



Right photo: Fabian-Horst.de, CC-BY

# Swap, share, experience

## The transformative potential of socio-ecological forms of practice

Jenny Lay & Till Westermayer

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# Bridges for transformation

**Socio-ecological forms of  
practice as pioneers of  
change towards  
sufficiency/Good Life**





# Transformative potential means ...

**Integration into daily routines**

**Attractiveness**

**Learning skills**

**Low thresholds**

**Community-based activities**

**Transforming experiences**



# A sociologists' tool-box

A collection of various tools including pliers, a hammer, and a screwdriver, arranged on a workbench. The tools are scattered across a dark, textured surface, likely a workbench. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the tools and the workbench.

**Sociology of knowledge**

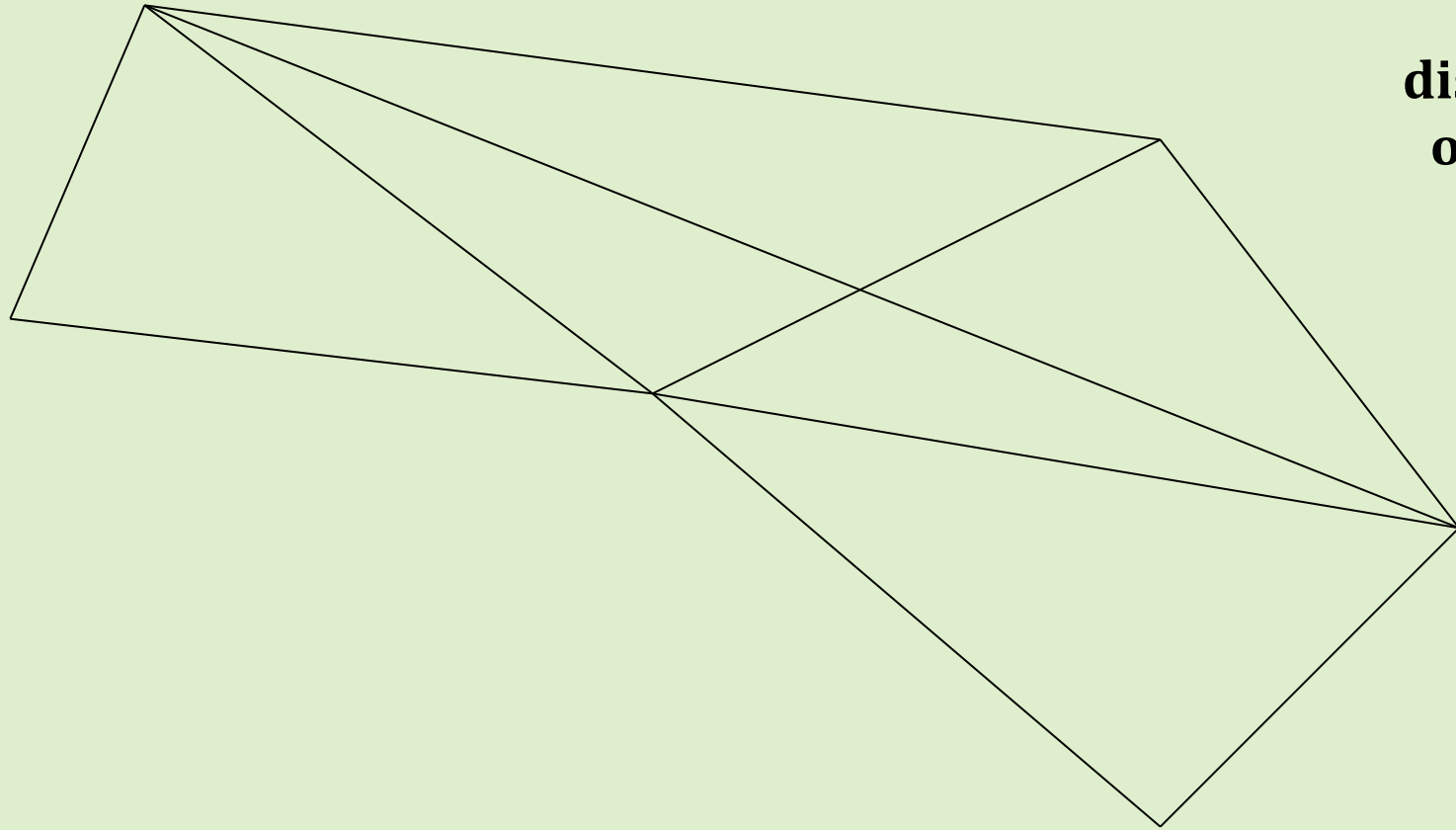
**Theory of practice**

**Karl Mannheim  
Michel Foucault  
Karl H. Hörning  
Karin Knorr Cetina  
Andreas Reckwitz  
Elizabeth Shove  
Karl-Werner Brand**

...

# The background of social reality

**Background: collective knowledge, discourse, systems of provision**



**dispositive  
of powers**



# Foreground: social practices

Background: collective knowledge, discourse, systems of provision

dispositive  
of powers

Foreground: social practice

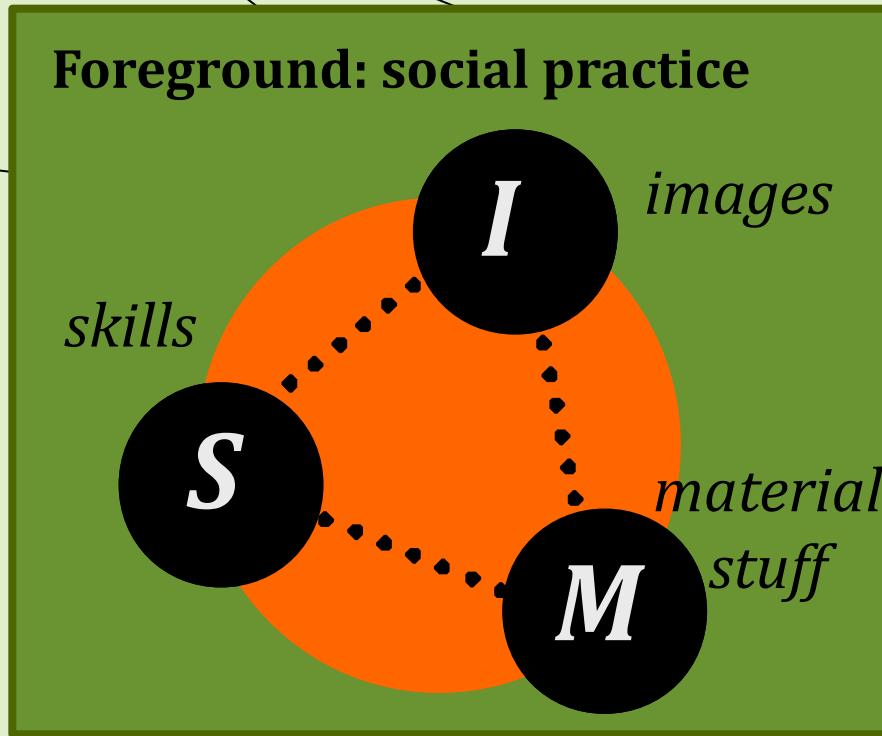
*skills*



*images*



*material  
stuff*



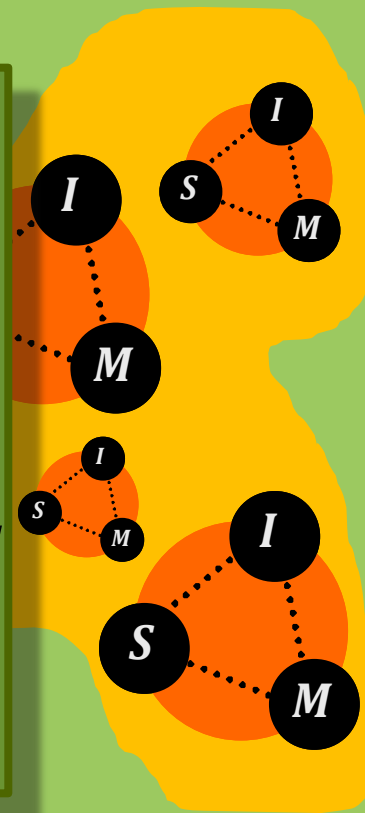
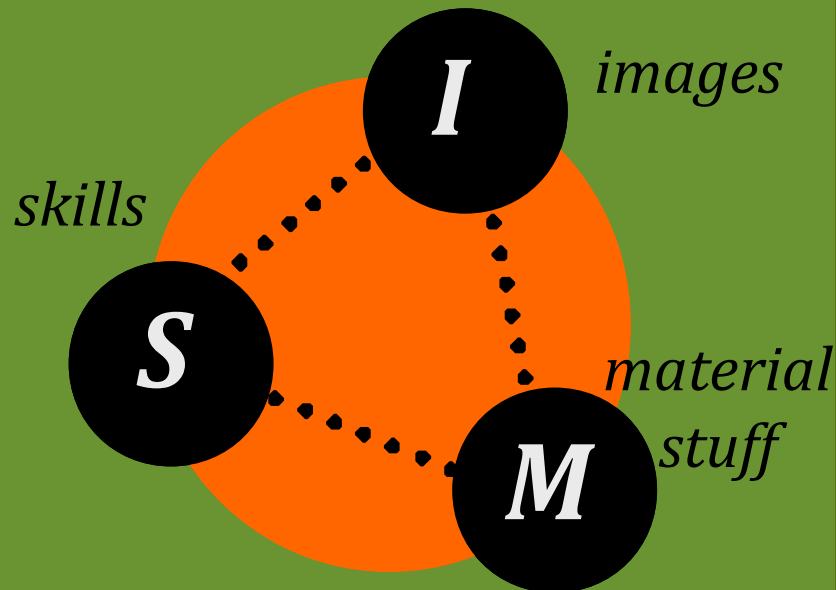
# Introducing forms of practice

Background: collective knowledge, discourse, systems of provision

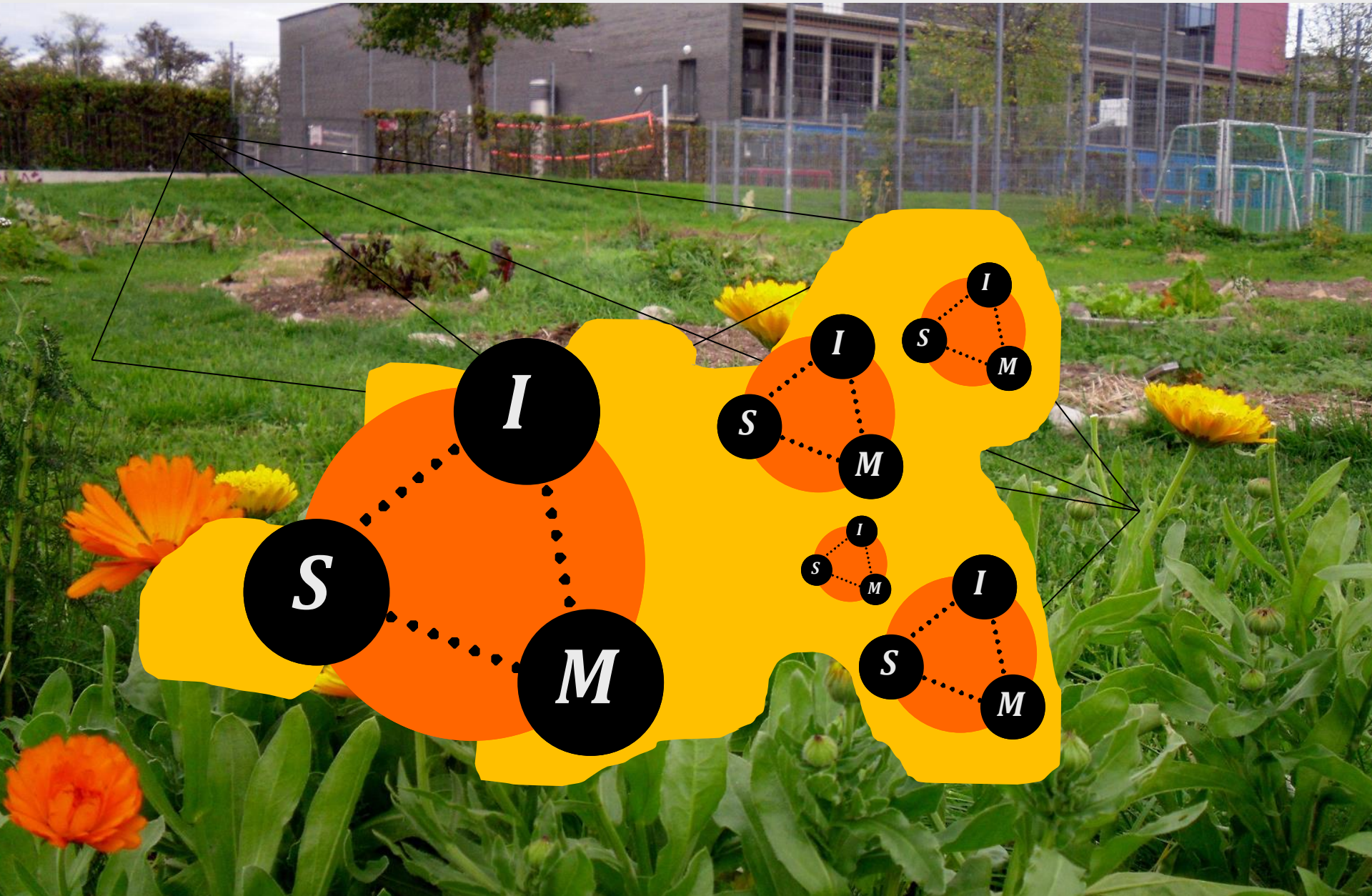
Middleground: forms of practice

dispositive of powers

Foreground: social practice



# Comparing two socio-ecological practice forms



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# Guiding criteria for our case study

	Free store	Urban gardening
<b>1. Goal: transformation or charity?</b>		
<b>2. Focus on reproductive activities, e.g. sharing and swapping?</b>		
<b>3. Orientation towards sufficiency?</b>		
<b>4. Skills and experiences learned?</b>		
<b>5. Attractiveness across milieus?</b>		

# Free stores and the order of things




**Images: solidarity economy,  
distinction from charity stores**

**Skills: swapping, sharing,  
reflection of material needs**

**Stuff: room for storage/shop;  
used clothes, books, dishes  
etc. => depends on preceding  
systems of provision; can only  
cover restricted field of needs**




# Four user groups with different images in mind



**Swapping »scene« –  
organizers, swappers**

**Our lifestyle,  
our occupied house.**



**»Charity« donators**

**I donate stuff.  
Thank me, please!**



**Treasure hunters**

**It's like ebay or  
the flea market.**




**»Charity« recipients**

**It's a charity shop.  
You must help me!**



# Practices of urban gardening



**Stuff: usable land, parks, tools, raised beds, seeds, vegetables and fruits**

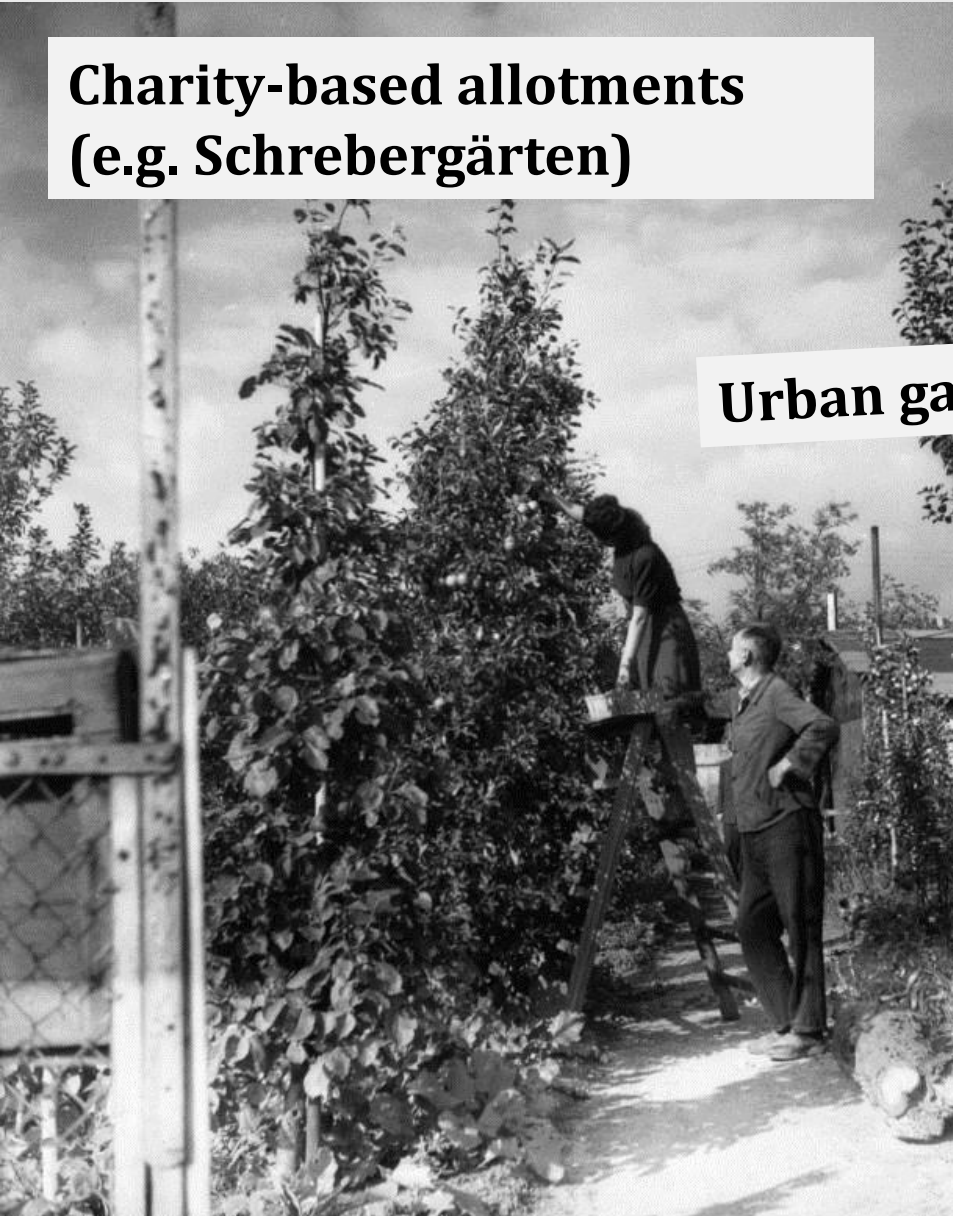
**Skills: learning skills concerning food production, upcycling, organization**

**Images: taking food production into one's own hands, sharing, sufficiency, changing systems of provision**



# Urban gardening: contrasting forms of practice

**Charity-based allotments  
(e.g. Schrebergärten)**



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-S79697  
Foto: Heinscher | August 1948

**Service-oriented,  
e.g. whole-food supermarket**




**Urban gardening?**

# Differences between the two forms of practice

	Free store	Urban gardening
1. Goal: transformation or charity?	***	****
2. Focus on reproductive activities, e.g. sharing and swapping?	***	*****
3. Orientation towards sufficiency?	***	***
4. Skills and experiences learned?	**	****
5. Attractiveness across milieus?	*	****



# Systems of provision: restrictions and chances



**Stuff matters: goods of daily use vs. food**

**Free stores: dependency on preceding systems of provision; restricted field of needs covered**

**Concurrency to existing systems of provision**

**Broadening form of practice, e.g. combining with repair cafés or clothes swapping party**

**Niche or transformation?**



**Urban gardening: voluntary work in small spaces, not enough output to feed many**

**Radiant image, inspiration to take food production into one's own hands**

**Link with community-supported agriculture could change local systems of provision**

# Compatibility with daily routines I



**Linking innovative practice forms  
with established routines**

**Attractive images,  
low thresholds**



# Compatibility with daily routines II



**Revaluating existing infrastructures  
=> appreciation**

**Opportunity to learn skills**

**Experiences of Good Life**

**Synergies; creating larger niches by bundeling  
socio-ecological forms of practice?**



# Conclusions

**Our focus: forms of practice,  
not individual actors or projects**

**Theory of practice as a helpful tool**

**Contrasting with not-quite-similar  
forms of practice helps identifying  
typical elements**

**Transformative potential: relevance of  
arrangement of skills, stuff and images**

**Practice-based approach could be  
combined with other methods, e.g.  
ecological impact analysis**



**Thank you for your attention!**

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