

The formation, reproduction and transformation of practices in VET

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A presentation at the Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group 2016 National Conference on VET Teaching & VET Teacher Education 'Research, Policy & Practice: building connections'

University of Technology Sydney, 8-9 December.

Overview

1. Preliminary remarks on *practice*
2. How practices of vocational education and training are formed, how they are reproduced over time, and how they are transformed: *the theory of practice architectures*.
3. How practices in VET interconnect: *the theory of ecologies of practices*.
4. The persistence (reproduction) of VET practices also depends on relative stability across this whole complex, although *VET practice traditions* can also persist despite changes in the other practices to which they are connected.
5. Sometimes, for better or for worse, educators' *resistance* preserves practice traditions in occupations and in VET, despite changing historical conditions like those of the present.
6. Although there are no guarantees in our turbulent times, the commitment of vocational educators to vocational *education* may help to preserve excellence in VET.

1. Preliminary remarks: Perspectives on practice

Perspectives on practice

Focus Perspective	The individual (psychological)	The social (sociological)
'Objective' (Observer's/outsider's perspective)	(1) Practice as individual behaviour: e.g., behaviourism, cognitivism	(2) Practice as social interaction, ritual, system-structured: e.g., soft systems theory
'Subjective' (Actor's/insider's perspective)	(3) Practice as intentional action, shaped by meaning and values: e.g., constructivism	(4) Practice as shaped by discourses and tradition: e.g., hermeneutics

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Focus Perspective	The individual (psychological)	The social (sociological)	Both: reflexive-dialectical
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Both: reflexive-dialectical	(5) Practice as socially- and historically-constituted, and reconstituted by human agency and social action: e.g., critical theory, practice theory		

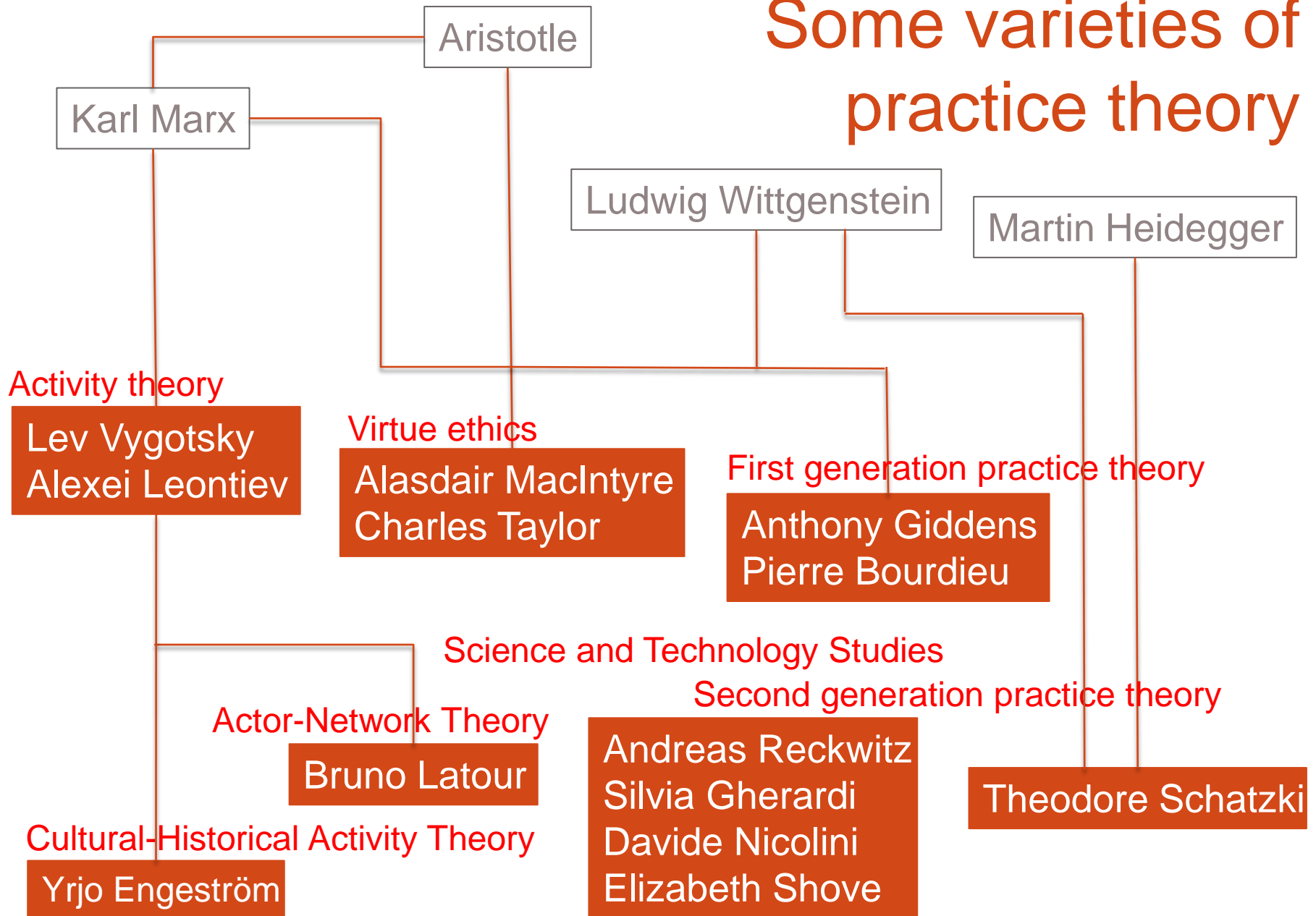
Practice as socially- and historically-constituted, and reconstituted by human agency and social action



“The materialist doctrine that [people] are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed [people] will be the product of changed circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is [people] who make circumstances, and that the educator must [themselves] be educated”

Karl Marx (1845) *Theses on Feuerbach (from the third thesis)*

Some varieties of practice theory



2. The theory of practice architectures

Practices are composed of sayings, doings and relatings

According to the ancients, philosophy aimed to teach

How to speak and think well

Logic (or dialectics)

Sayings

How to act well in the material world

Physics

Doings

How to relate well to others

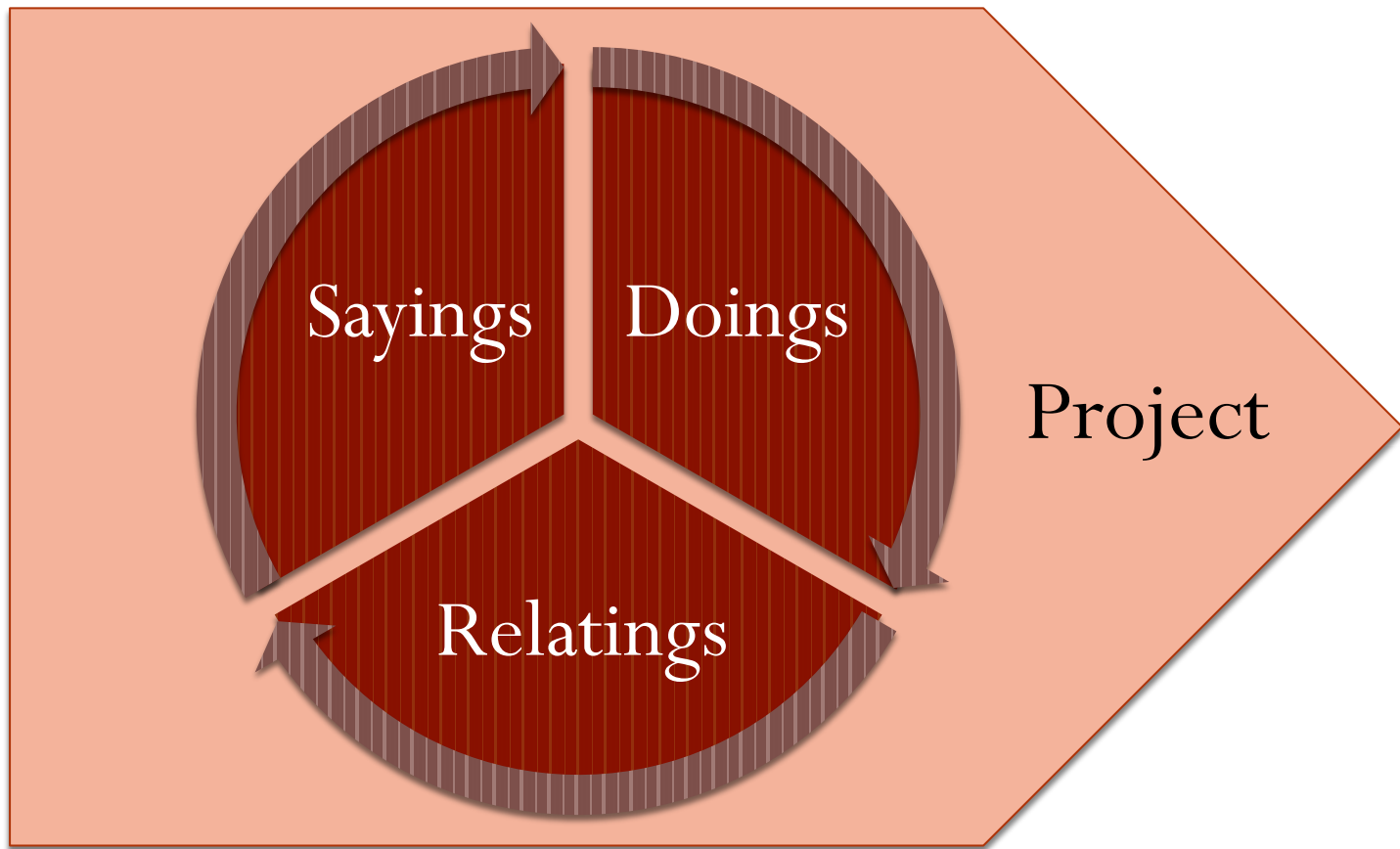
Ethics

Relatings

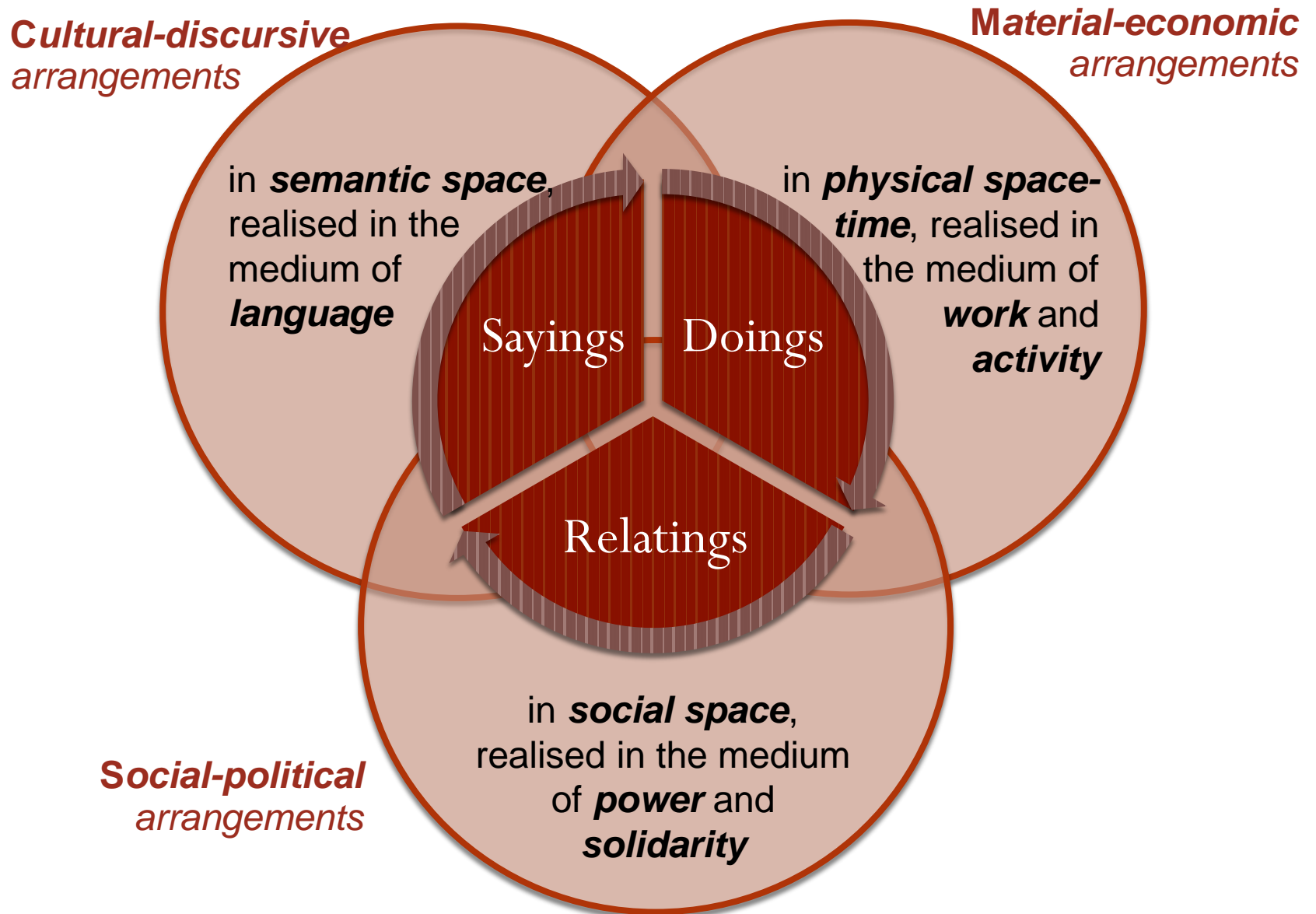
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	On the side of the individual (Bloom)	Extra-individually, the social media: Habermas (Bourdieu) of
<i>Sayings</i>	Cognitive	Language (Cultural, symbolic fields)
<i>Doings</i>	Psychomotor	Work (Economic field)
<i>Relatings</i>	Affective	Power (Social field)

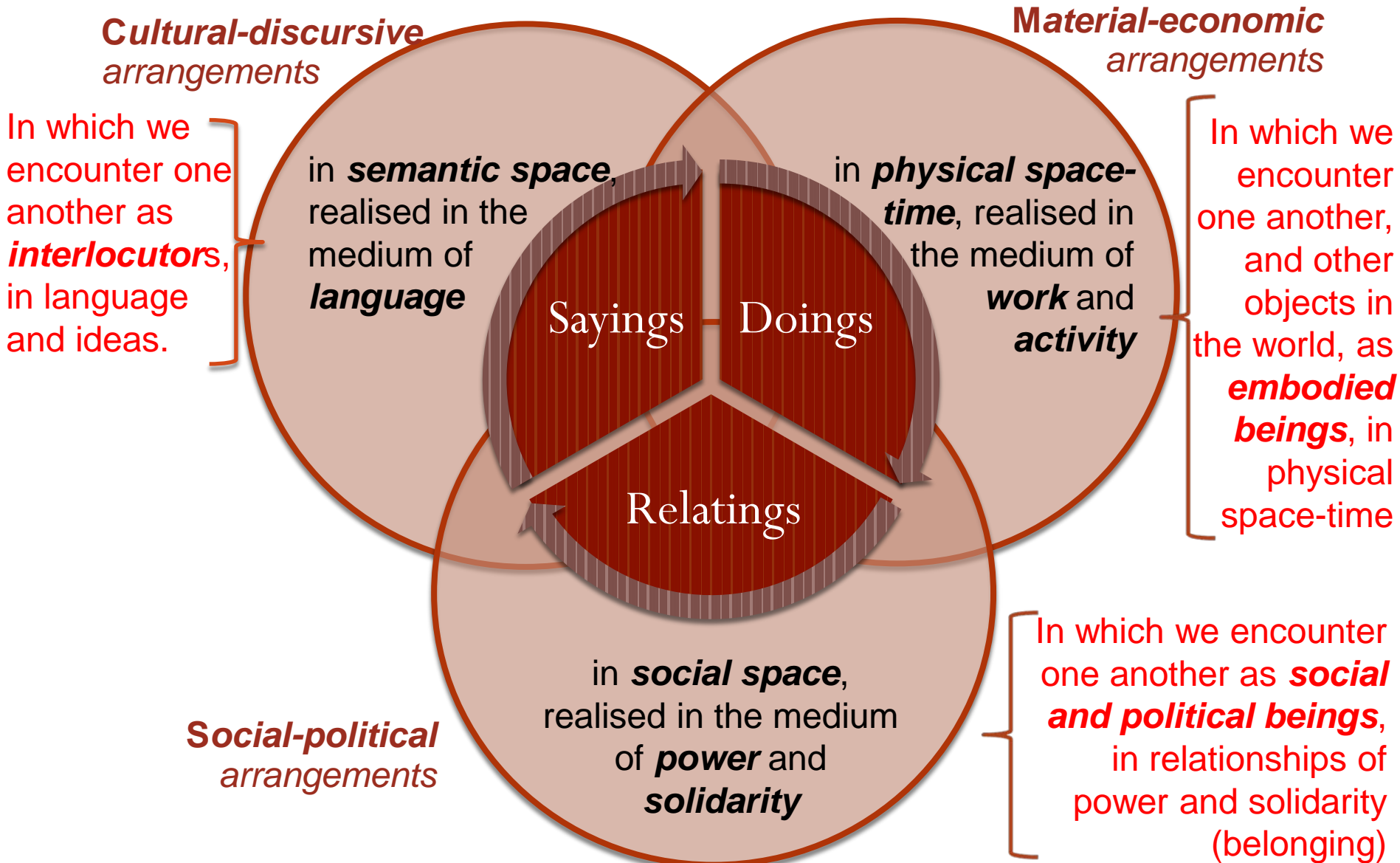
The sayings, doings and relatings of a practice hang together in the **project** (purpose, teleo-affective structure) of the practice



The sayings, doings and relatings that compose practices do not exist in a vacuum; they are made possible by *arrangements* in the *intersubjective space* in which we encounter one another:



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The theory of practice architectures

Practices are interactionally secured in

Intersubjective space/medium

Practice architectures (arrangements and 'set-ups') enable and constrain action and interaction via

Practitioners' characteristic '**sayings**' - and *thinking* (the 'cognitive')

In **semantic space**, realised in the medium of **language**

Cultural-discursive arrangements found in or brought to a site (e.g., language, ideas)

Practitioners' characteristic '**doings**' (the 'psychomotor')

In **physical space-time**, realised in the medium of **activity** and **work**

Material-economic arrangements found in or brought to a site (e.g., objects, spatial arrangements)

Practitioners' characteristic '**relatings**' (the 'affective')

In **social space**, realised in the medium of **power** and **solidarity**

Social-political arrangements found in or brought to a site (e.g., relationships between people)

THE PRACTITIONER AND THE PRACTICE

THE SITE OF (NICHE FOR) THE PRACTICE

which are bundled together in the **projects** (teleo-affective structures) of practices, and the **dispositions** (*habitus*) of practitioners.

which are bundled together in characteristic ways in **practice landscapes** and **practice traditions**.

Vocational education practices

Vocational education practices

Using specialist language about learning; teaching; assessment; language, literacy and numeracy in VET; e-learning in VET; etc.

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The project of facilitating student learning
Developing dispositions (knowledge, skills, values) that facilitate students' learning practices

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VET settings (RTOs, workplaces, industry, etc) as practice landscapes
VET practice traditions, including recognising practice traditions in industries, occupations

The reproduction and transformation of practices

- Practices are *reproduced* by being repeated (with variation to suit current circumstances), when people act on the basis of past performance of the practices, channelled within the practice architectures that enable and constrain them.
- Practices are *transformed* when they vary to a sufficient extent for us to say they are no longer the same, when people act in new ways (saying and doing new things, and relating in new ways), and when they respond to changed circumstances (new practice architectures) that channel (enable and constrain) their practices in new ways.
- People can make new practice architectures and they can produce new practices.

Examples of transformations

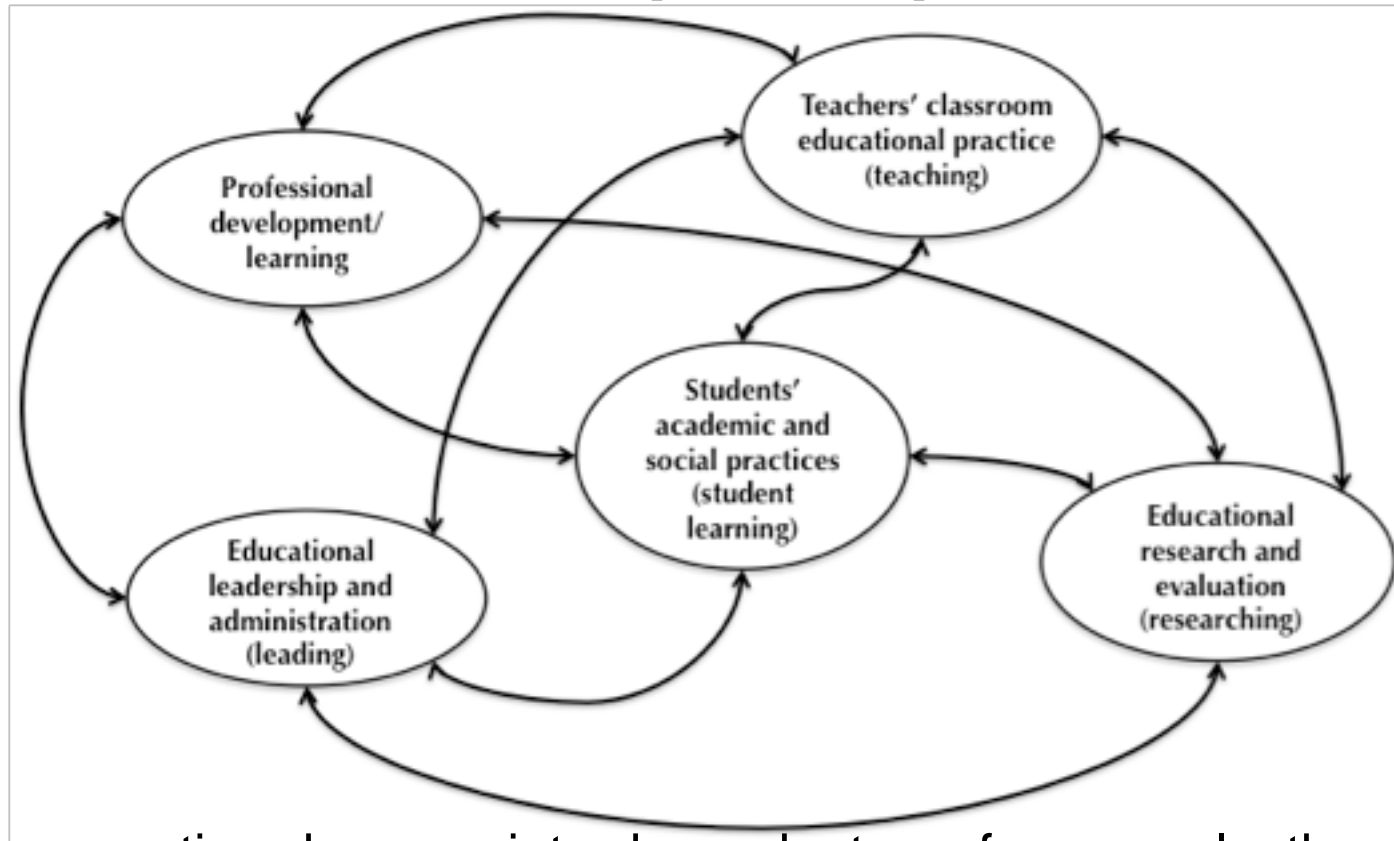
Practices	Practice architectures
Changed teaching practices: the rise of online pedagogies in VET	Provision of ICT infrastructures to support VET teachers and students
Changed initial teacher education for VET teachers	Arrangements supporting Certificate IV in Training and Assessment versus Bachelor of Vocational Education in partnership with universities
Changed practices of management and administration of teachers in VET	Reduced funding, producing changed balance between continuing versus contract versus casual employment in VET
Changed practices of apprenticeship in India	Research on international approaches to apprenticeship that supported changed policies, funding, administration, and practices for apprenticeships

3. Practices relate to other practices in ecologies of practices

Practices as living things?

- Are born, grow, die...
- Travel from place to place...
- Live in ecological relationships with other practices...

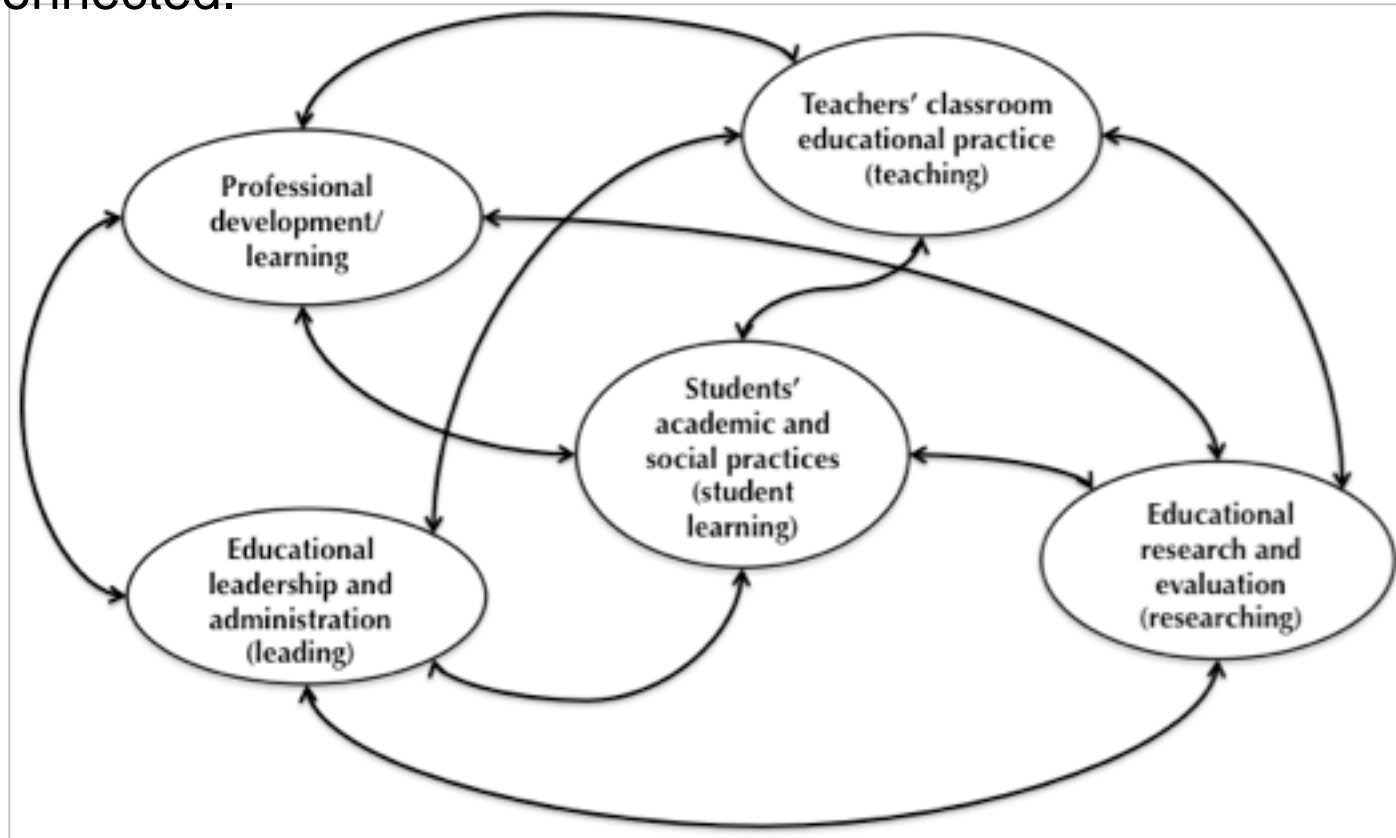
Ecologies of practices – The Education complex of practices



- When practices become interdependent, so, for example, the outputs of one practice are the inputs for another, they may form an ecology of practices.
- When practices do become interdependent, changes in one domain influence, and sometimes force change in, others.

4. The persistence (reproduction) of
VET practices: *VET practice
traditions*

The persistence (reproduction) of VET practices depends on relative stability across this whole complex, although *VET practice traditions* can also persist despite changes in the other practices to which they are connected.



Currently, in VET (as well as school education, Early Childhood, and Higher Education) major changes are underway in each of these domains of practice, and there is pressure for more change, with contradictory and contested implications.

5. Resistance

- Sometimes, for better or for worse, educators' *resistance* preserves practice traditions in occupations and in VET, despite changing historical conditions like those of the present.
- Sometimes, it proves difficult to replace old practices with newer, better ones.
- Sometimes, it is difficult to replace old better practices with newer, worse ones.

6. Education

- Although there are no guarantees in our turbulent times, the commitment of vocational educators to vocational *education* may help to preserve excellence in VET.

Education (Stephen's definition)

Education, properly speaking, is the process by which children, young people and adults are initiated into

- forms of understanding [*sayings*],
- modes of action [*doings*] and
- ways of relating to one another and the world [*relatings*],

that foster

- individual and collective self-expression to secure a culture based on reason,
- individual and collective self-development to secure a productive and sustainable economy and environment, and
- individual and collective self-determination to secure a just and democratic society,

and that are, in these senses, oriented towards the good for each person [*individually*] and [*collectively*] the good for humankind.

(Education is not schooling, training, socialisation, or indoctrination, and should be distinguished from them.)

A theory of practice and a theory of Education

On the side of the individual: the person/ practitioner

Education as initiation into practices

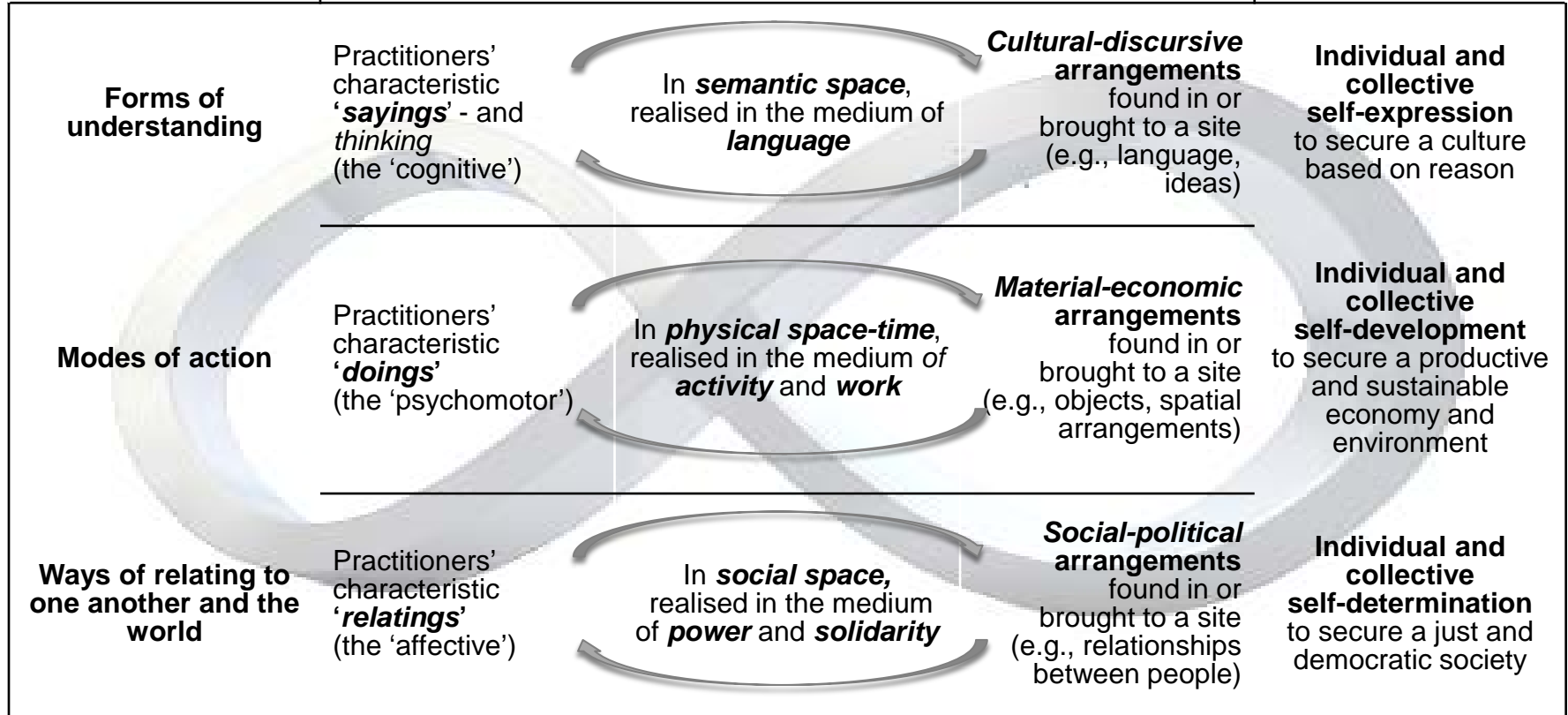
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Intersubjective space/medium

architectures (arrangements and 'set-ups') enable and constrain action and interaction via

On the side of the social: the world we share

Education as fostering



The project: Education and the good for each person

Education for living well

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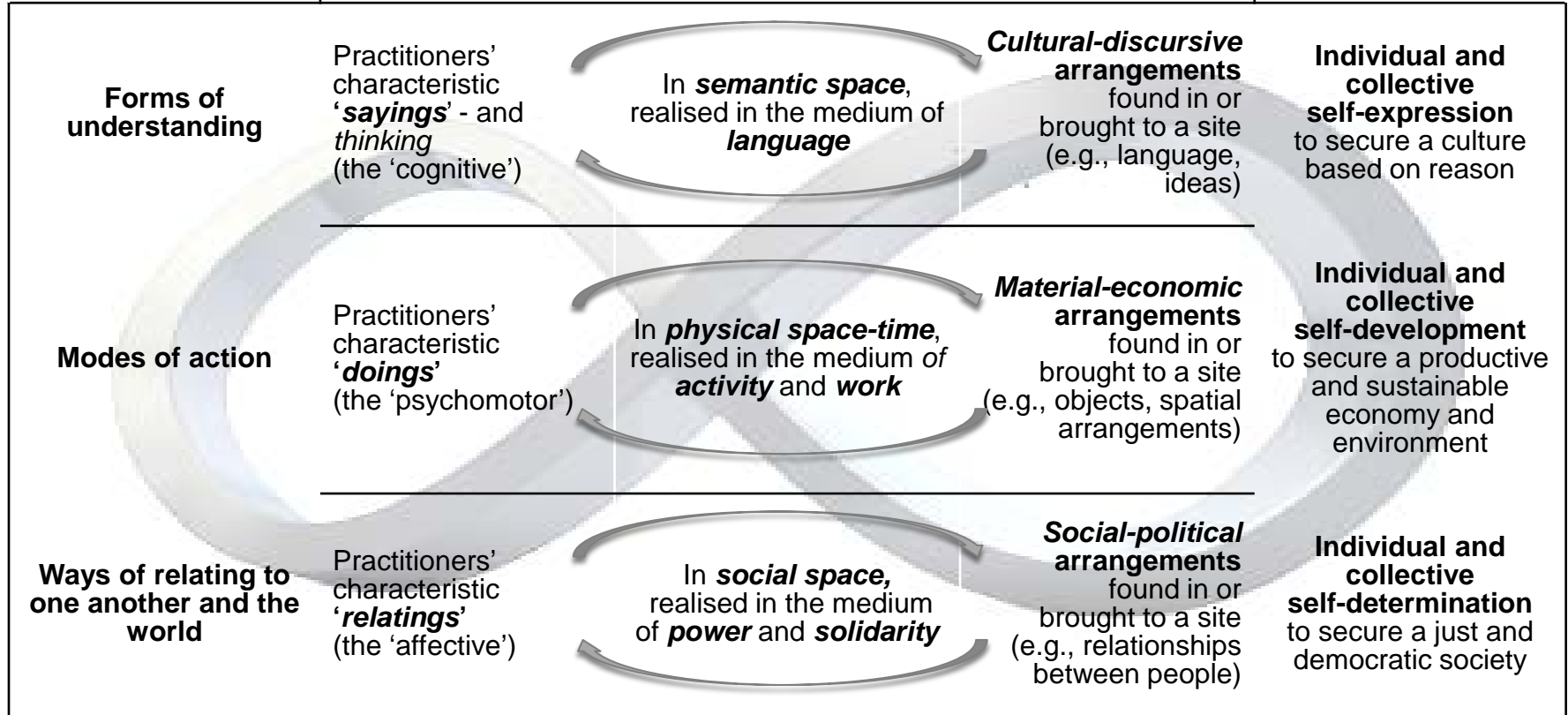
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