that this kind of individual comes about due to globalisation, spread and availability of information, de-traditionalisation, individualisation and social reflexivity. The question now is: how valid is Giddens's assessment? In other words: can these supposed hallmarks of late modernity be questioned in terms of their empirical accuracy? The answer is emphatically 'yes'. In this section, I will outline several key objections that have been levelled – either implicitly or explicitly – at each of these hallmarks.

Globalisation

The first supposed contributory factor to the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual in late modernity that I will examine here is globalisation. As we saw, in Leggett's assessment, globalisation is the most fundamental contributory factor to this new late-modern self. Whether it is indeed justified to imply the possibility of a

genealogy of Giddens's social revolutions of our time, and identify globalisation as the primal root cause, is somewhat contestable, on which more in chapter 4. However, globalisation is doubtlessly a central theme in Giddens's work, post-structuration theory. Indeed, there is barely a publication by Giddens beyond the late 1980s, which does not refer to this theme in at least some detail. It is therefore advisable to cover this element of his work first.

To be clear: the purpose here is not to look at the normative judgements Giddens passes on globalisation. The exact threats and opportunities that he sees in relation to globalisation will be discussed in chapter 4. Authors who accept that globalisation is happening, but proceed to outline its problematic effects (see e.g. Stiglitz, 2002; Klein, 2001; Chua, 2003) will therefore be put aside for the time being. Here I will assess whether Giddens is empirically justified to place such emphasis on globalisation as a 'social revolution of our time' in the first place.

Even after discounting those authors who accept globalisation as an empirically observable phenomenon, the remaining body of work on this topic is substantial. However, as we shall see, it is possible to give a concise outline of where Giddens stands in relation to all these sceptical accounts of globalisation.

Perhaps the most famed study in this context is Hirst and Thompson's *Globalization in Question* (1998). They start out with their definition of globalisation as "...the development of a new economic structure, and not just conjunctural change toward greater international trade and investment within an existing set of economic relations." (ibid: 7) They then present several arguments against this notion, based on plenty of evidence from research gathered by other individual scholars, as well as data collected by large organisations such as the UN and IMF. Ultimately, they largely dismiss globalisation as a 'fashionable concept' (ibid: 195) and note, summarising their critical objections:

...first, [...] few exponents of globalization develop a coherent concept of the world economy in which supra-national forces and agents are decisive; second, [...] pointing to evidence of the enhanced internationalization of economic relationships since the 1970s is not in itself proof of the emergence of a distinctly 'global' economic structure; third, [...] the international economy has been subject to many structural changes in the last century and that there have been earlier periods of internationalization of trade, capital flows and

the monetary system [...]. Fourth, [...] that truly global TNCs (transnational corporations) are relatively few and that most successful multinational corporations continue to operate from distinct national bases... (ibid)

Hirst and Thompson have several other publications on various individual aspects of these sceptical arguments on globalisation (see e.g. Hirst, 1997). Indeed, several other authors have argued along similar lines to Hirst and Thompson, the general point being that there is no genuine transformation towards a ‘truly’ global economy to be observed in our time, and that the type of international economy that is presently observable is at best a slightly evolved form of what has essentially been in place for centuries (see e.g. Ruigrok and Tulder, 1995; Boyer and Drache, 1996; Gordon, 1988; Weiss, 1998). Along with other critics (e.g. Callinicos, 1994), Hirst and Thompson effectively view the present international economic state of affairs as highly problematic and inegalitarian, and envisage globalisation, if anything, as a potential future project, centred around global governance as a tool for tackling the disproportionate – yet historically far from unprecedented – influence of transnational corporations (Hirst and Thompson, 1998: 170-194).

These kinds of critiques will be useful to keep in mind, especially in chapter 4, when we will look at the structural constraints acknowledged within Giddens’s globalisation-thesis; for as we shall see, Giddens is at least partially aware of the kinds of issues raised by the authors mentioned here. However, the reader may have noticed that these kinds of empirical objections to the idea of globalisation rely heavily on a specific definition of the term in the first place. Hirst and Thompson indeed make no secret of this and explicitly note that their definition is an ideal type (ibid: 7). But when we look at what Giddens means by ‘globalisation’, it is evident that these critiques only respond to one element of his definition, since his is considerably broader than for instance that of Hirst and Thompson, and by extension, of the other authors mentioned here. Giddens notes:

Globalization can [...] be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens, 1995a: 64)

Self-evidently, this definition encompasses much more than just the economics-based definitions of the kind offered by Hirst and Thompson. Indeed:

...I don't believe that either the sceptics or the radicals have properly understood what [globalisation] is or its implications for us. Both groups see the phenomenon almost solely in economic terms. This is a mistake. Globalization is political, technological and cultural, as well as economic. It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back only to the late 1960s. (Giddens, 2002a: 10)

I will go into detail on Giddens's evidence for this claim later on. But already we can note that Giddens's assertion here is not without cause. Several edited volumes that aim to give representative overviews of the globalisation debate include many chapters on economics, trade and multinational corporations, somewhat less on politics, and rarely more than a chapter (at best!) on culture and communications (see e.g. Held and McGrew, 2007; Held et al, 2000).

Given Giddens's rather broad definition of globalisation, it is necessary to divide the critical responses into the various sub-components that his definition involves. On the issue of economic globalisation, we have seen that there are considerable objections to its very existence. As mentioned, this will be of interest especially in chapter 4 of this thesis. On the other areas, in which Giddens sees globalisation to be a key 'social revolution of our time' the critical assessments are conceptually of a different nature.

I will largely leave the element of political globalisation for the latter stages of this thesis, for as I will show shortly, it is of little direct significance for Giddens's notion of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, and will instead feature as an important element in the formation of a Giddensian political project. Suffice to say for now, the debates in this field tend to centre around institutions of global political governance. In this context, there is little doubt that institutions such as the UN, EU or WTO *exist* and that they are conceptually *new*; but questions arise on how significant these institutions are, and to what extent (if at all) they are actually replacing state sovereignty (see e.g. Held et al, 2000: 32-86). More on these issues later. But more importantly in the context of this chapter, the principal existence of globalisation in terms of communications, or the 'intensifying of global social relations' as Giddens puts it, is in little doubt. Reflecting on many authors involved in the globalisation debate, Held et al note:

In terms of numbers of channels and their geographical reach, there has undoubtedly been a globalization of the telecommunications infrastructure in the post-war era (ibid: 343)

Yet, despite the relatively uncontroversial existence of new technologies that are able to link different parts of the world a lot more easily than was the case in previous times, there are several empirical cautions when linking this up to the issue of globalisation. Held et al are quick to note that although there is, in principle, an observable phenomenon – based here on sources gathered by Staple (1996) – of a globalisation of telecommunications, it is by no means evenly spread around the globe, and certainly does not manifest itself in an undifferentiated rise in communications between all countries: many regions of the world have been largely excluded from this type of ‘globalisation’ (Held et al, 2000: 343-346). The resulting scenario has often been termed the ‘digital divide’ (see e.g. Norris, 2001). I will discuss this in more depth later, as differentiated access to communication technology is also a major issue within developed countries, and will need to be discussed in contexts other than globalisation. This subject matter, though worth noting here, will therefore be looked at in more depth below, when I will discuss empirical objections to reflexivity.

In the age of the internet, the line between communication technology and the spread of media (films, radio, text, etc) has arguably become more blurred than ever before. Yet, if we do separate these two elements, and look at the latter on its own, there is an additional objection that should briefly be highlighted here. Once again, access to television and radio varies greatly across the globe, especially between rich and poor countries (see e.g. Held et al, 2000: 358). In principle, once again, films, TV programmes, books, newspapers and so on are increasingly distributed on an international, and arguably global, scale. Yet, in this realm it is not just a matter of unequal distribution of access to media, but also a highly limited number of countries, whose films and TV programmes are distributed on this scale in the first place. In fact, aside from the US as a major frontrunner, Held et al note that there are only a handful of countries with a significant market share of film and TV programme exports (ibid: 355; 360). So here, we can note that the ‘globalisation’ of media can be viewed effectively as a form of cultural imperialism, i.e. where those countries that had economically successful industries on an international scale in the first place have merely expanded this success into the media sector. Therein lies of course a principal charge that has been applied to many levels of this debate, most notably the economic and the military, and as was shown here, the cultural: that globalisation is, by many critics’ assessment, ‘westernisation’ (see e.g. ibid: 372).

To summarise: given Giddens's broad definition of the term, it is hard to point to any one piece of evidence, which flat-out dismisses his views of globalisation in its entirety. However, by splitting this supposed 'social revolution of our time' into its sub-components, it is possible to outline some objections in a coherent manner. The most serious charges are made in the area of economic globalisation, where the very existence of such a phenomenon has been questioned. At this level, an 'intensification of worldwide social relations' seems to be an overly benevolent characterisation, as there is plenty of evidence to claim that instead there is mainly persistence of long-established international economic power, located in those parts of the world that have been economically successful for centuries. 'Globalisation', by this line of argumentation, is at best a fashionable term, which puts a positive spin on the continuing economic dominance of developed nations over the rest of the world.

Similar arguments have been highlighted on 'cultural' globalisation, where, in line with the arguments about international economics, TV, radio, film and other media sources do have a more global reach than in previous times, but that once again, the only significant exporters of such cultural goods once again are based in those countries, which have had the greatest economic dominance in the first place. Unlike in the more general arguments about economic globalisation, there is here genuine recognition and acceptance of the fact that the cultural industry has increased its reach from a predominantly national to an increasingly international level (see e.g. *ibid*: 356-360). But this hardly leads to a scenario where 'globalisation' can be seen as a more useful analytical concept than 'westernisation'.

On political dimensions of globalisation, there is in principle agreement that there are institutions of international governance, which are in many ways unprecedented. However, debates here focus on how significant these new sites of political activity are and, consequently, how much significance the nation-state as a key organisational unit retains. As mentioned, more on this particular element of globalisation later on.

But in the area of communication technology, views critical of a globalisation-thesis are in a different vein from the sceptical arguments on economic globalisation. Here, there is no doubt that there have been several 'revolutions' in terms of genuinely new technologies that enable much faster global communication on a much larger scale than

ever before. For lack of a better term: there is generally consensus that in this realm there has been a *globalisation of sorts*. However, critics point out that access to these new technologies is highly unevenly distributed around the globe, and that many areas are largely excluded from these developments. This is of course a serious charge in relation to Giddens's views on globalisation. As mentioned, I will deal with this issue and its blanket-term, 'the digital divide', in more depth later on, as these problems of access are not only significant on an international scale, but also, as I will show, within nation states.

In sum, objections to Giddens's globalisation thesis fall into two categories: what I will loosely call ontological objections on the one hand, and distributional ones on the other. On economic dimensions of globalisation, many critiques are of an ontological sort, i.e. the very existence of 'globalisation' is questioned and convincingly countered. In other areas, chiefly in the area of communications, the arguments at hand focus more on distributional issues, i.e. acceptance of the principal existence of new technologies and 'technological revolutions', coupled with research on unequal distribution of and access to those technologies, leading to forms of exclusion from this type of globalisation.

The issues raised on the economic dimensions of globalisation cause major problems for several areas of Giddens's work. Especially in chapter 4, I will show that the notion of continuing expansion of economic power and capitalist principles favouring the 'west' is not considered by Giddens in much detail, but that this notion does present a source of considerable structural constraint in the period he defines as late modernity.

But in relation to those factors that supposedly lead to the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, it is globalisation in the realm of communication and culture that is of key interest. Just to remind ourselves of the claim in question: according to Giddens, globalisation and access to information on a multitude of possible lifestyles have created a social climate, in which traditional systems of belief and lifestyles can no longer justify themselves self-referentially: these traditions, according to his theory, are forced into a dialogic relationship with other possible lifestyle choices, and will on many occasions 'lose out', thus leading to a post-traditional, or even de-traditionalised⁹ society.

The use of further investigating critical objections to Giddens's globalisation-thesis is therefore exhausted for the time being. We have seen that his views on this matter are problematic and empirically questionable at all levels, especially in the economic sphere. In order to further evaluate the viability of talking about empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals, it is now necessary to examine the other processes that Giddens associates with this late modern self.

De-traditionalisation/ post-traditionalism

Giddens never gives an exhaustive list of examples of what exactly qualifies as a traditional belief system or a traditional lifestyle. However, two central elements that are mentioned are established major religions on the one hand (Giddens, 1995b: 195; 297), and ideas about family structures, gender roles and sexuality on the other (ibid, 1995c: 84; 117). Occasionally, some other elements are pointed to, including for instance a section in *Beyond Left and Right*, where electoral participation is cited as being sustained by tradition (1995c: 114). Given the lack of a clearly defined set of things that might qualify as 'tradition', I will here focus mainly on the two aforementioned areas. In both of these areas, there is considerable evidence that Giddens's assertions about post-traditional societies hardly stand up to scrutiny.

There is for instance plenty of research that shows traditional religious beliefs and dogmas to be, as it were, alive and well, and in parts even experiencing considerable resurgence. Whilst, as mentioned, Giddens claims that globalisation has enabled post-traditionalism, Mendieta (2001) notes:

Globalization has accelerated [...] the creation of the religious and the increase in the awareness that religion itself was not, could not and will not be abolished. (ibid: 46)

And:

It is not co-incidental that globalization was partly heralded by global movements of religious revival and activism (ibid: 47).

Mendieta draws this last claim from the work of several academics, most notably Robertson and Garrett (1991), Beyer (1994) and Turner (1991). Although these authors

do not necessarily acknowledge the causal link inferred by Mendieta, all conclude that there is at least continued survival, if not resurgence of religious beliefs, mostly centred around traditional, established religions.

Juergensmeyer (2001) adds an additional dimension to these observations when he discusses the rise of religious nationalism. Far from traditional beliefs and value systems becoming less significant, he concludes that they are becoming more significant, even in terms of politics and conflict:

...an ideological form of religious nationalism [...] religionizes politics. It puts political issues and struggles within a sacred context. Compatibility with religious goals becomes the criterion for an acceptable political platform. (ibid: 69)

Having separated this type of religious nationalism from cases where religion is merely an ‘offshoot’ of ethnic tensions, he discusses several examples of such ‘sacred struggles’, in countries including Iran, the US, India and Japan (ibid: 69-71).

Indeed, there is plenty of material that argues along similar lines. Some studies are quite specific, for instance Bretthauer’s study on televangelism (2001). Others are more general, discussing the rise and/ or continued significance of traditional religious beliefs in both empirical and theoretical dimensions. Edited volumes by Heelas (1998) and Flanagan and Jupp (1996) provide plenty more substantiation of the above claims.

The point is clear: there are considerable objections, supported by many authors, to the idea of traditional religious beliefs becoming less significant, thus allowing us to speak of post-traditional societies. These objections hold at the level of empirical case studies, and in wider theoretical discussions.

Similarly, we can look at other areas related to the idea of post-traditionalism. As we saw, Giddens makes claims about detraditionalisation occurring in the realm of gender, sexuality and family. *Transformation of Intimacy* has its primary focus on this field, but it also receives frequent mentioning in his works on late modernity. However, there is ample material that puts his conclusions into question. Gross is just one of the many authors who explicitly argue against Giddens’s idea of detraditionalisation in this field (2005). He notes:

The strength of the regulative tradition of what I call lifelong, internally stratified marriage (LISM) has indeed declined in recent decades, in the United States and elsewhere. I define LISM as the set of cultural practices according to which family life and intimacy are organized around a permanent and state or religiously sanctified commitment between members of a heterosexual dyad – a commitment premised on and reproductive of an unequal division of labor, power, resources, or responsibilities between the genders. That there is some evidence this tradition is in decline, however, does not mean that reflexivity, understood as unbounded agency and creativity, has rushed in to fill the void. This is so because social action is also shaped by what I call "meaning-constitutive traditions," which involve patterns of sense making passed down from one generation to the next. Marshaling various kinds of empirical evidence, I use this distinction to argue that while those who deviate today from the practices of LISM are subject to fewer and less intensive social sanctions than in the past, the image of the form of couplehood inscribed in the regulative tradition of LISM continues to function as a hegemonic ideal in many – perhaps most – American intimate relationships. (ibid: 288)

The argument is that traditions relating to family and child rearing, as well as gender roles involved with these issues, are merely constituted in a different way. There is indeed ample empirical research, much of which Gross draws on to substantiate his claim, which stresses the continued prevalence of 'traditional' norms in these areas. Among key areas are studies, which found prevalence of the widespread desirability of marriage, and child rearing within marriage, as opposed to alternative set-ups of relationships and families (see e.g. Waite and Gallagher, 2000; Smith, 1999; Fields, 2004; Gerson, 1993; Townsend, 2002; Orenstein, 2000; Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001; Amato and Booth, 1997), widespread adherence to traditional gendered division of labour (see e.g. Blair-Loy, 2003; Hochschild, 1997; Sigel, 1996; Smith, 1999; Jamieson, 1998; Coltrane, 1996; Townsend, 2002; Bianchi et al., 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Sanchez and Thomson, 1997) and widespread persistence of traditional views on sexual practices (see e.g. McNair, 2002; Laumann et al., 1994) especially in relation to attitudes on monogamous vs promiscuous practices (Berger, 2002; Radway, 1984). Though not a key feature in Giddens's more general texts on late modernity, the concept of romantic love is acknowledged as a key site of 'tradition' in *Transformation of Intimacy*. On this issue there are also several studies, which show romantic love to still be a widely-held ideal, and emphasised heavily in popular culture (see e.g. Shumway, 2003; Hochschild, 2003; Whitehead and Popenoe, 2001; Simpson et al, 1986; Smith, 1999).

The sources cited above already indicate that Giddens's views on detraditionalisation in the field of family, intimacy and gender are problematic. Many of the above sources place a lot of emphasis on opinion surveys. This type of data is clearly useful when

discussing issues relating to lifestyle choices. However, it is also of interest to look not just at public opinion on this subject matter but, importantly, also at whether lifestyles in these areas are in fact becoming de-traditionalised.

In his extensive statistical analysis of several factors relating to the theme of ‘family’, Vogel (2003) produces results that are much in line with what has been said above, though with a few qualifications. His study is based on indicators such as birth rate, extra-marital birth rate, divorce and forms of co-habitation across all EU countries. On certain areas, for instance on gendered division of labour, he notes that “...the traditional gender roles still dominate everywhere.” (ibid: 96) In other areas, he accepts the detraditionalisation-argument to an extent, but, based on his data, gives some major qualifications:

...gainful employment is [...] a matter of existing gender roles imbedded in traditional value systems, which may change gradually, but still have a strong impact on individual decisions related to family pathways. There is no doubt that there is a common trend in Europe in the direction of changing values towards a two-breadwinner model, and towards full employment for men as well as women. However, the pace and level may vary much between [EU] member states, in relation to the opportunity structure, i.e. the supply of jobs and the public arrangements supporting female employment... (ibid: 95)

Much of Vogel’s research reaches conclusions of this type. In summary, based on all the various indicators he uses, he compiles what he calls a ‘traditional family index’, and concludes that the EU member states fall into three distinct categories, where the Nordic countries do show signs of a clear shift away from traditional family set-ups, southern Europe and Ireland showing only a very small shift away from traditional family set-ups, with the rest of Europe in various intermediate positions. (ibid: 107)

So, this data in itself shows that aspects of the traditional family prevail across the board, whilst in other areas, detraditionalisation has occurred only partially, i.e. only observable in a select few countries. Meanwhile, the figures used by Vogel of course hide any uneven distributions of detraditionalisation within each EU member state: incidences of non-traditional families may easily be concentrated on certain regions within each state, e.g. to urban environments.

Further in-depth research into the conclusions drawn by Vogel reveals still more arguments against the detraditionalisation-argument. Thus, although Vogel claims that

there is a move to a ‘two-breadwinner’ model – which may initially suggest a move away from traditional family set-ups – Adkins (1999) looks at gender in the workplace, and concludes, once again based on considerable quantities of sources, that in terms of the roles attributed to each gender in the workplace there is in fact a “...retraditionalization of gender in terms of employment...” (ibid: 119). Further research with strikingly similar conclusions on this matter is also presented by Ailwood (2006).

Yet more evidence could be cited here in this context, but in terms of the arguments at hand in this thesis, the case is now clear: as in the case of religion, there is plenty of evidence that many forms of traditional lifestyle and values persist and are showing little sign of giving way to a post-traditional age. Some of the research I have cited here explicitly mentions Giddens’s detraditionalisation-argument as its key target of criticism, whilst some others only question Giddens’s ideas by proxy. We can conclude therefore that Giddens’s thoughts on detraditionalisation in the area of family, relationships, gender roles and intimacy need to be read with much scepticism.

To conclude this section on detraditionalisation, it is worth noting that the research on religion on the one hand, and gender, intimacy and relationships on the other are acknowledged as being closely linked. Thus Gross, one of the authors who directly criticises Giddens in relation to gender, intimacy and family explicitly aligns himself with authors, who have argued against the detraditionalisation-thesis in other areas, such as religion and nationalism (Gross, 2005: 305), indicating that the authors cited here on intimacy, family and gender, and the previously discussed authors on the survival of religion can, to a certain extent, be viewed as part of a wider canon of research that opposes the detraditionalisation-argument in general.

Reflexivity

So far, we have already seen that two central factors viewed by Giddens as contributing to the advent of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual in late modernity – globalisation and detraditionalisation – can easily be questioned in terms of their empirical validity. According to critics, globalisation is in some respects not happening

at all, and in others only to a limited extent. Equally, the extent of detraditionalisation has been shown to be limited in its empirical manifestations, and there is additionally evidence that points towards a resurgence of tradition, partially attributable to elements of globalisation itself.

These points by themselves already cast doubt on Giddens's views on the late modern self. But there is one further element, which needs to be considered in this respect to complete the analysis of critical objections to the foundations of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual: as we saw in chapter 1, globalisation, according to Giddens, forces different lifestyles into dialogic relationships. Meanwhile, agents have heightened access to information on a variety of lifestyles, and thus are able to formulate their identities reflexively, which in turn leads to individualisation.

The link between reflexivity and individualisation is virtually tautological: where each individual constructs their identity reflexively through the information available to them, the individual, rather than the society or structure that surrounds them, becomes the key site of identity construction. Understood in this minimal sense, which for now I will settle on, there is no need at this point to look into individualisation itself. But reflexivity – in this case synonymous with individualisation – is once again (perhaps obviously) a key contributory factor to the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual – and once again, it is a component of Giddens's analysis of late modernity, to which there are objections. On this particular issue, there are two related, yet essentially distinct types of objection, both of which raise questions about reflexivity: some critiques question whether detraditionalisation – assuming it is happening at least to some extent – necessarily leads to reflexive formation of identity at all; others, as hinted previously, look at the availability of and access to the information-flows that enable reflexivity in the first place, and show evidence of many groups of individuals who are unable to gain access and are thus excluded from them.

'Self-control as Social Control - the Emergence of Symbolic Society' by Elchardus (2009) is perhaps the most useful text to look at in the context of critiques that dismiss reflexivity at a fundamental rather than distributional level. This text explicitly mentions Giddens, along with Beck¹⁰ and some other authors, as its focus of critique, which naturally makes it especially relevant to the subject matter at hand here. Moreover,

unlike the authors noted in the previous section of this chapter, Elchardus accepts that detraditionalisation is happening, and even so argues against the consequent emergence of reflexivity. Simply put, a critique that accepts the developments that supposedly lead to reflexivity provides Giddens's reflexivity-thesis with its best shot at standing up to scrutiny.

Incidentally, Elchardus mainly discusses this subject matter in relation to 'individualism'. But he is also clear about the inevitable connection between individualism and reflexivity. He defines individualism, specifically in relation to the work of Giddens and Beck:

The most commonly encountered meaning sees individualization as an increased or great autonomy of the individual, resulting in (very) weak relationships between the individual's tastes, convictions and practices on the one hand, his collective identifiers on the other. Phrased differently: the tastes, convictions, and practices of individuals are idiosyncratic, and can no longer, to any significant extent, be predicted on the basis of the standard sociological variables (such as class, level of education, gender). (ibid: 148)

The argument here is that where structural determinants do not dictate individuals' life choices, the individuals themselves will do so, which leaves their reflexivity as the key determinant to explain their life choices. Indeed, at several points in the article, reflexivity and individualism – defined as above – are viewed as synonymous (ibid: 146; 153). Based on this, Elchardus then sets out to argue against this idea of a society defined by individualism and reflexivity. His principal argument is that the individual's life 'choices' are still hugely affected by structural determinants, and that in fact, it is possible to predict life choices through analysis of structural determinants. All that detraditionalisation has done is to replace or change the structural determinants themselves, i.e. that the classic analytical categories such as social class have either conceptually changed, or have given way to new categories altogether, which now nevertheless have predictive power for individuals' lives. Thus, individuals' life choices are affected by something other than reflexivity:

Scarcity, religious belief and ideology, traditional ethics and roles, sensitivity to command and respect for authority, have lost much, if not all of their steering and controlling capacity. This does however not herald an epoch of individual autonomy, but a new form of social control, centered around the self, and in which schooling, the mass-media, the world of goods and therapy play an important role. (ibid: 146)

Much evidence is used to support this idea of new structural determinants and the consequent lack of reflexivity. Elchardus's point is most clearly contextualised by the example of vote choice. Much research has suggested that social class is becoming less of a determinant of voting behaviour (see e.g. Inglehart, 1984). However, there is ample research to show that voting behaviour is affected by structural determinants as much as ever, if said determinants are sociologically re-defined and 'updated' as it were:

On the basis of the results of eight British elections held between 1964 and 1997, Andersen et al. (2006) conclude that, if one takes into account changes in class composition and party programs, class-based voting did in fact not decline (similar conclusions are reached by Macallister et al., 2001; Andersen and Heath, 2002). [...] When education is taken as an indicator of class, then class structuration of voting is strong, with no signs of a declining importance (Elchardus, 1994; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006). (2009: 149)

Aside from the specific issue of voting, there is also plenty of research on the predictability of individuals' life-choices in general. The implication of reflexivity/individualism is that there can hardly be a standard life-cycle. Echoing Giddens's views on reflexivity, Beck famously notes that the individual becomes the "...producer of his or her social biography..." (Beck, 1992: 93); thus, elements of life-cycles such as residential set-ups, cultural practices, even tastes, should no longer be predictable through structural variables. But there is plenty of research that shows that they are, some of which Elchardus cites himself (Peters et al, 1993; Tillekens and Mulder, 2005; van Eijck, 2001; Hakanen and Wells, 1993; Elchardus, 1999; Stevens, 2001; van Eijck and Bargeman, 2004; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005).

Illustrating Elchardus's point abundantly clearly, Gerhards and Hackenbroch (2000) look into the practice of naming children. Having shown that there has indeed been a 'detraditionalisation' in the way in which children's names are picked, they show, based on a case study in the city of Gerolstein in Germany, that there is no significant weakening of the relationship between social position and the choice of first names between 1894 and 1994 (ibid; see also Elchardus, 2009: 150).

The type of argument offered by Elchardus is now clear: even assuming that detraditionalisation is a real phenomenon, there are two problems. Firstly, there is no logical ground to assume that if A (detraditionalisation) is the case, then B (reflexivity/

individualisation) must be the case as well. Secondly, there is ample empirical evidence on a range of issues to show that this is in fact squarely not the case.

Adkins (2003) Argues along similar lines, though with a slightly more benevolent critique. She, like Elchardus, also directly addresses Giddens's theories, this time directly discussing reflexivity rather than individualisation, though once again she also acknowledges that the two are inextricably linked. She notes that whilst reflexivity might well exist to an extent, there is a problem with Giddens's views on this, in that he does not situate reflexivity in the life-world. In this sense, Giddens's concept of reflexivity is of an objectivist character, as it sees the reflexive individual as completely separated from its surroundings – in which structural determinants (gender, in the specific case of Adkins' article) must still be at work (ibid: 23; 26; see also Crook, 1999; Dean, 1998). So, in a slightly more benevolent approach than that of Elchardus, Adkins effectively shows that whilst the reflexive individual may partially be a determinant of life-choice, there is the issue of the individual's situated-ness, which in itself determines the specifics of the individual's reflexivity. Thus, she asks, perhaps rhetorically:

Why are there reflexive communities in some places and not others? (Adkins, 2003: 26)

This question leads me to the second type of critique that can be mounted against Giddens's reflexivity-thesis: the distributional critique, which was already alluded to earlier when I discussed empirical objections to globalisation.

To remind ourselves: it is not the blanket-term 'globalisation', which somehow implies reflexivity. Instead, it is the conceptual contraction of distance between individuals and cultures, facilitated by technological innovation in the field of communication, and necessitated by the supposed void of determinants of action left by detraditionalisation. Additionally, it is worth noting that there are some other preconditions for reflexivity. As we saw in chapter 1, Giddens suggests in *Transformation of Intimacy* that literacy is a key requirement for individuals to become reflexive. This comment is made in the context of pre-20th century reflexivity, which Giddens claims to have existed, albeit only to a limited extent. The point here is that alongside the existence of communication technology, there must also be the individual's capacity to use the technology and indeed, to have access to such technology. Beck echoes the importance of competence,

when he notes that it is specifically the ‘educated’ person, who can become the producer of their own biography (Beck, 1992: 93).¹¹ The direct analogue to this in Giddens’s work, though somewhat vague compared to Beck, is still worth quoting:

A world of intensified reflexivity is a world of clever people. (1995c: 7)

So, even if we assume – contrary to some of the research discussed in the previous section of this chapter – that detraditionalisation is happening, and even if we assume arguments by people like Elchardus and Adkins to be irrelevant, we can still easily question whether access to communication technology and the necessary knowledge to make use of it – both central elements of Giddens’s reflexivity-thesis – are universal phenomena.

Resoundingly, the answer is ‘no’. There is no need to dwell much on the subject of literacy. Literacy rates vary greatly across the globe, and literacy is even a preserve of the elites in some countries. Giddens never specifies exactly which countries he sees his theories on late modernity to be applicable to; but for the most part, his prime focus of attention appears to be on Europe, North America and Australasia. In these regions, literacy is indeed not far from being a universal condition. Nevertheless, on the issue we can note that on a global scale it is not universal.

But on the issue of access to communication technologies, and the required knowledge to use them, the picture is even more problematic. Once again, on a global scale, access to such technology varies, resulting in a phenomenon known as the ‘digital divide’. Many regions of the world have been almost completely sidelined from these technological innovations; and rather than developed nations merely ‘getting ahead’ of other countries in this respect, the lack of availability of such technologies directly puts developing countries at a disadvantage, as more and more elements of social and economic life shift their mode of operation to these technologies. Thus, areas in which new communication technology is limited become excluded from many important elements of activity, as those activities shift increasingly to the digital realm (see e.g. Norris, 2001; Galperin et al, 2007). Thus, if the communication and technology-based elements of globalisation are what gives rise to reflexivity, then the digital divide

certainly causes problems for the idea of reflexivity as a universal condition of late modernity.

As mentioned, it is unclear what exactly the scope of geographical applicability of much of Giddens's theory is intended to be; hence this global dimension of the digital divide could conceivably be less problematic to his theories than might initially seem to be the case. But the reason why I am looking at this issue here, under the heading of reflexivity, rather than earlier on the issue of globalisation, is because the issue of the digital divide also applies *within* developed nations. Cullen (2001) notes:

The phrase "digital divide" has been applied to the gap that exists in most countries between those with ready access to the tools of information and communication technologies, and the knowledge that they provide access to, and those without such access or skills. This may be because of socio-economic factors, geographical factors, educational, attitudinal and generational factors, or it may be through physical disabilities. (ibid: 311)

Indeed, just as with many other elements I have looked at in this chapter, there is ample research that shows significant differences in terms of access and ability to use information and communication technology within developed countries (See e.g. Bonfadelli, 2002; Dickinson and Sciadas, 1999; Jung et al., 2001; Loges and Jung, 2001; NTIA, 2000; Reddick, 2000). Indeed, there is very little research that casts any doubt on the digital divide thesis within developed nations. One of the few arguments of this type is put forward by Selwyn (2004), who argues that it is problematic to conceptually divide societies into digital 'haves' and 'have nots' based simply on class, gender, location or age, due to issues such as access to information technology at home vs at work, or different stages of access to and competence in information technology. However, this argument does less to question the existence of a digital divide itself, and more to deconstruct 'zombie categories' in favour of a more complex analysis of the digital divide, assessing precisely which individuals are affected by it and to what extent (ibid). In short, even this type of angle on the subject matter does not dispute the existence of structural determinants, but simply highlights that the determinants need to be better defined than with broad-brush terms such as class or occupation.

Verdict

I started out in chapter 1 by highlighting the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as a central theme in Giddens's work. This late modern self supposedly comes about due to various factors, many of which are specific to the late modern age. However, we have now seen that on every single one of these factors, there is ample evidence to show that they are empirically questionable. Whether on globalisation, detraditionalisation or reflexivity/ individualisation, there are strong empirical grounds to contest Giddens's analysis of late modernity on many counts. Moreover, it is not just a matter of each separate component of Giddens's thoughts being questionable, but also the links between them, e.g. detraditionalisation leading to reflexivity.

At a theoretical level, we can broadly say that the research in all these fields identifies several structural forces that have a profound effect on the individual: the inequalities generated by modern capitalism (a key hallmark of globalisation sceptics), the values and life-prescriptions given by the continued importance of tradition, the 'new' structural determinants identified in preference to 'old' zombie categories, and indeed, the differential access to information and communication technology. All these factors demonstrably affect every individual's life options and life choices. Thus, put simply: things are looking extremely bleak for the empirical viability of Giddens's claims about the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as a key feature of this, the late modern age.

Put differently: if we take Giddens at face value, i.e. that present-day society is chiefly characterised by globalisation (in economic, political and communication terms), post-traditionalism and reflexivity, thus giving rise to the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as a distinct late-modern self, then – given the research I have cited in this chapter so far – we have little choice but to deem his theory virtually indefensible. Thus, based on the analysis here, we may easily be tempted to dismiss Giddens's work post-structuration theory altogether and perhaps look at other social theorists instead. However, I will now show that there is a different way of looking at Giddens and his critics, by returning to the previously discussed issue of transformative critical theory.

An Alternative Approach to Giddens: Utopian Realism and Politics

Instead of dismissing Giddens as an empirically misinformed theorist on late modernity, I will now propose an alternative way of reading his work: a way, which (1) accommodates for most of the empirical objections I have highlighted, (2) is central to his idea of critical social theory and (3) is in fact suggested by Giddens himself at several points in his work.

Utopian realism: an outline

Aside from highlighting the centrality of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual in chapter 1, I also spent some time looking at Giddens's idea of critical theory. It is here, in the context of this myriad of critical objections to his analysis of late modernity, that this issue becomes important. In my analysis of structuration theory in chapter 1, I highlighted firstly how, in general terms, social theory should operate according to Giddens, i.e. what its focus of investigation should be. Secondly, I gave an initial insight into what purpose social theory should have. We saw that Giddens does not want his social theory to be purely descriptive (i.e. non-critical), but that he also does not want to embark on a normatively grounded critique with the emphasis on highlighting whatever might be perceived as inadequacies of present-day society.¹² Instead, the idea is to 'fire critical salvos into reality', which are then incorporated into social reality themselves. This process comes about through the transformative power of texts, a process which, as my analysis of critics of this view showed, is itself uncontroversial. Put simply: if a text is written, published and read by someone, it will most probably affect the way in which at least a few people will think about a certain aspect of existence. Criticism only began to mount on the issue of whether reliance on this approach actually constitutes a 'critical' social theory.

This issue of the transformative power of text is decisively elaborated on by Giddens, first in *Contemporary Critique II* (1985), and then in *CoM*. As we shall see shortly, this further development still raises questions about whether Giddens's theories are technically of a 'critical' nature, or indeed whether he is a 'good' social theorist; but it

does provide a way of reading Giddens in such a way that his analysis of late modernity is consistent with the critiques I have outlined so far in this chapter.

Of course, simply stating that the transformative power of text is something that the social theorist should be aware of gives little indication of what exactly the social theorist ought to do, or what their ‘critical salvos’ should involve. But in *Contemporary Critique II*, Giddens introduces a further aspect of his views on critical theory: reflecting on Marx, he advocates ‘critical theory without guarantees’ (Giddens, 1985: 337). Once again uncontroversially, he notes that history does not follow a telos, and that therefore it is misguided to place “...the whole burden of history upon one revolutionary agency – the proletariat, acting in the context of class struggle.” (ibid)

Based on this lack of telos or an overarching, ideological framework attached to claims about historical inevitability, he then notes that critical theory becomes stripped of historical guarantees and enters the universe of contingency (ibid). And hence:

I do not mean by this that the Marxian theorem of the unity of theory and practice should be abandoned altogether. What we should envisage is, rather, a process of critique that does not recoil from connecting material possibilities of social reform with an utopian element. Every analysis of existing conditions of social life, because it is ‘historical’, i.e. concerned with the temporality of institutions in their reproduction by human actors, generates an understanding of their potential transformation. (ibid)

On the issue of what kind of social reform social theory should look at, we have little to go by apart from Giddens claim, quoted in chapter 1, that ‘some things are clearly noxious and others are clearly desirable’. On some of the issues he goes on to discuss – full-scale nuclear annihilation or ecological disasters (ibid: 339-342) – this attitude is unproblematic. On others, it is evident that the kind of reform Giddens might point to will probably be attached to some sort of normative claims on his part, which of course would in turn leave his approach wide open to moral relativist critiques. However, it is worth emphasising here that I am not attempting to mount a critique of this element of his outlook on social theory, but simply showing that his outlook can help to generate an alternative reading of his analysis of late modernity. As mentioned, whether or not he can be viewed as a ‘good’ social theorist is – for the time being – not the issue.

So, having acknowledged the transformative power of text, Giddens elaborates on his approach by stating that social theory should work to acknowledge material possibilities of social reform and engage with possibilities for transformation.¹³ From this, we can already see that it is not so much Giddens's intent to describe societies in a representative way, where all noteworthy forms of structural constraint, exploitation and hegemony are discussed and examined in as much detail as representativity would demand. Instead, the aim is to focus on elements where the capacity for social reform and transformation may be identified as emerging, or where developments are emerging, which might ultimately lead to transformations. This approach to social theory is further contextualised and given its name in *CoM*:

...we can envisage alternative futures whose very propagation might help them be realised. What is needed is the creation of models of utopian realism. (Giddens, 1995a: 154)

The concept of utopian realism is not discussed at any length in the critical literature on Giddens. Even the comprehensive edited volumes and books that seek to cover all aspects of his work rarely devote more than a couple of pages to this (see e.g. Kaspersen, 2000: 111-113; McNally and Wheale, 2001: 108-109). Indeed, Giddens himself does not devote much space to explaining this concept further. And whilst once again, social theorists can easily contemplate whether or not the utopian realist approach is preferable compared to types of critique that focus more explicitly on structural constraints, utopian realism is in and of itself not an especially problematic notion in Giddens's work. Bryant and Jary make the point, along similar lines to my argument here, that utopian realism is indeed a direct continuation and contextualisation of his approach to critical theory outlined mainly in *CoS* (Bryant and Jary, 2001b: 45). But if this were the whole story of utopian realism, we could easily voice serious objections. At this point, Giddens's focus on the individual and relative neglect of structure and constraint seems to make him more 'utopian' than 'realist'.

This focus on agency and the individual in the context of critical theory can however be explained by further contrasting utopian realism to historical materialism (Marx and Engels, 1965), on which Giddens has published several works (e.g. Giddens, 1983; 1985). His foremost point of contention, which I already mentioned, and which is emblematically stated in the opening paragraphs of *Contemporary Critique I* (1983: 1-2), is the issue of telos and the notion of an 'evolution of societies' (ibid: 2) contained in

Marx's theory. Yet, he does note, as we saw, that he views his theory as being critical and transformative. These two points lead him to the idea of 'critical theory without guarantees', a phrase I quoted previously, and which Giddens re-states in *CoM* (1995a: 155). This absence of 'guarantees', 'evolution' and 'telos' necessarily gives Giddens an analytical focus distinct from that of historical materialism: if historical guarantees, telos and evolution are assumed, then identifying transformative agency, exploring its transformative capacity and contemplating what kind of transformations might occur are relatively straightforward tasks, as compared to the task of typifying the society in question, especially its oppressive and constraining features, and thus making the case for transformation. On this issue, Giddens's utopian realist outlook differs. In the absence of these 'guarantees', the task of identifying transformative agency, the scope for transformation and the processes by which this might take place becomes the most significant challenge for a critical social theory. We can contrast the two approaches directly: Marx engages in an extensive analysis of capitalist societies, highlighting its constraints and contradictions and understanding these as being part of an evolutionary process (see e.g. Marx and Engels, 1965). Ultimately, this allows him to point to the proletariat as the transformative agency and communist societies as the end-result (ibid, 1985). But Giddens, rejecting class struggle, or anything for that matter, as the singular historical thread with all its attached inevitabilities, must emphasise this latter issue, of identifying the capacity for transformative agency and contemplating what kind of 'immanent possibilities' (Giddens, 1995a: 155) for social change are contained in a given society. In a nutshell: for Marx, analysis of oppressive structures will highlight where the transformative agent is; for Giddens, identifying the transformative agent may then highlight which structures need transforming.

Aside from further explaining utopian realism and highlighting its distinctiveness, this consideration helps to explain why Giddens's approach necessitates such emphasis on agency and on possibilities for social transformation, even if these only exist on a limited scale. However, as things stand, he nevertheless simply proposes to talk about 'how great things could be' and let the transformative power of text 'do its thing'. Clearly, this is unsatisfactory. But Kaspersen, paraphrasing Giddens's thoughts on utopian realism notes additionally that this approach must be...

...sociologically sensitive and thereby sensitive to the hidden contradictions in the institutions of modern society that can be used to propagate progressive forces on the path to a better world. [And it must] be politically and geopolitically tactical. By this, Giddens understands that moral convictions and “good faith” alone will not lead to the desired changes. (Kaspersen, 2000: 112)

We shall see shortly what ‘political and geopolitical tactics’ might mean. But these thoughts now provide us with a clear outline of utopian realism. Normative positions, according to this logic, can be grounded in the real possibilities that exist in contemporary societies, even if these possibilities are contradicted by various constraining features. And whilst these constraining features may be analytically neglected in favour of deeper discussion of the possibilities of a ‘better future’, utopian realism must also involve clear ideas on how the constraining features could be overcome, and hence, how the possibilities identified by the author might be fostered and the ‘better future’ realised.

So, given that Giddens clearly advocates utopian realism, and that moreover, this approach is established at several points in his work, with initial indications in *CoS*, right up to his seminal works on late modernity, it is time to ask: what if we read Giddens’s analysis of late modernity as a utopian realist critical social theory? What if we assume that he is – quite consciously – focussing on some selected elements of social reality that he sees as having potential for social transformation? In other words, we could understand the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual not as an empirical claim about an existing universal human condition of the present age, but as a normative aim, which Giddens views as a distinct possibility emanating from globalisation and post-traditionalism. To be clear: if Giddens’s ideas about globalisation, detraditionalisation, reflexivity and the consequent emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual are entirely unfounded, then a utopian realist reading of his work would still make his analysis of late modernity indefensible, as it would then be void of any empirical justification. But if these developments do have some credibility, even in very partial or tendential terms, and quite possibly only existing alongside considerable structural constraints and counter-weights, then Giddens’s theories would stand up to the critiques I highlighted in the first section of this chapter. However, though I will return to this issue shortly, it is already clear from my arguments that a mere analysis of the possibilities for a ‘better future’ will not do. A utopian realist social theory of late modernity would need to involve a discussion of

how the possibilities identified by Giddens might be built on to actually make a ‘better future’ happen, i.e. how the forces contradicting these possibilities can be dealt with. This is the first indication of a key argument on which my subsequent critique of his Third Way and my own alternative Giddensian political project will be based: within the utopian realist approach, identifying structural constraint and forces contradicting the normative position of the author is not chiefly a sociological, analytical task, but is in fact deeply political.

Back to the criticisms

If we accept that Giddens is writing from a utopian realist point of view, it quickly becomes apparent that his theories stand up to almost all of the scrutiny that has been levelled at them. The central point is that virtually all the critiques of his work – both implicit and explicit ones – only partially reject his ideas. That is to say, we saw plenty of convincing evidence to show that he cannot justifiably claim that globalisation is the universally observable phenomenon of the ‘intensification of worldwide social relations’, or that tradition and internally referential systems of belief and lifestyles are giving way to post-traditionalism, or that all individuals are becoming ever more reflexive and empowered. These are demonstrably *not* universally applicable ‘conditions’ of late modernity. Many of the critiques I highlighted show that there is persistence, even resurgence of tradition, and that globalisation is to a large extent merely the continuation of international capitalism for the benefit of the already wealthy nations. Additionally, new structural determinants were identified, which shape individuals’ life ‘choices’. But almost none of these critiques argue against a partial, tendential, or even just possible emergence of the ‘social revolutions’ posited by Giddens. Most of the critiques we saw ultimately concede that elements of Giddens’s theories do apply in some cases, in some regions, in some social strata; in short, to some – at times very limited – extent. A utopian realist reading of Giddens scarcely requires more than that.

Thus, on the information and communication dimension of globalisation, critics noted that much of the new technology is only widely available in the wealthy countries; but none of them deny that these technologies exist in principle, and that therefore, for some

individuals (though by far not all!), there is indeed an intensification of worldwide social relations. In a utopian realist context, we might say that the intensification of worldwide social relations is not a universal, undifferentiated reality, but that these new technologies, and the fact that some individuals do have access to them, do give rise to such a possibility. If the advent of these technologies simply had not happened, entertaining the possibility of an intensification of worldwide social relations would be ludicrous.

On detraditionalisation, we saw that whilst there is widespread persistence, even resurgence of traditional lifestyles, there are also areas, where detraditionalisation is observable to a certain extent. Vogel, as we saw, made some clear qualifications in his conclusions, noting that non-traditional lifestyles are on the increase in some countries of the EU (2003). And indeed, critics also pointed out that some of the legal sanctions formerly placed on deviance from traditional lifestyles have been lifted in some parts of the world. This, as critics mentioned, does not equate to post-traditionalism; but once again, in societies where legalising e.g. homosexuality, divorce and blasphemy had not yet happened, even entertaining the possibility of post-traditionalism would be unthinkable.

On reflexivity, critics also showed convincingly that we have not entered into a world in which individuals make all their life choices reflexively, and that there are in fact new structural determinants to either supplement or substitute for old ones. But here too, the emergence of reflexivity cannot be entirely dismissed out of hand. Elchardus notes for instance:

Various empirical analyses have already pointed out that the events highlighted by the authors who claim that the standardized life cycle is disappearing, such as the reversal of the standard sequence or wide variation with regard to the timing of transitions, are in fact quite rare (Glorieux et al., 2004; Breedveld, 1996). Yet, those events receive a lot of attention and are often without further ado interpreted as the harbinger of major changes. Such claims are often based on qualitative research. (Elchardus, 2009: 150)

Once again, we can unproblematically dismiss the idea of fully reflexive societies. But even critics of the reflexivity-thesis acknowledge that some instances of reflexivity do exist and that these have come about specifically in the late modern age.

So, on most elements of Giddens's analysis of late modernity that I have considered here, we saw that critics are easily able to dismiss his claims when read as being universally applicable to the contemporary world, but never in absolute terms: most of the time, critics even acknowledge that the 'social revolutions' Giddens talks about do exist, albeit in very limited terms. This even included the communication technology-based element of globalisation, which was of course highlighted as being critically important in his ontology of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. Understanding Giddens as a utopian realist therefore produces a largely successful reading of his analysis of late modernity, which can answer the criticisms we saw. However, there is one element of his analysis, to which the utopian realist angle does not provide us with a straightforward solution: the economic dimensions of globalisation, and the arguments on this subject matter by authors such as Hirst and Thompson (1998). Unlike on the other 'social revolutions', where totalising notions of post-traditionalism or reflexivity were rejected, but emerging tendencies and possibilities were conceded by the critics, on globalisation in the economic domain we have, in contrast, seen critiques, which flat-out reject any kind of globalisation-thesis. So naturally, even if we assume that Giddens is merely saying that there is a partial emergence of a new type of worldwide economy, his views are still unable to answer to this kind of critique. If there is simply nothing new about globalisation, or if it merely represents the continuation of international market expansion, it is nonsensical to counter by conceptually framing this as 'emergent' or in terms of 'scope' or 'possibility'.

As we saw, Giddens's definition of globalisation goes far beyond just the economic realm. He explicitly highlights other dimensions as being much more important in many ways. Certainly, in terms of the factors that explicitly enable the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, communication rather than economics is of key importance. These two 'dimensions' of globalisation refract on each other profoundly, which is an issue I will address later on. But although, as we can see, the utopian realist reading of Giddens's analysis of late modernity is generally successful in terms of answering to his critics, the issue of economic globalisation still leaves one major issue in his theories, to which the utopian realist reading in and of itself cannot answer. I will return to this issue in more depth in chapter 4. In it, the contradictions between the opportunities of global communication and information technologies, and

the threats and barriers posed by capitalism and global economic inequalities will be discussed at length, in order to ascertain how these developments and forces might be viewed in the context of Giddens's work. This will of course be a crucial element in the formulation of Giddensian politics. For the time being, we can conclude that a utopian realist reading of Giddens answers to all critiques that we have seen, except for those on the issue of economic globalisation, to which I will return in considerable detail later on.

It may comfortably be objected here that I am approaching Giddens's work with considerably more good will than is merited at face value. Sure enough, he himself suggests the utopian realist approach; but aside from that, I have so far effectively excused his work of its critics by claiming that he says something different from what he appears to be saying. But I will now present some textual evidence, which shows that he is acutely aware that his theories are not universally applicable, that there are many issues of differential occurrence of the revolutions he describes, and that he consciously decides not to dwell on such issues, rather than simply being unaware of the kind of critical research we have seen in the first parts of this chapter.

The vast bulk of Giddens's work on late modernity – be it the highly specific projects, exemplified by *Transformation of Intimacy*, or the more general works such as *CoM* – does focus on the agent, or more specifically, on the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. The principal charge, brought forward in several different ways by the critiques we saw earlier, is that Giddens's analysis fails to consider the structural constraints that inhibit his notion of agency to take hold universally. However, it was already shown earlier, when I looked at structuration theory, that this notion of agency is not viewed as a universal, timeless constant in Giddens's work, but that it has instead come about as a result of several developments specific to modern – and especially the 'late-modern' – societies. In *CoM* he decisively deepens this sentiment, tying together his theory on agency and individuals in late-modern societies with the aspect of structural constraints. Tellingly following his thoughts on utopian realism, he notes:

The transformations of the present time occur in a world riven with disparities between rich and poor states, in which the extension of modern institutions throws up all sorts of countertrends and influences, such as religious fundamentalism or forms of reactive traditionalism. If I do not consider these in detail in this book, it is for purposes of economy

of argument, not because I think they can be disregarded in any more concrete interpretation of likely global trends (Giddens, 1995a: 158)

A strikingly similar qualification is given in *MaSI* (1995b: 6), in a passage I will examine in more depth later on. But many of Giddens's other works on this subject matter are missing such qualifications, which contributes in large part to explaining how charges of ignoring issues of structural constraint come about. But looking at this passage, we do see a clear indication that Giddens is aware of the fact that he is sidelining a large portion of what may comfortably be termed 'social reality'. Yet, it also becomes clear here that he places his theory on the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual within the context of the inequalities and structural constraints he is accused of neglecting. In the above passage, for the first time, we get a characterisation of Giddens's late modern self, which may be summarised like this: whilst the knowledgeable, reflexive, empowered individual is coming into being through several developments occurring within late modern societies, there are also factors, structural constraints such as inequality and reactive traditionalism, which inhibit the existence, or at least the universal emergence, of such individuals.

Throughout *MaSI* the elements that have enabled Giddens's notion of the late modern self to come into being become ever clearer to the reader. In this thesis I have summarised the developments in question on several occasions: globalisation, most notably in the sense of communication technology opening up possibilities of intercultural exchange and consequent global communication; the rise of literacy and increased access to information; the rise of post-traditionalism and reflexive individualisation.

But then, in the final chapters of *MaSI*, Giddens focuses on the other side of this coin. He already indicates the constraints given by class, gender and ethnicity in the passage quoted above. In the penultimate chapter he then begins to cite further constraints, chiefly the endurance, and indeed the resurgence of tradition and traditional value-systems, the resurgence of religious beliefs, and of new religious dogmas, for instance in the form of cults and sects (Giddens, 1995b: 206-207). At the risk of stating the obvious, these developments tend to promote prescriptive rather than reflexive forms of identity, which runs directly contrary to Giddens's notion of the individual in late modern societies. Having shown considerable awareness of this multitude of constraints

– many of which doubtlessly are of a distinctly structural nature – he then introduces the final chapter as being concerned with ‘the return of the repressed’ (ibid: 208). ‘Repressed’, it becomes clear in the following pages, does not just refer to the resurgence of belief-systems that overtly counter his notion of knowledgeable, reflexive, empowered agents, but also refers to the indirect repression triggered by structural constraints such as class, gender and ethnicity.

Looking again now at the charge of a lack of awareness of structural constraint in Giddens’s analysis of late modernity, it is evident that he shows much more interest in the type of agent emerging in the late-modern context, and considerably less in the constraining aspects of structure. However, it is also evident that he is nevertheless aware of structural constraints, and thus of many processes that counteract the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. But in line with the idea of utopian realism, he chooses not to examine these in much depth, and instead, he chooses to focus on those elements of late modernity which he sees as containing promise for social reform and transformation.

Put differently: at face value, as we concluded earlier, his story of late modernity can squarely be described as thoroughly indefensible and empirically unsubstantiated. But if we accept that he is writing from a utopian realist perspective, and if we consider that he explicitly shows awareness – though not much analysis – of structural constraints, then a different verdict emerges.

Read in this way, Giddens sees late modernity as an epoch, which at its core contains a fundamental tension: on the one hand, there are very real, often historically unprecedented developments, which in theory have the capacity to enable the emergence of the empowered reflexive, knowledgeable individual, and, in certain sections of certain populations, this is beginning to happen. On the other hand, there is not just the partial persistence of old structural forces, but indeed the advent of new ones, which decisively inhibit the emergence of this new, late modern self.

So, having started out with Giddens as being indefensible, we have now seen that in fact his analysis of late modernity contains a profound awareness of the potential and partial existence of a new type of agency, as well as of the existence of highly significant

structural constraints. Without an awareness of the utopian realist angle, it would be easy to dismiss Giddens, but as it stands, he does in fact answer well to the vast majority of the critiques we saw earlier. However, there are still some problems that remain, even aside from the issue of economic globalisation, where as we saw, even the utopian realist reading of Giddens cannot mitigate the critiques.

As we have seen, the purpose of utopian realism is to bring about social transformation and reform. At present, it is unclear as to how Giddens's analysis of late modernity is meant to do this. The first issue in this respect is one of proportion: most of the critiques I highlighted merely conceded that there are a few, often very small areas of the population, to which Giddens's 'social revolutions' do apply. The extent of the persistence and resurgence of structural constraints, old and new, was still generally shown as being of far greater importance in terms of its determinant power. But Giddens pays huge attention to these empirically quite rare occurrences of reflexivity and post-traditionalism, alongside relatively little engagement with the other side of the coin. How such a disproportionate description in itself is supposed to lead to any kind of social transformation is hard to grasp.

Additionally, we can presently charge Giddens's social theory as being elitist. Although this does not necessarily apply universally on every single issue, we saw that generally, those instances where his theories on late modernity do find empirical manifestations, tend to be concentrated in wealthy nations, among people of relatively high social status, or in Beck's earlier cited terms, 'educated people'. In this context, Giddens's analysis of late modernity appears to be little more than a celebration of the fact that the wealthiest, most educated individuals, in the wealthiest countries are starting to become empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals. This is a far cry from the initial charge, when it was assumed he is saying that *all* individuals are in this position. In empirical terms, this is now a lot less controversial. Yet, how this amounts to a 'critical salvo', aiming to achieve social reform and transformation is unclear.

This matter is made even more problematic by the fact that Giddens rejects any idea of telos. I already highlighted this aspect of Giddens's thought earlier, and *Contemporary Critique I* provides ample more evidence of his stance on this (1983: 1-2; 20; 42). Therefore, it is impossible to infer from his works, that just because the emergence of

the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is taking hold in some circles, largely centred on elites, this development will somehow ‘trickle down’ with historical inevitability. Meanwhile, his act of describing reflexivity and detraditionalisation does not in itself do much to trigger any kind of social reform. So far, the utopian realist reading of his work is therefore still missing a key component. Put differently: having outlined that there is scope for the emergence of a new kind of late modern self, and having shown awareness of the fact that this emergence is severely hindered by substantial structural constraints, Giddens faces a question central to the utopian realist angle: now what?

The completion of the utopian realist angle: Giddensian politics

To clarify where things stand at the moment: the utopian realist angle has essentially been successful in terms of enabling a reading of Giddens, which makes his analysis of late modernity defensible in relation its critics; but there is no indication of how exactly his analysis of late modernity points towards social reform or transformation. This is problematic because (1) Giddens explicitly notes that this is the aim of his work, and (2) without a clear focus on how to achieve social transformation, his analysis of late modernity is vulnerable to charges of elitism.

I already highlighted earlier that the utopian realist approach contains a distinctly political dimension. Indeed, Giddens’s seminal works on late modernity contain one further element, which thus far has not been discussed here: having told the story of globalisation, detraditionalisation and reflexivity, and having provided evidence that he is essentially aware of structural constraints that inhibit these developments, both in *CoM* and in *MaSI*, he then finishes off by talking about the need for political action. In fact, in *CoM*, his discussion of politics begins as a part of his discussion on utopian realism (1995a: 156).

In both works, he makes a distinction between ‘emancipatory politics’ and ‘life politics’(ibid; 1995b: 209-210). This is a distinction, which lines up with the tension that his analysis of late modernity identifies between the potential for the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual on the one hand, and the forces inhibiting the

emergence of this late modern self on the other. Emancipatory politics, broadly speaking, is the term Giddens chooses to summarise what most scholars of politics will identify as the principal well-established struggles between the political left and right:

...in all cases, the objective of emancipatory politics is either to release under-privileged groups from their unhappy condition, or to eliminate the relative differences between them. [...] Emancipatory politics is concerned to reduce or eliminate exploitation, inequality and oppression. (1995b: 211)

Such a definition encompasses anything from allocation of resources and redistribution¹⁴ to the legal emancipation and equality of women or people of different ethnic backgrounds. Broadly, these issues of the ‘emancipatory’ category of politics are all centred on the issue of equality (in the widest sense of the word), a notion which I will discuss further in the latter stages of this thesis.

Life politics, in contrast, is the politics of self-actualisation. Giddens explains:

...life politics concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualisation in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies. (ibid: 214)

Thus, in the moral void left by post-traditionalism in the context of late modernity, life politics becomes a large area for debate, in which moral grounds need to be created, which in turn enable decisions on issues that emerge for knowledgeable, reflexive agents, or even for collective groups thereof. Giddens cites nuclear power and nuclear armament, environmental protection and changing lifestyles of women (beyond just the legal elements of women’s emancipation) as just some of the crucial issues that appear in this context, but is also suggestive of a vast quantity of other, perhaps smaller-scale issues that may transpire in this field (ibid: 217-223).¹⁵

Evidently, ‘emancipatory politics’ is chiefly concerned with overcoming – or at least easing – certain structural constraints, whilst ‘life-politics’ is concerned with solving the problems, which individuals may find themselves faced with in the context of late modernity. In itself, this discussion of emancipatory politics delivers more evidence – in addition to what I already presented earlier – that Giddens is clearly aware of structural forces, to which individuals are subjected in the context of late modernity.

It is clear then that 'life politics' concerns those areas where detraditionalisation and reflexivity have begun to take hold and where this emergence is beginning to trigger new political issues, while 'emancipatory politics' concerns those areas where these processes are obstructed by structural forces, and aims to alleviate them in some form. And once again, with remarkable similarity to the disproportionate attention Giddens gives to the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as compared with structural constraints, here too, his chief focus is on life politics, rather than on emancipatory politics. Indeed, in *MaSI*, he explicitly notes that whilst both are important, his focus of interest will be on life politics (Giddens, 1995b: 210). Consequently, his thoughts on emancipatory politics are summarised in just four pages, whilst life politics has an entire chapter dedicated to it (ibid: 209-231).

Nevertheless, Giddensian politics, as outlined here, pursues two central aims. Firstly, alleviating structural constraints in order to help foster the wider emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual (emancipatory politics); secondly, anticipating and addressing the political needs that develop through the emergence of this late-modern self. Clearly then, this discussion of politics does much to complete the utopian realist reading of Giddens's analysis of late modernity. In line with his logic of utopian realism, Giddens spends most of his analysis highlighting empirically verifiable tendencies and developments, which he sees as positive, or, in his words 'desirable'; then he briefly acknowledges that these tendencies and developments are severely inhibited by the persistence of structural forces, and indeed of the emergence of new ones; finally, he points towards the need for social reform, so that said tendencies and developments can be fostered towards universal emergence, and that the new political issues that will arise as they take hold can be anticipated. In the context of his belief in the transformative power of text (which presumably rests on the necessity for many people to read his books), he has thus succeeded in identifying social developments which he views as desirable, and pointing towards the kind of social reform and transformation that is required to build on and foster these developments.

Resulting issues

To an extent, we may therefore now say that the utopian realist reading is successful: it answers critics of Giddens's analysis of late modernity, and through the points made on politics, it points towards social reform and transformation. But there are now some key issues and problems, which transpire.

Firstly, given the relative brevity of his sections on politics in *CoM* and *MaSI* – especially the brevity on emancipatory politics – there is little clarity on what exactly a full Giddensian political project is supposed to look like. Is Giddens simply saying that emancipatory politics in the style of socialism or social democracy should continue, and that 'life politics' just needs to be 'tacked on'? Or is the link between the two more intricate than that? Do 'emancipatory' policies somehow need to be re-framed in such a way as to work better in tandem with 'life' policies?

Secondly, there is still the issue of economic dimensions of globalisation: the utopian realist reading of Giddens was not able to answer to critical objections on this issue. This is a major issue, so we need to consider, whether Giddens's work can answer to the charge that there is simply nothing new about the present-day international economy and, if it can, what place this would then have in the context of Giddensian politics. Already, there is considerable evidence to suggest that emancipatory politics would need to deal with economic globalisation in some form.

Finally, there is an issue with Giddens's brevity on structural constraints in his analysis of late modernity, even in spite of the extent to which a utopian realist reading managed to mitigate his relative lack of attention to them. Despite Giddens's consideration of structural constraints upon the individual, his lack of engagement with these constraints is problematic: as shown through the analysis of emancipatory politics, he mentions several potential sources of structural constraint upon the individual, and appears to be confident that emancipatory politics can be utilised to overcome these constraints. However, he fails to specify how we should conceptualise structural constraint and how emancipation from it might be possible: an emancipatory agenda requires a more elaborate definition of structure and constraint than *CoS* and *MaSI* can give us.

The reader will know that, subsequent to his analysis of late modernity, Giddens did in fact create a comprehensive political project: the Third Way. This thesis of course aims to critique that political project, by assessing whether it is indeed one that successfully builds on Giddens's analysis of late modernity. But before such a critique is even possible, the above issues need to be considered at length.

So, to summarise: reading Giddens's analysis of late modernity as a utopian realist social theory allows for a defence against his critics, which a face value reading of his work does not. Indeed, there is ample evidence that Giddens himself intends for his work to be read in this way. We have also seen that a political project is essential for the success of Giddens's utopian realist approach, as his analysis would otherwise face charges of elitism, and would certainly not be especially critical or transformative. In the first part of this thesis I have thus shown that a political project is essential for the internal coherence of Giddens's work (based on the utopian realist approach), and I have also shown what *aims* this political project should pursue. In the next section, I will show what exactly a Giddensian political project should *do*, i.e. what, based on Giddens's work, emancipatory and life politics should look like. Given the severity of persisting structural constraints upon the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, as highlighted by the critiques in the first half of this chapter, emancipatory politics will naturally be the more important element of interest here. Chiefly, the next section will:

- Obtain a clearer picture of how emancipation from structural constraint might be facilitated; whilst as we saw, there is not much information about this in the analysis of late modernity, I will extract some valuable points on this from structuration theory.
- Develop an understanding of the exact relationship between emancipatory and life politics, and the extent to which one has consequences for the other.
- Assess whether and how economic dimensions of globalisation can be accommodated in a Giddensian picture of late modern structural forces.

Based on these three main areas of investigation, I will show what the details of Giddensian politics need to be. At this point, I have demonstrated the analytical requirement for Giddensian politics, and have also shown what the fundamental aim of Giddensian politics needs to be. By the end of the next section, we will effectively have a list of criteria, which a Giddensian political project must fulfil, and against which I will then be able to critique his Third Way.

Part II:

Establishing the Foundations of a Giddensian Political Project

In the last section of this thesis, I showed what the principal aim of a Giddensian political project needs to be. We saw that in order to be consistent with his analysis of late modernity, its foremost aim needs to be the task of addressing structural constraints, which inhibit the emergence of the reflexive, empowered, knowledgeable individual (emancipatory politics), as well as catering to the non-emancipatory political issues that societies of reflexive, empowered individuals might bring to the fore (life politics).

This section will show what the foundations of any Giddensian political project need to be, beyond the matter of its aim. In other words: aside from its central aim, what theoretical and empirical considerations should inform such a project, and what could Giddensian policy positions on certain key issues look like. Indeed: what exactly *are* the key issues that such a project would need to address?

As we saw, there are still some questions which need to be addressed, before we can contemplate how the general aim of a Giddensian political project might translate into the substantive reality of political programmes: firstly, what is meant by structural constraint and by emancipation from it? Secondly, what is the exact relationship between emancipatory and life politics? Thirdly, what of the economic dimensions of globalisation, the one element that cannot be reconciled with empirical objections to Giddens's claims through the utopian realist approach?

Having established the principal aim of Giddensian politics in part 1, I will focus on these three questions in this part, and in doing so, I will provide an initial outline of what exactly Giddensian political projects must involve. In the final part of this thesis, I will then be able to critique his Third Way, and detail my own alternative Giddensian political project in full.

To summarise briefly: I will show in this part that a political project consistent with Giddens's analysis of late modernity is a form of social democracy that is highly redistributive (at the level of direct economic support for certain individuals, and crucially in the provision of public services), that integrates its redistributive emancipatory policies with life-political concerns, and also integrates national and international economic policy, making possible redistributive policies and universal provision of key services by prioritising international co-operation in order to regulate the activities of multinational and transnational corporations and financial markets.

In answering the above questions, I will provide a rationale for why this political approach is appropriate in terms of completing the utopian realist reading of Giddens's work.

Chapter 3:

Structural Constraint and Emancipatory Politics

The Conceptual Approach of Giddensian Politics

We saw in part 1 where the aim of fostering the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual through emancipation from structural constraint stems from. However, identifying the aim is in itself not sufficient for the task of formulating a corresponding political project. What does Giddens mean by structure? What kind of structural features do we find in late modernity, and how is emancipation from them to be conceptualised? If we take the stated aim of a Giddensian politics at face value, and appreciate that it contains several loaded key terms that are wide open to interpretation, then the consequent political project might be anything from established traditions of social democracy to a complete overthrow of capitalism, state socialism or anarchism.¹⁶ So, in order to narrow the options down, as it were, I will first consider what structure, structural constraint and emancipation mean in the context of Giddens's work, and what this means for the basic parameters of Giddensian politics. Whilst the specific structural features of late modernity can mostly (though not exclusively) be identified in Giddens's more substantive contributions (notably *MaSI* and *CoM*), conceptualising structure, structural constraint and emancipation requires us to go back to the theory of structuration.

Why structuration theory?

When I looked at Giddens's analysis of late modernity in part 1 of this thesis, it was of course important to assess its empirical validity, as it would be a somewhat pointless task to contemplate what kind of political projects should follow from an empirically incorrect analysis of contemporary societies. In a similar vein, we need to ask here: why

use structuration theory, rather than other authors who have written on similar subject matters, to work out how emancipation from structural constraint is to be conceptualised?

Unlike Giddens's analysis of late modernity, we cannot subject second-order theory to point-by-point empirical scrutiny of the kind we saw earlier: being second-order theory, it makes few direct empirical claims. Instead, structuration theory (like all second-order theory) seeks to point out ways in which empirical claims might be arrived at, how they might be expressed, or what, at a general level, social researchers might want to look at in order to arrive at empirical claims, e.g. 'structure', 'agency', 'the relationship between the two', etc.

This type of theory is therefore difficult to test empirically in a direct way. Indeed, even the question of whether or not second-order theory is necessary at all has been subject to some debate. Holmwood (1996) for instance discusses this matter explicitly with reference to Giddens. He notes that the idea of what he calls a 'general theory' is in itself something that has frequently gone in and out of fashion, and may or may not be desirable to researchers who try to make empirical claims in the discipline of sociology. Drawing on Parsons, and citing Habermas and Giddens as the two main contemporary authors engaged in such an attempt, he notes that a general theory should...

...provide a general framework of theory which would serve as a secure foundation for social scientific enquiry. This scheme [...] must recognise the importance of human agency and the role of structure. (ibid, vii)

I discussed the limitations of structuration theory as general theory in chapter 1, but here I return to a separate area of debate on this issue: Holmwood's thoughts already show that bodies of work such as structuration theory, whilst needing to relate plausibly to the empirical world, cannot be challenged in terms of their empirical correctness, as this type of theory is simply one step removed from the task of making empirical claims in the first place.

To deepen this point, it is worth briefly looking back to the critiques of structuration theory, which I cited at the beginning of chapter 1 of this thesis. I pointed out some similarities between those critiques, and the critiques of Giddens's more substantive contributions, mostly relating to the centrality of the empowered individual, which

recurred in critiques of both bodies of Giddens's work. However, despite these similarities, the critiques of structuration theory are of a different quality, as compared with the empirical objections to the analysis of late modernity, which I assessed in depth in the previous section. To briefly remind the reader: we saw critiques by authors such as Bauman, Urry and Gregory, who made points about insufficiently clear definitions of key terms such as 'structure', or incomplete assessments of the subconscious or time and space. These types of critiques did not entail any kind of empirical attack on what Giddens was saying; instead they asserted that he was not saying *enough*, and that there would need to be more work on several elements of his theory, in order to ascertain exactly what structuration theory involves.

Then there were the more comprehensive critiques of the kind offered by Gregson. Here, the principal charge levelled at structuration theory was once again not its empirical *correctness*, but its *use*. As I showed, Gregson asserted that structuration theory contained nothing new, and that empirical studies such as *Learning to Labour*, which Giddens frames as a structurationist work, might just as easily be informed by other authors' second order theories (as we saw, Gregson specifically mentions Lukacs, Althusser and Marx in this context). Not only, she continues, is its potential use for empirical analysis hampered by its relative lack of novelty; it is further limited by its level of abstraction and its lack of concrete guidelines for empirical research.

Structuration theory, by its very nature as second-order theory, does not lend itself to empirical scrutiny. As critiques of structuration theory, along with Holmwood's above deliberations on general theory indicate, it is possible to attack its lack of use or its incompleteness, but it simply does not contain substantive empirical claims, which could be assessed in the way I did on Giddens's analysis of late modernity.¹⁷ Even though we cannot place second-order theory under direct empirical scrutiny, the fact remains that according to many critics, structuration theory is in many parts incomplete and/ or unclear and in large parts not very useful for empirical investigation. Nevertheless, there is a rationale for using it here.

Despite the criticisms we have seen regarding the lack of practical use of structuration theory, it has been utilised for the purpose of empirical investigation on several occasions. Thus, in contrast to points about the limitations of its use by authors such as

Gregson, many research projects have taken an explicitly structurationist approach to several areas of investigation, including corporate management (see e.g. Spybey, 1997; Macintosh and Scapens, 1997), religious practices (see e.g. Lee, 1997) and media consumption (see e.g. Yates and Orlikowski, 1997). Reflecting on some of these studies (and others), Bryant and Jary note:

Giddens' resolutions of the dualisms of structure and agency, determinism and voluntarism, and order and change have helped specialists throughout the social sciences to overcome deficiencies in their disciplines and specialities as they perceive them and get the research done. Menzies (1982) [...] distinction is between systematic theory-building and the researcher's pursuit of such limited connections between phenomena as the complexity and messiness of the social world permit. [...] structuration theory as intermediate theory has proved its value in filling the gap. (Bryant and Jary, 2001b: 57).

The arguments I have presented in this thesis in favour and against the uses of structuration theory do not necessarily contradict each other: despite the criticisms made by authors such as Gregson, some authors have been able to utilise Giddens's second-order theory for empirical purposes. Without going into this issue too much further, we can therefore conclude that whether or not structuration theory is at all useful for sociological investigation depends firstly at least to some extent on what the researcher wants to find out, and secondly on which elements of structuration theory are to be used.

To reflect briefly on the first of these conditions: given that structuration theory emphasises analysis of reproduction and transmutation of systems by agents over time, research questions relating to issues of systemic change may well be among the most likely to benefit from structuration theory in some form. The task of outlining a political project consistent with the aim of emancipation from structural constraint is by definition concerned with the issue of changing social systems as well as identifying the agents involved in doing so. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that structuration theory may be useful for the task at hand.

But it is from the second of the above conditions that I take the main rationale for my use of structuration theory. For the purpose of this thesis, I am not concerned with its more intricate elements, but simply with Giddens's definitions of structure and constraint and how they might relate to a transformative political project. Aside from the other points within his works on structuration that I have already identified as important to this thesis – approaches to critical theory and the normative link-up to the

analysis of late modernity contained therein – the particular elements of structure and constraint are in and of themselves not especially problematic elements of structuration theory, and are in fact quite comparable to other theorists' equivalents.¹⁸ The bulk of critiques on this matter do not concern the definition of structure and constraint in and of themselves, but how these are linked up to agency, and the leeway that the agent is given, sometimes even in contradiction to what Giddens says about structure in the first place. Crucially, structuration theory is the only area of Giddens's work that contains more than just brief mentions of 'structure' and 'structural constraint'. As we saw in part 1, Giddens shows awareness of structural features and constraints in his analysis of late modernity, but chooses not to explain these any further. This left some key questions open, which made it impossible to determine how emancipation from structural constraint should be envisaged in a Giddensian political project. However, in his works on structuration theory, despite conceptually emphasising the importance of agency, he does devote a considerable amount of thought to issues relating to structure and constraint. Therefore, these works will help to clarify what exactly is meant by the established aim of emancipation from structural constraint. Put simply: despite its deficiencies, looking at structuration theory is our best shot at understanding some key under-explored elements of the analysis of late modernity.

Structure and structural constraint

Any Giddensian political project, as I have outlined, must pursue the aim of fostering the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual through emancipation from structural constraint. A look at what Giddens means by structural constraint highlights some initial substantive elements of how this aim might be realised.

Structure, as we saw, is defined by Giddens simply as 'rules and resources'. Criticisms that I cited in chapter 1, for instance by Bauman, indicated that this definition is rather vague. Giddens in fact explicitly adds to this vagueness. Thus, when discussing 'rules', he notes that this term ought to be taken in a wide sense, encompassing formal laws, where disobedience is met with formally stated punitive consequences, as well as non-punitive rules, i.e. social protocol or unspoken behavioural codes.¹⁹ On 'resources', he

is less explicit, but we can infer that here too the term is to be understood in a wider sense, encompassing capital and property, but also social or cultural capital. Given Giddens's extensive work on canonical social theorists, inclusion of the latter in his definition of 'resources' is hardly unreasonable. Indeed, since Giddens at no point states otherwise, a Foucauldian dimension can even be read into this, where perhaps discourse could be read as a 'resource' (see e.g. Foucault, 2002).

All this is in itself of little use for the purpose of formulating a political project. If we can read just about any major theorist of the last 150 years into Giddens's definition of structure, then Gregson's point of critique – that Giddens offers nothing new and should best be ignored in favour of other authors who are a little more specific – is once again validated. However, Giddens's vague definition of structure is unsurprising, because his primary concern is not the definition of structure itself, but its development over time and space. It is on this issue that his conceptualisation of structure becomes important.

Giddens famously emphasises the importance of time and space in the conceptualisation of social structure. Self-evidently, social structures are not timeless constants that exist independently of agents. To illustrate: there may well be a 'rule' which states that lateness for work is punishable by certain sanctions; but if human beings suddenly ceased to exist, this 'rule' would equally cease to be of significance, as there would be nobody to either enforce, obey or violate it. Thus Giddens distinguishes within his conception of 'structure' between 'structural properties' and 'systems'. Rules and resources are in themselves structural properties; systems are reproduced relations between agents, relations which are organised through these structural properties. Therefore, 'structuration' then refers to "...the conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of systems." (Giddens, 1999: 25)

As noted, Giddens does little to clarify his definitions of structural properties and systems, and we could thus read any number of social theorists into his rather vague thoughts on this. We might, as mentioned, envisage a Foucauldian dimension, where discourse might act as a resource. Similarly, there is room for Marxist theory, where ownership and capital form systems which are reproduced over time. We could take social or cultural capital to be 'resources', whilst 'system' is a term that could easily

accommodate for concepts such as ‘habitus’ (see Bourdieu, 1977). This certainly once again justifies the criticisms made of structuration theory, where its abstract nature and its lack of clear definitions of key terms were pointed out as weaknesses. However, regardless of what we take to be meant by structural properties and systems, Giddens chiefly urges the reader to investigate the conditions of system reproduction and thus also the scope for system transformation.

Though rightly pointed out by critics, Giddens’s vagueness on rules, resources and systems is unproblematic for the subject matter at hand in this thesis. Between Giddens’s analysis of late modernity, and especially the empirical critiques levelled at it, it is possible to get a clear idea of what the structural properties of late modernity are. The critiques I cited in part 1 already give plenty of indication on this: global inequalities, inequalities within nations, distribution of and access to technology, ‘rules’ about gender roles, to name but a few, were all shown as structural principles. Therefore, rather than having to rely on clear definitions of these concepts by Giddens’s second-order theory, we can go directly to empirical analysis, in order to ascertain what structural properties and systems we are dealing with in late modernity. Furthermore, Giddens’s proposed emphasis on the conditions governing system reproduction and transformation is of use for the task of proposing a political project that aims to achieve social change. Here too, we have already seen some indication of what these conditions might be: between Giddens’s later works and the empirical objections to it, a mix of market principles and tradition on the one hand, and reflexivity and access to information on the other can already be highlighted as conditions, which in some form affect how the present ‘system’ develops over time. But before moving on to a more detailed and substantive analysis, there are some further elements of structuration theory that need to be considered in order to establish some of the key characteristics of Giddensian politics not readily evident from his analysis of late modernity, the key question being: where does structural *constraint* fit into all this?

In *CoS*, Giddens deals with this issue explicitly. Having separated ‘material constraint’, meaning constraining properties of the physical world such as mortality and gravity, he then defines constraint resulting from sanction on the one hand, and structural constraint on the other. The former relates to punitive responses on the part of some agents

towards others, which may take the shape of anything from formal punishment to simple disapproval.²⁰ The latter is defined as...

...constraint deriving from the contextuality of action, i.e. from the 'given' character of structural properties vis-à-vis situated actors. (1999: 176)

Put differently, actors may either draw on rules and resources to directly limit other actors' possibilities, or an actor may simply find their possibilities limited due to their own position within a certain system at a particular time of its on-going reproduction.

This in itself can easily be applied to Giddens's theory of late modernity. We need only to go back to the empirical research I cited in part 1 and ask: where then are the instances in which the scope for punitive action or contextuality of present systems limits actors' ability to be empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals? As examples we might envisage a woman fearing the disapproval of her peers should she decide to become a 'working mother' (sanction), or the lack of digital infrastructure in a rural area, denying the community access to information (contextual character of structural properties). Such examples are readily available from the research I already cited, and they are all compatible with Giddens's definition of structural constraint. However, this in itself tells us little of value, especially for the task of constructing a political project designed to somehow alleviate these constraints. The most vital element of structuration theory for the purpose of this task derives from the 'duality of structure'.

One sense in which Giddens's theories depart considerably from most classical sociological theory is that structure is not viewed as 'fixed' in any way. Giddens does not view structure and action as separate entities, where structures effectively become iron fortresses limiting what would otherwise be infinite scope for action. Instead, he notes on several occasions that structure has constraining and enabling properties, and that whilst structure can limit the scope for action, it also provides the context for action to take place (Giddens, 1999: 25; 177). Thus, those actions which can take place in a given system at a given time lead to the reproduction of structure; and due to the possibility to reinterpret and re-contextualise structural properties, there is scope for transformation of systems over time.

Whether or not this is always a useful way to look at sociological problems is contestable. Indeed, the question of how much capacity for transformation as opposed to straightforward reproduction agents may have in a given system is both a key site of interest for structuration theory, and is also likely to be a key determinant of how useful or useless structuration theory might be.²¹ As the structurationist research I cited earlier in this chapter indicates, structuration theory can in principle be useful in certain contexts, but has also been decried as useless by others. Thus, although structuration theory may not provide an ideal approach for all sociological problems, its focus on how to conceptualise social change is useful for the subject matter at hand in this thesis. Based on the duality of structure, and on the principal scope for system transformation, it is possible to outline some basic characteristics of what a Giddensian project consistent with the aim I identified in part 1 could look like.

Firstly, the duality of structure, the capacity to transform structure and its capacity to be enabling as well as constraining, implies that a Giddensian political project does not necessarily need to violently abolish or overthrow the structural properties or systems currently in existence. In practical terms this means on the one hand that such a project does not have to be of a revolutionary nature – as would be the case for instance with Marx – because it is at least theoretically possible to achieve social change through the systems that are already in place, providing that the available rules and resources can be drawn on in new ways in order to achieve system transformation. On the other, this also means that a Giddensian political project does not work towards abolition or minimisation of structure itself. That is to say, it is not a case of ‘the fewer structural properties or systems we have, the better’. Since in principle structure has enabling elements, a Giddensian political project should ask ‘how might the present system be transformed to the effect of limiting its properties that constrain the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, whilst fostering those elements that enable it?’

On this issue it is important to make one further point, which I already alluded to in chapter 1, but which needs to be clearly understood at this juncture: on no occasion does Giddens claim that there is any sense of equilibrium between constraining and enabling aspects of structure. In other words, structure is not necessarily a zero-sum game, where there always need to be equal amounts of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. This would place

Giddens squarely among structural-functionalists, and would make any attempt at system transformation somewhat superfluous: it would imply that removal of constraints for some would automatically result in new constraints for others. This is not the case in structuration theory. It is feasible for some systems to entail intensely constraining features, virtually stifling most agents' capacity for any kind of transformative action, whilst others may give a lot of scope for the achievement of transformation rather than structurally determined reproduction. Indeed, this is reflected in the analysis of late modernity, which – as we saw – Giddens identifies as a period in which the capacity for reflexivity and the possibility of different lifestyle choices has been amplified by factors such as the availability of information and high levels of literacy, albeit nevertheless still obstructed by various constraints.

So, point number one, as it were, of a Giddensian political project is that it does not seek to overthrow or abolish the present structure or system, but instead should seek to identify the constraining aspects of the present structure, and to aid the transformation of the present system in such a way as to alleviate these constraining aspects.

Secondly, and in many ways following on from the first point, a Giddensian political project could be based firmly within the present system. If it is possible to not just reproduce but to transform systems, then there is no reason why such a project could not be based within political systems that already exist. In practice, this means that the realm of political parties and representative democracy could easily be a context in which a Giddensian political project is possible. Based on what I have said here about structuration theory, this could be either through the reform of a political party that already exists, or through the creation of a new one. In general terms, examples of system transformation triggered by either the reform of existing parties or the creation of new ones abound: we could view the British Conservative party under Margaret Thatcher as having drawn on available rules and resources to profoundly transform many elements of social life in Britain (for better or for worse; that is not the point here). A similar case could be made for the formation of the Green party in Germany which, within the context of representative democracy, changed coalition prospects, government policy and ultimately many elements relating to environmentalism in Germany.

Based on such examples – of which there are many more – we can place a Giddensian political project within existing systems of party politics and representative democracy. I feel it to be important to even consider these rather basic elements of what such a political project should look like. Rather than just randomly selecting the existing realm of formal political activity – in preference perhaps to revolution or anarchy – we have now seen that Giddens’s conceptualisation of structure, systems and structural constraint is favourable to this type of political project; meanwhile, the way he conceptualises social transformation also gives some indication of how a political project pursuing the utopian realist aim within the context of representative democracy might approach this task.

A point worth making here briefly is that this discussion of structuration theory does not entirely limit the scope of Giddensian politics to the formal political sphere. Indeed, given Giddens’s rejection of singular, historically predestined transformative agency, this limitation would seem inconsistent. The new social movements are identified by Giddens as a further site of existing political agency (see e.g. 1995b: 228), and McNally and Wheale note that this additional agency is in fact linked to the concept of utopian realism:

It is [the social movements] who criticise what they perceive to be unacceptable risks and lobby for alternative institutional formations. (McNally and Wheale, 2001: 108)

Despite this importance of social movements, I will show statist dimensions to be an important part of Giddensian politics, given the barriers to even becoming part of such social movements for many individuals based on lack of necessary resources and other forms of constraint. Furthermore, Giddens views the nation-state and national governments as important and powerful agents even in the ‘age’ of globalisation (see e.g. 1995a: 66-68). Where social movements campaign for issues ultimately requiring legislative or redistributive action, the state is inevitably a key locus of power and agency that will have to be considered. As such, the formal political sphere must still be seen as the key site of a Giddensian political project. However, it is also clear, given these comments on social movements, that some form of closeness to and communication with civil society and the public sphere will be an important part of it as well. I will return to this issue later on and discuss what exactly this means within the politics of Giddens’s utopian realist social theory.

Readers who are familiar with Giddens's work will know that indeed, the political project he subsequently formulated – the Third Way – is precisely situated in the context of party politics, and more specifically the context of centre-left/ social democratic parties, primarily in developed nations. Evidently, the Giddensian political project I am in the process of outlining concurs on this basic feature with Giddens's Third Way. However, my project departs significantly from Giddens's from this point onwards.

We now have a much clearer context of how to look at the structural constraints inhibiting the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, which were only vaguely stated in Giddens's works on late modernity. Therefore, we are now in a position to examine more closely what these constraints are, and what a political party in a representative democracy might do to alleviate them.

To clarify my argument so far: based on Giddens's analysis of late modernity in conjunction with empirical objections to it, I identified the aim of a Giddensian political project to involve tackling the structural constraints that inhibit the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, and also to anticipate the political needs that a society increasingly characterised by this new late modern self might encounter. Based on elements of structuration theory, I have now proposed that this project could be situated in the existing domain of party politics, with some initial indication that social movements, or dialogue with them, may play some part. Furthermore, proponents of such a project could seek to conceptualise emancipation from structural constraints by drawing on available rules and resources in ways that allow for a transformation of the present system to the effect of lessening punitive sanctions and constraints emanating from the form in which available rules and resources are applied and contextualised. We will now see what this means in more substantive terms.

***Formulating Giddensian Policy Positions:
The Late Modern Self, Emancipatory Politics and Life Politics***

In the previous section, I looked at the concept of structural constraint in meta-theoretical terms. This was useful for the task of conceptualising the structural constraints that inhibit the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. In addition, this has already highlighted some basic characteristics of a political project consistent with Giddens's social theory. But before moving on to outlining some substantive Giddensian policy positions on specific political issues, it is now also necessary to look more closely at the other side of the coin: the individual as an agent in late modernity.

Sure enough, I showed that a new type of late modern self, i.e. the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is a central theme in Giddens's work on late modernity, and in the work on structuration theory that preceded it; I also showed that both fostering the emergence of this type of agent, as well as tending to the political issues that this type of agent may then be confronted with are the central concerns of a Giddensian political project. Furthermore, I highlighted Giddens's idea of 'emancipatory politics' and 'life politics', which respectively act as blanket terms to represent solutions to these two concerns. This raised the question of how emancipatory and life politics are connected. In other words, could Giddensian politics simply be an established form of social democracy (thus dealing with emancipatory politics), supplemented with an agenda on life political concerns, where the two are effectively separate elements of a Giddensian political platform? Or are the two more intimately connected, where the need for life politics somehow refracts upon emancipatory politics, determining what the emancipatory policies need to look like, and vice versa?

This question needs to be answered, before we can deduce concrete Giddensian policy positions on virtually any issue. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to take a closer look at how – according to Giddens – the late modern self comes into being. So, to clarify: in this section I will establish in more depth what Giddens says about the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, whether what he says is empirically justified, what this means for the connection between life politics and emancipatory politics, and what Giddensian policies therefore need to look like.

On this issue of the connection between Giddens's late modern self, life politics and emancipatory politics, there are two options which we can dismiss out of hand.

The first option is that we already live in a world populated entirely by empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals. This would mean, effectively, that emancipatory politics has done its job and is now a thing of the past, and that life politics has become the sole objective of a Giddensian political project. This is clearly false. It is firstly false in empirical terms, as I showed in chapter 2 of this thesis; but as I also showed, it is not a position which Giddens himself advocates. Although at face value it may initially seem as though Giddens makes such a claim, noting his acknowledgements of the existence and importance of constraining factors, as well as reading his work as a utopian realist theory – which he himself advocates on several occasions – highlighted that this is emphatically not what he is saying.

The second option that we can dismiss easily is what might be described as a dualist view of contemporary societies. This option would entail a view by which there are two entirely separate groups of people: those who are empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals, and those who are not. From this view, we could deduce a Giddensian political project in which life politics and emancipatory politics would be essentially separate elements. To those who have 'attained' the status of empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, a Giddensian government would cater with life political policy positions, to all others, it would cater with emancipatory policies, so that they too may eventually 'transform' into this new type of individual.

Much like the first option, this dualist view of the emergence of the late modern self and Giddensian politics can be easily dismissed. Quite aside from probably striking most readers as downright ridiculous, and effectively reading like a bizarre caricature of Marx's emergence of class consciousness, this option is once again neither vindicated by empirical research, nor evident from Giddens's own work. As we saw in chapter 2, instances of the late modern self exist, but often only in partial, emergent ways. It is not the case that there are some select areas or communities that consist of fully empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals. Instead, there are some areas of the world, where we find a relatively low prevalence of traditional beliefs, others where these beliefs are more widespread; some areas in which there is a lot of access to informational resources

and contact with alternative lifestyles, others where there is less of this. Additionally, we saw studies which showed that in certain areas, there is some validity to the claim of detraditionalisation, but that detraditionalisation has not necessarily led to individualisation and reflexivity. To illustrate my point here with a concrete example, we can look at the study on naming children by Gerhards and Hackenbroch (2000), which I cited earlier in chapter 2. Though perhaps trivial in relation to the subject matter at hand here, it illustrates my point more clearly than other studies I referred to on more complex issues. The study highlights that there are indeed instances of non-traditional name giving. The key conclusion in the study itself was that structural determinants could still highlight among which individuals this element of detraditionalisation is likely to occur. However, an additional point is of interest here: just because an individual shows signs of detraditionalisation on this particular issue does not mean that their life is fully detraditionalised, or that in other areas of their life there might not still be structural forces obstructing a fully reflexive life-cycle.

Giddens's own work also does not allow for this kind of dualist view of late modern societies. Indeed, at one point he notes explicitly:

It would be too crude to say simply that life politics focuses on what happens once individuals have achieved a certain level of autonomy of action... (1995b: 214)

I have mentioned these two ways of viewing the emergence of the late modern self in relation to emancipatory and life politics, in order to illustrate that even just by a process of elimination it is likely that life politics and emancipatory politics cannot be viewed as separate entities.

To use Giddens's own terms, emancipatory politics and life politics are respectively the politics of life-chances and lifestyle (1995b: 214), or in the more sociological language used in *CoM*, of inequality and self-actualisation (1995a: 157). These two concepts are so intertwined in his work, and affect each other so profoundly, that any Giddensian policy position must be formulated in consideration of both, albeit with occasional emphasis on either one or the other.

The 'becoming' of the late modern self is dealt with most decisively in *MaSI*. One part of this process of becoming has been the major theme of this thesis: globalisation

(specifically its time/ space dimension, emanating chiefly from communication technology) forces different lifestyles into contact with each other, traditions are questioned and enter into dialogic relationships, leading to post-traditionalism, and thus to the reflexive project of the self, which, given the basic tenets of structuration theory, can lead to major social transformations as individuals draw on available rules and resources and contextualise them in new ways. These features are reiterated once again in *MaSI*, and I have discussed the inaccuracy and very partial applicability of them at some length now.

Much of this book then deals with other elements of the late modern self, culminating in an outline of the ‘tribulations of the self’ (Giddens, 1995b: 181-208). Here, Giddens outlines the backdrop of problematic issues, against which the reflexive project of the self happens: firstly, the experience of unification in conflict with fragmentation, in other words...

...the problem of [...] protecting and reconstructing the narrative of self-identity in the face of the massive intentional and extensional changes which modernity sets into being. (ibid: 189)

Secondly, the experience of powerlessness...

...in relation to a diverse and large-scale social universe [in conflict with] possible forms of mastery over life circumstances unavailable in pre-modern situations. (ibid: 191-192)

Thirdly, the prevalence of risk and uncertainty in a situation where traditional authority loses significance (ibid: 194-196); and finally, the idea that

...modernity opens up the project of the self, but under conditions strongly influenced by standardising effects of commodity capitalism. (ibid: 196).

It is on the back of these ‘tribulations’ that the need for life politics is based. Put simply: just because you are an empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual does not mean that everything is now ‘fine’ and that you will have no further political needs. These thoughts furthermore indicate that even the life-political agenda must be sensitive to issues of access, inequality, empowerment and capitalism, themes which might initially seem to relate more to the agenda of emancipatory politics. Deepening the complexity of the connection between life politics, emancipatory politics and the emergence of the

late modern self, Giddens makes a crucial statement about the self, specifically in relation to the major structural features that I highlighted earlier in this thesis as a means of questioning the validity of his claims:

...one might assume that 'lifestyle' refers only to the pursuits of the more affluent groups or classes. The poor are more or less completely excluded from the possibility of making lifestyle choices. [...] Indeed, issues of class divisions and other fundamental lines of inequality, such as those connected with gender or ethnicity, can be partly defined in terms of differential access to forms of self-actualisation and empowerment [...]. Holding out the possibility of emancipation, modern institutions at the same time create mechanisms of suppression, rather than actualisation, of self. [...] Yet it would be a major error to suppose that the phenomena analysed in this book are confined in their impact to those in more privileged material circumstances. 'Lifestyle' refers also to decisions taken and courses of action followed under conditions of severe material constraint. (ibid: 5-6)

On the same page, he also notes that in this book he does not intend to deal at any length with the inequalities he mentions (ibid: 6). Unfortunately, he does not do this anywhere until the formulation of his political project, and even there, as we shall see in the final chapters of this thesis, he does not do so terribly well. It is significant, however, that he nevertheless acknowledges these inequalities and that they do affect processes of self-actualisation. Firstly, this once again confirms that Giddens can be read in such a way that structural obstacles to the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual are taken seriously. Secondly, this passage tells us a lot about the issue currently at hand. It is worthwhile reading the above passage in conjunction with a critical remark made on Giddens by Kaspersen:

Some actors might have more resources, with more opportunities as a consequence. The well educated doctor can, better than a single mother with three kids, choose to live a healthy life. By possessing a higher level of cultural and economic capital, the doctor has easier access to high-quality organic food, a healthy house, a better job, etc. (Kaspersen, 2000: 169)

To some extent, Kaspersen's remark is accurate: in the above passage, Giddens partially suggests that the reflexive project of the self does apply to everyone, regardless of structural constraint. However, in the same breath he notes that structural features – in the above case class, gender and ethnicity – do impact on the possibility of self-actualisation. The only way to interpret this in a manner that is coherent and empirically valid is with Orwellian connotations, whereby we are all empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals, but some more so than others. Essentially, this view is consistent with Giddens's views on social structures, whereby, as we saw, structure is

the context for action, and as such always has enabling and constraining properties (Giddens, 1999: 25). In this sense, it is inevitable that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual still lives a life that is in some ways constrained: by mortality and finite resources, if nothing else. Since, as we saw, enabling and constraining aspects of structure are in no way seen by Giddens as amounting to a functionalist zero-sum game, a political project based on his work should nevertheless pursue the possibility of removing those constraining aspects, which are directly involved with the emergence of the late modern self. As his above passage indicates, this has not happened as yet. But at the same time, the assertion is that under severe structural constraint, individuals still have some capacity for reflexive life-choices, and thus, for self-actualisation. And whilst we can read him as saying that there are differences in the extent of empowerment, i.e. in the extent to which various individuals can reflexively transform their lives, the political implications of this are not dealt with at this point. A Giddensian political project will of course have to deal with this issue.

What this amounts to, is to say that we are all empowered, reflexive knowledgeable individuals within the limits of the structural factors that constrain us, which for some people may be few and for others many. Clearly, this is unsatisfactory: we saw earlier that structural factors have vast determinant capacity for the individual's life course, compared to rather rare instances of reflexive lifestyle choice. So, Giddens may be right in saying that if an individual should be so lucky as to find an unobstructed life-choice in some minute area of their life, we can speak of an instance of reflexivity; but surely he is missing the bigger picture here!

The dialectic of emancipation and self-actualisation

In much of his work, Giddens indeed appears to be missing the 'bigger picture', given the demonstrable extent of structural obstacles to self-actualisation. But of course lack of engagement is not equal to unawareness. In the above quote from *MaSI* it is already apparent that Giddens simply chooses not to document inequalities and their relationship to self-actualisation, despite being aware of them. Later on in the book, he makes a similar comment on emancipatory politics, noting that emancipatory struggles are important, but that he chooses not to engage with them at any great length (1995b:

210). As we saw earlier, he makes a similar remark in *CoM*, again about poverty, inequality and the resurgence of traditional beliefs and fundamentalisms, explaining this time that he will not consider these elements "...for purposes of economy of argument." (1995a: 158).

The brevity of Giddens's few passages on emancipatory politics is most likely a key factor for the existence of so many critiques that attack him for not considering the issue of structural constraints. But what he does say is nevertheless sufficient for us to understand how life politics and emancipatory politics might combine to help transform societies of limited reflexivity and comparatively strong determinant power of structural factors into societies where something closer to the opposite is the case.

His thoughts on politics, as expressed in the final chapter of *MaSI*, amount to nothing less than a dialectical relationship between emancipation and self-actualisation. This conclusion is based on a number of passages from that chapter. Consider the following as a starting point:

Life political issues are likely to assume greater and greater importance in the public and juridical arenas of states. Demands for emancipatory rights [...] do not thereby become any less important. (1995b: 226)

So, although Giddens quite openly neglects emancipatory politics in his analysis, and despite his claim that "...life politics presumes (a certain level of) emancipation" (ibid: 214), it is not his intention to claim that emancipatory politics should in any form 'give way' to life politics. If his fundamental assertion were that individuals are becoming more 'emancipated', and that therefore there will be less need for emancipatory politics in the future, but more need for life politics, then the above passage would be inconsistent. However, on the final pages of *MaSI* he notes:

Thus far, emancipatory politics has been described as though it were merely the preparation for the emergence of life politics. The relation between emancipatory and life politics is, of course, more complicated than such a view would suggest. Emancipatory politics will not come to an end as life politics moves to claim more of the overall political agenda; virtually all questions of life politics also raise problems of an emancipatory sort. (ibid: 228)

The implication here is that the advent of life politics does not signal the gradual end of emancipatory politics, but that instead it may often precede emancipatory issues.

Despite his brevity on the issue, Giddens makes a convincing case for this. In the first instance, life politics as a whole is tied to emancipatory issues: introducing life-political debates into public discourse – including questions on topics such as abortion, nuclear power and environmental protection – immediately raises the issue of who is entitled and/or able to have some input into discussions that might lead to policies on these matters. Hence:

Attempts to extend and sustain citizenship rights, for example, remain fundamental; such rights provide the arenas within which life-political issues can be openly debated. (1995b: 226).

But even if we consider individual life-political issues, it is evident that these may themselves highlight issues relating to emancipatory politics. The two examples that Giddens himself draws on are feminism and divisions between developing and developed nations. On the former issue, he notes that whilst women's movements had clear emancipatory objectives, life-political concerns within such movements can be highlighted early on as well, which in turn triggered further emancipatory discussions that might not have been evident from the outset:

When the women's movement gained its initial momentum in the early nineteenth century, some individuals were already proposing that more than sheer emancipation was at stake. Making the voices of women heard, they proposed, would both need far-reaching changes in the actual organisation of social life and bring them about (ibid: 229).

Meanwhile, he notes on global inequalities that mere expansion of industrialisation is unlikely to solve any emancipatory problems. Therefore...

...a process of emancipation on the part of the world's poor could probably only be achieved if radical lifestyle changes were introduced in the developed countries. Emancipation presumes life-political transformation (ibid: 230).

Although both examples are problematic in certain ways – the former for instance assuming essentialist gender differences²² the latter ignoring the fact that emancipatory and life-political concerns are not pursued by the same group of people – there is already some contextualisation of how life-political concerns might in turn lead to new emancipatory struggles. However, discussion of these examples, and of Giddens's point in general, occupy the grand total of two and a half pages. His thoughts here are simply

insufficient to help us understand how exactly the connection between emancipatory and life politics is to be conceptualised.

An understanding of his earlier work can help us fill the gap. It is worth at this point looking back to his writings on Marx to develop a more coherent framework. As we saw, elements of Marx's theories relating to 'telos' or to the proletariat as the singular transformative agency are rejected by Giddens. But a key element that he does not criticise, and which, generally speaking, he acknowledges as a useful element of Marx's writings, is the connection between consciousness and action (see e.g. Giddens, 1983: 34-37). His works on late modernity of course depart considerably from Marx's intentions since he departs from any kind of emphasis on class as a uniform concept (see Giddens, 1973). But the basic outlook that applies to Marx and, I argue, equally to Giddens, is that emancipation does not simply come out of nowhere, and is not something that can be facilitated purely in a top-down manner (that is to say, governments deciding without consultation that one or another group is oppressed, and then doing something about it). Instead, emancipation often begins with individuals or groups somehow becoming conscious of their oppression or constraint. This might happen through obtaining the knowledge that others in their society are not experiencing the constraint in question, or indeed by coming into contact with other societies in which said constraint does not exist, or is somehow managed differently.

Though as a whole Marx's theories are far from uncontroversial, this idea of consciousness as a central precondition for emancipatory, or indeed revolutionary action, is an established feature of his work, and is in itself one of its less controversial elements. Given that this is an area, where Giddens does not seem to disagree with Marx, we can apply this to the idea of life politics as a potential precondition for emancipatory struggles.

What this means is that the existence of life-political issues, and the access to information on different lifestyles can be the very factor that highlights the existence and the severity of inequalities, oppression and constraint. To use the previously quoted example given by Kaspersen, of the well educated doctor and the single mother, it is worth considering the following possibility: questions of diet, and what kind of food we ought to eat (organic, GM, fair-trade, etc) are highlighted by Giddens as part of the life-

political agenda (1995b: 227). As Kaspersen correctly notes, the doctor is more able to decide, given greater financial resources, to purchase for instance organic foods. However, it is unlikely that the single mother is completely unaware of debates on why organic and/ or fair-trade foods may be better, both from an ethical point of view and in terms of personal health. Thus, the very existence of life-political issues can further highlight or augment existing inequalities and constraints. On this specific example, we might say that the single mother was most probably principally aware of her position in the greater scheme of social inequality, and of the fact that this had constraining effects on her life; but now, given the rise of this particular life-political concern, she finds herself put at yet an additional disadvantage, given that fair-trade and especially organic foods are more expensive than the alternatives. To some readers (though doubtlessly not to all) this example of food choice may seem trivial. However, it is possible of course to imagine a whole host of similar life-political concerns that may exacerbate the implications of social inequality.

This point has significant implications for Giddensian politics. Taking seriously the difference between having access to knowledge and being able to reflexively incorporate it into the life cycle, where each of these two possibilities might be obstructed by potentially quite different constraints, is the only way we can read Giddens in such a way that he is consistent. Understanding this distinction made by Giddens also further highlights the importance of ‘empowerment’ – not just to think, but to *act* reflexively – as a key component of Giddensian politics. As we saw, despite life politics ‘presuming a certain degree of emancipation’, he clearly states that emancipatory should in no way ‘give way’ to life politics, and that indeed, life politics can itself open up new emancipatory issues. The only way to make sense of this is by accepting the logic that emancipatory struggles must be preceded by some form of realisation of oppression or constraint.²³ Fundamentally: becoming aware of different lifestyles highlights the availability (or lack) of the life-chances necessary to adopt them. As shown, Giddens does not object to this logic, which means that this dialectical relationship²⁴ between emancipatory and life politics turns out to be a valid and consistent way of understanding his thoughts on this issue.

In certain cases, the connection between emancipatory and life politics is even closer. Giddens notes that issues of reproduction (abortion, IVF, etc) are a key element of the

life-political agenda (1995b: 227). Here we do not even need to infer any kind of dialectical relationship. Given that for Giddens, emancipatory politics is not just about material inequalities, but also concerns other forms of domination, constraint and inequality (ibid: 210-211), this type of issue has at once emancipatory and life-political dimensions. The question of whether and/ or when abortion should be allowed does not merely lead on to questions about emancipation; it is at once a question of ethics regarding the foetus (life politics) and the rights of women (emancipatory politics). In this particular case, and doubtlessly in some others, it is clear that any policy position one might want to advocate would need to be informed by emancipatory as well as life political considerations.

We can see some implications that this analysis has for a Giddensian political project, namely that, rather than having an emancipatory as well as a separate life-political agenda, Giddensian policy positions need to be formulated in consideration of both. On some issues, such as the above example, this means that considerations of life-chances and lifestyle need to inform the ultimate policy position in equal measure. But more often, policies on issues which at face value appear to be of an emancipatory nature, need to be formulated with their potential life-political consequences in mind, and vice-versa. In the final stages of this thesis I will of course give several concrete examples of this. But before concluding the present chapter with a more detailed account of what this means in general terms for the formulation of Giddensian policy positions, it is first necessary to ask: aside from being consistent within Giddens's theories, are the assumptions underlying this dialectic between emancipatory and life politics correct?

I argue that yes, they are, but that Giddens's utopian realist approach once again has its immediate focus on possibilities rather than constraints, which means that in order to successfully complete his utopian realist social theory of late modernity, a Giddensian political project ultimately needs to put more emphasis on emancipatory politics and its connection to life-political concerns than his work would suggest at face value.

The key assumption, namely that emancipatory issues often (if not always) need to be preceded by some form of consciousness of oppression, is an entirely defensible one. On the one hand, we can use Giddens's own thoughts on structural constraint here, specifically his differentiation between 'material constraint' and 'structural constraint',

which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Material constraints, as he defines that category, are unalterable: based on all currently existing knowledge, it would be somewhat futile to advocate emancipation from mortality, or from gravity. If there is no indication that a particular constraint is even theoretically alterable, then emancipation from said constraint is a non-starter. However, once there is information on possible ways (even if it may just be theoretical) of overcoming said constraint, we are immediately in the domain of contextuality: if available rules and resources are merely contextualised in a constraining form, when they could be used in new ways to transform the system and thus alleviate the constraint in question, then there is the possibility of emancipation. This much we can infer from Giddens himself, and it certainly highlights that being aware of the fact that ‘things could be done differently’ is an important ingredient, as it were, of emancipatory struggle.

But empirical examples can easily tell a similar story. Klein’s account of sweatshop workers in Southeast Asia is a useful example here. She notes that there is little to no awareness of the vast discrepancy between the daily wage of the workers and the high street price of a single pair of trainers produced by them (2000: 195-298; 347). Another, rather more large-scale example can be highlighted in east Germany and eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 90s. Here, the role of western media played a key part in discrediting government propaganda and galvanising large-scale social movements. Indeed, though beyond the subject matter of this thesis, we may infer from this that the link between consciousness and emancipation may well be a key reason, why totalitarian states to this day tend to try and restrict its citizens’ access to outside information.

So, the basic logic of awareness of different lifestyles can highlight a lack of life chances in principle has plenty of merit. However, the theoretical points and the examples above do not show that this is necessarily always the case. To bring this discussion back to Giddensian politics, we also need to ask whether there are empirical grounds on which a reliance on this dialectical relationship between life and emancipatory politics is possible.

There is a key point of interest that has been implicitly contained in the analysis of the last few pages, and which I will now address directly. When it comes to the connection

between life politics, emancipatory politics and the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, there is a clear distinction between awareness and ability. What I mean by this is that for Giddens, the awareness of different lifestyles, and by extension, of life-political issues, is often given; but the ability to adopt different lifestyles, or to change lifestyles based on life-political considerations, is not. His theoretical rationale for this is clear from what I have concluded so far: globalisation, viewed as the contraction of time and space through global information flows, communication technology and travel, forces different lifestyles into contact with each other, with questioning of one's own lifestyle and comparison to others being a logical consequence. Nevertheless, because structural obstacles and constraints persist, implementation of lifestyle change can often be impossible for many people. This is a fundamental tension of the present age, which Giddens's work illuminates, and which a politics consistent with his work must deal with.

This viewpoint does not stand in opposition to much of the empirical material I assessed in chapter 2 of this thesis: on its own, the simple awareness of other lifestyles does not preclude the existence of barriers to lifestyle-change, or indeed the existence of structural determinants of life-decisions. As mentioned previously, Kaspersen's 'single mother' may well be knowledgeable, even reflexive, in the sense that she may well be more aware of different lifestyles and life-political issues than even the wealthiest individuals in past generations, but ultimately, these do little more than to highlight the constraints that exist in her life. To speak of 'empowerment' here would be cynical at best.

A Giddensian political project would need to weigh in at this point, utilising its available rules and resources to transform the present system in such a way that the relevant constraints are alleviated, leaving the single mother to not only identify different possible lifestyle options, but to reflexively implement them. This, at any rate, is the basic political outlook that a Giddensian political project would have in an 'ideal' world. However, the idea that such a project could work by simply being 'in tune' with the dialectic between lifestyle options and emancipatory concerns presupposes that access to the means by which different lifestyles come into contact with each other is already universal. As I showed in chapter 2, this is not the case.

The idea that it is merely widespread knowledge of different lifestyle choices that characterises late modernity, rather than the un-obstructed ability to implement them, is doubtlessly more defensible than the face value reading of Giddens that I started with. However, even this is contestable, both within developed countries and globally (we will see in the next chapter why global dimensions of this issue are so important). The idea that everyone – even in developed nations – already has sufficient access to the global information and telecommunication flows that could potentially make the awareness of, and engagement with, life-political issues possible is a non-starter. Evidence of digital divides, i.e. of technological ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ immediately renders this idea highly problematic. Giddens has in fact been accused of having a rather simplistic view on media-consumption (Kaspersen, 2000: 170-171), which means that to the dualist approach of the digital divide, we can add questions of *what kind* of information flows various individuals have access to: having a broadband internet connection in the home clearly leads to a different kind of engagement with informational resources than having a standardised digital TV package. In addition, the necessary knowledge to use such resources differs between individuals. Aside from the ability to use the relevant equipment (as I showed in chapter 2 this is a central issue in digital divides between age groups), we may even cite geographical location and literacy as important factors determining whether or to what extent a particular individual is able to engage with life-political debates and reflexively ascertain the limitations imposed on them by social structures.

Many of the above points are merely further extensions and elaborations on the empirical objections to Giddens’s analysis of late modernity which I already cited at earlier points in this thesis. But it is important to consider them here again in relation to the link between emancipatory and life politics. Fundamentally, it is entirely plausible to conclude that in developed nations, where communication and information technology is widely spread, it could be a realistic political ambition to envisage new realms of civil society and public space, through which engagement with life-political issues can take place and through which emancipatory concerns can be discovered and communicated.²⁵ This would be a centrally important site of the envisaged dialectic between emancipatory and life politics, and a Giddensian political project would be obliged to engage with these spheres in order to formulate its policies based on the concerns, constraints and moral dilemmas that individuals are actually experiencing.

However, as my comments above indicate, much would need to be done, before any reliance on such a feature of public life is possible. Naturally, there are ample examples to show that the availability of communication and information technology has already been used by individuals to create social movements, highlight and discuss life-political issues and influence governments,²⁶ but access and participation are not universal, and are often restricted by the very structural forces that already create significant disadvantages for individuals before technological dimensions are even considered: income, education, age, location, gender and so on.

Implications for a Giddensian political project

What this means for a Giddensian political project is that it needs a strong focus on the dialectic between emancipatory and life politics, but that this first requires universal provision of the means by which individuals are able to fully engage with this dialectic. In other words: it is an essential component of a Giddensian politics to ensure universal access to the means by which engagement with different lifestyles, life-political issues and understanding of structural constraints and emancipatory needs can be achieved – foremost information and communication technology, but also literacy, necessary technological competence and some other factors I will discuss later. This is likely to involve a strongly redistributive dimension, which I will also show to be important from several other points of view in the next chapter. Once again, not because this happens to be consistent with my own normative position, but because it is the only way that the utopian realist possibilities of technological globalisation, detraditionalisation and reflexivity can be transformed into a reality, thereby creating a politics, alongside which Giddens's analysis of late modernity can be read in a consistent, accurate and purposeful way.

In addition to the general characteristics of a Giddensian politics that I developed in the first part of this chapter – its situation within existing parliamentary party-systems and its approach of transforming rather than overthrowing social structures and systems – I can now spell out two further key characteristics of such a project.

Firstly, in order to be consistent with the logic of a dialectic of emancipatory and life politics, and with the links I already suggested as being necessary between government and the public, it should aim to create an inclusive public sphere, where individuals are universally guaranteed access to key resources through which engagement with life-political issues as well as emancipatory issues becomes possible. Ultimately, this should lead to a bottom-up approach to formal political and legislative decisions, where governments engage with the public and assess which emancipatory issues are important to the population as such. However, given the present lack of this type of inclusive public sphere – substantiated by evidence on digital divides, poverty and inequality – some top-down emancipatory decisions would precede this envisaged dialogue between governments and populations. Although I will spell out substantive points in more detail in the final stages of this thesis, some elements are worth briefly mentioning here for the purpose of illustration. I need to stress at this point that few of the following policy positions are unproblematic, and that there is extensive critical literature on all of them. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to defend the following policy positions against their various counter-arguments, but to demonstrate that these policy-positions follow from Giddens's social theory:

- Universal provision of key information and communication resources, regardless of location or income would need to be guaranteed. This could be for instance through nationalisation or subsidisation of broadband internet provision.
- The aims I outline above would also necessitate an egalitarian education system of a high standard. Once again, universal access would need to be ensured here, as well as a curriculum that heavily emphasises teaching the ability to assess and critically engage with whatever issues individuals might be confronted with through the vast flow of informational resources.
- Within the education system, it is unlikely that a private/ public divide could continue to exist, especially if the standard of education is deemed to be higher in private institutions.

- Given the importance of creating an inclusive public sphere, doubtlessly relying in large parts on modern communication and information technologies, issues of online privacy and of media monopolies would have to be dealt with. Media regulating bodies would assume a hugely important role in this.
- Alongside safeguarding data protection and online privacy of individuals, governments, if guided by Giddensian politics, should seek to expand their accessibility, and build on existing technologies to enable contact between themselves and the public. Having facilities for online petitions, questionnaires and message-boards on the websites of government departments (which already exists in some parts) could for instance be given a much expanded role.

Secondly, whether through public consultation or not, Giddensian policies should always be considered in relation to both emancipatory and life-political dimensions. This means that policies regarding life-political concerns need to be designed with possible resulting emancipatory concerns in mind. To give one example I already referred to: if a case would be made for a policy to limit the production and distribution of GM foods, or indeed to expand organic food production, issues of cost and lack of access for people on lower incomes would need to be considered. Likewise, moves to change the energy supply, for instance away from nuclear power and towards renewables, would need to consider cost and the potential constraints on poorer households (in the extreme case, there might for instance be the danger of a two-tier energy supply dependent on individuals' incomes). Conversely, policies regarding emancipatory concerns need to be formulated in relation to the aim of increasing individuals' possibilities of self-actualisation and enabling individuals to engage with life-political concerns and debates. In other words, a Giddensian politics should seek not only to neutralise social inequalities and constraints; it needs to do so in such a way that access to knowledge and greater ability to formulate and construct a reflexive project of the self are explicitly enabled. To give just one example: provision of state benefits to the unemployed may well go some way to alleviating the worst of financial constraint, yet this hardly provides many new opportunities for self-actualisation. Complementing benefits with broadband internet access, or with improvements to local infrastructures and educational facilities in poor areas is more likely to achieve such goals.

None of these policies are completely new: in chapter 6 I will explain, where appropriate, where similarities to other existing political orientations and economic agendas lie. What is crucial here is that these are the political positions that follow logically and consistently from Giddens's social theory, and with which the Third Way must stand in agreement if it is not to be dismissed as an unsuccessful completion of his utopian realist social theory of late modernity – which is precisely what I will ultimately do.

Although, as mentioned, I will return to this issue in more depth later on, it is already possible now to characterise a Giddensian political project in relation to other existing party-political platforms: much of what I have said here places Giddensian politics squarely in the realm of social democracy. In the first instance, it would be a party-political project, which does not seek to overthrow social systems, but which places a heavy emphasis on redistribution, not just of wealth, but also directly of key resources such as education and information and communication technologies. As I outlined, initially this would most likely happen as top-down decisions, i.e. initiated by a government, without much joint deliberation with the public. So far, this is not entirely dissimilar from the kinds of social democracy found in many European countries in the post-war years. Fundamentally, those systems share the outlook I have outlined in this paragraph: that within a system involving nation states and capitalism, the egalitarian provision of key services and resources can and should be ensured by governments.

However, we can also see an initial way in which a Giddensian politics would move beyond this social democratic outlook. Bobbio notes that most 'leftist' politics share a principle stance of equality as a normative political goal (1996: 60). At times it is literally viewed as an end in itself, because equality might be seen as a 'good thing' from a philosophical point of view, or, in the case of Keynesianism, it is a precondition to ensure demand, and thus to guarantee stable, prosperous economies (Keynes, 1936).

What I have concluded so far about a Giddensian political project certainly does not stand in opposition to such notions, but the central purpose of its egalitarian character is different. Rather than redistribution and egalitarian/ emancipatory policies being ends in themselves, or aiding economic growth, the aim is to foster the emergence of inclusive public spheres, where the dialectic of emancipatory and life-political concerns can

unfold, and where the state can gradually move from active, top-down decisions to responsive decisions that are formulated through dialogue with the public. In order to achieve this, initial emancipatory policies need to be formulated in such a way that inequalities and constraints will not just be tackled by arbitrary means, but in such a way that the possibility of inclusive public spheres is the explicitly desired result.

It is worth noting at this point that this chapter has also implicitly highlighted part of my rationale for looking at Giddens in the first place, as set out in the introduction of this thesis. The individual policy positions I have arrived at here are nothing new, and could just as easily have been arrived at by means other than Giddens's theory, or indeed without the use of social theory in general. The same will be the case for many positions I will suggest in subsequent chapters. What is significant is that this analysis of Giddens's work allows us to construct a model of social democracy with a new sociological basis.

Summarising the experience of centre-left parties in several European countries, Sassoon notes that social democratic parties across Europe traditionally based their rationale for policy, as well as their scope for electoral success, on elements such as nationhood, class solidarity and community cohesion (1997). Noting then that these features have lost their capacity to enable successful social democratic government, he characterises the European centre-left movements as converging to a 'defensive' position (*ibid*: 4).²⁷ Case studies on centre-left parties in individual European countries frequently confirm that the elements mentioned by Sassoon have ceased to be able to act as convincing ways of justifying centre-left policies (see e.g. Leys, 1997: 21-22; Meyer, 1997: 126). Independent of discussions on social democracy, other authors have also pointed to the demise of class and community solidarity (see e.g. Putnam, 2000; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). We can tie this outlook back in with the subject matter of this thesis by concluding that detraditionalisation in areas such as nationhood, community and especially class solidarity has caused problems for the prospects of social democracy. But my analysis of Giddens has highlighted a way of basing policy-positions broadly identifiable with social democracy on an outlook that does not require these features. Instead, we can obtain from Giddens a social democratic outlook centred on individualisation, where prospects of detraditionalisation and globalisation are the very features that supply justification for redistributive policies.

Given the travails of social democratic movements across Europe, as well as the fact that the dwindling salience of their sociological outlook is identified by several authors as being a key part of these travails, my arguments here show that Giddens is an especially worthwhile figure to look to in the context of renewing social democracy. I stress again here that I refer to the politics consistent with structuration theory, his analysis of late modernity and his utopian realist outlook, not to his Third Way.

Aside from providing a new sociological rationale distinct from that of most European social democrats, the principal aim of Giddensian politics, fostering the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, is additionally useful in that it does not simply dictate that redistribution and emancipation are important, but can also help to specify *what kind* of redistributive and emancipatory policies should be pursued. To reiterate: provision of state benefits and housing to the long-term unemployed may well be viewed as morally desirable, and it may well stimulate consumer economies somewhat, but these measures on their own are unlikely to promote greater inclusivity in public spheres or lead to any significant empowerment or reflexivity.

For now, there is little more that can be said about a Giddensian political project, and where it stands in relation to other political platforms currently in existence, because a centrally important element has so far not been addressed yet. Although I have already alluded to it on some occasions in this chapter by mentioning issues such as inequality or affordability, the issue of economic systems, capitalism and both global and national income inequalities has not been discussed so far. Once again without much further deliberation, Giddens notes:

Capitalism, one of the great driving forces in the expansion of modernity, is a class system which tends to generate major material inequalities – on a global scale as well as within the economically developed societies. The emancipatory struggles which have helped moderate the polarising effects of ‘unfettered’ capitalist markets are hence directly relevant to the pursuit of life-political endeavours. (1995b: 228)

This quote indicates that a Giddensian political project needs to engage critically and extensively with capitalism, both on a national, and on a global scale. This of course leads us back to the last of the unresolved issues I noted at the end of section 1 of this thesis: what does Giddens say about economic dimensions of globalisation, and is what

he says coherent and justified? Tackling this question will be the key task of the next chapter. In doing so, I will show in more detail, what Giddensian policies on global inequality, taxation and finance need to look like.

Chapter 4:

Globalisation, Inequality and Redistribution

The Context of this Analysis

As we saw earlier in this thesis, Giddens's analysis of late modernity is highly contestable at face value. The idea that we live in a world in which globalisation and detraditionalisation have led to societies of empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals simply does not stand up to empirical scrutiny. However, I also showed that his comments on utopian realism allow for a more defensible reading: within this approach detraditionalisation, individualisation, reflexivity and the new late modern self are mere possibilities, empirically verifiable in some respects in some sections of some populations, yet still severely obstructed by the existence of many structural constraints. Empirical evidence does not make much of a case against this. In fact, I even pointed to many empirical investigations which convincingly argued against blanket-assertions of detraditionalisation or individualisation, but nevertheless conceded that in certain instances these developments are indeed taking place.

We saw that Giddens only briefly and superficially covers the structural constraints inhibiting the universal emergence of the late-modern self. For good reasons: his idea of utopian realism does not involve dwelling on these much, and instead seeks to identify potential sources of social transformation that might enable 'the good life'. For Giddens, this is an approach necessary in order to construct a 'critical theory without guarantees' in the absence of telos and historically designated transformative agencies. Whether or not this approach is desirable for social theorists is debatable; yet, as we saw, Giddens produces a largely successful utopian realist analysis of contemporary societies, by pointing to detraditionalisation, globalisation – especially in its non-economic dimensions – individualism and reflexivity as emergent developments that lead to a new type of late modern self, one which Giddens clearly views as desirable and worth fostering.

But since the developments identified by Giddens are at best emergent, and in many instances mere theoretical possibilities, a corresponding political project needs to be clear about the other side of this coin, namely the factors that inhibit the emergence of this new type of individual. Having looked at structuration theory, emancipatory and life politics in the previous section, we can now further define the basic strategy of a Giddensian political project: it would most likely involve a political party, based in the presently existing sphere of representative democracy. Its outlook should be to identify instances where the way in which available rules and resources are contextualised leads to sanctional or systemic constraints upon the possibility of individuals becoming more empowered, reflexive and knowledgeable. Such a project should then seek to draw on the available rules and resources in ways that are likely to lessen or indeed fully remove said constraints, whilst also integrating emancipatory and life-political concerns in the formulation of policies.

However, this task of naming the structural constraints that a Giddensian political project needs to be concerned with inevitably leads back to the unresolved issue of globalisation. To briefly remind the reader: we saw in part 1 that certain elements of globalisation were unproblematic in the utopian realist reading of Giddens, specifically at the level of increased global communication and access to information. As with most other aspects of Giddens's analysis, I showed that these developments do exist, and theoretically lead to greater transformative power for individuals, but that they are highly unevenly distributed, both globally and within individual countries. This element of Giddens's analysis, along with many others, immediately raises questions about economic dimensions of globalisation.

Economic Dimensions of Globalisation in Giddens's Analysis of Late Modernity

Globalisation in the realm of culture and especially communications is identified by Giddens as a benevolent feature of late modernity. It is perhaps the most fundamental element through which the possibility of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual has arisen. The availability of information and the contact with other cultures and lifestyles is one of the key elements that can lead to individuals questioning their

own traditions and lifestyles, and thus supposedly emerges the reflexive project of the self. As I mentioned elsewhere, this element of globalisation is not the sole cause of this new type of self: the rise of widespread literacy is an important factor Giddens mentions. We might add the invention of the printing press, translations of the bible into languages other than Latin, anything in fact that has somehow made information more widespread or improved access to it. Nevertheless, the era of globalisation is shown by Giddens to take this process to a whole new level, where availability of information and contact between different cultures and lifestyles has increased dramatically in a relatively short amount of time, thus decisively increasing the potential for the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual.

Large sections of the literature on globalisation view it largely as an economic or political phenomenon. We naturally find this approach in subject areas such as global political economy or international relations. However, it is evident that developments such as international travel, migration, international distribution of films and TV programmes and the advent of the internet have had profound effects on many key areas of interest traditionally studied in the discipline of sociology: culture, lifestyle, employment and mobility. The fact that sociologists have taken a keen interest in globalisation is therefore unsurprising: understanding how hallmarks of globalisation such as mass air transit and digital communication technologies have affected the social fabric and the relationship between the individual and society is an important undertaking; this is precisely what Giddens has done and, in simple terms, the literature on globalisation would be incomplete without it.

By the same token, it would be problematic to look at these elements of globalisation in complete isolation from its economic and political elements. Many, if not all, of the 'globalising' technologies have been developed and distributed through principles of capitalism, by companies based in a select few parts of the world. Trade, market forces and industrial relations therefore need to be considered when looking at how these technologies affect social life in late modernity. Indeed, these areas in themselves are relevant to problems of a sociological nature: inequality, poverty, divisions of labour; many areas, in fact, that might entail several forms of structural constraint.

In both normative and empirical terms, global capitalism must be identified as a contradictory structural feature within Giddens's work, in the sense that on the one hand it has been the vehicle for the advent of the technologies that give rise to the possibility of the late modern self, whilst on the other undermining that very possibility through the inequalities it produces and widens. This links up with Giddens's views on structure as having enabling and constraining properties (Giddens, 1999: 25), and also with Kaspersen's point that Giddens's utopian realism urges us to be sensitive to such contradictions and to see in them possibilities for social transformation (Kaspersen, 2000: 112). The complexity of the relationship between the globalising technologies and global capitalism is further compounded when we consider that on the one hand these technologies add to the power and efficiency of large economic players, but on the other hand have already been used to undermine them.²⁸ A transformation of global capitalism sensitive to these contradictions is therefore a necessary part of Giddensian politics. This makes it necessary to develop a solid understanding of how exactly Giddens conceptualises the relationship between the different 'dimensions' of globalisation. However, the utopian realist reading of Giddens in part 1 did not produce an answer to where economic dimensions of globalisation come into the project of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. The question now is therefore: what does Giddens say about economic dimensions of globalisation, is it defensible, and how does it relate to the opportunities he sees in globalisation? What is of interest here are therefore not so much economic definitions of globalisation in themselves, but relational definitions, i.e. analyses, which try to understand how economic and cultural/sociological elements of globalisation relate to each other. In this context, there are two clearly different schools of thought, of which Giddens represents one.

For Giddens, the shrinking of time and space, made possible by the advent of globalising technologies, has virtually absolute centrality in his thoughts on globalisation. All other aspects – economic, political, military, and of course the emergence of the empowered, reflexive knowledgeable individual – flow from this element. Initially, Giddens sets out what he sees as four dimensions of globalisation: the world capitalist economy, the international division of labour, the world military order and the nation-state system, all of which interrelate in various ways (1995a: 71). This in itself is hardly different from most authors who have looked at globalisation as an issue ranging beyond pure economics. Most large volumes on globalisation try to cover all of

these 'dimensions' in some form (see e.g. Held et al, 2000; Held and McGrew, 2007). However, then Giddens goes on, explicitly stating that there is

...a further and quite fundamental aspect of globalization, which lies behind each of the various institutional dimensions that have been mentioned, and which might be referred to as cultural globalization. Mechanised technologies of communication have dramatically influenced all aspects of globalization since the first introduction of mechanical printing into Europe. They form an essential element of the reflexivity of modernity and of the discontinuities which have torn the modern away from the traditional. (1995a: 77)

This is by far not an isolated comment in Giddens's work. Elsewhere he notes:

Globalization is political, technological and cultural as well as economic. It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back to the late 1960s. (2002a: 10)

This conceptual situating of communication technologies in relation to all other dimensions of globalisation has already been more-or-less implicit in various parts of this thesis. I spell it out here again mainly for the sake of clarity and coherence. Indeed, Spybey notes that this approach to globalisation is consistent with structuration theory: if time and space are viewed as key concepts that social theory should consider, then factors that profoundly affect such dimensions attain key importance (2001: 149).

So, as his four dimensions show, Giddens does not deny that economic dimensions of globalisation exist. Undeniably, capitalism and the need to generate profit are therefore important factors in the globalising world (see e.g. Giddens, 1995a: 72). But based on Giddens's framework of globalisation, the key angle of sociological enquiry is to look at the information and communication element of globalisation, and to understand how it affects other spheres: the economic, the political, the military, and the personal. From here, it is not a far cry to become optimistic about the concept of globalisation: whatever adverse or downright gruesome conditions the global economy and labour market, military interests and so on might entail, they are all subject to the possibilities opened up by these new technologies that have 'shrunk' time and space. In theory, these technologies and this 'shrinking' therefore may provide new rules and resources, which individuals might utilise to transform the present systems, thus perhaps alleviating the negative effects currently observable within all the other institutional dimensions of globalisation. Those pursuing political ideals of emancipation and empowerment might thus conclude: there is cause for hope!

In contrast to Giddens's framework of globalisation, there is another school of thought, which sees the economic dimension, rather than the time-space dimension as the key driving force behind globalisation, shaping all other dimensions in the process.

Among the more extreme proponents of this view, we can even cite those authors who argue against the notion of globalisation altogether, most notably Hirst and Thompson. They famously argue that the global economic order has in fact changed remarkably little (with some qualifications, which I will go into shortly). Based on considerable evidence, they show that economic power is still centred on a few select regions – Europe, North America and a few others – and that the significance of these regions has in fact increased in relation to all other parts of the world. Furthermore, the vast majority of the world's largest corporations are still firmly based in individual nation states (most often the US or western European countries), rather than being truly 'multinational'. In addition, this growing economic power of the long-term wealthy countries is creating ever more of a power-imbalance, as the developing countries rely ever more on the developed countries as importers of cheap goods (Hirst and Thompson, 1998: 195-201). This leads to the conclusion that the present age simply represents a continuation, and indeed intensification, of an economic order that has been around for over a century. Thus, although the authors discuss what are essentially global processes and issues, they reject the descriptive term 'globalisation' as a misnomer: capitalism and the continually growing economic power of western nations and the corporations based within them are the central feature of the contemporary 'global' order.

Hirst and Thompson themselves do not directly consider the significance of time-space dimensions of globalisation, i.e. the existence of new communication technologies. However, their view is a useful starting point for arguing that this other element of globalisation is driven by the economic order. Some of the research I cited in part 1 makes this appear plausible: the highly uneven access to and distribution of communication technologies around the globe – the digital divide – is easily explained by the kinds of global economic forces pointed out by Hirst and Thompson.²⁹

Other authors deal explicitly with this type of relational analysis of the different 'dimensions' of globalisation. Thus, Martell, though not a 'globalisation-sceptic' in the sense that Hirst and Thompson are, also views the global economic order as centrally

important, to the point of decisively shaping access to whatever new communication and information technologies the last few decades have produced. He notes:

One area in which the opportunities of globalization remain unfulfilled or even actively countered is in economic globalization. [...] It is important to have a pluralistic understanding of globalization that does not reduce explanations to economic or other single factors. At the same time, it is also important to see the links between different factors in globalization and look at the extent to which some have causal power over others, rather than just seeing all as equal, separate or unaffected by one another. The search for resources, trade, production or investment, and the wealth that can be made from this, has been a driving force in globalization... (Martell, 2010: 312)

Reflecting on other sociologists who have written on globalisation, of which Giddens may easily be read as an implicit example, he also concludes:

...leaving out the economy and the way economic motivations, economic power and inequality structure globalization gives an over-benign, harmonious and equalized picture of globalization. [...] a key element is left out, that is, the way that globalization is based on and reproduces power, inequality and conflict. (ibid: 310)

We have here two opposed relational understandings of globalisation. Anyone familiar with the literature on globalisation will be aware that we could cite several other authors as proponents of either one or the other of the two above definitions, Beck (2004) and Sassen (2007) in the communications camp, Singh (2005) and Callinicos (2009) in the economics camp. These two contrasting approaches are symptomatic of a more general point made by Holton, who concludes, reflecting not just on academic discourse, but also on opinions he collected from members of the public at the World Economic Forum Conference in Melbourne in September 2000:

Globalization for many signifies a major root cause of inequality, human misery and injustice, while for others it is seen as a way of addressing these social ills. (Holton, 2005: 1)

So, who is right? Does the best explanation somehow lie somewhere in between the two? And most importantly, what does this say about the validity of Giddens's analysis of late modernity?

I propose, that although evidence largely favours the views taken by Martell or Hirst and Thompson, these two approaches to globalisation are in fact quite compatible with each other, especially when we consider some further comments made on the issue by Giddens.

Much of the evidence I have presented at various stages in this thesis points to the idea that economic power, located in a select few parts of the world, is a centrally important feature of the present age, and a causal determinant of many global processes. The ‘western’ nations and the corporations based within them are growing rather than declining in their significance and influence; global inequalities are increasing, as is the poorer nations’ dependence on the west; additionally, access to the globalising technologies is heavily distributed in favour of the developed countries, giving them ever more advantages over the less developed countries and regions of the world.

Evidence thus clearly seems to favour the approach to globalisation that places economics and the growing power of the developed world as its central feature, giving the context in which all other elements of globalisation might take place – most certainly those elements that Giddens focuses on. Meanwhile, the evidence in favour of Giddens’s view is rather weak. As we saw in part 1, instances of social transformations towards detraditionalisation, reflexivity, often generated by the availability of information, travel, communication technologies and other forms of cultural exchange do exist; but these instances are relatively rare, often limited to wealthy nations, regions and sections of populations, and largely still overshadowed in scale by the persistence of tradition and various other structural determinants rather than reflexivity. In fact, although such research suggests some significance of time-space and technological dimensions of globalisation, it still ultimately suggests, as we saw in chapter 2, that these dimensions are still underpinned by inequality and economic power.

Interestingly, despite his repeatedly stated insistence on communication technologies and the shrinking of time and space as the central underlying feature of globalisation, Giddens is nevertheless acutely aware of the constraining and destructive power of global economics. Consider these passages from *Runaway World*:

To many living outside Europe and North America [globalisation] looks uncomfortably like Westernisation [...]. Most of the giant multinational companies are based in the US... (2002a: 15)

The share of the poorest fifth of the world’s population in global income has dropped, from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent between 1989 and 1998. The proportion taken by the richest fifth, on the other hand, has risen. [...] Some transnational companies sell goods there that are controlled or banned in the industrial countries [...]. Rather than a global village, one might say, this is more like global pillage. (ibid: 15-16)

Further reflecting on economics, and hinting at issues such as the digital divide, he notes further:

...it is surely obvious that free trade is not an unalloyed benefit. This is especially so as concerns the less developed countries. Opening up a country, or regions within it, to free trade can undermine a local subsistence economy. An area that becomes dependent upon a few products sold on world markets is very vulnerable to shifts in prices as well as to technological change. (ibid: 17)

These comments seem a far cry from what Martell calls "...an over-benign, harmonious and equalized picture of globalization..." that "...disproportionately represents the experience of European elites..." (2010: 310-311). Yet, despite these qualifications, which have much empirical validity, Giddens still notes:

Economic influences are certainly among the driving forces [of globalisation] – especially the global financial system. Yet they aren't like forces of nature. They have been shaped by technology, and cultural diffusion... (2002a: 14)

This now appears entirely inconsistent and contradictory: technology is supposedly the driving force behind economic globalisation and by the same token leads to the advent of the empowered, reflexive knowledgeable individual; yet at the same time economic globalisation is deepening inequality, poverty and dependency, and thus undermines for large sections of the world's population any possibility for this new late-modern self to emerge.

Given the extent of the evidence that shows globalisation to entail an economic system that increases global inequalities and puts only a select few regions of the world at an ever greater advantage in relation to all others, thus undermining many opportunities for much of the world, we need to find a way of reading Giddens in such a way that his theories on the shrinking of time and space, leading to post-traditionalism and reflexivity, are consistent with this. As I noted before in this thesis, contemplating a Giddensian political project is only a worthwhile task, if Giddens's analysis of the contemporary age is correct: there is no sociological merit in designing a politics for a fictional world.

My conclusions so far about Giddens's work can provide a solution here. Most importantly, this involves not getting blind-sighted by the use of 'globalisation' as a

blanket-term covering various ‘dimensions’, from the economic to the political and the cultural. Sure enough, much of the expansion of western economic power has been made possible through the advent of modern communication technology, which is in turn distributed disproportionately within the locations of western economic power centres. This, however, does not necessarily mean that economic power and communication technology must be viewed as being conceptually ‘part of the same thing’. Giddens’s own structuration theory gives a useful rationale for this: we might say, the global economic order on the one hand and communication technologies on the other are sets of rules and resources, which actors can draw upon in varying ways, depending on their status and location. At the present point in time, we can further infer, actors privileged by the rules and resources of global economics are in turn more able to draw on the consequent technological resources, thus enabling them to lead more reflexive, empowered lives, whilst actors experiencing sanction or contextual disadvantage from the rules and resources of global economics are unable to draw on the globalising technologies to the same extent.

This, as far as I can see, is the only way in which we can read Giddens’s views on globalisation in such a way that it is both internally consistent and stands up to empirical scrutiny. Read in this way, globalisation involves multiple different sets of rules and resources from various domains – economic, political, technological, etc – which affect each other in various ways. De-coupling the various dimensions of globalisation at a meta-theoretical level allows for communication technologies to be viewed as aiding the expansion of global inequalities on the one hand, whilst also making them identifiable as a potential resource to lessen these very inequalities in the future. This gives us a consistent and empirically viable theory of globalisation from Giddens: the expansion of western economic power and the rise of the globalising technologies have doubtlessly affected each other, technology providing resources for the economic expansion, and the economic system largely determining which individuals are likely to have access to technological and communication resources.

But whilst it is then justified to say that the globalising technologies are deeply bound up with western economic power and expansion, this theory nevertheless also leaves room to say that the globalising technologies are a ‘resource’ in their own right. To use the language of structuration theory, specifically in relation to transformation of systems

over time: technological advances and global economics have at present been drawn on to produce a system marked by intense inequality and widespread constraint upon the empowerment, knowledge and reflexivity of individuals; but there is no reason why presently available technological resources should not be drawn on to transform the present system, and indeed, why the present economic order should not be transformed to the effect of increasing access to the globalising technologies in those areas that are presently disadvantaged. In other words: just because the globalising technologies have largely been a good servant to the expansion of western economic power so far does not mean that this necessarily has to continue to be the case in the future.

This interpretation is firstly empirically valid, as it accepts what sceptics and critics of globalisation say about inequality and highly uneven balances of power, whilst also accepting the transformative potential of the globalising technologies alongside the role that these technologies have played in intensifying economic inequalities.³⁰ Secondly, this reading is consistent with Giddens's theories: at a meta-theoretical level, it is a clear application of structuration theory. Starting with 'globalisation' as a blanket-term to designate the present 'system', we can identify its various structural properties (rules and resources) and contemplate how these might be drawn on in new ways, in order to transform the present system to the effect of alleviating the constraints currently inhibiting the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual.

At a substantive level this is also consistent with Giddens's theories. The interpretation I propose explains how Giddens can talk about globalisation as enabling transformative power and leading to the emergence of a new emancipated self on the one hand, whilst openly acknowledging rising global poverty and inequality on the other: if globalisation is read as a blanket term that encompasses many different 'dimensions' which, when put together, form the present 'system', then there is no reason why the constraining context of one dimension can't inhibit the otherwise promising and empowering features of another. In Giddens's own words:

Globalization is not a single unitary process but a complex mixture of processes, which often act in contradictory ways, producing conflicts, junctures and new forms of stratification. (1995c: 5)

This suggests that in his work globalisation should be understood primarily as a broad blanket-term, effectively placing a label on the entire present ‘system’.³¹ This is further confirmed elsewhere when he notes:

...globalization is not incidental to our lives today. [...] It is the way we now live. (2002a: 19)

This does not negate his definition of globalisation relating to time-space distancing through technological advances found in *CoM*: time-space dimensions are always mentioned in conjunction with the other ‘dimensions’ of globalisation (see e.g. 1995a: 65-78). The time-space dimension is something that is genuinely new, especially where digital communication is concerned, and as such has influenced and shaped other ‘dimensions’ of globalisation, such as western economic power, which are not so new. Thus, although the technological dimension holds a central theoretical importance, it can – and does – exist in Giddens’s work alongside the idea that western economic power and rising global inequality is nevertheless a central determinant of the present-day global landscape.

So, why does Giddens then spend so much time discussing how globalisation leads to post-traditionalism, reflexivity and the new late-modern self, whilst devoting relatively little space to discussing the ‘other side of the coin’? Here, we are back in familiar territory: the key lies in utopian realism, and closely bound up with it, the need for a Giddensian political project. As a utopian realist, Giddens focuses on those sociological issues, which contain possibilities for social transformation, whilst paying relatively little attention to factors constraining these possibilities. Dealing with the constraints currently inhibiting the scope for social transformation then falls into the realm of a Giddensian political project, the implications for which can now be outlined.

Broadly speaking – and perhaps unsurprisingly – these deliberations mean that such a project needs to have a globalist outlook. That is to say, since the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, as well as the factors inhibiting its universal emergence are closely bound up with global processes, a Giddensian political project, though based within the sphere of national parliamentary democracy, must in some form engage with these global processes. However, given the various dimensions of globalisation, and the profound and complex ways in which they affect each other,

this is not to be understood in a normative sense. Those familiar with Giddens's later work will know that indeed, 'globalisation' is somewhat of a buzzword in his Third Way.³² However, what I have discussed here suggests that it is misleading to talk about globalisation as a conceptually unitary and distinct phenomenon; the reason being that 'globalisation' in his pre-Third Way work can only be understood as a blanket term encompassing many dimensions, which refract on each other in several ways. Therefore, rather than somehow either fully endorsing or being hostile to 'globalisation', such a project needs to take a nuanced view of this term. It would need to be committed to expanding those elements of globalisation that carry possibilities and opportunities vis-à-vis the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, but also to tackling those elements which have been shown to cause problems for the fulfilment of this aim.

Since the two key areas of interest here were shown to be economic and technological dimensions of globalisation, a Giddensian political project thus needs to take an active role in dealing with both global capitalism and trade, and with global access to and distribution of these globalising technologies. My analysis has shown that Giddens's theories do not point towards the need for any kind of 'overthrow' of the capitalist system. Instead, they point to the need for Giddensian governments to help transform the global economy, utilising the rules and resources available to them. This might for instance involve actively seeking international cooperation to create global regulatory frameworks aimed at creating a more autonomous economic role and sustainable economic growth in those areas currently suffering as a result of the present incarnation of the global economy. Though I will spell out more details later on, some examples are already worth noting here, for instance allowing developing countries to take protectionist measures in cases where national economies are stifled by the economic power of 'western' transnational corporations, or, as a more long-term and perhaps more 'utopian' than 'realist' goal, the introduction of a global minimum wage.

Meanwhile, the centrality of technology in Giddens's globalisation-thesis indicates that a Giddensian political project should likewise seek ways of expanding access to the globalising technologies in those areas, which are currently declining in global economic power as a result of the digital divide. Again, a number of possibilities come to mind here, ranging from the provision of incentives and resources for existing

companies to build digital infrastructures, to allowing governments to do this in a nationalised form.

To be clear: I am not making these suggestions because they happen to suit my own normative world-view. I make them because they are the political consequences of Giddens's pre-Third Way works. The above suggestions are based on, and consistent with:

- Giddens's theory of structuration, which proposes that structural constraint can be alleviated by drawing on available resources (in the above cases chiefly political power, international cooperation and existing technology) to transform existing 'systems' (in this case the global economy).
- Giddens's analysis of globalisation, which highlights a current tension between technology as a possible pathway towards reflexivity and self-creation and capitalism – in its current form – as a force obstructing these possibilities in many areas.
- Giddens's utopian realist goal of fostering the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual.

As in the previous chapter, the suggestions I make above are in principle nothing new. To give just one brief example, Hirst and Thompson argue for more international cooperation and global governance in order to bring about what they would describe as 'true' globalisation rather than the current continuation of western economic power (1998: 199-200). Many other suggestions of the kind I make above have also been made elsewhere. The point I am making is that these kinds of policy platforms emerge as a logical consequence from Giddens's work: in order to complete his utopian realist approach to social theory, a Giddensian political project must have this kind of position on globalisation. I will elaborate on how this might be done, and will also examine why his Third Way fails to do so in the third part of this thesis.

Financial Markets: A Key Exception in the Globalisation-debate

To most readers it will seem hardly surprising, even inevitable, for a thesis of this kind written immediately after the financial crisis of 2008/09 to pay at least some attention to global financial markets and finance capitalism: it is a theme that has recently come to the attention not just of academics of all disciplines, but to the wider populations in many parts of the world. More surprising however, is that financial markets already have occupied a distinct place in the globalisation-debate ever since it gathered pace in the early 1990s. Here too, this theme is of course unsurprising amongst those authors from political economy or economics backgrounds, who treat globalisation as a chiefly economic phenomenon. But as we shall see, even sociologists who discuss globalisation – including Giddens – have not only referred to this theme in passing, but have generally given it a distinct position within their analyses.

When Giddens discusses economic dimensions of globalisation, specifically in relation to trade, he rarely focuses on the trading of tangible goods. Instead, the key example he often uses to make the case that there is something genuinely new about trade and capitalism in the present age, is financial capitalism: currencies, speculation, banking and other related areas. Reflecting on sceptics and supporters of the globalisation-thesis, he notes:

The level of world trade today is much higher than it ever was before, and involves a much wider range of goods and services. But the biggest difference is in the level of finance and capital flows. Geared as it is to electronic money – money that exists only as digits in computers – the current world economy has no parallels in earlier times. (2002a: 9)

To give just one further example, in *CoM*, he also mentions money markets ahead of commodity markets as key factors that affect local conditions at distance (1995a: 64).

These comments by Giddens on financial markets of course do little to counter the kind of criticisms offered by globalisation-sceptics, especially Hirst and Thompson. Technological revolutions and intensification of financial markets do not change the fact that commodity trade still follows the same patterns that have been in existence for centuries. Likewise, the idea of globalisation as a misnomer – insinuating inclusion of all parts of the world where this is not the case – is, if anything, strengthened when

discussing money markets. Power-centres of financial capitalism are not only concentrated within the long-established wealthy nations, but in fact within select districts of a select few 'global cities' within a few of those nations: New York, London, Tokyo, Frankfurt and a few others. But, when viewed as separate from commodity trade, financial capitalism does present a good case for Giddens's overall globalisation-thesis: through the advent of the globalising technologies, finance capitalism was able to expand and accelerate at a rapid rate, and has thus become a far more powerful structural force in late modernity than it was before. Indeed, the near-exponential growth of finance capitalism over the past decades is something that even the staunchest globalisation-sceptics rarely disagree with. In the literature on this subject, this view is widely shared, as are deliberations on the impact this has on national governments, state finances and welfare/ redistributive policies. Sassen for instance concurs, both with the significance of the globalising technologies, and with the political implications of the unprecedented growth of financial markets. She notes:

...the particular properties of digital networks have assumed added meaning because the number of transactions that can be executed within a given timeframe can be multiplied with every additional participant. Elsewhere I have examined organizational complexity as a key variable allowing firms to maximize the utility or benefits they can derive from digital technology [...]; in the case of financial markets, complex instruments can have that same effect... (Sassen, 2007: 92)

and:

...the global integration of a growing number of financial centres, computers, and telecommunication technologies have contributed to an explosive growth in financial markets. The high degree of interconnectivity in combination with instantaneous transmission signals the potential for exponential growth. (ibid: 93)

She also notes some figures on the already observable scale of that growth:

From 1985 to 1995, the period that launches a new global phase, the total stock of financial assets increased three times faster than the aggregate gross domestic product of the twenty-three most highly developed countries that formed the organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD) for much of that period, and the volume of trading in currencies, bonds, and equities increased about five times faster [...]. This aggregate GDP stood at 30\$ trillion at the end of the 1990s, whereas the worldwide value of international trades derivatives was over \$65 trillion. By 2004, that value had risen to \$290 trillion. To put these figures in perspective, it is helpful to compare them to the value of other major components of the global economy, such as the value of cross-border trade (approximately \$11 trillion in 2004) and foreign direct investment stock (\$8 trillion in 2004). Foreign exchange transactions were ten times as large as world trade in 1983 but seventy times larger in 1999 and over eighty times larger by 2003 even though world trade had itself grown sharply over that period. (ibid: 92-93)

Similar figures are incidentally also given by Moon (2000: 66-67). Sassen's thoughts support what I have said here about Giddens and economic dimensions of globalisation, though, as noted, it applies only to one – yet very significant – aspect of it. Then considering the impact these financial markets have already had on many governments and national economies, she asks:

Does the global capital market now have the power to 'discipline' national governments – that is, to subject at least some monetary and fiscal policies to financial criteria – whereas in the preceding period it could not quite do so? How does such a power affect national economies and government policies more generally? Does it alter the functioning of democratic governments? Does this kind of concentration of capital reshape the accountability relation that has operated through electoral politics between governments and their people? (Sassen, 2007: 94)

These questions need to be kept in mind, as they have implications for Giddensian politics. But Hirst and Thompson attempt to argue against the distinctiveness of contemporary finance capitalism. Concurring that "...there is little doubt that there has been a progressive internationalisation of money and capital markets since the 1970s..." (1998: 296) they nevertheless try to make a case that there are historical examples of similarly integrated global economic systems, thus showing that even the financial dimensions of economic globalisation are nothing especially 'new'. However, writing also from a mainly economic perspective, Gilpin's comments can mediate between this sceptical view and Sassen's and Giddens's comments. Reflecting on financial crises of the 1990s and 'comparable' incidents of financial penetration reaching back as far as the 'tulip mania' of 1637 and the 'south sea bubble' of the 1710s, he notes:

Whereas earlier crises were restricted to particular markets or regions of the world, the immense scale and velocity of international financial flows and the equal swiftness of information flows today have resulted in a situation where, with the push of a button, billions of dollars can be shifted from one country to another, and the whole globe can quickly be drawn into a maelstrom. As a consequence of the global financial turmoil of the late 1990s, the economics profession and many governments have become increasingly concerned about, and deeply divided over, international finance and the regulation of international capital/ investment flows. (Gilpin, 2002: 134-135)

So, despite economic globalisation as a whole being an ambiguous issue in many ways – though I have proposed a justified way of understanding it in this chapter – the issue of financial markets clearly has a special position in this debate, in that a certain extent of novelty is accepted by virtually everyone, regardless of academic discipline. Likewise, the idea that financial markets have considerable influence on national

economies and by extension on government policy is suggested by many authors.³³

Giddens concurs with this view:

In the new global electronic economy, fund managers, banks, corporations, as well as millions of individual investors, can transfer vast amounts of capital from one side of the world to another at the click of a mouse. As they do, they can destabilise what might have seemed rock-solid economies – as happened in the events in Asia. (2002a: 9)

As I already established in the current part of this thesis, a Giddensian political project necessarily involves many policies that entail redistribution and investment in key services. Given the political power of financial markets, as highlighted by some of the above authors, finance capitalism turns out to be an important element that a Giddensian political project must consider. The key questions here are: can it be regulated, should it be regulated, and if so, how?

The first question, though primarily a technical one, is worth asking, because as I showed, much of finance capitalism operates globally and through international digital spaces. This raises the issue of whether financial capitalism is quite simply beyond the reach of national governments. To use the language of structuration theory: do national governments actually have available rules and resources which can realistically be drawn upon to transform financial capitalism in such a way that it does not pose a threat to the viability of the Giddensian policy positions I have outlined so far?

The international and electronic character of financial markets may initially appear to suggest a ‘no’ to this question. However, there are two key points that suggest otherwise. The first point relates to the fact that financial markets are not fully disembodied from the realm of the nation state. Sassen notes in this context:

...the private digital space of global finance intersects [...] with the world of state authority and law [...] through the partial embeddedness of even the most digitized financial markets in actual financial centers, an intersection that in part returns global finance to the world of national governments. (Sassen, 2007: 96)

This is an important point. Indeed, it is unlikely that with potential further technological developments this will somehow cease: there is evidence to show that physical financial centres are extremely important to the functioning of financial markets, and moreover, that these centres need to be located in well developed cities, where there is physical

proximity to other firms, as well as good infrastructure and desirable locations for employees to live (see e.g. Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Friedmann 2001; Sassen 1999; 2001; Taylor, 2004).

So, given the necessary embeddedness of financial markets within nation states, national governments could certainly place limitations on what firms, investors and speculators can and cannot do in those spaces. Furthermore, there is the possibility of achieving changes through international cooperation between national governments. This could be either through direct cooperation, where for instance several countries that are host to a major financial centre simultaneously legislate to limit certain powers of the companies based in them. It could also involve jointly setting up international regulatory and 'watchdog' organisations, to combat internationally those elements of financial capitalism that pose such threats to national economies and, more importantly in this case, to governments' ability to implement redistributive policies. Naturally, there are, as Singh for instance notes, "...powerful interests and lobbies..." (2005: 52) which stand in opposition to such regulation. However, the measures I state above are clearly within the possibilities of what national governments might do. Indeed, greater regulation of financial markets has been suggested by many academics (see e.g. Singh, 2000; Hirst and Thompson, 1998), and Giddens's comment on the volatile and destabilising character of financial markets gives further justification for doing so.

The second question, whether transforming and regulating financial markets is desirable in the context of a Giddensian political project is relatively straightforward. Based on what I have said so far, it is fairly clear that yes, it is, given the potential effects of financial markets both on the stability of national economies and the possibilities for large-scale redistributive programmes. Yet, the case for this can easily be strengthened.

Although there have been charges of exaggeration (see e.g. Mosley, 2005), the literature on the subject matter indicates that financial markets in their current form do limit governments' possibilities to implement policies of the kind I have already outlined as necessary components of a Giddensian political project. In the first instance this is because banks and other financial firms use their financial clout to ensure government policies do not hinder their profit maximisation. This is especially clear in the case of government debt. Holton for instance notes that many governments have high levels of

commercial debt and thus become heavily influenced in their policy decisions by the will of banks. He notes that this was especially true of developing countries (Holton, 2005: 170-171), although by now this doubtlessly applies to many developed countries as well. Gilpin strengthens this point by noting the conditionality that accompanies IMF loans, ensuring that debtors facilitate free markets (both commodity and money markets that is) through their government policy (Gilpin, 2000: 157). Holton echoes this stance, noting that IMF conditionality, favouring liberalisation of trade and financial markets, has typically resulted in cutbacks to health and public education systems, poorer public services in general, higher costs of living and failure to achieve either economic growth or social protection and equality (Holton, 2005: 172). Soros (2002) and Stiglitz (2002) are among many other authors who argue along similar lines, i.e. noting that the present role of global finance, its political power and the conditionality enforced in the interest of financial companies is undesirable on several counts. This is especially true when considering political projects that seek to implement emancipatory policies, redistribute and universally provide certain key services.

Some authors go even further, noting that quite aside from the constraining effects that finance capitalism currently imposes on governments, there are additionally hardly any discernible benefits. Singh notes:

The arguments in favour of financial globalization are not well founded. Empirical evidence militates against the orthodox thinking that unfettered global capital flows can promote investment and growth besides better allocation of resources and deepening of financial markets. In the light of recent experiences, very few can assert that global capital flows provide immense benefits to countries, particularly developing ones. The benefits of global capital mobility have only accrued to a miniscule number of 'global investors' and financiers (Singh, 2005: 51).

Based on all this, it is now possible to make a few points about financial capitalism and Giddensian politics.

Giddens accepts the recent rapid growth of financial markets, as well as the constraints that this places on national governments. Furthermore, financial capitalism is somewhat of a 'favourite' argument for his thesis on the current global economic system as something genuinely different from previous times. The logic of structuration theory indicates that once again, a Giddensian political project would not aim to completely abolish financial capitalism. Instead, it should be transformed in such a way that it does

not obstruct the possibility of other Giddensian policies, most notably those relating to redistribution and universal provision of key resources. As I have outlined, there is scope for national governments to achieve this at least partially, and Giddens's own concurrence with the idea that globalisation does not negate nation states as a key locus of political power (Giddens, 1995a: 71-72) makes this a viable course of action for a Giddensian political project. To briefly tie this argument back in with the original aim of such a project: in a sense, financial capitalism does not obstruct the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual in and of itself – although events such as the sub-prime crisis and the way it directly destroyed many individuals' livelihoods could quite possibly be used to make such a case. But it does do so in a secondary way, in that its present incarnation limits the kinds of policies governments are able to implement, more so than perhaps in previous times.

So, to conclude, and to address the final question of how financial capitalism should be transformed and regulated, I can now summarise briefly: a government that pursues Giddensian politics could firstly draw on the resources of the legislative power it has over financial centres within its borders and secondly, where limits of this arise due to the globalised dimension of finance capitalism, on international cooperation. These resources would need to be drawn on to minimise the constraints placed on redistributive policies by financial capitalism, and indeed, to reform financial capitalism so that elements of it may even be utilised explicitly for such purposes. A few concrete points, some of which have already been alluded to here could be:

- Reforming organisations such as the IMF in such a way that there is no conditionality, i.e. no pressure on governments to abandon or reduce public service provision.
- Cancellation of government debt, especially for developing countries.³⁴
- Introducing legal restrictions on those types of speculations or financial transaction that destabilise otherwise prosperous economies.

- Taxing of financial speculation (see e.g. Singh, 2001), or indeed taxing financial transactions in general.

These are of course just a few examples,³⁵ which I will detail in more depth later on. But once again, the rationale here should be clear: (1) the aim of a Giddensian political project is to foster the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. (2) Several elements of financial capitalism obstruct governments' ability to implement certain policies that could lead to this end, and (3) it is within the scope of governments to achieve regulation and transformation of financial capitalism. Controversial as some of these policy positions may be – and I stress here once again that responding to their controversial character is beyond the aim of this thesis – the task of transforming financial capitalism is an inescapable element of a Giddensian political project.

From the Global to the National

Since I have already established that there is good cause to locate a Giddensian political project within the realm of national parliamentary democracy, it may seem strange for me to begin discussions on economics and redistribution from a global perspective. From a point of view of pure *Realpolitik*, it may be said that any political organisation seeking to enter office in a national political sphere needs foremost to address political issues immediately applicable to the context of the specific nation in question. Where the task of being elected is the key concern, discussions on redistribution, resources, infrastructure and technology should surely focus on the national rather than the global level!

Whilst this may be the case, I have started with a discussion on global dimensions mainly for analytical reasons. Ascertaining Giddensian policy positions at a global level is the best starting point, because global processes and developments have such centrality in Giddens's theories. However, I will now show that we can infer Giddensian policy positions on national issues of inequality, redistribution and technology, using what I have said so far about globalisation, combined with some of the empirical research I cited in part 1 of this thesis. Subsequently, I will also show that global and

national redistributive policies are closely connected, due to Giddens's comments on the reflexive relationships between the global and the local.

On the issue of global poverty and inequality, the Giddensian approach could be ascertained in a fairly straightforward way: he focuses the vast bulk of his analysis on the transformative potential of globalisation, whilst empirical studies on the matter show beyond reasonable doubt that this transformative potential is largely undermined by poverty and unequal distribution of the resources that might lead to said transformations. In order to move from this mismatch to a sound and empirically viable social theory, his work then needs to be supplemented by a political project, which in this case must be concerned with minimising the factors obstructing the transformative potential of globalisation. Therefore, the policy positions I outlined at the end of the previous section form the logical – even inevitable – completion of Giddens's utopian realist approach, in this case on the particular issue of the global capitalist economy.

But if we move away from the global perspective, and focus instead on the national, a similar logic needs to be applied, if Giddens's analysis of late modernity is to be anything other than over-optimistic action theory.

The research I cited in part 1 of this thesis showed that the empirical validity of Giddens's claims is as questionable at the national level as it is at the global. To remind ourselves briefly: ample studies showed that even the wealthiest societies are hardly marked by widespread detraditionalisation, reflexivity or individualism. Instead, there is plenty of evidence for the continued significance and indeed resurgence of traditional systems of belief and highly significant structural determinants of various kinds. We also saw that the digital divide is not a phenomenon that is only observable between rich and poor countries: developed nations are equally marked by internal digital divides, often running along lines of class and age. Overall, if viewed as representative assertions about contemporary societies in developed countries, I showed that Giddens's claims simply do not stand up to scrutiny. This applies foremost to the descriptive terms of post-traditionalism, reflexivity and individualism, but also to the substantive developments that supposedly brought these about, chiefly the globalising technologies: digital communication technologies and mass travel are nowhere close to being universal realities, even in the wealthiest societies. Universal applicability of Giddens's

theories therefore falls apart, long before we get on to post-traditionalism and reflexivity, as it were, the ‘knock-on effects’ of globalisation. But I also showed that Giddens’s claims do have plenty of merit, as long as they are understood as emergent possibilities, currently only leading to transformations to a new type of self for very few people. This too was contained in the evidence I presented earlier. At a quantitative level, Vogel’s analysis on tradition in EU countries showed that especially in Nordic countries there is a certain level of detraditionalisation. Meanwhile, based on more qualitative work, authors such as Adkins and Elchardus concede that there are many pockets of detraditionalisation and reflexivity. However, far from endorsing Giddens, these authors criticise him, their main point being that the pockets of society, to which Giddens’s theories do at least partially apply can be demarcated by structural determinants (class, gender and many others), leading Adkins, as we saw earlier, to ask rhetorically and with distinct Orwellian overtones, why there are reflexive communities in some places and not in others (2003: 26). Nevertheless, even from these outspoken critics of Giddens, there is admission that in certain instances there is some validity to his claims.

The overall picture can then be articulated in terms similar to what I concluded about globalisation. The systems – i.e. the present contextualisation of available rules and resources – that we see within developed nations have many different components and dimensions, and it is perfectly plausible that these various dimensions have profound effects on each other. To contextualise: nobody denies that the internet, digital communication and mass travel principally exist, and that especially the former is a relatively new development, which doubtlessly has some kind of effect on late modern society. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that indeed, some individuals use these resources, and, in line with Giddens’s theories, that we consequently see instances of dialogue between cultures and lifestyles, the basis of post-traditionalism and reflexivity. However, alongside this, there also exist dimensions of the present system, which limit the extent, to which these new resources can be utilised by individuals; dimensions, which lead to a selective distribution of these resources, and which ultimately present not just old forms of structural constraint, but also introduce new ones. So, at a conceptual level, we have a similar picture when looking at developed nations as we did earlier on the global perspective. It is now possible to outline what this means in practice.

As I showed on the global scale, the central factor negating much of the possibilities for the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual lies in the economic dimension of globalisation, or put differently, in the present incarnation of global capitalism, even though this dimension has simultaneously brought about some of the key prerequisites for the emergence of the late modern self. Based on this, I argued that various forms of international regulation in this domain are an essential part of a Giddensian political project. A similar logic applies to Giddensian policy positions within nation states. However, here it is possible to contemplate considerably more scope to Giddensian policy positions, simply because the rules and resources available to a national government by definition give it more transformative capacity within its national boundaries than on an international scale. But solutions aside for the moment, the central structural obstacles preventing Giddens's utopian realist aim from being realised lie once again in constraints given by inequality and capitalism.

In the first instance, this is once again visible in Giddens's own work. Capitalist economics and class divisions are identified by Giddens as central system components of modern and late modern societies as early as *CoS* (1999: 184). Given his stance on structure as having enabling and constraining characteristics, it is absolutely in line with Giddens that capitalism and market forces are a source of constraint. Much later, in *BLaR*, he notes that...

...capitalistic markets do often have a polarizing effect on distributions of wealth and income. (1995c: 98)

Indeed, quite aside from global poverty...

...millions of people in the richest societies are also poor. (ibid: 99)

Not only is this view held by Giddens himself; there is plenty of empirical research on the existence and effects of poverty within developed countries. Many authors have shown that poverty, both absolute and relative, exists even in the richest countries on a large scale, and that widespread rising levels of poverty are frequently intensified by low wages, unemployment and many other economic factors (see e.g. Townsend et al 1997; 2000; Byrne 2005; Whelan and Whelan, 2004; Walker, 2004).

Meanwhile, there is plenty of research on the effects of inequality. Most recently, Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level* (2009), as well as its precursors (see e.g. Wilkinson, 1996) has made this point, citing ample reasons why inequality is a concerning phenomenon. Many of the reasons cited – higher crime rates, poorer health outcomes, etc – might easily find agreement with Giddens. However, based on his own work, it is clear that it is the barriers to reflexivity and the globalising technologies that make the question of inequality so important to a Giddensian politics. This in itself gives us some clues as to what Giddensian policies to tackle inequality should look like.

Rather than normatively identifying inequality as a bad thing in and of itself – a position which, as I mentioned previously, Bobbio (1996) notes as being a somewhat constant characteristic of left wing politics (see also Giddens, 2000a: 40) – a Giddensian politics should view it as an issue that needs to be tackled with the aim of facilitating the specific result of increased reflexivity. This means that such a politics could not be content with simply ensuring that there are high levels of unemployment benefits and reasonable wages, in the vague hope of driving down a country's gini-coefficient. Given research on the effects of inequality by authors such as Wilkinson, it may be advisable to pursue greater financial equality as well – and there is certainly little grounds in Giddens's work to advocate the opposite – but the key factor in a Giddensian politics would need to be the kind of redistributive policies that actively foster increased reflexivity and access to the opportunities given by the globalising technologies.

Foremost, this would mean ensuring universal access to key communication technologies such as the internet, regardless of location or socio-economic status. This could be either through a nationalised broadband service, or, perhaps more in line with the logic of structuration theory, through governments co-operating in some form with existing providers to ensure access for individuals who otherwise could not afford it.

But of course, the path to widespread reflexivity is not limited to mere availability of technologies such as the internet – there is no research I am aware of that shows internet access in and of itself to lead to greater reflexivity. There is also an inevitable need here to overhaul and equalise education systems, as indeed I already noted earlier when discussing the link between emancipatory and life politics. In order to move societies on from having mere 'pockets' of reflexivity in already privileged social strata, state

education systems would have to become an absolute government priority. Central aims would need to be the improvement of educational facilities in underprivileged areas and introducing into curricula the training to use the globalising technologies, as well as training critical engagement with the masses of information that these technologies generate. In effect, any existing differences between private and public education should be minimised, or multiple-tier education systems avoided altogether, to prevent ‘some being more reflexive than others’.³⁶

Since I will go into considerably more detail on substantive policies later on in this thesis, I leave it at that for now. For the time being this will suffice to show what kind of policy positions are necessary – based on Giddens’s work – in the area of poverty and inequality within developed nations. To summarise: on the one hand, there is certainly an argument to ensure a universally adequate standard of living to ensure that individuals are not cut off from the resources that are central to the formation of the late modern self. On the other, these resources also need to be made universally available, for instance through the provision of certain material elements, and through highly egalitarian provision of well funded education systems.

Having considered issues of inequality, poverty and access to globalising technologies at both the global and the national level, it is worth pointing out that these two ‘levels’ of Giddensian redistributive policies are intimately connected.

One element of Giddens’s views on globalisation that I have so far not mentioned concerns not so much its ‘dimensions’, but, for lack of a better word, its mechanics: at several points in his work, Giddens discusses the relationship between the global and the local as a key hallmark of globalisation. He refers to the fact that distant events can have consequences – immediate consequences at times – in one’s own location, indeed in one’s personal sphere. Likewise, personal or local decisions can have consequences in distant locations (Giddens, 2002a: 12; 1995a: 64; 1995c: 5). Examples of the validity of this claim abound, such as Klein’s (2001) investigations into sweatshop labour in Southeast Asia, where consumer demands in ‘the west’ and rules and resources available to major corporations led to the atrocious working conditions she describes.

The essential logic of the connectedness of events that Giddens describes is hard to dispute, based on my further analysis on these matters here. What is questionable is whether there is anything new about this sociological ‘butterfly-effect’. Globalisation sceptics would most likely point out that in the economic order of past centuries, demands and decisions of people in one corner of the world would also have had repercussions for events in another. However, though this connectedness between local and distant events is frequently acknowledged as part of Giddens’s thoughts on globalisation, it is never explicitly characterised as something new. Mostly, Giddens merely talks about ‘intensification’ and greater visibility of this connectedness, brought about once again chiefly by the globalising technologies.

Whilst it is therefore questionable whether the connectedness Giddens mentions so frequently is anything new, the principle idea that connections between global and local activities exist, and that these may have been intensified in certain regards by the globalising technologies is relatively uncontroversial. By the same token, this point in itself is also not particularly illuminating. The reason why this idea of connectedness is important is because it gives us a rationale for having both global and national dimensions of tackling inequality.

Utilising international cooperation to build digital infrastructures in developing countries, or to create some form of legally binding minimum wage standards across the globe would doubtlessly have repercussions within developed nations. What exactly these repercussions might be would be unwise to predict; but this line of thinking nevertheless indicates that Giddens’s frequent mentioning of interconnectedness between global and local events leads to a position, where international development cannot be viewed as separate from national redistributive issues. Similarly, the transformation of financial capitalism – clearly mainly an international project – would of course have direct repercussions for national issues, foremost the affordability of redistributive policies.

So, another key feature of a Giddensian political project, and indeed, an element on which it breaks with many versions of social democracy, is that equality is not something to be achieved essentially within the realms of the nation state, with international development as a benevolent ‘add-on’, or a device to avoid ideological

contradiction. As I explained in chapter 3, Giddensian politics moves beyond redistribution justified through notions of nationhood, and instead, global and national dimensions of engaging with inequality are mutually necessary parts of an integrated framework. Since Giddens's social theory contains the normative political aim of fostering the universal emergence of the empowered, knowledgeable, reflexive individual, since he concedes that poverty, inequality and uneven access to key resources are structural barriers to this, and since he emphasises the intimate connection between the global and the local, the kind of concerted framework for tackling inequality I suggest above, integrating global and national dimensions, becomes an inevitable part of Giddensian politics. The necessity in Giddens's normative angle to promote a genuinely inclusive form of globalisation simultaneously makes the case for redistribution itself, and for promoting this at national as well as global levels.

What my deliberations on global and national dimensions of economics and inequality amount to is a transformation of global capitalism, brought about through global and national transformations of welfare, redistribution and trade, where international cooperation between nation states is utilised to implement the necessary changes at the global level, and legislative power over territory at the national. Once again, to summarise briefly: at both levels, the central approach is to lessen the digital divide, providing universal access to globalising technologies as well as the necessary skills to make use of them, and to lessen or eliminate the material inequalities which in themselves obstruct the universal emergence of the late modern self (through poverty, crime, starvation, etc).

Without going into any detail on policies, Giddens concludes *MaSI* with the following passage:

The emergence of life politics, I have argued, results from the centrality of the reflexive project of the self in late modernity [...]. The capability of adopting freely chosen lifestyles, a fundamental benefit generated by the post-traditional order, stands in tension, not only with barriers to emancipation, but with a variety of moral dilemmas. No one should underestimate how difficult it will be to deal with these, or even how hard it is to formulate them in ways likely to command widespread consensus. [...] Responding to such problems will surely require a major reconstruction of emancipatory politics as well as the pursuit of life-political endeavours. (1995b: 231)

Based on the framework I have established in this section, the final section of this thesis will assess whether Giddens's Third Way manages to provide that 'reconstruction' – or more to the point, just how badly it fails at doing so. I will also consider possible reasons behind its failure, and explain in more detail, what such a 'reconstruction' consistent with his work on late modernity should look like.

Part III:

Beyond the Third Way: An Alternative Model of Giddensian Politics

In this, the final part of this thesis, I will turn directly to Giddens's own political project: the Third Way. In the previous parts of this thesis I have established, based on Giddens's pre-Third Way work, what the principal aim of a Giddensian political project needs to be, the basic approaches it needs to take in order to be consistent with his utopian realist analysis of late modernity, and I have also already stated some initial possible concrete policy positions which would be viable in the context of the overall aim and approach of Giddensian politics. To briefly remind the reader: the reason why it is especially important in the case of Giddens for his politics to be fully consistent with his other work is because his analysis of late modernity has been shown to be flawed without a supplementary political project. Put simply: unlike other authors (e.g. Marx, Foucault or Habermas) who have produced social theory on the one hand and political projects or commentaries based on their theories on the other, in the case of Giddens the political project *is an integral part* of his social theory, without which said social theory is problematic to say the least.

In the first chapter of this part I will use the framework I have developed so far to critique Giddens's Third Way. The central research question of my critique is therefore: does Giddens's Third Way succeed in delivering the kind of political project that his previous work demonstrably necessitates? My critique here will therefore differ somewhat from the vast majority of critiques that have been levelled at the Third Way, as its central approach lies not in my own normative political assumptions, nor in a direct empirical assessment of individual claims made in Giddens's Third Way. I of course took this latter approach on Giddens's analysis of late modernity, but since I view the Third Way here as an extension of that analysis, the empirical claims made in the Third Way do not have to be re-tested: they simply need to be consistent with what we saw earlier in this thesis, which in itself will be an important part of my critique. But

chiefly, his Third Way is viewed here as part of a much larger social theory, thus giving rise to the issue of whether it 'plays its part' correctly, as it were.

The second chapter of this section will then assess some possible reasons why the Third Way fails to successfully complete Giddens's social theory of late modernity. I will then present my own alternative Giddensian politics that is based on the framework I have established so far in this thesis and show how it succeeds in completing the utopian realist reading of Giddens, where his own Third Way fails.

Chapter 5:

The Third Way: Failure to Deliver

The Basis of my Critique

It is worthwhile at this juncture to state the central claims I have made so far in this thesis. In doing so, I will clarify what kind of critique of Giddens's Third Way I am producing, why this critique is important, and what, consequently, the significance of my alternative Giddensian political project is. The original contribution of this thesis so far broadly divides into two elements, respectively explained in the previous two main parts.

Firstly, I proposed a new way of reading Giddens's work, based primarily on his concept of utopian realism, and which I will now take forward to a critique of his Third Way. At face value, his analysis of late modernity – as outlined mainly in *CoM*, and to a slightly lesser extent *MaSI* and *BLaR* – might be characterised as a sociological grand narrative. By this I mean a more-or-less fully representative theoretical analysis of the present age, covering everything from global trade and communication, to social movements, ecology, the relationship between individuals and society, right down to intimacy and personal relationships. But read as a utopian realist social theory, Giddens's analysis of late modernity is not a grand narrative of this type.³⁷ Instead, it is an analysis that highlights certain elements of the present age, and in doing so points to certain emergent possibilities that have the capacity to enable the emergence of a new type of self that is empowered by knowledge and is sufficiently emancipated from structural constraints to define its biography reflexively. But this on its own is of course not a representative picture of the present age.

Giddens acknowledges structural constraints that exist alongside these developments on several occasions, but rarely devotes more than a couple of pages to them at any time. Nevertheless, what emerges is an empirically viable analysis, in which contemporary

societies are characterised by a fundamental tension: on the one hand there are elements – some of which genuinely new – that could enable the emergence of this new type of self; on the other hand elements which obstruct it. The need for a political project stems from this tension. It does so for two reasons: firstly, Giddens is clear about the fact that utopian realism is a transformative undertaking, and that he views the emergence of this new type of self as worth fostering. A politics that aims to reduce the constraints inhibiting its emergence is therefore a logical notion. The need for such a politics arises secondly, because as it stands, Giddens's work on late modernity does paint an overly benevolent picture of contemporary societies. Although he points to some developments which do exist in some form, he openly neglects many issues of structural constraint, making his overall analysis somewhat one-sided and empirically questionable. To remedy this, he would either need to abandon the utopian realist approach and produce an additional bulk of analysis detailing all the structural properties in late modernity that inhibit the emergence of the empowered reflexive, knowledgeable individual (which he clearly hasn't), or he needs to complete the utopian realist approach by producing a political project that has the capacity to transform the largely obstructed potential for the development of a new type of self into a universal reality.

Therefore, in Giddens's work, a political project that is consistent with his sociological theory is hugely important, more so than with many other authors who have these two elements in their work. To briefly draw on one example: Marx produced both sociological theory (see e.g. Marx and Engels, 1965) and a political project (Marx and Engels, 1985); and although any inconsistencies that may be highlighted between the two would be lamentable, the theory of historical materialism is internally coherent without the *Communist Manifesto*. With Giddens this is not the case: I have shown that a political project is an integral part of his analysis of late modernity, without which it would be a problematic and unnecessarily skewed theory with hardly any critical capacity. Hence, the critique I am producing here assumes its vital importance: the question of whether the Third Way is consistent with his analysis of late modernity is not merely a quest for an aesthetically pleasing link-up; it concerns the validity of his analysis of late modernity itself.

Based on these conclusions, the subject matter of this chapter assumes its full significance. My approach to Giddens's work now necessitates an analysis of his Third

Way, where the question is whether his political project does indeed follow consistently from his analysis of late modernity, and as such successfully completes his utopian realist social theory. But this task can only be addressed by establishing some substantive criteria, based on the analysis of late modernity, which a Giddensian political project would need to have. These criteria are effectively the second main contribution of this thesis so far.

The second part of this thesis effectively produced a framework, which shows in general terms, what a Giddensian political project needs to look like, in order to be consistent with Giddens's analysis of late modernity. This framework is based primarily on my analysis of three key issues in Giddens's work: his definition of structure and structural constraint, the relationship between emancipatory and life politics, and his views on economic dimensions of globalisation. I already mentioned a few possible concrete policies that would be consistent with his pre-Third Way work, but this was mainly done in order to illustrate the general approach which a Giddensian political project would need to have. I will return to these concrete policies later on, as I do not wish for this thesis to merely be an indictment of Giddens's Third Way, but also to point to substantive alternatives. However, for the purpose of direct critique, it is the more general framework I outlined, against which the Third Way needs to be assessed. The concrete policies I mentioned (e.g. global minimum wage and nationalised internet provision) certainly do fit the general framework, but different policies on these issues may of course do so as well. So, it is the general conclusions drawn here about what a Giddensian political project should look like, which form the basis of my critique:

- Fostering the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual by tackling the structural constraints currently inhibiting this, must be the central normative aim of Giddensian politics.
- Giddensian politics does not advocate revolution or complete system overthrow. Instead, it works on the principle that structures and systems can be transformed over time by utilising and re-contextualising available rules and resources.
- Capitalism and inequality, both nationally and globally, are central elements that limit the scope for the emergence of the late modern self. As such, Giddensian

politics must seek to transform capitalism and significantly lessen inequality – both globally and at the national level. Tackling inequality here refers partially to greater income equality, eliminating poverty and achieving legal equality (e.g. in areas of citizenship, gender, and sexuality). But crucially, it must involve universal education and access to the globalising information and communication technologies, which, although developed and pioneered in the context of capitalism, are also obstructed by it in terms of access and distribution.

- Giddensian politics cannot view global and national issues of inequality as separate endeavours. Tackling poverty, inequality and digital divides worldwide is a prerequisite for genuine globalisation as opposed to increasing dominance of developed nations. Given the significance of globalisation for the emergence of the late modern self, fostering this emergence within developed nations must go hand in hand with doing so globally.
- Similarly, Giddensian politics cannot view life politics and emancipatory politics as two entirely separate categories. Instead, they must be viewed as two sets of considerations that both inform virtually every policy: emancipatory policies must be designed to enable more widespread engagement with life-political concerns and life-political issues must be responded to by taking their emancipatory consequences into account.
- Above all, Giddensian politics must be based on the assumption that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is not a universal reality. Apart from everything else I have said here, this also has some implications for the issue of civil society. Ultimately, Giddensian politics must seek to build close relationships between governments and civil society. However, this first necessitates universal ability to participate in that relationship. Education, information and communication technologies are key resources for the potential expansion of civil society and the public sphere. So whilst Giddensian politics must ultimately pursue a policy-making process based on dialogue between government and civil society, top-down decisions are initially required to enable an inclusive digital public sphere in the first place.

Each point of this framework has been shown to be a necessary consequence of Giddens's analysis of late modernity, aided where necessary by the theory of structuration. In order for the analysis of late modernity – read as a utopian realist theory – to stand as empirically sound and justifiable, a Giddensian political project cannot afford to deviate to any significant extent from this framework.

The Third Way: Summary and Critiques

From the mid 1990s onwards – though still occasionally publishing on late modernity and classical sociological theory – Giddens's focus of attention largely shifted towards politics. Many of his most recent publications are essentially commentaries on the British Labour Party and primarily discuss specific contemporary political situations and how it might respond to these. Most notable in this category are *Where Now for New Labour* (2002b) and *Over to You, Mr Brown* (2007). Works of this kind are not especially useful for the subject matter at hand here, though their existence is worth keeping in mind, especially in relation to the links between Giddens and the New Labour government. But between approximately the mid 1990s and the mid 2000s, Giddens produced a number of pieces which, when put together, effectively form his political project: the Third Way. The key works here are of course emblematically *The Third Way* (2000a), its sequel, as it were, *The Third Way and its Critics* (2000b), a few sections in *BLaR* (1995c), as well as several articles, which elaborate on one or a few elements already found in the main Third Way works.

Giddens's work on the Third Way broadly focuses on three themes: the state and civil society, the welfare state and inequality, and responses to globalisation. The substantive chapters of *TTW* respectively deal with each of these themes, but these themes recur more generally in some form in most of his Third Way texts. Without going into too much detail now, the central recommendations he makes are:

- No longer viewing the state and the market as being fundamentally in tension, and instead fostering partnership between state and market, where the private sector helps to deliver and improve public services, while public services place greater emphasis on actively aiding the private sector.

- Devolving political decision-making to communities and individuals, combined with a greater onus on individuals to transform their lives and communities, summarised in the emblematic phrase ‘no rights without responsibilities’.
- Understanding the importance of life politics, primarily by legislating to change policies that enforce a standardised life-cycle, e.g. mandatory retirement age, and actively legislating to enable different lifestyles, e.g. diversifying education and working times (and places).
- Acknowledging globalisation as an important social revolution, to which policy-making must respond in a number of ways, most notably in the areas of employment, economics and environmental issues.

At times, the distinction between Giddens’s own Third Way and his comments on New Labour is a little opaque, hence the occasional justification in using his works that discuss New Labour. Unfortunately, the same opaqueness can often be found in critiques of the Third Way. Depending on the purpose of any given critique, this is not necessarily a problem: it is useful sometimes to view the Third Way as a broad political orientation, followed more-or-less by several governments from the mid 1990s onwards, and viewing Giddens as one of several academic influences. However, Giddens’s own Third Way is also a political programme in its own right, and for the purpose of this thesis must be treated as such. But whilst I intend this thesis to act partially as a contribution to the now on-going ‘autopsy’ of New Labour – inasmuch as there are many elements of congruence between Giddens’s and New Labour’s Third Ways – it is worth stressing once again that my objective is to show how Giddens’s work might be used to influence centre-left projects distinct from New Labour, and that my critique here is of Giddens’s Third Way and not of New Labour’s, to which Giddens’s was merely one of several influences. There are a few authors worth reflecting on briefly to add substance to this point.

Driver and Martell devote a section of a chapter to the differences between Giddens’s and Blair’s Third Ways, which delivers a concise summary of this issue (Driver and Martell, 2001: 43-45). The differences they identify include differences of emphasis on elements such as civil society, different definitions of concepts such as globalisation and

individualisation, differing proposals in the area of global governance, as well as differing attitudes towards welfare, redistribution and equality (ibid).

Morrison is another of the relatively few authors who contemplate the distinction between Blair and Giddens. Like Driver and Martell, his arguments enforce the idea that a conceptual separation of their two respective Third Ways is advisable for most analytical purposes. Morrison in fact goes further, bordering on the cynical:

The cover of Giddens's book [The Third Way] claims that Giddens is 'allegedly Tony Blair's favourite intellectual'. [footnote removed] There is mutual advantage in this claim. Giddens is posited as an intellectual who is close to and influential with the government, while Blair has the advantage of being able to claim intellectual support from the academy for his own position. (Morrison, 2004: 168)

We can see several more examples that highlight the necessity for this distinction: it is for instance apt in this context that Hale's text on the communitarian philosophy of New Labour's Third Way draws in detail on several figures from many academic traditions (e.g. Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer), but only mentions Giddens once (Hale, 2004). The critical literature on the Third Way that specifically talks about New Labour is therefore of limited use to this thesis. Similarly, as mentioned, there are some critical texts, which simultaneously discuss Blair's and Giddens's Third Ways (see e.g. Barrientos and Powell, 2004). Critiques of this type often need to be treated with care, as they tend to treat the Third Way as a mixture of Giddens's texts, Blair's pamphlet (1998) and New Labour's policies. Although viewing the Third Way in this light may be useful for some analytical purposes, it is likely to cause misconceptions when trying to understand specifically the link between Giddens's Third Way and his earlier works.

As a final example on this point, consider the following characterisation of the Third Way:

...a third way could promote wealth creation and social justice, the market and the community, it could embrace private enterprise, but not automatically favour market solutions... (Driver and Martell, 2001: 37)

In context, it is clear that the authors are discussing New Labour's Third Way, whilst also being aware of Giddens's work. In the case of the above quote, it is far from obvious, whether the authors see this element as a key component of Blair's or of

Giddens's Third Way, or whether they are inferring that this is a key feature of their respective Third Ways compounded. As mentioned, this may not be a problem for other analytical purposes, but for this thesis, it is evident that we need to look to those critiques that focus entirely on Giddens's Third Way, or on those texts, which make a clear separation between Giddens and New Labour. There are a few such critiques, worth discussing at this point.

The first is Cammack's critique of the Third Way (2004). This text is distinctive in two ways. Firstly, it criticises Giddens's Third Way purely on its own terms, with no reference whatsoever to any of his works other than *TTW* and *TWaC*. Secondly, it is quite possibly the most outspokenly ferocious attack on Giddens's Third Way.

Going through Giddens's book virtually point-by-point, issue-by-issue, Cammack accuses Giddens of Orwellian newspeak and double-think. He argues that Giddens can only place his Third Way in opposition to neoliberalism by disregarding the distinction between laissez-faire and active neoliberalism. Giddens's Third Way, he concludes, is an active neoliberal agenda (Cammack, 2004: 152), and as such re-defines formerly social democratic terminology – solidarity, emancipation, community, redistribution and equality – in ways that suit a strictly market-oriented ideology (ibid: 157-163). Ultimately, he concludes:

...the Third Way systematically re-defines social democratic values in order to give them neoliberal content. Casting himself in the role of Blair's Minister of Truth, Giddens offers New Labour a set of slogans tailored to the needs of the age: individualism is solidarity; responsibility is emancipation; risk is security; enterprise is community; opportunity is redistribution; inclusion is equality; self-help is welfare. It obviously won't do to pass this off as renewed social democracy. (ibid: 165)

There are many other critiques of this type, though few of them as ferocious as Cammack's. Many of them contemplate, as Cammack does, whether and to what extent the Third Way really is a 'renewal of social democracy', or whether it is rather more neoliberal or centrist (see e.g. Leggett, 2004: 195-198). The results of such deliberations differ between the various authors. However, what many of these critiques share is a neglect of Giddens's earlier work, be that his works on structuration theory, his analysis of late modernity and the related substantive contributions, or even *BLaR*. Such readings of *TTW* can be problematic: reading a text in isolation, especially one such as

TTW – which, much like Giddens’s other works, has faced the charge of being abstract and vague (see e.g. Morrison, 2004: 168) – may easily result in different interpretations, ranging all the way from approval to the charge of double-think and neoliberalism. Reading the Third Way with reference to Giddens’s previous work is therefore a useful undertaking in itself, as many key terms which are only briefly mentioned in the Third Way texts are explained in greater detail in his previous work. Some of the vagueness and ambiguity might therefore be alleviated.

Astonishingly, there are hardly any authors who have engaged in such an undertaking, which, broadly speaking, may for now be termed a Giddensian critique of Giddens’s Third Way. Out of the few examples that exist of this kind of critique, it is worth considering a piece by McCullen and Harris (2004). In it, Giddens’s concept of ‘generative equality’ is assessed against a backdrop that includes *CoM* and *MaSI*. They conclude – much in line with some points made in this thesis – that for Giddens, self-actualisation, a possibility emanating from the increased reflexivity of the late modern age, is directly equivalent to Marx’s ‘good life’ (ibid: 95). In order for everybody to achieve this self-actualisation, they conclude further, Giddens sees it as necessary to advocate generative equality, which might for instance involve forms of welfare that are not based on a top-down approach. This interpretation stands in considerable contrast to Cammack’s earlier stated Orwellian charge that for Giddens, ‘opportunity is equality’ and ‘self-help is welfare’, wherefore his Third Way is supposedly a neoliberal undertaking.

One of the key reasons why McCullen and Harris arrive at such a different conclusion from Cammack is precisely because of their engagement with Giddens’s earlier work,³⁸ which enables them to track the concepts he develops, and ultimately gives them a deeper understanding of the terms and concepts Giddens uses in *TTW*. Examples such as this one indicate that a critique of Giddens’s Third Way ought to take his earlier work into account as much as possible. McCullen and Harris do not attempt a comprehensive critique of Giddens’s Third Way; they only look at one particular element – generative equality – and ultimately veer into a somewhat different direction, drawing parallels between this concept and literature on human resources management. Yet, what they do say about the Third Way in the context of Giddens’s other works will suffice here to

indicate that this is potentially a highly fruitful way of going about a critique of the Third Way.

One further critique briefly worth considering here is ‘Reflexivity Contra Structuration’ (Bagguley, 2003). This text is one of the very few in existence that links up Giddens’s work on the Third Way with his earlier works, reaching all the way back to structuration theory. Bagguley argues that there are problems in these earlier works that ultimately render Giddens’s writings on politics and reflexivity unworkable. However, firstly Bagguley more-or-less settles for this conclusion of un-workability, which I do not intend to do. Secondly, his argument, which places a lot of emphasis on Giddens’s writings on the duality of structure, fails to take into account the crucial role that his political project has in relation to rendering his analysis of late modernity ‘workable’. I have shown this connection already, which will make my argument differ considerably from Bagguley’s.

These examples suffice to explain some key characteristics of the critical literature on the Third Way. For a more general overview, it is worth mentioning Leggett, who assesses and classifies this critical literature into three broad categories: neo-Marxist, anti-technocratic and social democratic critiques (2005: 65-118). Although he takes the approach of viewing the Third Way chiefly as New Labour’s political orientation, where Giddens is one of several influences, Giddens nevertheless features in each category. Although my critique broadly touches on each of these categories in at least some respects – more on the Neo-marxist and social democratic, a little less on the anti-technocratic – it is foremost a Giddensian critique of Giddens’s Third Way, and is as such a new contribution to the critical literature in this field. The key question is whether his Third Way is consistent with the framework that I presented at the beginning of this chapter, and thus, whether it presents an adequate and viable completion of his utopian realist social theory. I will now show that the answer is clearly ‘no’. I base this verdict on four central points of criticism, all of which directly relate to the framework I have extracted from his pre-Third Way work:

- Rather than seeking to transform capitalism, the Third Way openly accepts it as a structural feature that everything else has to adapt and be subservient to (with the exception of global financial markets, which is especially odd, as this is

supposedly the most 'globalised' element of capitalism, further beyond state control than trade and production of goods and services). This contradicts the principles of structuration theory and abandons the idea that the central constraints on the emergence of the late-modern self can be tackled.

- The Third Way largely assumes that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is already a universal reality. As I showed, Giddens's 'utopian realist' analysis of late modernity can only stand up to scrutiny, if a complimentary Giddensian politics does not do this, and instead deals at length with structural constraints inhibiting the emergence of this late-modern self.
- There is also a shift in his attitude towards technology: modern communication and information technologies were consistently shown to be a central feature that has made the whole project of the reflexive, empowered, late-modern self possible. This disappears in the Third Way, where technology is discussed occasionally in relation to employment, while little to no attention is given to access and distribution of technologies that were identified as key in his earlier works.
- Whilst his earlier work, centred on the theme of reflexive, empowered individuals, implies a benevolent view of the self or of human nature, the Third Way advocates a need for individuals to be controlled and coerced, which is impossible to reconcile with the idea of empowered, reflexive individuals as a normative political goal.

Critique

No transformation of capitalism

A benevolent view of capitalism, the private sector and market principles is a well known feature of Giddens's Third Way. Critics such as Cammack (2004) frequently point this out, often leading to charges of neoliberalism or varying degrees of market fundamentalism (see also Callinicos, 2001). Indeed, comments on capitalism that are a

lot more benevolent than those found in his earlier work are readily available. When looking at the analysis of late modernity, and even the works on structuration theory, I quoted several passages that identify capitalism and market principles as central elements of structural constraint in late modernity. In his Third Way, we can see some rather different comments:

...social democrats [cannot] any longer see either capitalism or markets as a source of most of the problems that beset modern societies. (2000b: 28)

The charge of neoliberalism is perhaps excessive: Giddens is usually quick to point out that markets and the private sector are unable to single-handedly lead to a better society (2000b: 55; 2000a: 99-100). Nevertheless, rather than discussing how the private sector and market principles are problematic, he proposes on several occasions that the capitalist economy is an important pillar for the functioning of society, where the only issue is that these mechanisms will not suffice on their own. Hence, he proposes a 'partnership' of state, civil society and the market. The idea is that the market creates dynamism and growth, the state enables access, creates the key components for the necessary workforce and tackles the worst excesses of market-driven inequality, and civil society acts as a check on the legitimacy of these two spheres (see e.g. 2000a: 69; 84; 99). Based on the passages I have cited here, Giddens's Third Way does not view capitalism and market forces as a key source of constraint that needs to be transformed in order to enable the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. Instead, they are largely viewed as societal features that are essentially useful and benevolent, but need to be supplemented by an active state and civil society, without which they tend towards neoliberal excesses. Indeed, on some occasions Giddens points to the private sector as a role-model for the state, suggesting that various branches of the state should perhaps not necessarily privatise – which would be the neoliberal outlook – but certainly aim to emulate the practices of private companies, especially in areas of efficiency, personal responsibility and dynamic business models (e.g. 2000b: 59).

This quick overview shows some incongruence between passages on capitalism and market principles found in the Third Way on the one hand, and in Giddens's earlier work on the other. It already suggests the possibility of a mismatch between what Giddensian politics needs to say about capitalism (based on the utopian realist analysis

of late modernity), and what the Third Way does end up saying about it. However, it is possible to go further on this point of critique, by assessing at a conceptual level, what kind of a structural feature capitalism is viewed as within the Third Way.

My central point of contention is that capitalism, rather than being viewed as a system component of late modernity that severely obstructs the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual and thus needs to be transformed to the end of alleviating its constraining aspects, is viewed instead as an immovable, un-transformable component, to which all government activity must be made subservient. As shown, whilst Giddens often praises the dynamism and initiative found in the private sector (often contrasted to a lack of these qualities in the public sector, e.g. 2000a: 74), he occasionally also notes that if left to its own devices, capitalism will lead to excesses, inequality and much social hardship. But, rather than concluding that capitalism and market forces are an actual *danger* to society, he merely identifies it as being *insufficient* on its own to organise society properly; hence his idea of ‘partnership’ between state, market and civil society. What this notion of ‘partnership’ actually means is in and of itself wide open to interpretation. However, with some further analysis it is possible to ascertain what is meant by this.

Aside from a few brief instances, discussions on capitalism, what it means and what part it plays in the present age are conspicuously absent in the Third Way texts. Or, put differently: the global capitalist economy essentially functions as an un-discussed context, between the lines as it were, which forms a non-negotiable backdrop against which the Third Way is laid out. Ample examples containing this sentiment are readily available. Consider the following:

Consumers shop on a world level, in the sense that distribution is global and therefore ‘the best’ no longer has any generic connection with where goods and services are produced. Pressures to meet these standards will also apply more and more to labour forces. In some contexts such pressures are likely to deepen processes of social exclusion. (2000a: 123-124)

In a world ‘where customers can literally shop for workers’, without new ideas guaranteed by entrepreneurship there is an absence of competition. (ibid: 124)

Since no one can say whether or not global capitalism will in future generate sufficient work, it would be foolish to proceed as though it will. (ibid: 126)

Product, capital and labour markets must all be flexible for an economy today to be competitive. 'Flexibility' for many is a red rag to a bull. Especially as applied to labour markets, flexibility implies deregulation, making workers more vulnerable to economic insecurity and expanding the numbers of in-work poor. Flexibility does indeed entail deregulation – getting rid of, or reshaping, rules and regulations that hamper innovation and technological change. Increasing flexibility can't be costless – trade-offs are involved. Yet it can't be stressed too strongly how high the social and personal costs are where there is large-scale unemployment, and especially where there are many long-term unemployed. (2000b: 75-76)

At the risk of sounding like a bull confronted with a red rag, there is a common thread in these passages: the global capitalist economy is seen as an unalterable fact of life in Giddens's Third Way. Whether flexibility, global free markets for products, workers and customers, or the potential 'lack of sufficient work' are viewed as 'good things' or 'bad things' is hardly even the issue; what is the issue is that these features are accepted as unalterable circumstances, to which government policies – and societies in general, for that matter – must adapt, or else face dire consequences.

Already we may ask, based on the first two parts of this thesis: whatever happened to the potential for transforming structures and systems (Giddens, 1999) and to globalisation as an open-ended process (Giddens, 1995a)? Some further examples highlight what this submission of government policy to global capitalism entails on various specific issues.

I highlighted earlier that education needs to be a key element of Giddensian politics. The main reason for this was the necessity to enable widespread ability to use the globalising technologies, to provide the intellectual and practical tools to participate in a renewed public sphere and the ability to critically engage with the vast information flows made possible by certain elements of globalisation. Education is indeed viewed as a key necessity in the Third Way; yet it is flagged as important for completely different reasons, and is consequently a different kind of education: the purpose of education is consistently described as being rooted in the need for a competitive and flexible labour force. In fact, there is hardly an instance at which education is discussed by Giddens without use of the somewhat sinister³⁹ term 'human capital':

The guideline is investment in human capital wherever possible, rather than the direct provision of economic maintenance. (2000a: 117)

Welfare expenditure should be [...] switched as far as possible towards human capital investment. (ibid: 122)

Greater harmonization of educational practices and standards [...] is desirable for a cosmopolitan labour force. Some global corporations have already set up standardised entrance-requirements, but governments need to take the lead. (ibid: 125)

The key purpose of education here is clearly the provision of a competitive labour force (see also 2000b: 73-74). The global capitalist economy is therefore used here as a device that dictates policy. The same is true on old age and pensions:

Most industrial societies have ageing populations, and this is a big problem, it is said, because of the pensions time bomb. The pension commitments of some countries [...] are way beyond what can be afforded (2000a: 118)

We should move towards abolishing the fixed age of retirement, and we should regard older people as a resource rather than a problem. [...this] would probably be neutral in respect of labour market implications, given that individuals could give up work earlier as well as stay in work longer. [...] yet it does suggest there is scope for innovative thinking around the pensions issue. (ibid: 120)

Here once again, rather than questioning for instance the market mechanisms that make provision of adequate state pensions in the context of demographic change so difficult, the prescription is to change policy so that it complies with the economic pressures that are exercised. At a general level, referring to what the state should and should not provide to individuals, the following quote is emblematic of the Third Way outlook:

Instead of relying on unconditional benefits, policies should be oriented to encourage saving, the use of educational resources and other personal investment opportunities. (2000a: 125)

The subservience of government policy to the market becomes even clearer – perhaps unsurprisingly – when looking at Giddens’s frequent comments on how government should assist businesses:

[Entrepreneurship] drives technological development, and gives people opportunities for self-employment in times of transition. Government policy can provide support for entrepreneurship, through helping create venture capital, but also through restructuring welfare systems to give security when entrepreneurial ventures go wrong – for example by giving people the option to be taxed on a two- or three-year cycle rather than only annually. (ibid: 124)

The public sector can [...] provide resources that can help enterprise flourish [...]. [...] welfare to work programmes in the US have sometimes foundered on the problem of

transport. Companies offer jobs in areas which those available for them can't easily reach because of lack of adequate transport facilities. (ibid: 125)

Based on all these excerpts, it is now possible to spell out a deeper understanding of what is meant by 'partnership' between state and market: 'partnership' is not necessarily a misnomer on the part of Giddens. The two spheres are certainly not viewed as adversarial in the Third Way. However, far from being a partnership of equals, there is a clear sense of subservience of the state. The central purpose of the state is consistently to enable a competitive and dynamic private sector. Examples of this include viewing education as the creation of human capital, providing infrastructure for businesses and welfare to work programmes. Conversely, where services and resources provided by the state are not conducive to the private sector, services must be changed to adapt, for instance on retirement age and taxation of businesses.

These points of critique have been made before of course. Especially Giddens's more left-wing critics, some of which I mentioned earlier in this chapter, frequently note that he has an overly benevolent view of the market,⁴⁰ or that the public sector is made to cede too much in preference to it. Yet, my angle of critique on this issue is quite different. Depending on each reader's point of view, some of the policies I cite above may principally be regarded as a 'good idea', others not. But what is interesting about all the above examples is the conceptual property of un-transformability that is implicitly attributed to global capitalism. Global capitalism and the need to be competitive and flexible are features that exert nigh-absolute power over what the state should and should not do, what it should and should not provide. Instead of asking how global capitalism might then be transformed to alleviate these pressures that it generates, Giddens's Third Way effectively capitulates. Redistribution and equality are still demonstrably important to Giddens, yet any attempt at policies that may achieve such ends is consistently kept subservient to the demands of global capitalism.

Based on the framework for Giddensian politics that I established in the preceding chapters, this is a serious problem. I showed earlier in this thesis that global capitalism and market forces are a significant source of structural constraint vis-à-vis the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. I made the case for this at the time based on Giddens's pre-Third Way work, in conjunction with many empirical studies. However, the case for this can be readily made here once again, just

based on the passages from the Third Way texts I cited above. The pressures exerted by the global economy are such that individuals need to spend much of their lives training and re-training in order to have the skills to compete with other workers in a global marketplace; flexibility is demanded, be it geographical, temporal or otherwise, both for individuals and businesses; even in the passages above, Giddens sometimes acknowledges that this need for flexibility can cause problems, and that adapting to it involves 'trade-offs'. Moreover, wherever state services are under financial strain – e.g. on pensions and unemployment benefits – it is not the systemic foundations of the financial strain that are proposed to be changed, but the services themselves, whilst education, far from facilitating greater reflexivity and self-creation, must instead serve to create competitive and flexible workers.

To tie this in with the key issue at hand: within the world view that is implicit in the Third Way, individuals are not becoming more empowered and reflexive. Quite the contrary: rather than being more able to reflexively create their own biography, individuals are under more pressure than ever to 'keep up', to improve their competitiveness and to adapt to whatever requirements the global marketplace may have. To be fair to Giddens, it is not the Third Way itself, which constrains individuals in this way; but the Third Way is highly permissive to a system which plainly does. Put simply: according to the Third Way, global capitalism exerts huge constraints on any scope for further emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, and the state 'mops up' where it can. With the best will in the world, this feature of Giddens's Third Way does not satisfy the criteria I showed to be necessary for Giddensian politics. Additionally, this notion of global capitalism as an un-alterable structural property does not sit well with the structurationist outlook, where systems can be transformed, and of course with Giddens's general outlook on late modernity, which he identifies as an age in which there is in many ways more scope for transformation of systems than in previous eras.

There is a possible explanation for this U-turn: the possibility to transform a given system of course depends on whether the agent who wishes to transform it actually has the necessary resources to do so. Although Giddens says nothing of the sort in previous work, it is conceivable that he changed his mind by the time he wrote the key Third Way texts, concluding now that the state genuinely does not have the capability to

transform the system of global capitalism, and therefore must resign itself to doing what it can for the emergence of the late modern self *within the limitations* posed by global capitalism – which isn't very much. When putting the analysis of late modernity and the Third Way together, the result would then be a coherent, but quite dark outlook on contemporary societies, where humanity is doomed to never-ending constraint at the hands of global capitalism, and where the scope for reflexivity and empowerment are so utterly limited that 'utopian realism' ceases to be an adequate approach, or indeed a coherent descriptive term.

This possibility can however be refuted for two reasons. Firstly, Giddens re-affirms the idea of globalisation (including its economic dimensions) as an open-ended process as late as *RW* (2002a: 6-35; 81), published after *TTW*. There is no indication even at this late stage that globalisation is open-ended within the limitations of the immovability of the global capitalist economy. The second and perhaps more convincing reason lies in the comments made in the Third Way texts about financial markets. This is the only area, where Giddens's Third Way matches up more-or-less fully to what his utopian realist analysis of late modernity demands; yet, this is also the element of the global economy which, as I showed, should be the most difficult for the state to regulate and transform.

To briefly remind the reader: I drew special attention to finance capitalism, as this has a special standing in the literature on economic globalisation. Even sceptics of globalisation tend to concede that at the level of finance capitalism, there is something genuinely new about the present-day global economy. Unlike the production and distributions of goods, and even of many services, finance capitalism is able to operate almost fully through global information and communication networks, and as such is further beyond the reach of states – ruling as they do over fixed territories – than is the case with other economic sectors. Meanwhile, finance capitalism is the source of much constraint, not least those mentioned by Giddens in the Third Way. I cited earlier the issue of national debt, interest payments and IMF conditionality. Issues such as pensions, public services and unemployment benefit are, as Giddens rightly points out, under financial strain. Though not in full, these problems are partly exacerbated by currency speculation, fluctuating interest rates and other causes traceable to finance capitalism.

I showed in chapter 4 that Giddens often uses finance capitalism, its recent unparalleled growth and its ability to function mostly without the use of sovereign state territory, as a central argument to show that the present-day global economy is genuinely different from past ages. This is continued in the *Third Way* (2000a: 30; 2000b: 66). I highlighted several authors who note that whilst finance capitalism is perhaps more detached from sovereign territories than other economic sectors, it is not detached completely: especially the need for ‘global cities’ means that financial firms do need to be based in quite specific geographical locations, meaning that governments do have some immediate legislative clout over them. Giddens never considers this point. Yet, this oversight in his own theory makes my point here all the more significant. Financial markets, for Giddens, are further beyond the influence of the state than is the case with other elements of the economy. Yet, I pointed to several authors who believe nevertheless that finance capitalism can – and should – be controlled: Soros, Stiglitz, Hirst and Thompson, Singh, etc. And indeed, oddly enough, Giddens stands fully in agreement with these authors. More than once in his *Third Way* texts, he notes that finance capitalism is a source of many problems, both for states and for individuals, and lays out several possibilities of how states can achieve transformation, regulation and control of financial markets.

On the final pages of *TTW*, Giddens notes that “...the regulation of financial markets is the single most pressing issue in the world economy...” (2000a: 148) and proceeds to outline a number of possible measures, including greater regulation of currency speculation and the possibility of a speculation tax, reform of the IMF and World Bank and establishing a UN economic security council (ibid: 148-153). Later on, he re-states some of these measures and adds regulation of short-term bank loans, hedge funds and derivatives (2000b: 126) and the abolition of third world debt (ibid: 168). Given Giddens’s lack of engagement with the physical locations of financial markets, it can be inferred that the means by which to achieve these measures are largely through international co-operation. By themselves, he perceives nation states to have relatively little promise of achieving change, but he shows that they can do so through international bodies such as the EU, the UN and others. To sum up: on the issue of financial capitalism, Giddens’s thoughts are absolutely in line with the framework for Giddensian politics I developed earlier.

Given the perceived immovability of all other elements of global capitalism, this feature of the Third Way is utterly bizarre. Financial capitalism, within Giddens's analysis, should be the most difficult economic sector for governments to regulate. Yet, Giddens is quite clear that this can be done and, as mentioned, stands in agreement with many other authors on this point. But other economic sectors, which rely far more on nations' employment laws, infrastructure and customer spending power, apparently form an unalterable structural feature of late modernity, to which government policy must submit. Based on what he says about the regulation of finance capitalism, and indeed, based on the entire analysis so far in this thesis, there is no plausible explanation for this. If speculation, third world debt and derivatives can be regulated, scrutinised and transformed to create better results for populations, then why can't global wages? Why can't the ease with which manufacturing sites are shifted from one place to another? Why can't job security? Ample more questions of this type could be asked here, and at this point there is no apparent reason.

I will of course assess possible reasons for this and other failures of the Third Way in the next chapter. But for now, my first point of critique is clear: with the utterly counter-intuitive exception of finance capitalism, Giddens's Third Way fails to fulfil the demands of Giddensian politics made by the utopian realist reading of his work, because the global capitalist economy, clearly a major source of structural constraint for the emergence of the late-modern self, is viewed as an unalterable force, which the state is unable to control or transform in any way, and to which it must therefore be subservient. Although the Third Way does fulfil the criteria on financial capitalism, this exception makes the conceptual characterisation of the global capitalist economy as 'untransformable' especially inconsistent and misguided.

The empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual: emergence complete?

I have established in this thesis that a Giddensian political project cannot assume that the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is in any way 'complete', but that it must pursue fostering this emergence as its primary objective. I also showed that this involves two central components: the first is a major redistributive component. As we saw in the previous section of this chapter, the

potential of this component is hampered considerably by the notion of global capitalism as an un-transformable structural feature in Third Way. The second component – as I showed – is to design policies in such a way that they imply both emancipatory and life-political considerations, because these two blanket-terms are closely connected and can as such not form separate elements of a Giddensian political project. This means on the one hand that issues which appear ‘life-political’ in the first instance must be recognised as having emancipatory consequences, which in turn must inform what kind of a policy position should be put forward on the issue in question. On the other hand, it is also prescriptive for issues which are at face value of an emancipatory nature: not just any kind of emancipatory policy will do – it needs to be formulated in such a way that individuals’ possibilities of engaging with life-political concerns become greater.

So, my second key point of critique is that Giddens’s Third Way is in large parts based on the assumption that this new late-modern self is a universal reality, and that consequently life politics is conceptually separated from emancipatory politics, leaving what emancipatory policies the Third Way does advocate somewhat directionless. Once again, direct textual evidence, as well as evaluation of some implicit structural concepts found in the Third Way texts make a case for this criticism.

In the preamble-chapters of *TTW*, where Giddens outlines some central issues that his renewal of social democracy wishes to address, he notes:

The new individualism [...] is associated with the retreat of tradition and custom from our lives, a phenomenon involved with the impact of globalization widely conceived rather than just the influence of markets. [...] All of us have to live in a more open and reflective manner than previous generations. This change is by no means only a beneficial one: new worries and anxieties come to the fore. But many more positive possibilities do too. (2000a: 36-37)

Though re-phrased here as the ‘new individualism’ and simplified somewhat, the theme of a new, late modern self, based on the key developments to which so much attention was given in the analysis of late modernity, is re-iterated here, and is identified by Giddens as an important element of present-day societies, to which social democracy must respond. There are already some problems with this passage, based on what I have said so far in this thesis: evidence shows that tradition and custom are only retreating from the lives of a select few, in a select few areas or on a select few issues; structural

determinants of individual behaviour still abound, casting doubt on whether we really do all have to live in a more reflective manner. Though already a cause for concern, this particular passage cannot be given much weight, situated as it is in somewhat of a preamble section of *TTW*, rather than being part of a substantive policy-prescription. What this passage does show is that the theme of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, as explained in Giddens's earlier work, is certainly not abandoned in his political project. The key issue is now how Giddens's political project proposes to respond to this theme, and whether this response implies that this 'new individualism' is an emergent possibility which needs to be fostered, or whether it is implied as a universal reality. A closer look at Giddens's more substantive policy suggestions shows that the latter is the case.

To some extent, we can see this in Giddens's comments on welfare, public services and entrepreneurship. I already concluded that in this area there is a sense that all policies are subjected to the pressures of global capitalism, which in itself is a major problem of the Third Way vis-à-vis Giddens's earlier work. However, even if we temporarily accept this submission to global capitalism, there is still a sense that the Third Way assumes all individuals to essentially have access to all necessary information, be capable of reflexively incorporating it into their lives and able to transform their lives accordingly.

On the example of unemployment benefits, Giddens frequently talks about education as a key resource, which must be made available to the 'socially excluded' (see e.g. 2000a: 102-104). However, as I mentioned earlier, Giddens notes that education refers specifically to vocational skills, and more generally, to the development of 'human capital'. Whilst education appears to be the most important component of Giddens's stance on unemployment – if frequency of mentioning the subject is anything to go by – there are some other elements that should be highlighted here as well. Thus, alongside education, entrepreneurship should be encouraged and facilitated, for instance by provision of venture capital and benevolent taxation systems in the early years of new businesses being launched (ibid: 124). Generally, the proposed approach is to maintain levels of government spending in the area of social security, but to spend in such a way as to enable career-improvement and entrepreneurship by all these various means.

The central point of criticism here is that just because these mechanisms and possibilities are put into place does not mean that everyone will be equally willing or capable of using them. Giddens in fact does contemplate the issue of individuals not making use of the mechanisms he proposes, specifically on the issue of benefit dependency. His rather brief conclusion on the matter is that entrepreneurship should in certain cases be encouraged through legal obligation (ibid: 122). Elsewhere in the book, he notes that the issue of benefit dependency largely arises in situations of long-term rather than short-term unemployment (ibid: 115).⁴¹ This point gives rise to a problematic conclusion: for some individuals, the processes Giddens outlines could enable emancipation from certain types of structural constraint, albeit purely in the realm of careers and work-life (which, as mentioned, is a significant limitation in itself). But for many individuals, crucially the long-term unemployed, a group where multiple structural constraints are surely especially noticeable, dependency is potentially replaced by coercion through legal obligation.

So on the issue of unemployment we initially have a familiar picture: provided that individuals are not subject to structural constraint other than those of a purely financial kind, mechanisms are put in place that could conceivably be used to a positive effect by those individuals. But where other types of constraint do exist, Giddens resorts to legal requirements, i.e. coercive means, rather than contemplating how emancipation from structural constraint – this time especially constraints of whichever kind experienced by long-term unemployed individuals – might otherwise be facilitated. He assumes, in short, that the issue lies with individuals rather than with structure, a point I shall return to later.

Giddens also outlines some further principles through which the realm of work and career should be changed, most notably through family-friendly workplace policies (ibid: 125). Again, this is inconsistent with the idea that the emergence of the reflexive self is often obstructed, for instance by prevailing traditionalism: for some individuals, this kind of proposition on family-friendly policies in the workplace may indeed prove useful, and indeed Giddens also provides evidence to support the idea that this might additionally benefit employers in terms of increasing productivity (ibid: 127). But once again: what of structural constraint preventing use of these types of mechanisms? Just because such mechanisms are in place does not mean every individual will be able to

make use of them. For instance, what of individuals, or indeed entire communities, where traditional views about work-life persist? The issue of gender roles in relation to work might be especially important here: a wife in part-time work may still be viewed as signalling a husband's inability to 'feed his family'; fathers taking time off for childcare might equally be viewed as unacceptable in many circles. Once again, evidence I presented earlier in this thesis – illustrated here by these examples – suggests that many individuals would not be so readily able to change their lifestyle through mere changes in employment law. Indeed, given Giddens's own deliberations on resurgent traditional morality and dogma in previous work (1995b: 206-207), it is astonishing that these types of questions are not considered in his policy proposals.

Similar points can be raised about the ideas put forward by Giddens about civil society and the public sphere. I established that fostering a renewed public sphere would have to be a key element of a Giddensian political project; and indeed, Giddens does pay plenty of attention to this theme. However, once again there is a clear expectation in the Third Way that governments merely need to put certain dialogic props in place and individuals will be able to make use of them.

Giddens makes several points on what he calls 'downward decentralisation'. This includes advocating devolution in terms of introducing more local or regional assemblies, but crucially, he also advocates more direct involvement in decision-making on the part of individuals – which is of course very much in line with the 'new individualism'. Electronic referenda, citizens' juries and lay committees and experts coming together in public debate are cited as key mechanisms to 'democratise democracy' (2000a: 75-77).

But whilst, once again, these policy suggestions fit well with the idea of empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals – and indeed are essentially in line with the framework for Giddensian politics I presented – there is no awareness of structural constraint in these deliberations: what of differentiated access to and participation in all these devices of democratisation? Different levels of education, social/ cultural capital, and indeed issues such as different social class positions in general, as well as divisions relating to gender or ethnicity could easily result in many individuals being excluded from all these processes. I noted of course that the use of technology would be crucial in

creating a new public sphere, and Giddens's mentioning of electronic referenda suggests the same. But issues of digital divides and competence to use the relevant technology are not considered. So whilst Giddens puts an essentially credible apparatus for democratisation in place, there is no indication of how universal access to, and engagement with this apparatus might be facilitated.⁴² Put even more simply, there is the assumption here that all individuals are already sufficiently knowledgeable, reflexive and – crucially – empowered, for this not to be a matter worth worrying about. Giddens in fact makes an additional point of caution, which effectively adds validity to my argument here:

As critics point out, devolution can add layers of local bureaucratic power to those that already exist at the political centre. (2000a: 78)

And:

Among the obvious dangers [...] is that some cities or regions could thereby forge ahead of others, worsening the marked regional inequalities that already exist in the UK. (ibid: 78)

Since he does not further pursue these points, there is a strong suggestion here that the mechanisms Giddens proposes may in fact add new types of structural constraint – additional levels of bureaucracy and growing inequality – rather than diminishing it, with no additional deliberation as to how this might be avoided.

Having explained the Third Way's lack of engagement with fostering the new late-modern self based on two examples from quite different areas of policy, it is also worth briefly looking at the issue of life politics in the Third Way. Here too, his arguments imply that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is treated as a reality rather than a possibility worthwhile fostering, based this time on the relationship between emancipatory and life politics.

Reflecting on the idea of left and right, which he broadly identifies as the politics of class and inequality in general, Giddens notes:

What I mean by [life politics] is that, whereas emancipatory politics concerns life chances, life politics concerns life decisions. It is a politics of choice, identity and mutuality. How should we react to the hypothesis of global warming? Should we accept nuclear energy or not? How far should work remain a central life value? Should we favour devolution? What

should be the future of the European Union? None of these is a clear left/right issue. (2000a: 44)

In the analysis of late modernity, specifically at the end of *CoM* and *MaSI*, this distinction between life politics and emancipatory politics was also drawn. However, at the time it was not clear at face value, what the relationship between the two is. Upon extensive analysis, I showed that the connection is a close and profound one. Here it is different: life politics is conceptually separated from the politics of equality and emancipation. Based on the framework I developed, this separation is problematic: all the questions raised in the above quote can in fact be linked to emancipatory concerns. One example of such a link that I gave earlier related to GM foods, where less affluent individuals may well be aware of moral dimensions to food-choice, but unable to act upon their 'life-decision' on the matter, given that organic food is more expensive. Similar points could easily be thought of for the above questions. As such, instead of conceptually separating emancipatory and life politics so clearly, there needs to be an acknowledgement that life-politics can be an important way of highlighting emancipatory concerns, and that the policies introduced on life-political matters must be formulated based at least partially on their emancipatory dimensions. He does note later on:

A reformed welfare state [...] has to meet criteria for social justice, but it has also to recognize and incorporate active lifestyle choice... (2000a: 45)

But 'incorporate' here does not refer to the possibility of expressing issues of social justice *in terms of* individuals' ability to make lifestyle choices – it merely implies that a political platform in this day and age must deal with both these elements *in some form*. Elsewhere he notes:

As affluence increases, lifestyle issues grow in importance as compared to economic or fiscal concerns – more so among the better-off, but also among poorer groups too. (2000b: 42)

Giddens is surely correct to suggest that many poorer individuals are acutely aware of life-political issues. But the implicit assumption that structural determinants – in this case different levels of wealth – make little difference to how individuals can respond to such issues is implausible. So whilst it is consistent with the analysis of late modernity to put life politics on the political agenda, the issue of ensuring that everyone is able to

react to life-political concerns freely – or to design solutions to life-political issues in such a way that structural determinants matter less – is hardly dealt with. The distinction between individuals being principally aware of life-political issues, and being able to respond to them in accordance with their knowledge and moral conscience is thus insufficiently dealt with.

So, to summarise this second main point of critique: many points from Giddens's Third Way that I have discussed here are essentially credible – within the restriction of my first point of critique, the Third Way's submission to global capitalism – and do ultimately follow from his previous work. However, to put it as simply as possible: there is effectively one step missing on many policy positions, and that is how exactly individuals could be empowered to be able to engage in all the participatory and deliberative mechanisms he suggests. Tradition, gender roles, poverty, digital divides and educational levels are among the structural constraints that are not sufficiently dealt with in this context. Given this lack of engagement, the Third Way is highly suggestive of the idea that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is already a universal reality. Life politics meanwhile, far from additionally highlighting existing structural constraints experienced by individuals, is supposedly in the process of superseding emancipatory needs in their importance.

Technology and human nature

Finally, there are two further points of criticism worth making here about Giddens's Third Way. Both of them are related to the two previous main points of the present critique, and both of them have already been alluded to in some form. Yet, I still find them to be important in their own right for the purpose of my critique, so I will address them here directly. Since both points are fairly straightforward, they can be dealt with here quite briefly.

Firstly, there is the issue of technology in the Third Way, specifically of what was referred to earlier in this thesis as the 'globalising' technologies: the internet and other communication and information technologies, and perhaps to a slightly lesser extent, mass transit and travel. I showed that within Giddens's pre-Third Way work, these

technologies are of central importance. I showed that Giddens's definition of globalisation has the advent of these technologies and their precursors at its root, and that fostering the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is dependent on expanding access to these technologies, which at present is still limited. Indeed, on the specific issue of civil society and the public sphere I also showed that the globalising technologies would need to be expanded and made more widely available in order to speak of any kind of genuine 'renewal'.

In the Third Way, the importance of these technologies is once again alluded to. In the previous section of this chapter I quoted Giddens as re-stating the importance of non-economic dimensions of globalisation for the formation of the 'new individualism' (see e.g. 2000a: 31; 36); the importance of globalising technologies is implied in these sections. However, apart from these allusions, which are generally limited to the preamble chapters of *TTW*, or in introductory paragraphs to sections on different matters elsewhere, access to, distribution of, and ability to use the globalising technologies are conspicuously absent themes in the Third Way texts.

Technology generally features in the Third Way in one of three forms. Firstly, information and communication technologies are occasionally mentioned as something that could be utilised for greater democratisation, for instance electronic referenda, which I already mentioned in the last section of this chapter. Secondly, technology features as bringing about the 'knowledge economy', to which governments must react by acknowledging the importance of human capital as opposed to fixed industrial assets such as property (see e.g. 2000b: 69-75). Thirdly, there are a few notes on technology in general, which associate it with new risks, especially ecological ones (see e.g. 2000a: 153). Whilst all these types of deliberations on technology have some merit (indeed, using technology for democratisation was a possible Giddensian policy I explicitly mentioned previously in this thesis), the centrally important feature of access and distribution of technological resources does not feature in the Third Way.

Given the framework for Giddensian politics I constructed in this thesis, this omission is unacceptable. The Third Way's lack of a programme detailing the redistribution of technological resources is related to both points of criticism I made earlier. It is related to the Third Way's submission to global capitalism, because information and

communication technologies are at present largely in the hands of private companies, be it production and distribution of hardware components or provision of infrastructure such as broadband networks. Some relatively elaborate form of regulation or indeed nationalisation of these technologies would most likely be necessary to ensure universal access irrespective of economic or geographical position. The Third Way's basic outlook on global capitalism largely negates such possibilities. This lack of a programme for redistributing technological resources is also related to the Third Way's assumption that the late modern self is a universal reality: digital divides are a key factor that excludes many individuals from global information flows and contact with other cultures and lifestyles, let alone from participation in any kind of renewed digital public sphere. A programme to ensure universal access to the globalising technologies would have been an important step towards acknowledging that the late-modern self is not a universal reality yet, but might eventually become one, given the right political initiative.

Despite being related and partially implicit in previous points of the present critique, this is an important point worth making, as it represents an inconsistency between Giddens's Third Way and his previous work. Given the conceptual importance attributed to the globalising technologies in the analysis of late modernity, especially for the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, the lack of engagement with further distribution of these technologies is nothing short of startling.

The final point of criticism that needs to be made here concerns the issue of human nature. This is a theme which I have so far not mentioned in this thesis, although it has been implicitly contained in much that I have said about Giddens's work. Once again, it is an issue on which a key inconsistency between his Third Way and his previous work occurs, this time to the extent that the whole premise of Giddensian politics appears to be undermined.

I need to stress here that I do not necessarily imply biological characteristics. I have chosen the term 'human nature' in preference to alternatives such as 'human condition' to indicate that I refer to something more fundamental than the self in the way that it is discussed frequently by Giddens. By 'human nature', I refer to how the individual, as

constituted in present-day society – be that biologically determined or socially constructed – is viewed in terms of its capacity to do ‘good things’ as opposed to ‘bad things’ in the absence of punitive and determinant structures. I hope this qualification will avoid confusion.

Hardly ever in his work does Giddens explicitly discuss the issue of human nature.⁴³ However, his thoughts on the individual are clearly related to this theme. His emphasis on the individual as being reflexive, empowered and knowledgeable, and indeed, his normative position that this type of self is something worth fostering effectively demands a positive view of human nature. To be clear, this does not necessarily imply that Giddens must concur for instance with Rousseau’s notion of the innocent child and the morally superior state of nature (See e.g. Rousseau, 1984). But Giddens’s entire stance on the individual does imply that as long as structural constraints are kept to a relative minimum and individuals have access to knowledge and formulate their own morality and life decisions in accordance with it, they will basically do ‘good things’ rather than ‘bad things’. Were this not the case, the whole idea of empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individuals as a normative political goal would be utterly nonsensical. At the very least, we can say that Giddens cannot be placed in any kind of Hobbesian tradition, where human nature is conceived of as egoistical and violent, and where the state needs to set up a bulwark of constraining features to prevent life from being ‘nasty, brutish and short’ (Hobbes, 1996). Giddens’s notions of reflexivity, emancipation, democratisation and lifestyle choice simply do not allow for such an angle.

This does not mean that according to Giddens it is impossible for individuals to do bad things. He is surely quite right to discuss issues such as crime in his politics, and to note that criminals should generally be either punished, rehabilitated or kept away from potential victims until deemed to no longer be a clear and present danger to other individuals (Giddens, 2000a: 86-89). The possibility of individuals committing acts of violence, deceit and so on could easily be explained through structural factors, and to be fair to Giddens, this is often the case in the Third Way, certainly when he talks about crime, punishment and rehabilitation, where there is a focus on improving communities with high crime rates as a possible solution (*ibid*). However, beyond that, Giddens’s work as a whole also gives rise to the expectation that individuals’ autonomous life decisions should generally be respected. In other words: if fostering empowered,

reflexive, knowledgeable individuals is deemed a desirable political goal, then the state should generally retreat from coercively prescribing how individuals ought to live their lives. If reflexivity and empowerment of the individual are considered worthwhile undertakings, the underlying assumption must be that these characteristics will lead to generally positive outcomes. However, this line of thought is often absent in Giddens's Third Way. Quite the contrary: in many cases, rather than putting in place resources to allow for greater reflexivity and empowerment, the Third Way often prescribes more coercion and punitive sanctions, based on some fundamental assertions about human behaviour.

Nowhere is this more obvious than on the issue of recipients of unemployment benefits. Next to its relatively high cost and its lack of promoting flexibility and entrepreneurship, Giddens cites at length the issue of 'moral hazard' as a central shortcoming of unemployment benefits (2000a: 113-116). He notes:

It isn't so much that some forms of welfare provision create dependency cultures as that people take rational advantage of opportunities offered. Benefits meant to counter unemployment, for instance, can actually produce unemployment if they are actively used as a shelter from the labour market. (ibid: 115)

And hence:

Benefit systems should be reformed where they induce moral hazard, and a more active risk-taking attitude encouraged, wherever possible through incentives, but where necessary by legal obligation. (ibid: 122)

This general approach to benefits, with 'moral hazard' as a central concern, is mentioned elsewhere in the Third Way texts as well, and is therefore of some importance within Giddens's political project (see e.g. 2000b: 56-57; 1995c: 142). The fundamental assumption contained in this example is rational choice based on a narrow sense of self-interest as a central element of human behaviour. This stands in contrast to the idea of reflexive incorporation of knowledge into the life cycle as a means of developing new, post-traditional moral frameworks. In general terms, the inherent suggestion here is that many individuals cannot be allowed to reflexively design their own life-cycle, and that the state needs to intervene in order to ensure they make the 'correct' choice. The question of whether there is such a thing as 'dependency culture', 'moral hazard' or 'rational choice' is of course subject to considerable debate. Although

these issues in themselves are not of significance here, it is nevertheless surprising that Giddens takes this stance. Rather than providing more resources with the aim of increasing individuals' capacity for reflexive action of whatever kind, legal obligations are suggested to steer individuals' lives towards very specific 'choices' – which at this point is clearly a misnomer. Indeed:

Policies designed to counter social exclusion won't be successful if they aren't directed to the changing character of the life course that accompanies the development of the new economy. (2000b: 107-108)

Reflexivity and empowerment are thus only politically desired if they lead directly to economically beneficial circumstances. If not, government must steer the individual's life-cycle to that end. The clearest evidence for Giddens going against his own notion of empowerment and reflexivity on this issue is found a little further on:

'Strategic users' [of benefits] have a more instrumental attitude still. They deploy social assistance as one resource among others to achieve a certain style of life. [...] They may have chosen to be unemployed, at least for a period, in order to pursue other concerns or interests. (ibid: 111)

It is not contemplated here that said 'other concerns and interests' may in fact be thoroughly beneficial (e.g. childcare or volunteering). Instead, just as elsewhere in the Third Way texts, the objective is to promote 'choices' leading to employment and discourage all other possible 'choices'.

In a sense, this point ties in less with what I have referred to here as human nature, and more with the point I already made about the Third Way's complete submission to global capitalism: there must be profitability at all costs, and the state must in this case ensure that each individual plays their part. This is only a minor extension of the point I already made in the first main section of this chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to note the additional dimension here, namely that there is considerable distrust in the individual. Reflexive life-choices will not do: the government must steer the individuals' life-cycle towards a preconceived form; if not, individuals will act in narrow rationalistic self-interest. This philosophical take on the self could not be further removed from the notions of the self found in Giddens's pre-Third Way work.

Moving away from the specific example of benefits, we can see this attitude prevailing at a general level in Giddens's Third Way, most clearly in the emblematic phrase 'No rights without responsibilities' (see e.g. 2000a: 65). This phrase, along with its implications for the very concept of citizenship is one of the elements that appears in both Giddens's and New Labour's Third Way, and has as such been the subject of considerable critique. Though chiefly discussing New Labour's Third Way, Morrison puts it well for the purpose of my point here:

New Labour's concept of citizenship is characterised by its prioritising of responsibilities over rights, with the latter largely replaced by opportunities. [...] this discourse of citizenship indicates both an institutionalising of a normative and moralistic conception of the good citizen, which simultaneously defines the identity of the bad citizen, and a shift in the responsibility for ensuring social justice away from both the government and the social sector to individual citizens themselves... (Morrison, 2004: 181)

Since the subject of rights, responsibilities and citizenship in the context of both New Labour and Giddens has been covered by other authors, there is no need to pursue it further here. In terms of its implications for my earlier point on submission to capitalism there is little more that could be added to this issue. But this point needed to be raised in order to highlight the implications of this elevation of responsibilities over rights for the issue of how the individual, and by extension human nature itself, is conceptualised in Giddens's Third Way. Contravening what I demonstrated to be the necessary aim of a Giddensian politics, his Third Way adopts the mantra of 'no rights without responsibilities' and applies it, foremost to welfare, and to a lesser extent to various other elements (e.g. 2000a: 121; 2000b: 52), with possible coercive and punitive measures. As such, the primacy of empowerment and reflexivity is replaced by the state's prerogative to decide what a 'correct' life-cycle is,⁴⁴ and to enforce it. Individuals clearly cannot be trusted with their own reflexivity.

Summary

At the outset of this chapter I set out a framework of the key outlooks and characteristics that a Giddensian political project would need to satisfy in order to successfully complete Giddens's utopian realist social theory of late modernity. As I have shown, his Third Way fails to satisfy the vast majority of that framework. Firstly,

it treats global capitalism as an immovable, un-transformable structural feature. Secondly, it assumes in large parts that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is already a universal reality. Thirdly, distribution of and access to technology is an absent theme. And lastly, rather than viewing the reflexive, empowered self as a normative political goal, the Third Way has a rather more Hobbesian take on the self, where the state must coerce and legislatively ensure that individuals will adopt a specific type of behaviour and moral understanding, and a specific type of life-cycle.

As such, Giddens's utopian realist social theory, as it stands, is a failure. The analysis of late modernity correctly identifies elements and developments in contemporary society that have the scope to bring about a new type of reflexive, empowered self. Yet, his political project fails to build on this by coherently and consistently showing how these developments may be fostered and built upon.

Two central questions now remain, which I will address in the final chapter of this thesis. Firstly, why is there this complete disjuncture between the analysis of late modernity and the Third Way? Secondly, beyond the general framework I presented at the outset of this chapter, what would a political project that successfully completes Giddens's utopian realist social theory of late modernity look like?

Chapter 6:

Beyond the Disjuncture: A New Giddensian Politics

Assessing the Disjuncture: Reasons for the Third Way's Failure to Deliver

As we move towards the conclusion of this thesis, the situation at hand can be summarised as follows: I have shown that Giddens's analysis of late modernity and his Third Way, when put together, are an unsuccessful utopian realist social theory. It is unsuccessful, firstly because the Third Way fails to sufficiently provide the means, by which the structural constraints inhibiting the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual might be dealt with at a political level. Secondly it is unsuccessful, because the Third Way is inconsistent with several key elements of the analysis of late modernity, most notably its assumption that this new late modern self has already emerged on a large scale, its lack of engagement with the issue of access to globalising technologies, its acceptance of global capitalism as an un-transformable structure and its rather bleak implicit assumptions about human nature. Before outlining my alternative Giddensian political project in contrast to the Third Way, designed to match up with his analysis of late modernity and produce a consistent and successful utopian realist social theory, it is important to consider whether it is possible to explain the disjuncture between Giddens's Third Way and his earlier work.

There is one rather crude possible explanation, which in fact was already alluded to earlier, when I briefly discussed the separation between Giddens's and New Labour's Third Ways: the possibility that Giddens simply 'sold out' and abandoned his original political outlook in order to gain stature and fame through an alliance with Tony Blair. In the previous chapter I already quoted Morrison as having this view (2004: 168); an even more forceful reiteration of this is given by Castree (2010).

Though a genuinely possible explanation, I do not wish to pursue it further. Firstly because exploring this further does not have any sociological merit: it would most likely

result in a journalistic account of Giddens as a flawed, quasi-Shakespearean character, torn between integrity and opportunity. Secondly, and as mentioned above, this charge has already been made by several authors, so I do not believe pursuing this issue further would make any sort of useful contribution to this issue. Thirdly, I feel that resorting to this kind of personal attack on Giddens would only begin to be even remotely justified, if there were genuinely no other possible explanation that might lend itself more to critical enquiry. As it happens, I do see a number of such possible explanations. I will turn to these now, based on the assumption that Giddens is perhaps not quite as flawed a human being as some critics appear to claim he is.

There is a further relatively straightforward possible explanation, which can be refuted easily, but is nevertheless worthwhile dealing with: did Giddens perhaps quite simply change his mind about key elements of his pre-Third Way work? If true, this could be entirely acceptable, providing he changed his mind for good reasons. A comment once made in an interview by Foucault comes to mind:

When people say ‘Well, you thought this a few years ago and now you say something else’, my answer is ‘Well, do you think I have worked like a dog all those years and not be changed?’ (Mills, 2003: 3)

But for Giddens, this is emphatically not the case. In none of his publications does he ever refute any of his central claims that I have looked at in this thesis. Indeed, he notes on several occasions after publishing some of the key Third Way texts that he still stands by the claims made in his earlier work. As late as 1999 he notes in an interview with Bryant and Jary that, if given the chance, he would not change the substance of structuration theory as outlined in *CoS* (Bryant and Jary, 2001a: 229). In the same interview he also says that he still identifies with the concept of utopian realism (ibid: 234). In 2005 he notes at the ESRC Identities and Social Action Programme Launch that he is still in full agreement with most claims made about late modernity in *MaSI*, crucially including the sections on politics (Giddens, 2005). Furthermore, we already saw in the previous chapter that the idea of globalisation and post-traditionalism, leading to a new reflexive self, is identified as a key political challenge in *TTW* itself. Finally, it is also worth mentioning in this context that as late as 2010 he sees his Third Way as an attempt to integrate the key theoretical issues he dealt with in the late 1980s and early 90s – globalisation, the knowledge economy and the reflexive self – with

policy, and that even beyond the end of the New Labour project this remains an important task (Giddens, 2010a: 67-69).

So, far from changing his mind about any of the key issues at hand, Giddens is on record as standing firmly by the basic tenets of structuration theory, late modernity, globalisation, post-traditionalism and reflexivity, utopian realism and the connection between his theoretical work and politics. Clearly, an explanation for the disjuncture between his theory and his politics cannot lie here. But there is another, not entirely unrelated possible explanation: is it possible that the Third Way is based on assumptions and discourses *other than* those found in his own earlier work? I have already shown that certain elements of his earlier work do act as an influence on his Third Way, but this does not negate the possibility of separate concerns existing *alongside* these. Such additional influences on his Third Way may have diluted the link-up between his theory and his politics, potentially to the point of inconsistency.

This supposition has some merit. In virtually all of Giddens's Third Way texts, but especially in *TTW* itself, the presence of an additional theoretical background besides that of his analysis of late modernity is apparent. *TTW* is divided into five chapters, the last three of which are explicitly denoted by Giddens as the substantive chapters, concerned with offering an 'outline' for the renewal of social democracy (2000a: 69), while the first two chapters, lacking any kind of policy prescription and having a more analytical tone, act as a preamble, explaining the reasons why a renewal of social democracy is necessary. The second of these two chapters, entitled 'Five Dilemmas' links the book up with Giddens's previous work. The five dilemmas, to which a renewal of social democracy must respond, are globalisation (both economic and other dimensions), reflexivity, re-hashed here as the 'new individualism' but substantively still in line with Giddens's earlier conclusions about the late modern self, the addition of life politics to the old left/ right divide, new scope for individual political agency, and ecological issues (ibid: 27-63). Reading this chapter in isolation gives rise to the conclusion that the Third Way is indeed the political extension of Giddens's social theory of late modernity.

But the first chapter of the book provides an additional and completely different background to Giddens's political project. Entitled 'Socialism and After', this chapter

hardly refers to any issues and concepts from Giddens's earlier work at all. Instead, he discusses here what he sees as the two main ideologies that have shaped politics in Britain, and more generally in most industrialised countries since the end of the second world war: socialism, and to a greater extent what he calls 'old style social democracy' on the one hand, and neoliberalism on the other. He criticises and compares the two doctrines, concluding that they are both flawed – neoliberalism leading to excessive social inequality and old style social democracy to static economies – and that a renewal of social democracy must acknowledge the respective successes and failures of these two doctrines (ibid: 1-26).

Whether or not Giddens's assertions about neoliberalism and old-style social democracy are correct is not so much the issue here. Discussions on the success and/ or failure of these two doctrines could easily be the subject matter of a whole thesis of its own. The issue here is that Giddens's Third Way is motivated by two distinct backgrounds. One of them – the social developments of globalisation, post-traditionalism and reflexivity – are supplemented by a substantial theoretical backdrop in Giddens's previous work, including even meta-theoretical dimensions provided by structuration theory. The other background has no equivalent in Giddens's work. Discussions of socialism, social democracy and neoliberalism only begin to appear in Giddens's work as late as 1994 in *BLaR*, where these doctrines are discussed with much the same conclusions as in *TTW*, albeit in more detail. The key question for the subject matter at hand here is therefore: can the presence of this additional background explain the disjuncture between Giddens's analysis of late modernity and his politics?

My answer is that this additional background to the Third Way certainly does dilute its capacity to present a fully successful conclusion to Giddens's utopian realist social theory, and that it takes away some possible options for what Giddensian policy positions might look like, but that this in itself cannot explain some of the more fundamental disjunctures I highlighted in the previous chapter.

Whilst Giddens criticises what might be termed the 'methods' of both doctrines in question, he agrees with the fundamental aims of both: wealth creation in the case of neoliberalism, social justice in the case of social democracy. And indeed, neither of these two aims is incompatible with what I have said here so far about the aims of

Giddensian politics. But beyond their two respective fundamental aims, Giddens is critical of both doctrines. The neoliberal outlook is untenable as it leads to social polarisation (see e.g. 2000a: 101). Social democracy on the other hand is largely centred on defending welfare institutions, but struggling to do so, given its lack of ability to deal with global economic pressures (ibid: 4-5). Meanwhile, both doctrines are characterised as somewhat anachronistic, for instance in that both supposedly rely heavily on the existence of traditional family structures and divisions of labour (1995c: 9; 2000a: 16).

Giddens's bottom-line on the two doctrines is that whilst noble in their aims, both have considerable flaws, some of which they share, others that are diametrically opposed. It is plausible then that Giddens's own political project should try to avoid several policy-approaches of both these doctrines. This limits the options of what his political project may advocate. For instance, his views on social democracy are likely to make him cautious not to place any emphasis on top-down decisions and attempts to control national economies. Ensuring some form of social cohesion in the absence of traditional families might be an important point he would take from the perceived failures of both doctrines. But whilst such considerations derived from his rather short and questionable analysis of recent political and ideological history do place limitations of this kind on his policy formulations, they are insufficient to explain the magnitude of the contradictions that I have identified between the Third Way and his previous work. They may, at a stretch, partially explain the Third Way's submission to global capitalism, in the sense that much of the 'taming' of capitalism undertaken by 'old-style social democracy' was ultimately unsuccessful. But it does not explain the seismic shift towards capitalism as a conceptually un-transformable system. Likewise, the absence of any policy on the redistribution of technological resources or the Third Way's comparatively darkened view of human nature cannot be explained by the perceived failure of these two ideologies. To be clear: on issues of how to balance wealth creation and social justice, as well as ways in which these ends may be met, Giddens's preambles on neoliberalism and social democracy may have had some effect, limiting and ruling out certain policy approaches from the start. But a more fundamental reason for the disjuncture I am exploring must lie somewhere else.

There is indeed one further characteristic of Giddens's Third Way which, as I will now show, can account for the kind of problems I have highlighted: its lack of perceived legitimate political enemies, or put differently, its non-adversarial character.

I do not use the term 'non-adversarial' in the same way as Mouffe, who adopts a post-Marxist position and criticises the political positions of Giddens, Beck and New Labour, noting that they fail to take clear sides, or even acknowledge the polarising effects of capitalism (Mouffe, 2007: 35-63). Therein, it follows from her argument, would lie the scope for truly radical politics, the aim of which must be "...the establishment of a new hegemony." (ibid: 52). As we shall see shortly, my use of the notion of adversarialism differs considerably from this line of argumentation. I mention Mouffe's argument here mainly in order to distance myself from it.

Furthermore, by 'non-adversarial' I do not mean 'centrist'. The question of whether the Third Way is 'left-wing', 'right-wing' or 'centrist' is implicit, sometimes even explicit throughout the critical literature and there is little consensus. Giddens himself claims that the Third Way is on the 'left' and openly rejects the notion of centrism (see e.g. 2000a: 44-45, 2000b: 39). Barrientos and Powell on the other hand characterise the Third Way as centrist, trying to combine precisely the two doctrines Giddens discusses in his introductory chapters of *TTW* and *BLaR* (Barrientos and Powell, 2004: 9-30), whilst Cammack (2004), as we saw earlier, places it squarely on the right as re-hashed neoliberalism.

I will not weigh into this debate directly, although there will be no doubt about where my alternative Giddensian political project stands on the left/ right scale. However, what is clear is that the Third Way does not identify itself in opposition to any other present-day political ideology. There is a strong suggestion throughout the Third Way texts that there can only be one way of politically dealing with the social realities of our time – subject to minor alterations and nation-specific peculiarities, as exemplified by the existence of a 'global Third Way debate' (see Giddens, 2001) – and that all previous political ideologies have already failed to do so. Whether the Third Way is ultimately viewed as being positioned closer to neoliberalism, to social democracy, or squarely between the two is therefore not the point here: whatever attributes it 'borrows' from either of these two doctrines, it positions itself as the 'Only Way' for politics in this day

and age, where other ideologies are not acknowledged as competitors on a political level playing field, but are instead all dismissed as rightly long-gone anachronisms. Put simply, at the level of political doctrines and ideologies, the Third Way's enemies are all located in the past. Though discussing New Labour rather than Giddens, Marquand concisely summarises this stance, noting that New Labour advertised itself as "...uniquely suited to a young country..." and noting Blair's comment that "...everything is new." (Marquand, 1999: 226). Hence:

The world is new, the past has no echoes, modernity is unproblematic, the path to the future is linear. There is one modern condition, which all rational people would embrace if they knew what it was. The Blairites do know. (ibid: 226)

Other authors have also noted this criticism specifically in relation to Giddens. Anderson mentions that his Third Way lacks any notion of politics as a struggle for power and is thus effectively blind to any potential ideological opposition (Anderson, 1994; see also Kaspersen, 2000: 177). Aside from dismissing virtually all other noteworthy political ideologies of recent decades as anachronistic and unable to respond adequately to the present age, Giddens himself gives us further evidence that this point about his Third Way is accurate:

The politics of the traditional left was – and is – grounded in finding and confronting the 'bad guys' – the adversaries, as Stuart Hall calls them. The bad guys are the capitalists, markets, the large corporations, the rich, or the US with its imperialist ambitions. The right, of course, has its own collection of bad guys – big government, cultural relativists, the poor, immigrants and criminals. Neutralize and get rid of the bad guys and all will be well. But there isn't a concentrated source of the ills of the world; we have to leave behind the politics of redemption. (2000b: 38)

To a certain extent, it is even possible to pin-point the earliest remarks in Giddens's work that indicate this non-adversarial stance. In *BLaR*, he contemplates the existence of individuals who are not willing to let their lifestyles be influenced by others and thus resist post-traditionalism and reflexivity. He squarely identifies these as 'fundamentalists' (1995c: 84-85; 115), and notes that little political interaction with such individuals is possible. The use of this term, alongside its marginalising tone, sits uneasily with the magnitude of barriers preventing greater reflexivity and detraditionalisation. By Giddens's broad definition of 'fundamentalists' (see also Leggett, 2005: 17), this term might refer to anything from radical clerics preaching violence against 'infidels', to CEOs of large corporations who show complete

unwillingness to engage with their workers' concerns about low wages. Analytically marginalising so many individuals who might be termed 'enemies of reflexivity', many of whom are doubtlessly sufficiently powerful to exercise what Giddens calls sanctional constraint in his work on structuration theory (1999: 175), may well be viewed as somewhat of a point of origin of what would later become the non-adversarial character of his Third Way. To be clear: this issue can also not be solved by a utopian realist understanding; this would allow for a relative minimum of analytical emphasis on certain elements of social reality, but not for dismissal of this kind. Far from being 'fundamentalists', individuals who self-referentially hold world views that run counter to post-traditionalism and reflexivity, and who may have the power to impose these views or their worldly repercussions on others, are the legitimate and equal political adversaries of Giddensian politics. Giddens does not appear to recognise this.

So, whilst the issue of whether the Third Way is on the left, on the right or dead-centre is debatable, its non-adversarial character is hard to dispute. And indeed, it is possible to link its non-adversarial stance to the main points of critique I made earlier. I showed in the earlier chapters of this thesis that Giddens sees late modernity as characterised by a centrally important tension: those elements that enable the emergence of the late modern, reflexive, empowered self, and those elements that obstruct, even extinguish any scope for its wider emergence. Politically, this implies that a Giddensian politics must have an adversarial stance towards certain structural features of late modern societies, or, to use the language of structuration theory, towards those individuals who have vested interests in keeping said structures intact and reproduce them accordingly. He is surely right to suggest in the above quote that tarring 'markets' or 'corporations' with the undifferentiating brush of 'bad guys' is overly simplistic (though few 'left-wing' writers would be likely to unreservedly agree with such a stance). In fact, in some respects these entities may even be characterised as 'good guys', for instance in the sense that modern communication and information technologies, central to the emergence of the late modern self, have been developed by corporations, and spread, wealth-permitting of course, by markets. But this does not mean that the ways in which many markets and corporations currently operate do not have a multitude of dire consequences for many individuals the world over; it does not mean that the way markets and corporations operate cannot or should not be changed. And it certainly does not mean that there are no individuals with competing interests who might want to resist such change!

Reflecting in part on a short piece by Anderson (1994), Rustin makes some comments which tie the Third Way's non-adversarial nature in with some of my key points of critique:

Politics is usually about interests and power, about friends and foes [...] and a politics which ignores these dimensions in favour of an exclusive reliance on dialogue is liable to be ineffectual. This is the central problem with Giddens' programme, and it derives from his theoretical idea that the moment of reflexive rationality has arrived. (Rustin, 2001: 191-192)

This line of causality is possible; but since I have demonstrated awareness of structural constraints inhibiting the 'moment of reflexive rationality' in Giddens's work, the opposite direction of causality is more likely: relegating individuals, who are capable of limiting others' reflexivity, from the realm of political opponents to that of 'fundamentalists' leads to a politics without adversaries, thus making the advent of universal reflexivity considerably less problematic than it would otherwise be. In effect, awareness of structural constraint has, for Giddens, not translated into awareness of political conflict with individuals who are intent on keeping said constraints in place. Based on these comments, as well as other points I have made above, we can ascertain a plausible explanation for the Third Way's failure to produce a politics consistent with Giddens's previous work, which does not resort to accusations about Giddens's personal character.

I began this chapter with my four key points of discontinuity between Giddens's theoretical works and his politics: the complete acceptance of capitalism, the implicit notion that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is already a universal reality, the lack of a programme to further distribute technological resources and a rather more negative take on human nature than his earlier work suggests. It is possible to situate each of these points in relation to the Third Way's non-adversarial character.

Not acknowledging political adversaries in the context of promoting greater reflexivity and empowerment leads to an outlook where notions of constraint are stripped of any sense of domination or what Giddens describes as 'sanction' in *CoS* (1999: 176). With little sense of how punitive or sanctional effects of structure might then be enforced, the very concept of structural constraint is decisively weakened. This is a misapplication of structuration theory, where the importance of domination (ibid: 29-31) and, as noted,

constraint based on sanction is highlighted. This effectively leads to a situation where constraint, even though it exists, exerts little power, and where government thus needs to do little to further enable all individuals to engage in dialogue wherever disagreements arise, leaving it as a mere facilitator of such dialogues, rather than having to represent one set of interests against another.⁴⁵

Meanwhile capitalism, already deemed harder to transform than previously expected, given the failure of ‘old-style social democracy’ as perceived by Giddens, does not require any ‘enforced’ transformation from governments; if dialogue is possible at all levels, then individuals may achieve whatever transformation could be deemed necessary through their own reflexive capacity for dialogue and action. Furthermore, if such possibilities already exist without a concerted effort to spread the globalising technologies to all parts of the population, then such an endeavour is no longer necessary. Hence, there is also less need for the state to regulate the forces of capitalism beyond some limitation of absolute meritocracy and its un-equalising and socially destabilising effects. Certainly there is no need for any additional redistributive interventionist programmes, such as in the realm of technology. Meanwhile, where does the Third Way’s bleak take on human nature, exemplified by ‘no rights without responsibilities’ fit into all this? Here, I need to extrapolate a little.

This non-adversarial view of politics makes it difficult to explain failure. If we are truly in the age of universal reflexivity, and a Third Way government was to fully harness individuals’ reflexivity so that individuals can transform society as they see fit, then what could possibly go wrong? In other words: in the absence of competing ideologies and their worldly manifestations, how could we explain the persistence or even the increase of any social problems? How could we explain mass unemployment, if not through the profit-driven excesses of neoliberalism? How can we explain rises in illiteracy and innumeracy, if not through economically necessary cuts to education budgets? Any number of these questions could be asked, and Giddens’s Third Way can have recourse to two options:

Firstly, the Third Way government could be blamed – not for taking the wrong approach, but for not doing its job well enough. This line of thought is reflected in the criticism often levelled at New Labour’s Third Way that it is technocratic and overly

obsessed with targets and numbers.⁴⁶ Aside from that, there can only be one further possible reason: in a society without fundamental ideological tensions, where no manifestations of political or economic doctrines impinge on the individual's empowerment and reflexivity, it is the individuals *themselves* who must be at fault for social ills. Despite being reflexive, and despite having a government which embraces that reflexivity, individuals make 'wrong' choices, and hence a large discourse on responsibility and accountability becomes inevitable.

I have dealt at some length with this subject matter for two reasons. Firstly, I have done so because the question of why the disjuncture between Giddens's theory and his politics occurs is a matter of interest in and of itself. There may be other possible explanations, beyond those that focus on Giddens as a human being, though I have yet to encounter one that is convincing. Secondly, the explanation I have given here is in fact useful for the task of formulating my own alternative Giddensian political project. I have already given a rough outline of it, to which I can now add that it cannot follow the non-adversarial approach that we saw in the Third Way. A politics that is consistent with Giddens's analysis of late modernity and his utopian realist outlook must recognise that it is on a level playing field with other doctrines that potentially pursue different normative goals. Based on its central aim, a Giddensian politics must be clear about which interests it actively represents, and which interests it opposes. As such, a consistent Giddensian politics is certainly not situated 'beyond left and right'. Although I am keeping discussion of these two rather abstract terms⁴⁷ to a minimum, I can note nevertheless that my alternative model of Giddensian politics is situated in relation to direct ideological opposition.

Integrated Giddensian Politics: An Outline

Upon examining and contrasting the neo-marxist, anti-technocratic and social democratic critiques of New Labour's Third Way in his book *After New Labour*, Leggett sets out to reconstruct the Third Way, taking its key themes seriously, but also utilising its critiques. Before embarking on this task, he notes:

Books of this type are vulnerable to the charge of being all about critique, parasitic on existing perspectives and offering no constructive suggestions. Alternatively, whenever closing chapters do put forward tentative proposals, they often feel trite, unoriginal or highly speculative. (2005: 139)

And hence:

There is no manifesto here, nor a rallying call to a particular group of agents to enact a political project. Instead, what follows attempts to use the theoretical approach developed over the book to show how key Third Way themes might be reconstructed along more progressive lines. (ibid)

I broadly agree with all these points made by Leggett, and my motivation behind this final section is similar to his. Of course, my substantive subject matter is quite different from his, in that I do not attempt to reconstruct the Third Way – neither Giddens’s nor New Labour’s – or draw on its themes. The themes I draw on are explicitly not those found in the Third Way, but instead the quite different themes found in Giddens’s pre-Third Way work which, as I showed, are either conspicuously absent in his Third Way, or are at the very least treated in a highly inconsistent way. Though not a ‘call to arms’ as such, what is to follow here will have a more programmatic tone than Leggett’s ‘reconstruction’. This approach is necessary in relation to two of the key aims of this thesis.

As I noted at the outset, I wished to show in this thesis that Giddens’s pre-Third Way work – read in the utopian realist way, as Giddens himself prescribes – can be used as an important theoretical backdrop, based on which it is possible to construct important contributions to debates about the future of left-wing politics. Having shown that his Third Way is more-or-less a complete misfiring of an attempt at such a contribution, it becomes important to show substantively, what a contribution to these debates that is based firmly and consistently in his pre-Third Way works could look like.

Another key aim in this thesis was to contribute to the critical literature on Giddens’s work as a whole, and to propose a way of reading his work in such a way that it can withstand empirical scrutiny, which at face value it cannot. As I showed, a way of achieving this is to view his analysis of late modernity as being incomplete without a supplementary political project. Having shown that his Third Way is not a suitable political project to complete his utopian realist analysis of late modernity, it is important

to outline in at least some substantive detail, what kind of political project *would* lead to a successful completion.

For these two reasons, both closely bound up with the analytical objectives of this thesis, the following pages will at times necessarily be prescriptive beyond the boundaries of Leggett's cautions. However, in some important respects, this will not be a fully-fledged political manifesto. Firstly, the following pages cannot simply reel off a list of policy prescriptions. Given the aims of this thesis, it will also be important to place them in an analytical context, and to explain why they are being made, how they stand in relation to the key themes in Giddens's pre-Third way work and, where applicable, to contrast them to the Third Way.⁴⁸ Secondly, what is to follow cannot be a comprehensive political programme, simply because there are some policy areas, on which possible policy positions are not immediately obvious from Giddens's work. For instance, rules governing deployment of the military, or what the criminal justice system ought to look like cannot immediately be extracted from Giddens's work – its thematic focus is too far removed from these issues. Put simply: although Giddens's pre-Third Way work is a useful basis on which to make contributions to debates about politics, it does not have something to say about every single political issue that exists. A comprehensive political programme that could achieve this would have to draw on additional theorists who do have something to say about issues that are distant from Giddens's work. I see no reason, why this should not be possible in future research. But for now, I will limit myself to those areas of policy that are of direct relevance to Giddens's pre-Third Way work.

At this juncture, I need to stress a point I already briefly noted when I gave some illustrative examples of possible Giddensian policy-positions in chapter 3: none of the policy-positions I mention in the following pages are uncontroversial, and the majority of them have been the subject of much critical literature. I will only refer to such literature where doing so aids illustration and comparison to other political doctrines. As noted in chapter 3, the purpose of outlining the following policy positions is not to show that they are uncontroversial, but to show that they are the political consequences of Giddens's utopian realist social theory of late modernity. Put differently: the policy positions I mention in the following pages are intended not so much an analysis, but as data-presentation that *follows from* my analysis. My analysis of Giddens's work

revealed the framework for Giddensian politics outlined at the beginning of chapter 5 and I showed that any political project that successfully completes Giddens's utopian realist social theory must comply in full with this framework. However, having also shown that his Third Way does not accomplish this, it becomes an important final task of this thesis to go beyond my general framework and to give a possible example of a substantive political project – in a level of detail comparable to *TTW* – that does comply with it, controversial though its constituent policy positions may be. I also stress once again that whilst the framework for Giddensian politics I outlined at the outset of chapter 5 is effectively non-negotiable in terms of providing a successful completion of Giddens's utopian realist social theory, the following outline is merely one example of a substantive political project consistent with it. It may be possible to design different political projects that comply with the framework for Giddensian politics, though the Third Way is not one of them.

For lack of a 'catchier' term, I will refer to my alternative project as Integrated Giddensian Politics (IGP). I noted at the outset of this thesis what I mean by the term 'Giddensian', but just to remind the reader: this term does not imply that if asked, Giddens would necessarily agree with its content. It refers to the fact that my political project has Giddens's utopian realist analysis of late modernity as its theoretical framework, and is as such fully based on it. I add the term 'Integrated' for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is to serve as a reminder that this project is viewed here as an integral part of Giddens's social theory, without which said theory is highly flawed. Secondly, this term acts as an indication of the basic contours of my project. Thus, as I already showed, a Giddensian redistributive and economic agenda must integrate global and national policies,⁴⁹ rather than viewing them as entirely (or even partially) separate. Furthermore, based on the complex relationship between the reflexive, empowered self and the issue of structural constraint and emancipation, Giddensian politics must integrate emancipatory and life-political concerns, rather than for instance viewing life-politics as a separate agenda from the 'old' politics of left and right. Thirdly, this term serves as a reminder of Giddens's utopian realist approach, highlighting the importance of integrating solutions to the constraining aspects of the present with the genuinely emergent possibilities for the future.

The global and national economic agenda

I start with this area of policy, firstly because the economic agenda is arguably the most important part of any political platform, determining to a large extent what is and is not possible in other policy areas, and secondly because it relates to some of the most fundamental and complex elements of Giddens's analysis of late modernity, most notably the economic dimensions of globalisation.

The IGP approach to economic policy is based mainly on three theoretical premises that I have developed in this thesis so far. Firstly, since social inequalities and lack of access to key resources are barriers to the emergence of the late modern self, a strongly redistributive agenda is necessary. Secondly, the pressures of the global economy mean that a redistributive agenda cannot simply be implemented within national borders, blind to economic pressures from the outside. Instead, transforming the global economy, chiefly through international cooperation, must be a prerequisite for the ability to implement redistributive agendas within nations. Thirdly, transforming and achieving a more equal balance of power in the global economy is essential for the emergence of the late modern self. This is because the notion of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual derives in large part from the cultural and communication-based dimension of globalisation. Therefore, the charge of 'westernisation' must be dealt with. If reflexivity results from increasing contact and dialogue between different cultures and lifestyles, then it is crucial to the very concept of reflexivity itself that sections of the world's cultures and lifestyles are not cut off from this process as a result of an unbalanced global economy.

In order to make possible domestic redistributive agendas shown to be necessary for societies of greater individual reflexivity and empowerment, and in order to allow for an age of reflexivity based on genuine globalisation – in the sense in which for instance Hirst and Thompson define the term (1998: 7) – IGP must foremost pursue far-reaching reform of the global economy. International cooperation with other governments, for instance through international organisations such as the UN, as well as legislative power over corporations within national borders, are among the key available resources that should be harnessed.

A key cornerstone of this is the financial sector, given the extent of leverage that speculation and money markets currently have over national governments and economies. Introducing an international tax on speculation and other financial ventures – mooted at various times as ‘tobin tax’ or ‘robin hood tax’ – could be a key element of this. Global regulations on what kind of speculation is possible should be added to this: where speculation and other elements of finance capitalism such as hedge funds are likely to promote job creation and widely beneficial economic growth, they should be encouraged (for instance through varying rates of financial transaction tax), but where they run contrary to such ends, they should be penalised, either through tax rates or legislative power. Through such means, the financial economy could be transformed and re-contextualised so that its key function becomes to aid job and wealth creation and to enable redistributive projects.

Transforming some of the key institutions bound up with finance capitalism is also of importance here, and also relates to the issue of third world debt. In line with Giddens’s earlier cited claim, setting up a UN financial security council, entrusted for instance with aiding the implementation of what I suggest above, might be useful. Additionally, it would be crucial to seek reform of the IMF and other bodies that administer financial aid to governments. There can be no place for the type of conditionality that several authors I have quoted identify, where financial aid is provided on conditions that extend the power of large transnational corporations in developing countries and reduce those countries’ capacity to set up health and education systems and other public services. If anything, financial aid should be provided on conditions diametrically opposite to these. The goal here should be to create more autonomous economies in developing countries, which create jobs and raise the standard of living, allowing those countries to become exporters in their own right, but to eventually also become importers, as wealth increases. Although financial aid and loans to governments of developing nations (and developed nations for that matter) are quite possibly inevitable, it is also worth at least considering the possibility of cancelling third world debt, as was already unsuccessfully attempted in the late 1990s.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, what of the ‘real’ economy of goods and services? Whilst IGP acknowledges that private enterprise is beneficial in many respects and even contributes decisively to the capacity for more reflexive societies – for instance by developing ever

more efficient information and communication technologies – it must also tackle some of the central constraints that stem from the way in which many private firms currently operate. In both developed and developing nations, these include foremost driving down wages, effectively making potential employees in different areas compete by offering the lowest possible labour costs, and destabilising communities and entire countries and regions through their rapid mobility and transnational character.

The aim here is not to overthrow, but to transform capitalism in such a way as to lessen these kinds of destructive effects, while at the same time preserving its capacity to enable wealth creation and innovative new products. Once again, global and national dimensions are necessary here.

At the national level, many approaches readily come to mind that have been practiced with some degree of success both in the past and the present. Where the fundamental aim of private enterprise is concerned, elements of the Japanese model (See e.g. McCormick, 2004) could be drawn on, where private enterprise tends to be financed through local banks with vested interests in long-term prosperity in the region in which they mainly operate, thus alleviating the demands for quick returns often necessary in shareholder-financing. Elements of approaches found in Germany and France, referred to sometimes as ‘Rhenish’ capitalism (see e.g. Albert, 1993), could also be pursued, for instance mandatory representation of employees on the directors’ boards of major companies and strong obligations on companies to offer apprenticeships. Other ways of giving employees both stakes and decision power in companies should also be considered, for instance expansion of the co-operative approach, currently practiced by many businesses in the UK and elsewhere.

IGP advocates a combination of these measures. This is because some of the pressures exerted by private enterprise on individuals demonstrably obstruct the emergence of more reflexive and empowered individuals. The measures I outline here are feasible without any kind of system overthrow and are generally possible to achieve through the rules and resources available to governments. In combination, these measures represent a transformation of capitalism, where the term as such clearly still applies, but where private enterprise is recontextualised so that it gives individuals more decision power about how companies operate, whilst also ensuring that private enterprise is in itself

conducive to creating long-term prosperous communities and regions. The uneven power-balance between the high mobility of companies and the wage-dependence of employees would be somewhat lessened through these measures, thus reducing some of the most constraining aspects of the capitalist economy.

However, given the pressures of economic globalisation, IGP cannot rely on such an agenda and assume that it will not be compromised, even deemed unworkable through a mass-exodus of businesses and exploitative, low-wage job creation in developing countries.⁵¹ This type of national economic agenda must be combined with an agenda for international economic reform, to be achieved through cooperation with potentially like-minded governments and, once again, through international organisations.

In order to avoid the phenomenon of the 'working poor', shown to be a barrier to empowerment and increased reflexivity by the research I cited on the issue of poverty, it is desirable in the context of Giddens's utopian realist social theory to have mechanisms in place that prevent the existence of wages that fail to allow for a basic standard of living, be that through a standard minimum wage or through tariffs negotiated by trade unions. In order to counteract the global competition for low wages, IGP needs to campaign for the introduction of global wage-regulation. A global minimum wage, linked for instance to average living costs in each individual country, is one possibility here. Providing aid for labour movements and trade unions, especially in developing countries, might be an alternative or indeed simultaneous step.

But aside from dealing with wages and workers' rights, IGP also engages with the other side of this coin: the mobility of businesses themselves. At the national level I already outlined existing approaches that could be used to deal with this in some form. Yet, here too international regulation is needed to safeguard the areas in which large employers are located and in those areas to which they might choose to relocate. IGP acknowledges that mobility of businesses can be desirable, quite aside from the rather dubious feature of wage-competition. Infrastructure, proximity to raw materials, key customer bases or sufficiently skilled workforces might often provide sensible grounds for relocation. But given the often dire side-effects of relocation and abandonment of communities, IGP advocates international regulation and cooperation between nation states, in order to place public interest at the heart of any major relocation of mass-

employers. Mandatory social impact assessments on the old and new locations of an employer could be useful here. Obligations to contribute to sustainable infrastructures in the new location, as well as contributions to a fund for the start-up of new businesses in the old location are other possible measures. I already mentioned mandatory provision of apprenticeships as part of national economic policy. But this could also be advocated on an international level, as an additional requirement for the relocation of major employers.

Another key issue related to relocation especially of large industrial production facilities is pollution and environmental protection. Giddens himself acknowledges this as a truly 'global' problem (see e.g. 2000a: 153), and it is related to the issue of business relocation and is in many cases likely to require global rather than national regulation. The option for businesses to relocate to areas with less stringent environmental protection rules needs to be dealt with: given the effects of bad environmental practice on the very health and well-being of communities, IGP needs to ensure that such considerations cannot influence business mobility. On this issue, treaties such as the Kyoto protocol have clearly been steps in the right direction, and IGP broadly pursues further measures of this type. However, regulation must be more stringent: the envisaged end-result for IGP is that environmental protection and the safeguarding of local environments are obligations that businesses will need to meet, regardless of where they might be located.

Though I intend to investigate such possibilities in more depth in further research, I will conclude the outline of the IGP economic agenda here. The purpose of this section is to give a substantive example of what kind of an economic agenda would be consistent with Giddens's analysis of late modernity. This outline accomplishes this, and whilst further details are doubtlessly desirable, a deeper discussion of the agenda I set out here would require in-depth reference to many other authors, which as noted would in turn veer far beyond the topic of this thesis. Further details that might come to mind on the kind of agenda I have set out here would no longer be rooted in Giddens's work, and would instead largely be based on my own normative political stance, supported by whichever authors I were to see fit.

The economic agenda of IGP that I have set out here is formulated in response to the first major point of critique I made about his Third Way. To illustrate the contrast simply: whilst, as I showed, the Third Way advocates policy positions that make individuals, their life-cycles and life-choices subservient to the market, IGP advocates policy positions that make the market subservient to individuals. As we saw, the lack of engagement with possibilities of transforming capitalism is a central weakness of the Third Way vis-à-vis the connection between Giddens's social theory and his politics. As such, this is a central element, which an alternative Giddensian politics must deal with. Furthermore, the IGP agenda, as set out here, builds directly on Giddens's pre-Third Way work in a number of ways:

Firstly, in line with structuration theory, it views capitalism as a key structural feature of the present age that has both enabling and constraining properties. As such, it does not seek to abolish this structural feature altogether, but instead aims to transform it in such a way as to lessen those elements of it that constrain the political aim of fostering the reflexive, empowered self. In order to do so, IGP draws on those resources that are already available to governments, most notably legislative power and international cooperation.

Secondly, and related to this, the above approach is consistent with Giddens's view on globalisation, where the nation state is still an important player, but where international cooperation is essential, given that economic pressures are often exerted from beyond any given country's borders.

Thirdly, this economic agenda is consistent with the central aim of Giddensian politics in two ways. We saw on the one hand that within Giddens's own analysis the capitalist economy is a key source of constraint on the universal emergence of the late modern self. Empirical studies and critiques of Giddens that deal with issues such as poverty, inequality and pressures of competition helped to strengthen this case. Hence a critical, though not fully dismissive approach to capitalism, is necessary. Furthermore, I showed that the emergence of the late modern self depends to a large extent on a pluralistic and inclusive form of globalisation, where 'westernisation' and large global inequalities undermine the possibility of cultures coming into contact on at least roughly equal terms. Therefore it is necessary to regulate both the financial and the real economy to the effect

of lessening the power of western corporations over developing economies, and allowing those countries to build more autonomous and sustainable economies,.

Overall, this economic agenda provides two important cornerstones of a political project that is consistent with the political imperatives implicit in Giddens's utopian realist analysis of late modernity: at face value, it seeks to regulate capitalism at both the national and global level, in order to lessen its constraining influence on individuals' empowerment and capacity for reflexivity. But additionally, it redefines the framework of rules and possibilities within which private enterprise can operate, making it subservient to the sustainable prosperity of communities, individuals, and indeed to governments themselves. This final point is significant, as it leads me on to the next key element of IGP: aside from fostering the emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual by re-defining what private enterprise can and cannot do, as well as what rights and possibilities the actual and potential employees of those enterprises need to have, IGP also advocates a redistributive agenda, focussing on issues such as progressive taxation, healthcare, education and, crucially, technological resources. But the viability of such a redistributive agenda depends at least in some part on available funding and prevention of an outflux of businesses as a result of unfavourable economic conditions. By harnessing financial capitalism to make it more subservient to the aim of stable, wealthy and productive economies, and by tightening and harmonising the rules within which businesses can operate, IGP thus provides some key preconditions for any large-scale redistributive agenda to be possible.

The redistributive agenda: taxation, public services and technology

My second point of critique of Giddens's Third Way was that it is largely based on the assumption that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is already a widespread social reality. Within the utopian realist reading of his previous work – and supported by a vast array of critical literature – this is not the case. The effects of poverty and inequality, lack of educational facilities and, importantly, highly uneven distribution of technological resources, identified as central to Giddens's entire globalisation-thesis, all represent barriers to empowerment, reflexivity and knowledge. This being the case, IGP proposes a strongly redistributive agenda in these areas, in

order to allow for the new late modern self, as described by Giddens, to become a universal reality.

Three points need to be made at the outset here. Firstly, although IGP essentially advocates redistribution and has a broadly egalitarian outlook, making its basic stance on these matters fairly similar to those of virtually any orientation within the social democratic tradition, it does not pursue egalitarianism for egalitarianism's sake. As I noted previously, some research on the matter, such as Richard Wilkinson's (see e.g. Wilkinson, 1996; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) might of course lead to a politics where reducing social inequalities is a desirable end in itself, given the measurable problems that inequality brings to any society. But in the case of Giddens, where the central normative political aim is more intricate – focussed as it is on fostering a new type of self – the features of a redistributive agenda can be defined more clearly than would be possible with a simple watch-word of 'equality at all costs'. Instead, the aim of Giddensian politics provides us with a framework of *what kind* of equality and redistribution is necessary. Thus, although IGP certainly cannot promote widening income inequalities between the richest and the poorest in society, and must of course respond where sections of the population live on so little money that full participation in public life and the capacity for reflexivity are hampered, it does not simply advocate 'as much income equality as possible'. So, IGP is strongly committed to alleviating poverty and any kind of life circumstances that demonstrably hinder the emergence of the new late modern self. This may be termed negative redistributive policies, in the sense that the aim is to reduce factors which *obstruct* the goal of Giddensian politics. But equally – if not more importantly – are positive redistributive policies, in other words policies that seek to redistribute and create universal access to those resources that directly *contribute* to this aim. Central elements here, as I have pointed out on many occasions in this thesis, are education and technology.

Secondly, in line once again with Giddens's views on globalisation, the IGP redistributive agenda cannot limit itself to national dimensions. Much as is the case with the economic agenda, global redistributive dimensions must also feature. In part, the economic agenda already dealt with this. But as I showed, the existence of global digital divides is a key issue that Giddensian politics must deal with explicitly in order for the

notion of the empowered, reflexive self to be anything other than a strongly western and elitist notion.

Thirdly, any strong redistributive agenda that places a heavy emphasis on public services requires considerable amounts of funding. IGP deals with this in some part by regulating the financial sector and by ensuring that businesses cannot simply leave any given country for the sake of lower wages. But this must be combined with adequate levels of taxation. In the first instance, IGP therefore advocates a concerted effort to tackle problems of tax evasion and illegal offshore banking. Increased penalties or a one-off amnesty might be possibilities here. Additionally, international cooperation and legislation to make tax evasion more traceable are options worth investigating.

How much revenue could be generated by such measures is virtually unknown,⁵² so although the regulation of the financial economy and efforts to tackle tax evasion are likely to provide some part of the necessary funds for the sort of programmes I will shortly outline, IGP also looks to taxation as a key means of creating the kind of public infrastructure necessary to achieve the desired aim of Giddensian politics. Giddens's work in itself does not lend itself to any inference of what exactly the various levels of taxation should be, and this is compounded by the difficulty of speculating on how much revenue a financial transaction tax or a crackdown on tax evasion might bring. Yet, two points can be made on taxation in IGP. Firstly, taxes are in general unlikely to be especially low, and most likely in some cases to be above the average of the developed world, as is usually the case in countries with strong public services. Secondly, given the constraining effects of poverty (this includes the working poor), IGP places a strong emphasis on progressive taxes. This would mean that taxes such as VAT, broadcast tax (such as the TV licence in the UK or GEZ in Germany) would be kept as low as possible, as would income tax for low earners, whilst tax on high incomes, corporation tax, inheritance tax and so on would most likely see considerable increases. As mentioned, stating exact levels of taxation cannot be done based on Giddens's work and would therefore be outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, I find it important to mention this issue, as it is a key element of any political agenda, and also because financing an expansion and improvement of various public services is a demonstrably important feature of any politics consistent with Giddens's analysis of late modernity.

On the issue of redistribution and public services, the closest ‘relative’ of IGP is perhaps the Scandinavian model, but with many important caveats. Although this model differs between the various Nordic countries on many details, I broadly define the term as a social contract of sorts, where the state accumulates high amounts of revenue, provides state-of-the-art public services and social protection with the aim of benefiting all levels of society rather than just providing a ‘safety-net’, and ensures high levels of training, infrastructure and research, thus aiding the creation of a highly-skilled workforce and a productive business environment.⁵³

IGP stands in agreement with the basic ‘formula’, as it were, of the Scandinavian redistributive model. Acknowledging capitalism as a key structural feature of late modernity with some key important merits worth encouraging, in areas such as innovation and the creation of wealth and jobs, IGP is also acutely aware of its constraining features and therefore advocates strong government action to provide and distribute the resources necessary for the widespread emergence of the empowered, reflexive self – a task which the market, given its un-equalizing characteristics, cannot undertake and in fact often counteracts. Hence, a financially powerful state and heavily financed egalitarian public services are an advisable basic approach.

An additional congruence between IGP and the Scandinavian model worth mentioning here is its non-traditionalist character. Amongst various comparisons, Esping-Andersen contrasts the Scandinavian model to the conservative welfare models of for instance Germany or Japan, which rely heavily on traditional gender roles and family set-ups for the provision of important social tasks, most notably care for children and the elderly (Esping-Andersen, 1997). A system of this kind could not be part of a Giddensian politics: given Giddens’s emphasis on post-traditionalism and individuals’ ability to reflexively make their life choices and thus design individualised biographies, a welfare system that relies on the existence and persistence of structural determinants is a non-starter. Barriers to reflexivity, stemming from traditions and social structures such as gender or family-type, run no less contrary to the basic aim of Giddensian politics than structural barriers that stem from the constraining effects of capitalism, poverty and inequality. By providing strong public services in areas which conservative welfare regimes might deal with by reliance on traditional structures, the Scandinavian model diminishes some key barriers to reflexivity and empowerment. IGP concurs with this

approach. Once again, the argument for a large, well-financed state, providing egalitarian provision of public services is implicit.

But in many other respects, the redistributive agenda of IGP differs from the Scandinavian model. The additional global dimension, which I already mentioned and will detail further below, is a key difference. The emphasis of IGP on regulating the movement, financing and power-structures of businesses is also an element not found in the Scandinavian model. Furthermore, although the creation of a highly skilled workforce to enable economic growth and business creation is essentially pursued by IGP, the central aim of services such as education and infrastructure goes beyond this: individual reflexivity and empowerment beyond the world of work must be a priority of any Giddensian political agenda. This influences several details of how and what kind of services must be focussed on by the state. Related to this, the emphasis on technological resources is not a significant element of the Scandinavian model, though in IGP it is of great importance. In any case, having identified certain fundamental similarities in order to place IGP into the context of comparable existing versions of centre-left politics, it is superfluous now to pursue this particular comparison much further.

So, IGP proposes investment in several public services, most notably those which, if unavailable, would limit individuals' capacity to make reflexive life choices. Additionally, these services must be of sufficiently high quality to eliminate the possibility of public/ private divides (for instance in the areas of healthcare and education), in order to prevent a scenario where some are more reflexive and empowered than others.

Given the importance of knowledge, the acquisition thereof, the ability to evaluate and reflexively incorporate it into the life-cycle, and the ability to use and understand the mechanisms through which knowledge might be acquired, high investment and reform of education systems are crucially important elements of the IGP agenda. Contemplating the exact nature of school curricula or teaching styles veers deeply into the field of pedagogy, which is once again far beyond the subject matter of Giddens's work. However, several important points on how education systems might be reformed can be made here.

Foremost, there is the issue of distribution. IGP must ensure that a high standard of educational facilities is available to everyone. In the first instance this relates to the problem of poor communities, which may in turn at present have poorly equipped and under-performing schools. The structural barriers created by this must be dealt with by ensuring that schools in disadvantaged areas receive heavy investment. But even in relatively well-off areas, IGP also advocates improvements. Decreasing class sizes, improving facilities, both within classrooms and for extra-curricular activities, might all be key steps to building an egalitarian education system that promotes discovery of knowledge and skills, and enhances individuals' capacity for reflexivity and empowerment in disadvantaged areas, as well as in those that are better-off. Rigorous qualification processes for the teaching profession, as well as financial incentives for individuals from other career paths to teach in schools or play some part in the curriculum are also part of the IGP agenda. Indeed, similar proposals could also be applied to university education. One point worth making here about university education, as it concerns the structural barriers posed by social inequality, is that there can of course be no place for tuition fees in IGP; financial barriers to educational resources must be avoided if the aim of Giddensian politics is to be realised in anything other than an exclusively elitist manner.

But access to high quality educational facilities is not only an issue of advantaged versus disadvantaged communities and regions. Giddens himself points out that education and training should be viewed as a life-long endeavour (2000a: 125), where facilities are available also to those who have completed their formal education and may have already spent some time in the job market. Age cannot be a barrier to knowledge, skills and reflexivity: increasing possibilities of formal qualifications for higher age groups is therefore an important step, and provision of informal classes on a wide variety of skills and topics should also be in place. This is especially important where the use of technology is concerned, as research cited in chapter 2 shows that there are considerable digital divides between older and younger age groups. Providing free IT courses especially for the elderly is thus an additional important precondition for the advancement of reflexivity.

I mentioned in my critique of Giddens's Third Way that education does in fact feature highly on the agenda. Yet, whilst the Third Way almost exclusively views the creation

of ‘human capital’ as the desired goal, IGP pursues broader ends in its approach to education. Whilst qualifications and skills for specific jobs are a key element of any education system – indeed, IGP harnesses private enterprise to play a part in providing this, as noted in the previous section – education systems must also be aimed at fostering the more general skills that are involved in coping with the vast information flows brought about by the globalising technologies, and in the process of reflexive incorporation of knowledge in the individual’s life-cycle. It is obvious, and perhaps not especially helpful, to simply say that any curriculum should emphasise individual research, critical skills, competence in locating and individually evaluating teaching and learning materials, and sophisticated use of information technologies. However, some concrete examples come to mind which are likely to further this rather general aim: firstly, said information technologies must of course be available in schools. Secondly, citizenship classes could be adapted to such ends. The International Baccalaureate (IB) has some features which are also worth looking to: in the IB curriculum there is for instance a compulsory ‘Theory of Knowledge’⁵⁴ course, typically starting for students aged approximately 16. Also worth noting is the ‘Information Technology in a Global Society’ (ITGS) course, taught across many age groups in most IB schools. The course objective is set out explicitly:

[The ITGS] course is the study and evaluation of the impacts of information technology (IT) on individuals and society. It explores the advantages and disadvantages of the access and use of digitized information at the local and global level. ITGS provides a framework for the student to make informed judgments and decisions about the use of IT within social contexts. (IBO: 2010)

Although compared to large-scale economic agendas these points on the exact details of school curricula might seem insignificant, I find it worthwhile mentioning them to illustrate that there are specific things that could be done – and are already being done in some schools – which directly provide the foundation for engagement with and critical use of knowledge and information technologies.

To summarise: reform and expansion of the education system is one of the most important elements on the IGP agenda. The overall approach is to provide state-of-the-art educational facilities to the entire population, where structural determinants such as location, income or age have a minimal effect on the standard of education available. Where appropriate, private enterprise is utilised to support the education system, though

this is generally limited to the provision of apprenticeships. Aside from creating a highly skilled workforce, curricula should be geared at least in some part towards providing what might be termed here the intellectual and practical tools for individuals' reflexivity.

In other areas of welfare and public service provision, the basic approach of IGP is effectively the same: public services must be sufficiently strong, well funded and widely available that barriers to reflexivity can be overcome. In many areas, the contrast to Esping-Andersen's definition of the conservative welfare model is useful here. Childcare and care for the elderly must be key priorities, since these areas frequently become causes of constraint based on gender or family-type.⁵⁵ Likewise, provision of universal high-quality healthcare is an important element of IGP, as is provision of housing and levels of unemployment benefit that allow individuals to participate fully in public life and prevent isolation, poverty and all other related barriers to increasing reflexivity.

I mention these services briefly – even though they are important – as IGP effectively advocates application of the same outlook that shaped policies on the issue of education: with considerable justification, IGP acknowledges that poverty, age, gender roles, health, and so on can all represent barriers to reflexivity and empowerment. Unfettered market principles demonstrably do little to overcome these – in fact they often strengthen structural determinants and create additional ones, as I showed in the earlier stages of this thesis. Hence, if the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is to become a universal reality, public services must be strong, egalitarian and not dependent on the existence of structural determinants (such as traditional gender roles in the case of childcare). On all counts, IGP follows this approach.

But there are two further elements of the IGP redistributive agenda worth mentioning here in some additional detail, as they are important in relation to Giddens's pre-Third Way works, and also go beyond most well-established ideas of what a large redistributive welfare state might look like: the distribution of globalising technologies, and the global dimension of IGP redistribution.

As we saw, there is a fundamental tension in Giddens's globalisation-thesis. On the one hand, there is the technological and communication-dimension of globalisation, from which the capacity for post-traditionalism, reflexivity and empowerment stems. On the other, there is the economic dimension, which at once has at least partially given rise to these technologies, and also led to an uneven distribution of them. IGP must deal with this tension. If access to information is the foundation of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, and if market principles lead to unequal access, then the state – provided that it pursues the aim of Giddensian politics – must step in to ensure that no individual is denied said access.

A few issues can be noted here that do not relate to technology per se, but are relevant to the availability of and access to information. Thus, where there are levels of illiteracy in a given society, IGP supports government-sponsored programmes that can tackle this, be it within the formal school system or in separate organisations. Furthermore, preserving and expanding public libraries is important in this context.

However, the most significant task in this respect is to ensure universal access to the globalising technologies, specifically the internet, irrespective of age, location, income or any other structural determinant. This involves investment in digital infrastructure in areas that do not have internet access, the provision of computers and, as mentioned previously, the provision of courses that teach competence in these technologies where necessary. The idea of viewing internet access as a fundamental human right has been mooted at various times.⁵⁶ In effect, IGP concurs with this position. Not only is it, in the context of Giddens's work, a key pathway to reflexivity and empowerment in a general sense; it could furthermore yield economic benefits as those previously 'unconnected' might use this technology for entrepreneurial purposes.

There are a number of ways in which these ends could be met. Outright nationalisation of broadband internet provision could be one option; subsidising internet provision through existing service providers to those otherwise unable to afford it could be another, administered as part of unemployment benefit or in the case of the elderly, as an add-on to state pensions, much like a bus-pass. A more Giddensian, transformationist approach might be to offer tax incentives to internet service providers and manufacturers of computers if they enable access in previously unconnected homes and

communities. Although this would perhaps be more in the 'spirit' of structuration theory, IGP does not advocate any particular one of these possibilities.

Finally, there is also a global dimension to the IGP redistributive agenda. The need for this stems from the issue of globalisation versus westernisation. Given the role of globalisation in the notion of the reflexive, empowered self, any charge of developed countries being the sole beneficiaries of globalisation renders the project of the late modern self problematic. As such, IGP proposes that governments in developed countries take steps to allow the preconditions for an emergence of the reflexive, empowered self to be established in developing parts of the world. In some part, the global economic agenda I set out earlier accomplishes this. The hope is that where developing countries are not burdened by IMF conditionality, and where transnational corporations cannot simply enter and leave at will, indigenous and sustainable economies may emerge and long-term wealth may be created. However, relying purely on this may be insufficient, given the lack of infrastructure or scope for entrepreneurship that exists in many parts of the world. Therefore, IGP firstly advocates sustaining and increasing financial aid to regions affected by abject poverty and which have little scope for economic growth. This can also include support for humanitarian organisations which operate in those regions. Secondly, IGP aims to utilise the expertise of existing companies to lay the foundations for a digital infrastructure in countries that are currently on the 'losing side' of the global digital divide. This could be done, once again, through tax incentives for companies that might be able to accomplish this. On the one hand, this could lead to growth of those companies and to the creation of jobs within the countries they are based in, as well as to close economic ties and potentially good diplomatic relations with the developing countries in question. On the other, those areas to which infrastructures for the globalising technologies are provided will have more scope for creating sustainable economies. Meanwhile, investment in the digital infrastructures of the developing world adds to creating a genuine notion of globalisation, through which a less 'westernised' emergence of post-traditionalism, reflexivity and the late modern self becomes ever more possible.

This concludes the outline of the redistributive agenda of IGP. It was formulated in direct response to the second, third and fourth point of critique I made about Giddens's Third Way. Unlike the Third Way, IGP recognises that the empowered, reflexive,

knowledgeable individual is far from being a universal reality, and that the state must provide a high level of public services and redistribution in order to enable this to happen. Secondly, and once again unlike the Third Way, IGP is acutely aware that access to information, specifically through the globalising technologies, is a crucially important element for any political project consistent with Giddens's utopian realist analysis of late modernity, and therefore makes the distribution of these technologies, as well as wide-spread competence to use them, a key priority on its agenda. Thirdly, IGP carries a generally positive underlying view on human nature. Only through such a view can the idea of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual be meaningful as a desired political aim. The Third Way emphasises threats such as 'moral hazard' and opens up a large discourse on responsibility, where coercion on the part of the state is viewed as necessary in order to make individuals make the 'correct' life choices. IGP by contrast views individuals as being structurally constrained in many ways, where said constraints are important factors behind undesirable outcomes such as long-term unemployment or crime, and advocates that the state should help to diminish those constraints, enabling rather than coercing individuals to transform their lives for the better, becoming ever more reflexive and empowered.

Between the economic and redistributive agenda, I have now formulated a political project that responds adequately to the criticisms I made of the Third Way. However, one further element of the IGP agenda still needs to be outlined here, in order to satisfy the demands that the subject matter of this thesis makes on the outline of a political project: having provided a framework that sets out how globalisation, reflexivity, post-traditionalism and the late modern self might be fostered, how should politics respond to societies in which this is increasingly the case?

Life politics, transparency and the digital public sphere

So far, much of what I have said about IGP has a strong top-down character. Generally, I have suggested policies which a government, if it were to follow the IGP agenda, would seek to implement upon being elected, quite possibly against considerable opposition both in the formal political sphere and elsewhere. Initially this approach might seem to run contrary to the Giddensian notion of the reflexive, empowered self.

This notion and its normative political connotations should surely involve greater political decision-power for all individuals, rather than a pre-set political agenda to be implemented from the top of the political power-structure. However, in societies where universal reflexivity, access to knowledge and individual empowerment are possibilities rather than widespread realities, politics cannot immediately rely on individuals' reflexivity, knowledge and empowerment for its policy formulation. The first step of IGP, and easily the most important in the context of Giddens's utopian realist social theory of late modernity, is therefore to implement an economic reform and a redistributive agenda that reduces the constraints inhibiting the wider emergence of the late modern self.

It is this first step that I have set out in the previous two sub-sections. But for IGP, greater social equality and distribution of resources is as mentioned not an end in itself, given the central normative aim of Giddensian politics. Not only must IGP deal with structural constraint in late modernity; but having laid the groundwork for greater reflexivity and empowerment, it must respond to a society that is increasingly characterised by these features. Indeed, as we saw, Giddens notes on several occasions that there are many political issues that are not purely of an emancipatory nature, summarised under the blanket-term 'life politics', the politics of life-choice. And whilst the economic and redistributive agenda I have set out so far has had a strong top-down character – necessarily so, as it is this agenda that brings about greater reflexivity and empowerment in the first place – it is from this point onwards that IGP advocates placing greater decision power and political participation into the hands of individuals. An initial emancipatory agenda of the kind I set out above is non-negotiable, given its importance for what is to follow. But beyond this initial agenda, governments and political parties cannot moralise and impose their values upon individuals, as this would stand in direct contradiction to the idea of reflexive, empowered individuals actively engaging with life-political issues and having a say in what the politics of life-choice might look like.

Therefore, the final key element of IGP that I will present in this outline is the creation of a public sphere, mainly through the use of the globalising technologies, alongside an increase in transparency and freedom of information, as well as an increase in dialogue between governments and the public.⁵⁷

The first point, namely fostering the public sphere, may seem counter-intuitive at first: the idea of a government setting up the public sphere might be viewed as contradictory. However, the stance of IGP is that whilst the government should not have much (if any) involvement in setting up the institutions of the public sphere, it should provide the resources, through which the public sphere can grow in significance and become more inclusive. In large parts, the redistributive agenda I outlined above accomplishes this, specifically through universal provision of the globalising technologies. Technologies such as the internet, aside from giving individuals access to information, also enable individuals to communicate. Since Giddens places such fundamental emphasis on these technologies to make his case for the era of globalisation as being genuinely distinct, a Giddensian argument on the public sphere can be made.

In past ages, any concept of a public sphere is likely to have been highly exclusionary. Where public debate has to happen through traditional means – the established news-media, discussions and debates in physical locations – several factors, such as mobility, geographical location, health and disability and time constraints would have prevented many individuals from being a part of it. Through the advent of the globalising technologies, this could potentially change. Some examples can already be pointed to, where the internet has been used to create high-profile discussion forums for groups of people who would otherwise be less able to publicly express their concerns. Mumsnet, which, aside from providing plenty of discussion boards for mothers to communicate amongst each other, has hosted debates with several leaders of political parties, is a particularly poignant example here.⁵⁸ Many other examples could come to mind, including the more general social networking sites, certain elements of which also contribute to this digital public sphere. Yet, inclusion in this public sphere is only possible if universal access to these technologies, as well as providing means of acquiring the competence to use them where necessary, is guaranteed. Through its redistributive agenda, IGP accomplishes this.

But it will not do to simply facilitate the existence of such an inclusive digital public sphere, if governments and parliaments are free to ignore whatever is being said there.⁵⁹ At times, it is possible that the very existence of a large digital public sphere can resolve social tensions in and of itself by facilitating dialogue and expression of individuals'

problems and points of view. But often, issues might be at stake which ultimately require some form of government action, be it redistributive or legislative.

It is perhaps not especially helpful for IGP to simply advocate that government shows some form of informal interest in online discussion groups and forums, although the case of Mumsnet suggests that this may sometimes be viewed as a necessary move by individual politicians to demonstrate engagement with the public and hence to attract voters. But there are some specific measures that could be taken to create greater links between the digital public sphere and policy-making. For instance, more emphasis could be placed on online petition web sites, which some governments are already operating. At present, digital divides make this an exclusionary concept, but with greater access to the necessary technologies, online petitions could assume greater significance. IGP advocates that any online petition that is signed by a certain minimum number of people must be debated in parliament (national or regional, depending on the issue in question). Conversely, governments should also seek public opinion on issues that are already being discussed in the formal political sphere. Launching web sites for online questionnaires on whatever issues arise might be useful here. Where large response rates occur and representativity can be ensured,⁶⁰ results could even be made to play some part in government decisions, be that in actual parliamentary votes or in formulating draft legislation.

These are just a few suggestions on how IGP proposes to foster a digital public sphere and to use the globalising technologies to facilitate greater individual empowerment and public involvement in policy-debates and policy-making. Additional methods of facilitating this are of course conceivable, but since they veer strongly into technological rather than sociological discussions, the above examples will suffice to outline the general approach of IGP.

The reason why this kind of approach is necessary is rooted in Giddens's notion of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual. A strong redistributive agenda is necessary in order to bring about greater capacity for reflexivity in the first place. But beyond this, IGP cannot seek to impose morality and ideals about desirable and undesirable life-choices onto populations as the Third Way does: this would run counter to any notion of increased reflexivity and empowerment of individuals. Foremost, this

concerns what Giddens describes as the life-political agenda: issues relating to sexuality and family-models, the control and/ or regulation of certain goods (narcotics, violent music and video games, weapons, etc), abortion, religious practices, and a host of other issues that are not immediately of a redistributive nature. On all of these, IGP advocates that government utilises the digital public sphere and arrives at legislative solutions (where necessary) based on dialogue with the public, rather than on the particular moral viewpoints of the individuals who happen to form part of the government.

But the use of the digital public sphere is not limited purely to the life-political agenda. As I showed earlier in this thesis, there is a close link between emancipatory and life politics, and any Giddensian political project must be aware of this. On the one hand, I showed that emancipatory policies must be designed with the explicit aim of making engagement with life-political concerns possible. The agenda I have outlined so far accomplishes this part: redistribution and increased access to knowledge and technology in the way I have outlined here are the necessary preconditions for greater public involvement with life-political discussions and decisions. But the relationship between emancipatory and life politics also works in the opposite way, as discussions on newly possible life choices may also highlight new differences in life chances. An example I have frequently noted to illustrate this was the issue of organic foods, which might additionally highlight the constraints of poverty, given that organic foods are considerably more expensive than non-organic equivalent. As new emancipatory concerns surface, beyond those already referred to in the redistributive agenda of IGP, the digital public sphere should of course also be utilised, both for individuals to share the concerns in question with others and petition government, and for governments to ascertain what exact problems are being encountered and what solutions might be desired by the public.

It is worth noting at this point that there is a chronological issue here: a government guided by the principles of IGP cannot simply assume office and place its reliance on a fully inclusive digital public sphere that does not yet exist. To put it as simply as possible: the economic and redistributive agenda of IGP might be termed as ‘phase 1’, whilst the expansion of the digital public sphere and this form of direct democracy is very much ‘phase 2’, to be implemented gradually, and only after measures guaranteeing universal access to knowledge and the globalising technologies have been

implemented. But beyond the digital public sphere itself, there is a further matter relevant to the heading of this section that needs to be considered before I conclude: transparency and freedom of information.

Even if the technological and educational requirements for universal access to wide ranges of information are guaranteed and a government is committed to engagement with the public, both informally and through set regulations, there are still two key dangers that could affect the scope and workability of the digital public sphere and digital direct democracy of the kind I have outlined. Firstly, there is the issue of government secrecy, which might profoundly limit the information to which the public have access. Secondly, there is the issue of media control by powerful individuals, who may in certain cases even have close ties with certain parties or governments. A politics, which seeks to expand individuals' access to information, and to include the public in political debates and decision-making, must confront these issues.

Firstly, IGP therefore advocates a strong emphasis on transparency in the formal political sphere. In the first instance, this involves rebalancing freedom of information acts and government secrets acts as far as possible in favour of the former, where only information relating to matters of national security and perhaps a few other exceptions can legitimately be withheld from public access. Additionally, governments should utilise information technology to publish further relevant information, such as details of the treasury budget, details on government debt and research that is used by the government to inform policy.⁶¹ These kinds of measures can add to ensure that the information to which individuals have access is such that greater engagement with policy-making and political debates becomes possible.

IGP also advocates some engagement with the established news media. Naturally, many news outlets are likely to be partisan in some form, and attempting to change this would most likely involve heavy regulatory measures, censorship, and so on. Such measures are undesirable by most normative political viewpoints. But to ensure once again that sources of information are as diverse as possible, IGP advocates preventive measures against media monopolies and ownership of major news outlets by policy-makers. Rules preventing individuals who own newspapers or news broadcasters to form part of a government could be one possible measure to help promote independent news media.

Tightening rules on what market share of news media any one individual or company can have is also a possibility. Likewise, whilst state-funded public broadcasters may be useful, rules about impartiality and independence from the government should be strengthened.

These final points are not necessarily readily evident policy prescriptions from Giddens's own work. However, I have added them here, albeit in relative brevity, because issues of transparency, freedom of information and close ties between government and news media are clear potential hazards to notions of public debate and public engagement in policy-making. For this reason I feel it necessary to note these matters as a precautionary measure that must be included in the IGP agenda.

Summary: The Adversarial Model of Giddensian Politics

I have constructed and outlined IGP here in direct relation to my critique of Giddens's Third Way, and indeed, to the basic framework of Giddensian politics which I developed over the course of this thesis and against which my critique of the Third Way was formulated. Whilst, as I showed, Giddens's Third Way is not a political project that successfully completes his utopian realist social theory, IGP does accomplish this task.

Firstly, IGP responds to the four points of critique I made about the Third Way. IGP engages with capitalism as a structural feature of late modernity, recognises its constraining elements and thus seeks to transform it, whilst the Third Way accepts capitalism as an un-transformable structural feature. IGP accepts that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is a possibility that needs to be explicitly fostered, while the Third Way views this new self as a universal reality, which merely needs to be responded to. Unlike the Third Way, IGP recognises the importance of redistributing the globalising technologies. And rather than focussing on a discourse of moral hazard, responsibility and coercion, as the Third Way does on many issues, IGP views individuals in a fundamentally positive light, where promotion of greater reflexivity and empowerment are intended to enable un-coerced lifestyle-choice and an active say in how a society should be organised.

Secondly, whilst explicitly avoiding these pitfalls of the Third Way, IGP fulfils all the criteria I established as necessary for any Giddensian politics. Firstly, its central aim is to foster the wider emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual, and to respond to a society where this type of individual becomes a widespread reality. Secondly, it aims to achieve this not through revolution or any kind of complete system overthrow, but by drawing on rules and resources already available in the present system. Thirdly, it acknowledges that capitalism and social inequality are key sources of constraint on reflexivity and empowerment, and as such places a strong emphasis on economic reform and redistribution in order to allow the reflexive, empowered self to emerge. Fourthly, it views globalisation as a phenomenon with several dimensions and many threats and opportunities, while also viewing the nation state and national governments as important agents. As such, it emphasises that many policy areas require both global and national elements, which often stand in close relation to each other. And finally, it recognises that emancipatory politics and life politics are not entirely separate categories, but that instead emancipation must be explicitly geared towards greater individual reflexivity, and that reflexivity and knowledge of possible life-choices can highlight ever more emancipatory concerns.

As noted, whilst my framework setting out the general parameters of a politics consistent with Giddens's utopian realist analysis of late modernity is effectively non-negotiable, I do not claim that IGP is the only possible model of Giddensian politics. Further thought on this matter may of course yield other possible models that comply with it. However, unlike the Third Way, IGP can be combined with Giddens's analysis of late modernity to form a consistent and empirically sound utopian realist social theory: his analysis of late modernity, aided by structuration theory where necessary, identifies those elements of contemporary societies that give scope for a new type of self – reflexive, empowered, post-traditional, able to formulate its own lifestyle and life-cycle – whilst IGP shows how structural obstacles to this new type of self can be overcome, using presently available resources. When put together, the result is a critical theory, in which structural barriers to reflexivity and empowerment are not so much an object of sociological analysis, but of political attack.

Before concluding this thesis, there is one further point worth making about IGP, as it concerns my explanation for the Third Way's failures, as well as IGP's wider outlook on politics and its positioning in relation to other political beliefs and ideologies.

I noted earlier in this chapter that Giddens's Third Way has a non-adversarial character and does not understand itself as being in direct conflict or competition with other political beliefs (other than beliefs squarely located in the past by Giddens, or 'fundamentalists', squarely located outside of legitimate political discourse), and that this feature – aside from being a point of critique of the Third Way made by other authors – is related to each of the Third Way's failings identified in this thesis.

IGP, by contrast, is implicitly adversarial. That is to say, it stands in a clear antithetical relationship to other political beliefs. Its aim to heavily regulate global capitalism stands in direct contrast to free-market philosophies and to ideas about the market as a desirable tool for the organisation of social life. Its highly redistributive character places it in contrast to political leanings that advocate higher inequality and 'incentive' based on the threat of failure and poverty. Its outline of a non-traditionalist welfare system stands in contrast to conservative ideas about traditional family values, the role of women and so on. Finally, its globalist outlook and its emphasis on international cooperation stand in contrast to nationalism and isolationism. And indeed, IGP makes no claim that these ideologies and political leanings – free market philosophy, politics of high inequality and incentive, conservatism, nationalism – are somehow 'in the past' or have 'failed'. Quite the contrary: these political leanings are viewed by IGP as key tools that maintain the structural features which IGP seeks to transform. Readers with an interest in current events and politics might find – as I do – that various combinations of these political beliefs and practices form the ideological outlook of many political parties, governments and sections of electorates in many countries. IGP places itself in direct adversarial relation to them.

Conclusion

Summary of Arguments

This thesis began with a review of Giddens's structuration theory and his analysis of late modernity, and highlighted the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual as a central theme in both these clusters of his work. Within structuration theory, the individual's knowledge, reflexivity and empowerment was not so much an empirical claim, but simply an analytical focus: the extent of reflexivity, access to knowledge, and hence of the individual's transformative power is viewed by structuration theory as something worthwhile looking at in any given society. Here already, I highlighted the normative dimension involved in Giddens's heavy emphasis on this type of agency. But in the analysis of late modernity, this theme was no longer simply part of a meta-theoretical guidance on how sociologists might conceptualise and analyse societies, but – at face value at least – appeared to be a substantive claim about contemporary societies.

I then examined empirical evidence on reflexivity, individualism, as well as what Giddens views as developments that have led to this supposed reflexive age: globalisation and post-traditionalism. The overwhelming evidence showed that an analysis claiming that the present age is characterised by wide-spread reflexivity and individualism, brought about through post-traditionalism and globalisation is incorrect. Although pockets of these developments exist, they tend to apply only partially, to a small number of individuals in a few privileged locations, whilst on the other hand there is plenty of evidence for unprecedented global inequalities, resurgence of tradition and the emergence of new structural constraints and determinants.

Instead of simply concluding that Giddens isn't a very good social theorist, or that he should have left it at structuration theory, I suggested a different way of reading his work, rooted in what Giddens himself views as his approach to critical social theory. From comments in his works on structuration theory and other early contributions, it emerged that Giddens views sociology as a transformative undertaking, and views

sociological texts as having transformative power. In later works, especially in *CoM*, he builds on this sentiment, and advocates the utopian realist approach in social theory. This entails chiefly that social theory should seek to point out developments and features of contemporary societies which, if fostered, may lead to ‘desirable’ ends (Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 72). This approach does not necessitate much attention to structural constraint – in the absence of ‘telos’ or historical ‘guarantees’, it is the quest for transformative agency that assumes primary importance; however, it does require the social theorist to show what might need to be done, in order to foster and encourage those emerging developments viewed as desirable to take hold on a larger scale.

Therefore, I proposed that Giddens should be read as a utopian realist, where the universal emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is the central normative goal, brought about chiefly by the technological dimension of globalisation and the consequent access to information and contact between different lifestyles; a normative goal, in other words, that derives from the possibilities identified by Giddens as being given in the late modern age. But keeping in mind the ample structural barriers currently preventing this aim from being realised, I also showed that Giddens’s utopian realist analysis would need to be supplemented by a political project that shows how these structural constraints to knowledge, reflexivity and empowerment could be overcome. This, effectively, was the basis of my critique of his Third Way.

But before it was possible to set out on this critique and to understand what a Giddensian politics would need to look like, some further steps needed to be undertaken. I therefore set out to show how structure and structural constraint could be conceptualised in a Giddensian politics (since his analysis of late modernity in and of itself gives little indication of this), how a Giddensian politics would need to respond to a society in which the new, late-modern self increasingly takes hold – this question being related to Giddens’s own distinction between emancipatory politics and life politics – and finally, what the key structural constraints inhibiting the wider emergence of the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual are, especially in relation to economic dimensions of globalisation, on which even the utopian realist angle did not immediately yield a conclusive account.

I argued for the use of structuration theory as the best way to solve the first of these three problems. This led to the conclusion that a Giddensian politics should be situated within existing political structures, make use of available rules and resources, and re-contextualise them in order to transform the constraining properties of the present system. This approach was shown additionally to be much in line with utopian realism in the sense that it does not advocate any kind of revolution or system overthrow, but instead looks to the possibilities for system transformation that are already in existence.

On the question of how to respond to a society in which reflexivity increasingly takes hold, I showed that Giddensian politics needs to envisage a dialectical relationship between emancipatory and life-political concerns. This was based on the argument that emancipation could on the one hand lead individuals to engagement with life-political concerns, whilst on the other, becoming aware of life-political concerns could also highlight new forms of constraint. Based on this, I concluded that Giddensian politics would at first need to pursue some large-scale top-down redistributive policies, especially in the area of education and access to the globalising technologies, in order to provide the fundamental requirements for greater reflexivity and access to knowledge, information and communication tools. From then onwards, it would be necessary to foster and encourage the growth of a digital public sphere, which government would need to engage with, in order to allow individuals to participate in political debates and decisions on life-political issues, and to highlight new emancipatory concerns as they emerge.

Finally, I showed that above all, a Giddensian politics would need to seek to achieve an extensive transformation of the global capitalist economy, since the growing inequalities and pressures resulting from its present incarnation are a key barrier to empowerment, knowledge and reflexivity for many individuals. This once again made the case for major redistributive agendas within individual nations. As a key element of both the global and the national redistributive agendas, I highlighted the importance of the globalising technologies, so clearly at the root of Giddens's entire globalisation-thesis. Indeed, ending digital divides was also identified as a central component of Giddensian politics.

Having established this basic framework of what a Giddensian politics would need to do in order to successfully complete Giddens's utopian realist social theory of late modernity, I then set out to contrast these basic requirements with his Third Way, and found that it fails to fulfil them, based on four key issues.

Firstly, I showed that the Third Way has an uncritical view of global capitalism, and sees it as a structural property of late modernity which cannot be transformed (with the thoroughly inconsistent exception of finance capitalism), and to which consequently all other government policy must be made subservient. Secondly, I showed that the Third Way in large parts assumes that the empowered, reflexive, knowledgeable individual is already a widespread social reality, which, rather than needing to be fostered and expanded, needs only to be responded to by government and policy-makers. Thirdly, I showed that the issue of redistributing the technological resources so fundamental to Giddens's entire project of the late modern self is absent in the Third Way. And finally, I showed that the Third Way has an implicitly negative view of the individual, which, at a general level, undermines the entire premise of Giddensian politics: rather than assuming that removing structural constraints and allowing reflexivity to take hold will generally lead to desirable outcomes, it views individuals as morally flawed and susceptible to moral hazard, hence leading into a discourse on responsibilities and coercion rather than emancipation and empowerment.

Based on these points, I rejected the Third Way as a successful completion of Giddens's utopian realist social theory of late modernity. I then set out to assess the possible reasons for this failure, and found that Giddens fails to take seriously the issue of politics as a contest for power, not just between various parliamentary factions, but also between competing political standpoints and ideologies. This in turn leads to a non-adversarial stance, which can in turn explain all four points of my critique.

Finally, I set out, based on my critique as well as on the framework for Giddensian politics I established in the earlier stages of the thesis, to construct an alternative political project to the Third Way, which does explicitly form a successful conclusion to Giddens's social theory. Trying to provide roughly the same level of substantive detail as *TTW*, and relating it back to the rest of my analysis, I presented IGP as my alternative model of Giddensian politics. IGP contains three key elements: firstly, extensive reform

and regulation of the global capitalist economy. Both financial markets and business regulation in general must be made subservient to lessening global inequalities and providing grounds for wealth creation and long-term prosperous economies, especially in developing regions of the world. At the national level, the power of large corporations is also to be regulated, largely through elements of existing economic models (Rhenish, Japanese, Scandinavian, cooperative). Secondly, IGP advocates a substantial redistributive agenda, aiming to create a high egalitarian standard of public services, focussing especially on education and access to technological resources, and also adding a global redistributive dimension to some of these elements. Thirdly, IGP advocates the creation and expansion of a digital public sphere, combined with obligations on government to interact with it.

Findings and Contributions

This thesis is not intended to be either an outright criticism or an outright defence of Giddens, but has instead mainly set out to add to the understanding of his work. It has of course been highly critical of his Third Way, but only in the sense that it does not follow from the rest of his work. Depending on other critics' normative standpoints, the Third Way may be viewed favourably, for instance in the sense that it contributed to significant electoral successes for centre-left parties in many countries after long periods of time in the political 'wilderness'. My critique does not counter such arguments; it simply shows that Giddens's Third Way does not follow from his social theory, read in what I showed to be the most defensible way. Conversely, I argued in favour of an alternative reading of Giddens, which allows for his social theory to be understood as empirically defensible. However, I also mentioned from the outset that whether or not utopian realism is generally a desirable course for social theory to take is debatable. Many social theorists may believe that it is not, and my arguments here do not dispute such a stance. What is crucial is that Giddens himself clearly advocates the utopian realist approach to social theory, and that this approach leads to a more defensible reading of his work, from which the remainder of my arguments has been developed.

Some minor conclusions I have drawn in this thesis are not in and of themselves new, even though I have reached them in a different way to other authors. For instance, I

noted that the Third Way's un-critical view on capitalism has been pointed to by others (e.g. Cammack, 2004). Likewise, its bleak view of human nature has also been alluded to elsewhere (see e.g. Morrison, 2004). Earlier points, such as the empirical indefensibility of many elements of Giddens's analysis of late modernity, or various points I made on his globalisation-thesis were of course explicitly taken from many other authors. It was necessary to draw on these existing conclusions in order to illustrate most clearly my own argument and to highlight its importance. The central original findings of this thesis, which I hope to have conveyed in full to the reader, are as follows:

Firstly, I have contributed to the understanding of Giddens's work. Although many authors and collected volumes discuss all three main clusters of his work – structuration theory, analysis of late modernity, Third Way – in some form, they are generally kept analytically separate, apart from the occasional reference to recurring themes or reading a particular concept found in one cluster against a particular theme in another. I have argued here in favour of reading these three clusters of his work as integrated parts of one comprehensive social theory, where the analysis of late modernity highlights Giddens's normative aim and the processes, developments and transformations that might allow us to contemplate its realisation, where structuration theory shows us how to conceptualise structure, structural constraint and emancipation, and where the Third Way needs to form the conclusion, by outlining a political agenda which can ensure that structural barriers to the normative aim can be overcome. If read in isolation and at face value, I showed that the analysis of late modernity is flawed and wide open to attack on several key points. But in the alternative reading I proposed, these weaknesses can be accounted for, whilst also noting that a certain type of supplementary political project must be added to it, without which the analysis of late modernity is of little merit. Hence, within the utopian realist reading of Giddens's work, the key flaw lies not in the analysis of late modernity, but squarely in the Third Way, which fails to complete Giddens's utopian realist social theory successfully. This leads on to my second main finding:

I have presented here an original contribution to the critical literature on the Third Way, and by extension, on what I described at the outset as the 'autopsy' of the Third Way. Primarily, my contribution here focuses on Giddens's Third Way, but it is also relevant

to the Third Way projects practiced in the UK and elsewhere, inasmuch as Giddens can be seen as having influenced these various governments, especially by supplying their policies with sociological background and underpinnings. Indeed, I cited several critiques that mainly focus on New Labour's Third Way, yet often reach conclusions very similar to mine that were specifically on Giddens's. Whilst I have outlined some direct criticisms of his Third Way, some of which have already been noted by other authors in different ways, my central finding here has been on the relationship between the substantive policy-prescriptions of the Third Way and its sociological underpinnings. I have shown that if we understand the Third Way as being based on Giddens's social theory, and if we take his ideas on utopian realism seriously (which, given the ample empirical objections to his analysis of late modernity, we have to!), then the key problem with the Third Way is no longer the sociological background on which it is based, but how that background is applied in it.

This then leads on to the third finding of this thesis – and in my opinion, the most important. I have shown that Giddens's work, if read in the way he himself advocates, can be used as a fruitful sociological basis for the construction of centre-left politics quite distinct from the Third Way. As I showed, IGP, rooted firmly in Giddens's work, has few commonalities with the Third Way aside from advocating reform of the financial sector and a vague nod towards democratisation and transparency. To put it as simply as possible: the New Labour government and others effectively chose a useful sociologist from whom to seek a political agenda, but if they had looked to his utopian realist analysis of contemporary societies, rather than to his Third Way, which is a gross misapplication of it, their policies may well have ended up being quite different.

If we discard Giddens's Third Way, and instead contemplate what kind of politics actually follow from his pre-Third Way work, we can establish a model for politics that is firmly in line with the long-standing normative positions of the left: equality (see e.g. Bobbio, 1996), emancipation (Schechter, 2007), progressivism (see e.g. Giddens, 1995c: 51) and a critical approach to capitalism. At the same time, it gives scope for contemplating renewal of these values, based on a new sociological premise distinct from that of existing social democratic traditions, which have struggled to achieve success – electoral or otherwise – in recent decades. These features are contained not just in the substantive policies that follow from his work, but also in its central

normative goal: the emergence of a new, empowered, reflexive self. This normative position is situated in a firm understanding of both the constraints and barriers, as well as the emerging possibilities and developments that exist in contemporary societies, and allows us to formulate consequent political agendas, of which, as I showed, IGP is one distinct possibility.

Context, Implications and Further Research

My arguments and findings in this thesis are, as mentioned, relevant to several existing strands of literature, most notably to the literature on Giddens's work, on the Third Way and its failings, and on the prospects and possibilities for centre-left politics. On all three of these fields, I plan to draw on the arguments I made in this thesis, and make them available to a wider academic audience. However, my research for this thesis also drew my attention to several further issues, which in this write-up I have not been able to explore at much length, but which I fully intend to examine in further research. Some of them are worth noting here, as they were alluded to at several points in this thesis.

Firstly there is the issue of globalisation. As I have shown, especially based on much of the literature presented here, there is to this day little consensus about how this term should best be understood and what its relevance both to sociological enquiry and to policy-making might be. The recent publication dates of some of the literature I have used here (see e.g. Martell, 2010) are indicative of the fact that these debates are unlikely to cease anytime soon. My utopian realist interpretation of Giddens's globalisation-thesis has given me much further thought on this matter. The idea of globalisation not just as an economic or just as a cultural phenomenon is of course nothing new. But what has been of importance in this thesis is how these various 'dimensions' affect and refract on each other. The rules or principles governing these effects and refractions are, I believe, just as important as discussions on each individual 'dimension', and further investigation into this matter has become a key interest of mine during the course of my research, and it is of course an issue which should be examined far beyond the focal point of just Giddens's work.

Secondly, there is the issue of the left/ right terminology. I have generally avoided discussing this here, and opted instead to simply talk about adversarial and non-adversarial politics, which, as I mentioned, is a rather different set of terms in the sense that they do not carry any ideological connotations. Yet, Giddens himself as well as some scholars associated with him have been quite dismissive of the left/ right terminology (see e.g. Beck, 1997: 149). My finding, that a politics consistent with Giddens's work needs to be adversarial, stands in some contrast to such stances. I therefore wish to examine in further detail whether or not the left/ right terminology should be viewed as relevant to the present age, both in terms of sociological, analytical merit, and also substantively, i.e. how and to what extent these terms are still being used in public and academic political discourse, and whether and how we may need to re-define and re-interpret the basic ideological outlooks symbolised by these terms. Regarding 'the left', I have here made a start on this, specifically in relation to Giddens's work. But the question of what 'left' and 'right' might mean, and how relevant they are in the 21st century, is of course a far broader question.

Thirdly, the effect of partisan news media on the prospects for greater reflexivity is a subject in which I have found considerable interest. In this thesis, I have shown awareness of this, by noting in my outline of IGP that links between media and powerful political factions within government and outside of it must be considered, if the possibility of a digital public sphere and greater direct political participation of individuals is to be contemplated. However, this too is an area I wish to investigate in further research, both in terms of its sociological dimensions, and its political consequences.

But if Giddens's idea about the transformative potential of sociological text and enquiry is to be taken seriously, then perhaps the most significant element of this thesis is my outline of IGP itself. His Third Way was written at a time when centre-left governments in many parts of the world had seen electoral success after long periods in opposition. Given this timing, it did indeed have at least some effect on the political direction of those centre-left governments. Should such a moment of centre-left resurgence occur again in the future, I hope to have sufficiently expanded on the ideas I have developed here, that they may play some part, however small, in the debates about what the future direction of the centre-left might be. May it be soon!

Endnotes

Notes to Introduction

¹ Leggett explicitly refers to him as "...the leading Third Way intellectual..." (Leggett, 2005: 13).

² Varela (2007) is among the few authors I have seen who use this term. It is slightly more common in German, e.g. Kiessling's *Kritik der Giddenschen Sozialtheorie* (1988). The ways in which these two authors use the term are quite different from mine, and indeed from each other.

Notes to Chapter 1

³ For further discussion on notions of power in structuration theory, see Layder, 1985.

⁴ There are however some attempts of empirical analysis that explicitly draw on structuration theory. Several applications of structuration theory in areas including reproduction of social space, religion, accounting, management, education, communication and media are collected in Bryant and Jary's *Anthony Giddens – Critical Assessments, Vol. IV* (1997).

⁵ There are some examples of critique that more-or-less fully reject the entire framework. Most of these come from post-modernist perspectives, although the previously mentioned morphogenetic approach might also be seen as a more all-encompassing critique of structuration theory (see Archer, 1982).

⁶ It has been argued that Giddens's reading of Foucault is rather poor in this respect. For a more detailed account of what some critics of Giddens may indeed term 'misrepresentation' see Boyne, 1997. However, although the charges of 'misrepresentation' are significant, they do not matter for the point I am making here: whether he is misrepresenting Foucault or not, it is evident that he is designing his theory explicitly in opposition to a structure-centred theoretical approach.

⁷ Giddens never gives an exact timeframe of when late/ radicalised modernity is supposed to have begun. In *BLaR*, he notes that many of the processes he talks about have taken place "...over no more than the past four or five decades." (1995c: 4). We may thus infer that the supposed beginnings of late modernity can be placed roughly in the 1950s at the very earliest. Giddens's work does not specify much further in this regard. McCullen and Harris (2004) note that "...the year of the first satellite TV broadcast [is] sometimes identified as a watershed..." (ibid: 48-49), although they give no reference for this.

⁸ For further discussion of various post-modernist criticisms of Giddens, see Tucker, 1993.

Notes to Chapter 2

⁹ Both Giddens and especially the critical literature often use these two terms interchangeably, but we can ascertain from Giddens a distinction between the two: in 'Post-traditional' societies, traditions no longer play a central role in consolidating the social order and are forced to justify themselves in dialogue with other lifestyles (Giddens, 1995c: 5), whilst de-traditionalisation implies their disappearance altogether (see e.g. ibid: 6; 13). I note this distinction here for the sake of clarity. Given the interchange of the two terms throughout the literature, I shall deal with them simultaneously.

¹⁰ I occasionally mention Beck in conjunction with Giddens, as their theories are similar on several issues. Giddens in fact notes:

I've become so close to Ulrich Beck over the past few years that I can no longer easily disentangle which ideas are his and which are mine. (Bryant and Jary, 2001a: 247)

¹¹ Points such as this one put into question the kind of linear connection that Leggett sees between the various elements of Giddens's analysis of late modernity: rather than globalisation being the root cause, from which the other 'social revolutions' stem, reflexivity here transpires as attributable to some other causes too.

¹² I believe it is justifiable to speak here in terms of Giddens's 'motives', as the evidence for these claims stems from an interview with Giddens (cited in chapter 1), in which he explicitly talks about his intentions, and what he 'wants' to do (see Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 72).

¹³ This approach to critical theory is not unique to Giddens: O'Kane notes that others have referred to...

...the miutic approach [to critical theory], which aims to engender the realization of emerging tendencies towards the good life. (O'Kane, 2009: 5)

¹⁴ Giddens notes that the financial/ redistributive element of emancipatory politics has generally been given the highest importance, compared to the other emancipatory issues he mentions (Giddens, 1995b: 212).

¹⁵ Giddens also presents us with a table, detailing a range of further issues and questions relating to life politics (1995b: 227).

Notes to Chapter 3

¹⁶ These are of course extreme cases. I mention them only to give an idea of the possible range of political approaches that could be conceivable at this point.

¹⁷ To be clear: this is not to say that books such as *CoS* contain no empirical claims at all! Where such claims appear, they can of course be assessed; but in those sections of Giddens's work, which focus solely on building his second-order theory, empirical claims are absent by definition.

¹⁸ Though opinions on this matter may differ, I find the closest equivalents to Giddens's views on this matter to be Berger and Luckmann (1966) and to a slightly lesser extent Bourdieu (1977).

¹⁹ At one point, he even mentions mortality as part of structure, an indication of just how wide the definition of 'rules' might be.

²⁰ It is worth noting here that this shows an important separation between constraint and domination on the part of Giddens, where the two are nevertheless still part of the same framework.

²¹ We can conclude from this that it is not by chance that structuration theory has been used successfully for research in areas such as management, and less on subject matters where individual scope for transformation intuitively seems more limited.

²² By Giddens's own admission, see 1995b: 230.

²³ Of course as noted, we do not need Giddens for this conclusion in and of itself. See e.g. Marx and Engels, 1985.

²⁴ Please note that I am using the term 'dialectic' loosely here: it is not intended to allude to a Hegelian teleology, but simply denotes the idea that, in some form, life-political issues can highlight emancipatory issues, which then in turn may or may not highlight new life-political issues, and so on. No linear sense of development is intended to be inferred here.

²⁵ Social movements, which I already mentioned, and most notably social networking, lobbying and political activism and participation, often through use of communication and information technology, are key examples here. I will discuss these possibilities in chapters 4 and 6.

²⁶ A few examples include no2wto, Mumsnet, Zeitgeist Movement, Huffington Post, Indymedia, (see end of bibliography for links) as well as many social networking sites and online discussion boards, launching consumer initiatives, petitions, demonstrations, etc.

²⁷ Giddens himself also mentions the ‘defensive’ character of the European left (1995c:8).

Notes to Chapter 4

²⁸ To give just one brief example of this: consider how peer-to-peer file sharing put pressure on the music industry to lower high-street prices of records and to make their content available online at even lower prices (see McCourt and Burkart, 2003).

²⁹ This is of course an inferential point: Hirst and Thompson do not explicitly consider these links.

³⁰ For further discussion on the political economy of communication and the case and prospects for disembedding communication technology from economic inequality and power structures see McChesney and Schiller, 2003.

³¹ Giddens has in fact noted that he finds the term ‘globalisation’ to be too broad for many analytical purposes and that it does involve many dimensions, to the effect that it more-or-less becomes a blanket-term for the present age. One example is in his address to USC Annenberg (no date available; see end of bibliography for link).

³² This is also the case in New Labour’s Third Way, see Blair, 1998.

³³ For discussion on some related points on the question of whether the constraints on national governments by financial markets have been exaggerated, see Mosley, 2005.

³⁴ Holton makes a case for this, and also notes that there have already been movements to achieve this (2005: 171).

³⁵ Beck, whose analysis of late/ high modernity is similar in many respects to Giddens’s, comes up with similar proposals for the regulation of global finance capitalism (2004: 130-132).

³⁶ These points are of course not dissimilar from those made at the end of the previous chapter. Yet, far from being a simple re-iteration, this shows that a strong redistributive character is important in a Giddensian political project from several lines of argumentation.

Notes to Chapter 5

³⁷ Giddens himself has in fact explicitly distanced himself from the term ‘grand narrative’ (Bryant and Jary, 2001a: 244-245).

³⁸ For another of the relatively few examples of this type of engagement with the Third Way, see Mouzelis, 2001.

³⁹ The German equivalent, *Humankapital*, was the elected Unwort des Jahres 2004 (‘Un-word of the year 2004’) in a highly publicised annual nationwide poll. Other ‘winners’ include *ethnische Säuberung* (ethnic cleansing) in 1992 and *Kollateralschaden* (collateral damage) in 1999 (see end of bibliography for link).

⁴⁰ For one of the clearest and most detailed examples of this, see Callinicos, 2001.

⁴¹ Again, this point is substantiated by reference to research on this subject matter, specifically Lindbeck, 1995.

⁴² I am not implying here that everyone would *have* to participate in Giddens's version of civil society. Elsewhere, he is quite clear in the context of civil society and the public sphere that "...democracy [...] is not defined by whether or not everyone participates in it, but by public deliberation over policy issues." (Giddens, 1995c: 114). However, it is clear from the context of Giddens's theories, and indeed rather uncontroversial to say that everyone *ought to be able and have the opportunity* to participate in it.

⁴³ In *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (1971) he notes Durkheim's notion of the 'historical nature of man [sic]', and contrasts this to what he describes as over-simplified notions of human nature associated with Hobbes and Rousseau (ibid: 224-225). The closest he comes to revealing a stance on human nature is in the same text. He notes Marx's concept of the appropriation of human nature, viewed positively and conducive to reciprocal relationships between individuals and communities, whilst it is capitalism itself that negates this by constituting humans in a more egoistic fashion. Though Giddens describes this as being part of an 'exciting and brilliant formula' (ibid: 17), it is unclear whether he actually concurs with this view, and if so, whether he still held it when writing *TTW* twenty-five years later.

⁴⁴ For further discussion on the moralising character of the Third Way, see Jordan (2010), who discusses this partly in relation to Giddens, but also highlights this as a key failing of New Labour.

Notes to Chapter 6

⁴⁵ Giddens does indeed devote some attention to what he calls 'dialogic democracy', with little consideration to who is able to participate in such dialogue (see e.g. 1995c: 112-124). For a further discussion on representation of interests in relation to impartial representation, see Bobbio, 1987.

⁴⁶ These critiques are documented in detail by Leggett (2005: 79-92).

⁴⁷ I use the term 'abstract' here, as they clearly have no substantive meaning in and of themselves – Beck in fact refers to them as 'metaphors' (1997: 149). For an especially poignant contrast of what the terms 'left' and 'right' are taken to mean, see Laver and Budge (1992) on the one hand and Bobbio (1996) on the other.

⁴⁸ Some key policy positions I outline simply do not feature thematically in Giddens's Third Way, even though his pre-Third Way work suggests that they need to. Beyond saying so in instances where this is the case, any further contrasting will of course be impossible.

⁴⁹ Though it has been implicit throughout much of this thesis, it is worth noting that throughout *TTW* and *TWaC* Giddens views his Third Way primarily as applicable to developed nations with representative democratic political systems, even though in general terms Giddensian politics is situated in a global context. I intend for the same geographical applicability in what is to follow.

⁵⁰ Writing at the time when debt cancellation was being mooted, Giddens speaks favourably of these possibilities (2000b: 132). Shah (2005) recounts how these plans failed, and interestingly notes that 'moral hazard' was used as a reason for decisions against debt cancellation.

⁵¹ It is precisely points of this kind that have been used to criticise the other models of capitalism I mention (see e.g. McCormick, 2004).

⁵² Murphy (2010) notes that HMRC estimates the UK 'tax gap' to be approximately 40 billion GBP, but also mentions that Tax Research LLP puts this estimate considerably higher at 95 Billion GBP (ibid: 1). Aside from these disagreements about the amount that is lost through tax avoidance and evasion, it is of course additionally unlikely that any measures would be able to retrieve the entirety of that figure.

⁵³ I take this general definition from Erikson et al (1987) and Esping-Andersen (1997), who himself rarely uses the term, but sees it instead as a distinct sub-category of what he calls the social democratic welfare model. NB: Giddens himself refers to the Scandinavian model on several occasions, though usually in passing, when comparing his Third Way to other incarnations of social democracy. In his Third Way texts he is generally critical of many of its aspects, noting for instance that its high unemployment benefits are

undesirable due to 'moral hazard' (2000a: 114-115) and its disincentivising character (2000b: 98-99). When he voices agreement, it tends to be on those few details that place the Scandinavian model close to his own Third Way position, for instance pursuit of 'active' labour market policies (2000b: 17). However, in an interview on AlJazeera's Riz Khan programme in 2007, he explicitly praises the Scandinavian model (see end of bibliography for link). Where exactly Giddens himself stands on the Scandinavian model is therefore somewhat unclear, though within his Third Way there is generally an unfavourable stance.

⁵⁴ For more information on this see the IBO web site (see end of bibliography for link).

⁵⁵ For a further discussion on the gendered nature and consequent challenges to conservative welfare regimes, see Gottfried and O'Reilly, 2002.

⁵⁶ An International Poll by GlobeScan, Commissioned by BBC World Service found this view to be widely held across the globe (see end of bibliography for link).

⁵⁷ It is worth noting here that these elements feature in some part in Giddens's Third Way (see e.g. 2000a: 73-75, 2000b: 62). However, Giddens's rationale for policies in this area stems from growing distrust in politics and politicians, and is hardly linked up to the project of the empowered, reflexive self. Thus, although this is an area where IGP is not entirely dissimilar from Giddens's Third Way, IGP places a much greater emphasis on it and pursues somewhat different goals through these means. As such, beyond the basic emphasis on transparency, dialogue and the public sphere, the further details differ sufficiently from the Third Way's approach to make inclusion of this subject matter worthwhile.

⁵⁸ At the time of writing, the most recent example of a political party leader questioned by Mumsnet is the UK Independence Party's Nigel Farage (see end of bibliography for link).

⁵⁹ For further discussion on this matter, see Habermas, 1999.

⁶⁰ The redistributive agenda of IGP is intended of course to make the possibility of representative results in online surveys more likely. However, it will be important here to ensure representativity more rigorously. How exactly this might be done is a technological rather than a sociological question. I will therefore not dwell further on this point, but note of course that such issues require technological solutions.

⁶¹ Some systems of this type already exist, although most are not provided by the government, e.g. 'where does my money go' (see end of bibliography for link). Governments might take a more active role in providing sites of this kind, although similar non-partisan equivalents could also be encouraged.

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