

# Expanding the Taxonomy of (Mis-)Recognition in the Economic Sphere

Axel Honneth's theory of recognition makes a number of contributions. It clarifies the concept of recognition and explains why it is crucial for self-realisation and a positive relation to self. Furthermore, it enables us to conceive of liberal democratic societies, and by implication their capitalist economic spheres, as recognition orders with immanent normative dynamics that fuel struggles for recognition.<sup>1</sup> Our aim in this paper is to expand Honneth's taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere.<sup>2</sup> We argue, firstly, that one key move when it comes to expanding the taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the market sphere consists in tracking demands for recognition that are grounded not just in esteem, but also in (various aspects of) need and respect. Secondly, we maintain that with regard to each of these three principles of recognition – need, esteem and respect – we have to distinguish a productive from a consumptive dimension in order to do justice to the variety of ways in which recognition is engaged in economic relationships.

There are a number of benefits associated with our expanded taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere: It accounts for why we are confronted with such a diverse range of struggles for recognition. It shows that a whole range of phenomena can be understood as instances of misrecognition that previously have received little attention from recognition theorists, and it brings structure into these diverse phenomena by associating them with distinct demands for recognition.

In what follows, we first provide an overview of key features of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition and how it bears on the economic sphere. We then explain the ways in which our own account builds on Honneth's and goes beyond it. Against this backdrop, we then develop our expanded taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere. The basic structure of this taxonomy is composed of the following categories: need (productive/consumptive), esteem (productive/consumptive), and respect (productive/consumptive). In the conclusion, we argue that our expanded taxonomy amounts to a useful resource for theorists of social pathology. It is not our aim here to provide an overview of different notions of social pathology. We also do not defend or apply

a particular account of social pathology. Instead, we raise awareness for the range of instances of misrecognition in the economic sphere which will be helpful for those who are in the business of diagnosing pathologies of misrecognition in that sphere.

## Honneth's Theory of Recognition and the Economic Sphere

For Honneth, recognition denotes a reciprocal relationship in which the relating individuals participate both as recogniser and recognisee. The act of recognition is said to track 'positive qualities' (Honneth, 2002: 505) of the recognised individuals (e.g. their capacity for rational deliberation) that give the recogniser a reason to treat the recognisee with (moral) consideration. Relationships of recognition are mediated by recognition norms. These norms specify what kind of consideration a recognised individual is due in terms of the behaviour of the recogniser. Recognition norms thus structure our interactions with others in a way that takes into account that the recognised individual is seen as possessing certain valuable properties. According to Honneth, human beings possess different kinds of valuable properties. Recognition therefore 'represents a conceptual species' that comprises different 'subspecies' (Honneth, 2002: 506). Each subspecies tracks a different valuable property which, in turn, underpins a distinct recognition relationship.

On the level of social theory, we can distinguish different recognition orders according to the value properties they track. We can compare recognition orders according to the value properties they track; and if they track the same value properties, we can compare their recognition norms, that is, the norms that tell individuals what kind of consideration they can expect from others. Honneth highlights that recognition orders can change considerably over time. We can speak of a normative revolution if existing norms of recognition are replaced by new ones. For instance, the transition from the 'estate-based order of pre-modern society' to the modern 'bourgeois-capitalist society' (Honneth, 2003: 138) amounts to a normative revolution since the 'pre-modern concept of honor' was replaced, on the one hand, by a 'democratized' notion of equal legal respect which tracks decision-making capacity, and, on the other, by a 'meritocratized' (Honneth, 2003: 141) notion of esteem which tracks individuals' contributions to society (Jütten, forthcoming; Schaub, 2015: 108-109). By contrast, we are dealing with normative reform if struggles for recognition bring about a change in how given recognition norms are interpreted, typically

to render the scope of their application or their content less biased (Honneth, 2003: 186-187; Honneth 2018: 914-915). For instance, the on-going struggle to arrive at an understanding of work and achievement that adequately takes into account socially valuable contributions like 'housework and childcare' (Honneth, 2003: 153) could be interpreted as being about the meaning of and scope of application for the recognition norm 'esteem'.

Honneth says that 'the mutual granting of recognition' (Honneth, 2003: 138) is historically variable. He also claims that among this variability, there can be moral progress. Shifts from one recognition order to another, or transformations of the way in which recognition norms are interpreted, amount to progress if at least one of following two conditions are met: First, such transformations have to increase 'social inclusion' (Honneth, 2002: 511). The successful struggle of the women's movement for equal political rights can serve as a case in point as it expanded the scope of application of the recognition norm of (equal political) respect beyond men. Second, transformations are progressive if they lead to 'increases in individuality' (Honneth, 2002: 511). This can either happen by way of tracking additional valuable properties that have previously not been recognised at all, or by way of generating a more differentiated and less biased interpretation of existing recognition norms. For instance, once it is recognised that human beings are vulnerable beings, then we can ask if our recognition norms could be improved such that more dimensions of human vulnerability are taken adequately into account (e.g. not just individuals' emotional needs but also their material and developmental needs).

According to Honneth, the bourgeois-capitalist recognition order that is characteristic of our liberal democratic societies evolved out of 'estate-based' (Honneth, 2003: 138) social orders familiar from the period before the French Revolution. It is characterised by three spheres of recognition underpinned by three different norms of recognition: love, respect, and esteem. Following Hegel, Honneth claims that while tracking different valuable properties of individuals, norms of recognition also underpin and give shape to distinct 'institutionalized' societal 'spheres' (Honneth, 2003: 138). Love or 'affective recognition' (Honneth, 2003: 138-139) grounds personal relationships like intimate relationships and friendships. Such relations are expressive of 'attitudes of care' and track that human beings are 'needy beings' (Honneth, 2003: 139). The point of these personal relationships of 'loving care' is the fulfilment of certain affective and 'bodily ...

needs' (Honneth, 2003: 139). The sphere of personal relationships is complemented by two other social spheres: A legal and political sphere that is underpinned by the recognition norm of (equal) respect tracking human beings' shared capacity for rational decision-making and moral responsibility (Honneth, 2003: 141), and an economic sphere in which individuals (who recognise each other as equal legal subjects) compete for esteem by making valuable contributions to social cooperation on the basis of their productive capacities (Honneth, 2003: 142). For Honneth, the 'meritocratized' recognition norm of 'social esteem' (Honneth, 2003: 141) is the key legitimising notion of the modern economic sphere.

## Going beyond Honneth: (Mis-)Recognition in the Economic Sphere

Honneth's framing of the economic sphere had the effect of unduly narrowing the focus of debates about (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere to issues related to what we call production-esteem. These debates deal with issues like the following: What counts as an achievement, or valuable contribution, to social cooperation? Is financial remuneration always the right currency for recognising achievements (an issue that is, for instance, pertinent when it comes to activities like raising children)? Is the market a mechanism for tracking achievement, or could it be turned into such a mechanism? What counts as adequate recognition with respect to different kinds of contributions to social cooperation (Honneth, 2003; Jütten 2017; Smith 2009)?

In our view, all of these debates about production-esteem are important. However, one (often implicitly made) assumption that underpins them is that issues surrounding production-esteem are treated as the main way in which recognition is at stake in the economic sphere. We argue that recognition is present in more varied ways in economic relations. In fact, we can only arrive at a picture that does justice to this diversity if we go beyond these debates that focus on production-esteem. First, apart from esteem, the recognition norms of need and respect are also in play. Since it is constitutive of modern market relations that individuals encounter each other as equal legal subjects it is implied by Honneth's own account that respect is part and parcel of economic relations. Below, we outline some of the ways in which the norm of respect is invoked by those participating in (struggles for recognition in) the economic sphere. We also argue for a reframing of how Honneth takes into account need-based recognition relationships. We claim that need is a

recognition norm that comprises different subspecies (of which love recognition is one). We develop a more differentiated picture of need-based recognition relationships (in the economic sphere), since not all of them can be adequately captured in terms of love recognition. To generate such a differentiated picture, one has to show, on the one hand, that all variants of need-based recognition form part of the same conceptual species since they are all tracking human needs. On the other hand, one has to demonstrate that it is possible to differentiate between subspecies of need recognition according to the different kinds of needs they track. This amounts to a re-working of Honneth's view, but the changes we propose do not contradict any of the basic tenets of his recognition theory. In fact, Honneth himself frames love recognition as tracking the fact that human beings are 'needy beings' (Honneth, 2003: 139; Honneth 1995, 18). What is more, he points out that love recognition is responsive to particular subspecies of human needs: i.e. certain 'affective' and 'bodily needs' that are typically fulfilled in relationships between children and parents, between lovers, and between friends (Honneth, 2003: 138-39; Honneth, 2014: 132-176; Zurn 2015, 28-31). To account for other subspecies of need-based recognition thus requires, on the one hand, to identify other kinds of needs (like the need to develop and exercise one's productive capacities) that ground claims for (moral) consideration and, on the other, to identify the social spheres concerned with the satisfaction of these needs.

Expanding the taxonomy of (mis-)recognition also requires to distinguish a productive from a consumptive dimension of need, esteem, and respect recognition. This distinction is introduced by Honneth in *Freedom's Right*, where he claims that a normative reconstruction of economic relations cannot just look at the production dimension of this sphere (Honneth, 2014: 223-253), but has to also take into consideration its consumption dimension (Honneth, 2014: 198-223). Due to this shift, Honneth now at least makes mention of a whole range of issues in the economic sphere (from sick pay to consumer protections) that he has hitherto neglected because of his focus on issues of production-esteem. We welcome this broadening of scope that takes place in *Freedom's Right*. What Honneth, unfortunately, fails to do in this monograph is to attempt to categorise the range of economic injustices, which he now considers, as instances of different kinds of misrecognition.

In sum, our expanded taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere builds on Honneth's insights, but avoids some of the shortcomings of his account. First, we argue

that not only esteem recognition but also (variants of) need and respect recognition form part and parcel of economic relations. Second, we show that with regards to esteem, respect and need recognition, we have to distinguish a productive from a consumptive dimension. On this basis, we account for the diverse injustices in economic relations as particular instances of (mis-)recognition of (productive/consumptive) need, (productive/consumptive) esteem, or (productive/consumptive) respect. Finally, we draw attention to the fact that the economic sphere encompasses different kinds of economic relationships – e.g. between producers and consumers (Honneth 2014: 208, 210), employers and employees, consumers and consumers – that condition the demands for recognition arising in this sphere. By modifying and expanding Honneth’s account in these ways, we can develop a better understanding of the wide range of struggles for recognition in the economic sphere.

## (Mis-)Recognition: An Expanded Taxonomy

We can now outline and defend our expanded taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere. We look at the different norms of recognition and identify the various valuable properties that ground the respective demands for recognition. We also explain why these demands form part of the economic sphere, clarify what kind of recognition relationship is at stake, and provide case studies from the real world.

### Productive Need

We begin with need-based recognition relationships. Such relationships track different kinds of needs that give us reasons to show some kind of (moral) consideration towards others. We first look at different needs that ground demands for recognition related to our productive activity. In doing so, we invoke an idea that is familiar from the history of philosophy as it can be found in Aristotle, Hegel, Marx and Rawls: namely, that ‘man is an essentially productive being’ (Wolff 2017) or ‘working species’ (Braverman 1998: 316). Being active and productive (in an appropriate way) thus counts among the needs of human beings (Yeoman, 2014: 8-38).

Human beings have developmental and exercise needs that have to be taken into consideration in how we organise productive cooperation. This comes out in Rawls’

discussion of the 'Aristotelian Principle' that invokes some 'general facts about human needs' that are 'clear enough' (Rawls 1999: 373) to draw some conclusions from them regarding how we should live. One of these facts is the need human beings feel to train their 'capacities' and 'realize' (Rawls, 1999: 376) them. Rawls maintains that 'other things being equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities ..., and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity' (Rawls 1999: 374). What is spelled out here are the conditions pertaining to human beings' productive activity under which they can develop a positive relation to self. The Aristotelian Principle thus accounts for our need to develop and exercise our capacities – at least up to the point where further improving our capacities becomes more strenuous than the satisfaction we derive from exercising our improved capacities.

If these assumptions are, by and large, correct, then we have identified two needs related to human productive activity that can be ascribed to children and adults alike. We call them developmental and exercise needs. The former denotes a need to further develop one's skills and the latter the opportunity to exercise them. These needs form part of the economic sphere by virtue of the fact that in the case of adults in full-time employment, the greatest part of their productive activity takes place during working hours. It is full-time employment itself that makes it such that one can hardly fulfil these needs outside of one's employment. This is what gives rise to the demand that employers have to recognise the developmental and exercise needs of their employees, for instance, by providing them throughout their working life with opportunities for further developing their capacities and to then entrust them with tasks that enable them to exercise their newly developed 'skills and discriminations' (Rawls, 1999: 375). Developmental and exercise needs form a kind of unity. For further developing one's capacities has the effect that one's previous tasks now appear 'simpler' and no longer as 'sufficiently interesting or attractive', with the result that doing them is no longer 'enjoyed' as much as 'before' (Rawls 1999: 375).

It is not our aim to discuss in detail how employees' developmental and exercise needs can be met, we simply want to establish that the relationship between employer and employee can give rise to specific struggles aimed at overcoming obstacles that are in the way of employees fulfilling these needs. Such struggles are about enabling, as far as possible, employees' opportunities for satisfying their 'preference for ascending the chain or chains which offer the greatest prospect of exercising the higher abilities with the least

stress' (Rawls, 1999: 377). To put the same point negatively, employees' complaints about 'work that requires neither skill nor initiative' and is 'repetitive' (Honneth, 2014: 237; also 238, 240; Durkheim, 1964: 371ff.) is best understood as a variant of need misrecognition.<sup>3</sup> In order to fully appreciate what is at stake with regards to this variant of misrecognition, one has to connect it to the venerable debate about 'the development of labour under capitalism' (Foster, 1998: xviii), for which Adam Smith's (2008) praise of the division of labour served as a prelude. In a seminal contribution to this debate, Harry Braverman argues that 'the incessant breakdown of labor processes into simplified operations' is a permanent feature of modern capitalist production, which, in turn, 'leads to the conversion of the greatest possible mass of labor into work of the most elementary form, labor from which ... most of the skill, knowledge, and understanding of production processes' (Braverman 1998: 319) has been removed.<sup>4</sup> If Braverman is right, then we have to see the demand for recognising employees' developmental and exercise needs as occurring against the backdrop of a 'general tendency' leading to the 'deskilling' of the majority of workers, which results 'from the managerial imperatives of capitalism' such as the 'unending quest for profitability' and reducing 'unit wage' (Foster, 1998: xviii-xx; Braverman 1998: 294-295).

Developmental and exercise needs are productive in the narrow sense. However, such needs are not the only ones at stake in the production-dimension of economic relations. The bodily and psychological vulnerability of human beings also gives rise to health and safety needs that shape the recognition relationship between employer and employee. Employers have a duty of care to their employees since they use and benefit from their labour. For example, UK employers have an obligation to take all reasonable steps to protect their employees' health, safety and wellbeing.<sup>5</sup>

There are even emotional needs which employers have to recognise, pace Honneth, who relegates all emotional needs to personal relationships. Consider, for example, the ongoing debates about what kind of support employers ought to offer employees in case of a bereavement. In the UK, many 'employees have the statutory right to a "reasonable" amount of unpaid time off under the Employment Rights Act' (Landau 2014) and in Australia all 'employees (including casual employees) are entitled to compassionate leave'.<sup>6</sup> What is at stake here is the struggle to get employers to recognise certain emotional needs of their employees, not just their health needs. For the entitlement of employees to go on bereavement leave is irrespective of the anticipated effects on the health of the grieving



individuals. The obligation of employers to recognise this emotional need results from the fact that only employers are able to fulfil it (i.e. by granting employees leave from work).

### Consumptive Need

Needs are also at stake in the consumptive dimension of economic cooperation. The economic sphere forms part of human societies since human beings have to engage in productive cooperation in order to meet their basic material needs (Braverman 1998: 316). In this sense, material needs are constitutive of economic relations and denote one kind of need that is tracked by relationships of consumption recognition. The fundamental role material needs play for the modern economic sphere is reflected, for instance, by Hegel who entitled the section dedicated to the market in his *Philosophy of Right* (1821): 'the system of needs' (Hegel, 1991: §§184-195).<sup>7</sup> For Honneth, we cannot account for the universal acceptability of the modern market unless we invoke the promise that all can contribute to productive cooperation and that everyone contributing earns enough to satisfy their basic material needs (Honneth, 2014: 203, 209, 252). Against the backdrop of this normative promise, we can speak of instances of misrecognition of individuals' material needs, whenever some lack basic goods because they are, against their will, excluded from cooperating, or lack basic goods such as 'affordable food, clothing and housing' (Honneth 2014: 201) despite cooperating, and this situation is one that could have been avoided. Such instances of consumption misrecognition can motivate struggles for the recognition of basic material needs. The addressees of such struggles for recognition vary. Sometimes misrecognised consumers aim to convince fellow consumers to back as citizens changes to how the economic sphere is regulated, so that all earn enough to satisfy their basic material needs. Sometimes unions exert pressure on particular employers to pay a living wage, that is, a wage that allows everybody working full-time to avail themselves of all necessary basic goods. In any case, we are always dealing with 'moral reactions to events in the market-mediated sphere of consumption' (Honneth, 2014: 202) that take place against the backdrop of its normative promise. Material needs also underpin other demands made by employees. Think, for instance, of statutory sick pay (Honneth, 2014: 229). Need-based recognition claims often end up taking on the form of rights (e.g. of employees) or legal obligations (e.g. of employers or the state). Once this happens, any instance of need

misrecognition is linked with an instance of disrespect, as the individuals in question would also be violated as legal subjects. However, the fact that particular need-based demands are transformed into right-based claims and corresponding legal obligations, and thereby moved into the domain of respect, does not change the fact that the recognition claim is grounded in a distinct need. In short, needs underpin the recognition claim even if rights are the means of protecting their fulfilment.

Human beings are not only bodily and psychologically vulnerable as workers but also as consumers. This vulnerability gives rise to a whole range of protective claims consumers have against producers. By now, there is – in many countries and transnational entities like the EU (Devenney and Kenny, 2012) – a whole ‘system of consumer protection’ (Honneth 2014: 204) in place that ensures, for instance, that products are reliable and safe to use or consume. These protections also extend to how companies are allowed to promote their products. Honneth speaks in this respect of a general acknowledgement of consumers’ ‘right to health’ and ‘safety’ (Honneth, 2014: 213; Hegel, 1991: §236).

To summarise, the notion of material need is constitutive of the economic sphere since we can neither make sense of the point of productive cooperation nor the universal acceptability of the modern market without it. Basic material needs underpin a range of struggles for recognition. In addition, there are also demands to protect the health and safety of consumers that are grounded in their bodily and psychological vulnerability. What this discussion of need recognition in the economic sphere brings to the fore is that economic relationships are ‘practices of ... concern’ through which ‘individuals understand themselves as individuals’ whose various ‘needs’ (Honneth, 2003: 142) as bodily and psychologically vulnerable being matter, or ought to matter to others. Struggles for recognition of consumptive needs either aim to integrate dimensions of need that form part of economic relationships but have hitherto been neglected, or they are about taking already recognised needs into account in a more differentiated and comprehensive fashion.

### Production-Esteem

This brings us to the notion of esteem and how it bears on the production dimension of the economic sphere. What is at stake here are the valuable contributions individuals make to

productive cooperation, that is, their individual achievements on the basis of which the 'social esteem' of "'productive citizens'" (Honneth, 2003: 141) is assessed.

As already mentioned, this aspect of recognition has taken centre stage in discussions about recognition and the economic sphere in Honneth's early and middle period from *Struggle for Recognition*, published originally in 1992, to *Recognition or Redistribution* from 2003. Arguably, production-esteem is for this reason the most well-established part of the taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere. What esteem recognition tracks are not just the productive capacities of individuals, but how (and how well) they use them to make valuable contributions to social cooperation. So, whenever an individual (or a group of individuals) is of the opinion that their valuable contributions to social cooperation are not adequately recognised, or esteemed (in comparison to others), then the preconditions for struggles for production-esteem recognition are in place. Think, for instance, about the struggle surrounding the recognition of care work.

Esteem recognition individualises in a way that recognising basic needs does not. It tracks something that is particular about the individual in question. For instance, we tend to assume that the way in which individuals choose to contribute to social cooperation (e.g. as a nurse or a plumber) is, at least to some degree, expressive of their preferences and talents (and thus of aspects of their identity). For this reason, freedom of occupation (against the backdrop of a range of meaningful options and fair access to education) plays an important role in the capitalist recognition order. For it guarantees that the way in which one contributes to social cooperation can itself be seen as an expression of individual freedom. Production-esteem is also individualising in another way. For it involves an evaluation of how well different individuals perform the same kind of tasks. For Honneth, the notion of 'individual achievement' is the key 'idea' when it comes to legitimising socio-economic differences. Individual achievement is supposed to be the decisive factor with regards to the position each and every individual has 'within the structure of the industrially organized division of labour' (Honneth 2003: 140). One's self-esteem thus depends on whether one (thinks one) receives adequate recognition for the kind of valuable contribution one makes to social cooperation, on the one hand, and for how well one contributes (compared to others doing similar things). In the former case, one issue at stake is the 'cultural measure that determines the social esteem owed a particular activity' (Honneth 2003: 140). Struggles for recognition involving this 'cultural measure' are addressed at the rest of society, for

those engaging in them aim to transform the socially accepted standards of evaluation themselves. In the latter case, the addressees of struggles for esteem recognition can be specific employers (e.g. the BBC) or sectors of the economy.<sup>8</sup>

There are still some issues pertaining to production-esteem that deserve more attention. For instance, if self-esteem is predicated not only on having one's contributions to social cooperation adequately recognised, but also on being able to appreciate the value of one's contribution, then it constitutes a problem if a significant number of people struggle to see the point or value of what they are doing for societally shared ends (Jütten, 2017: 261-266). The problem here is that of meaningless work (Honneth, 2014: 237), or 'bullshit jobs' (Graeber 2018). In other words, our economic system seems to encompass many jobs that require the development and exercise of skills (and thus do not straightforwardly violate individuals' developmental and exercise needs), but which nonetheless do not enable those doing them to develop a sense of self-esteem.<sup>9</sup>

### Consumption-Esteem

The topic of consumption-esteem constitutes another under-researched area of (mis-)recognition. Like production-esteem, consumption-esteem is individualising and protecting a dimension of individual freedom. Despite not linking consumption with esteem, Honneth is right to maintain that consumption is a 'form of individual freedom' since 'subjects would learn to see themselves as consumers who are free to determine their personal desires, and thus their identity, in the search for and acquisition of commodities' (Honneth, 2014: 199). Similar to freely choosing the way in which one contributes to social cooperation, one's consumptive activity can also be expressive of one's freedom. For this to be the case, one's consumptive activity has to track one's identity, that is, reflect one's individual tastes, preferences and ethical commitments. Consumption-esteem is thus about recognising, or confirming the value of, individuals' preferences, tastes and ethical commitments, which account, at least to a certain degree, for a person's individuality. Struggles for consumption-esteem are thus about ensuring that our consumptive behaviour is, at least to some degree, expressive of our identity, that we can recognise ourselves in the commodities we acquire. This individualising dimension of consumption-esteem takes us beyond fulfilling general and basic material needs (e.g. the need for nutritious food). And since consumption denotes a

distinct economic activity taking place in the market, consumption-esteem clearly belongs to the economic sphere.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of consumption-esteem can help us make sense of particular forms of economic misrecognition. For instance, it provides us with one reason for regarding it as problematic that more and more people have to regularly rely on food and clothes banks etc. to avail themselves of some basic goods. Presumably, individuals who rely on such services use them regularly because they have no other way of making ends meet. Our claim is that users of such services might satisfy (some of) their basic material needs (which is, of course, important), but this does not change the fact that they are suffering from consumption-esteem misrecognition. Compared to other consumers, they do not have the financial means to consume in ways that reflect, at least to a relevant degree, their individuality. By forcing them to regularly rely on such services, society communicates to them that their consumptive tastes and preferences do not matter. As a result, they cannot understand their consumptive preferences of being of value and their consumptive activity as being expressive of their identity. Their struggle as consumers is thus about overcoming a situation in which their consumption-esteem, and thus a dimension of their individual freedom, is not taken seriously (compared to other members of society whose consumption habits regularly track their tastes and who have a sense that their preferences are assigned a value by their society). To put this thought in more Hegelian terms: Only if the social world is arranged thus that what we consume is in relevant ways expressive of our identity, can our identity attain a degree of objectivity.<sup>11</sup> The same reasoning applies to other aspects of individuals' conception of the good.<sup>12</sup> For instance, one could argue that it amounts to an instance of consumption-esteem misrecognition if mainstream supermarket chains cater for members of society requiring halal meals but not kosher food, or provide no decent options for vegans. Another case in point is the outrage ensuing the allegation that food companies sell, under the same brand, safe but 'lower quality food products in some EU countries'.<sup>13</sup> If true, such a practice would imply a form of consumption-esteem misrecognition since these companies would consider it to be acceptable to treat their customers in some countries of the EU worse than others (by supplying them with lower quality products).

In sum, questions about consumption-esteem recognition arise between consumers whenever some individuals or groups in society are significantly disadvantaged in terms of their opportunity to express their identity (that is, their tastes, preference and ethical

commitments) in their consumptive behaviour, or when they are treated as less valued consumers. What is more, there is the question of whether consumers can invoke the notion of consumption-esteem to demand from producers that they supply them with a range of products that track the diverse consumptive preferences and ethical commitments of all members of society. All of these issues deserve, of course, a more in-depth treatment. However, for our purposes it suffices to show that esteem recognition in the economic sphere is not reducible to production-esteem, that is, problems surrounding individual achievements. There is also a (mostly neglected) consumption-esteem dimension that needs to be taken into consideration.

### Production-Respect

Respect tracks another valuable property of individuals: their capacity to rationally deliberate, make decisions and take (moral) responsibility for them. By being respected, individuals 'learn to understand themselves as legal persons owed the same autonomy as all other members of society' (Honneth, 2003: 142). Since it is a constitutive feature of the modern market that those interacting in it recognise each other as equal legal subjects, respect and esteem are both co-constitutive of modern economic relations. As a consequence, we can witness a whole range of struggles for respect recognition in the economic sphere.

One crucial way in which struggles for production-respect manifest themselves is in terms of demands for worker co-determination. Employees do not just have productive capacities that are valuable for their companies and need to be esteemed. Employers also have to respect their employees, that is, their deliberative and decision-making capacities (that are equal to those of the management representing the employer). Respecting employees thus means to be responsive to the demand 'for active involvement of wage labourers in decision-making within the firm' (Honneth, 2014: 249). This respect-grounded demand has become 'a permanent element in the intellectual reservoir of the labour movement' (Honneth, 2014: 239). The struggle for co-determination is one for respect and not (just) esteem since what employees continue to fight for is that adequate 'discursive mechanisms' and decision-making processes are put in place that grant 'workers a certain amount of co-determination' (Honneth, 2014: 238). It is true, workers' demands for co-

determination are in part about making sure that their voices are heard and adequately considered with regards to issues we are already familiar with from our discussion of productive need and production-esteem: e.g. 'working conditions' and 'wages' (Honneth, 2014: 238). However, this does not mean that demands for production-respect are reducible to demands for productive need and production-esteem. What matters is not just that these demands are met, but also how they are met: there is the issue of whether there are decision-making procedures in place within companies that ensure that employees have a say in how these demands are dealt with. That production-respect is not reducible to productive need and production-esteem also becomes apparent in another way. Worker co-determination expands the scope of relevant issues. Co-determination entails that employees are involved in the making of business decisions (about strategies, mergers etc.). Furthermore, worker co-determination is also about making sure that wider 'public interests' are taken into account in 'processes of economic decision making' (Honneth, 2014: 239), not just short term profit interests.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt that workers' success in establishing co-determination is very limited to date, as is their success in defending what they had already achieved against persistent attempts to undermine these achievements.<sup>15</sup> But this does not change the fact that the idea of production-respect remains a resource that workers can invoke to support their on-going struggle for the ultimate aim of 'economic democracy' (Honneth, 2014: 238) or democracy in the work place.

### Consumption-Respect

Having explored the issue of production-respect in the previous section, we now consider how struggles for respect recognition show up in the consumptive dimension. In our view, we are dealing with instances of consumption-disrespect whenever consumers' capacity to deliberate and make decisions or their moral responsibility is undermined, that is, if consumers face unnecessary obstacles that prevent them from making informed choices about what products to acquire.

Consumers are misled, when they are exposed to a form of communication that 'compromises good judgement' by way of 'interfering' with the process, or 'form' (Cohen, 2017: 4), of decision-making. Think, for instance, of advertisements that systematically

exploit psychological and emotional weaknesses of consumers (Honneth, 2014: 200-1, 214). Deception constitutes another form of consumption-disrespect. It 'undermines judgement by interfering with its input (content)' (Cohen, 2017: 4; Noggle, 1996: 43-55). Consider, for instance, companies that provide consumers with misleading or inaccurate accounts of (features of) their products. The recent Diesel emission scandal involving Volkswagen can serve as a case in point (McGee, 2017). Producers are, in other words, under an obligation to respect consumers by way of 'adequately' informing them 'about the ... quality of goods' and by refraining from 'unfair competitive methods such as false advertising' (Honneth, 2014: 206).

What is more, since the notion of respect also covers individuals' capacity for taking (moral) responsibility for their actions, the category of consumption-respect can be invoked to demand that costumers can easily find out about the conditions under which goods are produced (Stehr 2008). For a sufficient degree of transparency in this regard is a precondition for enabling consumers to consume in ways they consider morally defensible (Honneth, 2014: 216-7). Let us mention a number of those (morally) salient production conditions that might have to be disclosed by companies in order to take consumers seriously as moral subjects. First of all, there is the issue of the working conditions of those producing a consumer good (e.g. have basic health and safety standards been met, are workers allowed to form unions, are they paid a living wage, are child-labour or degrading conditions involved?). This concern can be illustrated by the anti-sweatshop movement and sweatfree tags in clothing. Furthermore, there is the question of the environmental footprint of the product (Honneth, 2014: 215). Does the company emit an excessive amount of pollutants (e.g. what is the carbon footprint of the product in question)? Finally, it could be argued that respecting consumers also entails an obligation to make them aware of salient issues surrounding international law, human rights, and the fuelling of conflicts. The European Commission's Interpretative Notice (2015/C 375/05) which states 'that goods made in territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, namely the West Bank, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem, must be explicitly labelled as such' can serve as an example here, or the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme that is supposed to ensure that so-called 'conflict diamonds' do not enter the market (Bieri 2010).<sup>16</sup>

With our expanded taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in place, we can now also appreciate how it strengthens and clarifies, for instance, Honneth's discussion of consumer



co-operatives (Honneth, 2014: 208-211, 217-222). Such co-operatives are, on the one hand, about material consumptive needs. They serve as a counter to the power of corporations vis-à-vis consumers by bundling the latter's buying power to improve their bargaining position. Like this, consumers can better secure cheaper priced goods, influence what is produced, and ensure that people's material needs are met (by way of internally distributing goods in a way not based on individuals' purchasing power). But consumer co-operatives also engage the dimension of consumption-respect. For they can be about challenging manipulative influences that large corporations exert. Like this they strengthen a collective form of decision-making regarding what and how goods are produced.

Consumption-esteem and consumption-respect both involve exercises of choice. However, in the former case, we are concerned with what is often referred to as (aspects of) individuals' conception of the good (their preferences, tastes, ethical and religious commitments etc.), whereas in the latter case, we are dealing with the protection of individuals' decision-making capacities and moral responsibility (e.g. for the environment, the upholding of acceptable working conditions).

Demands for consumption-respect are thus another source of struggles for recognition in the economic sphere that mainly concern the relationship between consumers and producers. Part of this on-going struggle concerns issues like the following: What levels of transparency about which aspects of products and conditions of production are called for in order to enable consumers to adequately exercise their moral responsibility with regards to the goods they acquire? What is more, there are difficult questions about what does count as undermining of consumers' decision-making capacity. Finally, there is the issue of whether consumers need to establish collective-deliberative mechanisms in order to exert more influence over what is produced and how.

<b>Dimension of economy / Norms of recognition</b>	<b>Production Dimension</b>	<b>Consumption Dimension</b>
<b>Need</b>	<b>Developmental and exercise needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: human beings' need to develop and exercise their (developed) capacities</li> </ul>	<b>Material needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: human beings' need for certain basic goods to physically reproduce themselves</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of misrecognition: monotonous work, lack of skills-development opportunities</li> </ul> <p><b>Health and safety needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: the bodily and psychological vulnerability of workers</li> <li>• Example of misrecognition: unsafe working conditions</li> </ul> <p><b>Emotional needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: the fact that certain emotional needs of employees can only be met by employers</li> <li>• Example of misrecognition: not granting employees a reasonable amount of compassionate and bereavement leave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of misrecognition: unemployment related poverty, no living wage</li> </ul> <p><b>Health and safety needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: the bodily and psychological vulnerability of consumers</li> <li>• Example of misrecognition: unsafe products</li> </ul>
<b>Esteem</b>	<p><b>Production-esteem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: the value of the contributions individuals make to social cooperation</li> <li>• Examples of misrecognition: biased cultural standards that undervalue certain contributions (e.g. care work), gender pay-gap, meaningless work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consumption-esteem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: individuals' preferences and ethical commitments (the value of which is confirmed if their consumptive activities reflect these aspects of their identity)</li> <li>• Examples of misrecognition: reliance on food banks, being treated as less valued consumer, failure to supply a meaningful range of products that take into consideration the diverse ethical commitments of consumers</li> </ul>
<b>Respect</b>	<p><b>Production-respect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: the capacity of workers to rationally deliberate and take (moral) responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Examples of misrecognition: prohibition of unions, denial of meaningful worker co-determination</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consumption-respect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised property: the capacity of consumers to rationally deliberate and take (moral) responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Examples of misrecognition: manipulation and deception of consumers, insufficient transparency regarding conditions of production</li> </ul>

Figure 1. Diagrammatical representation of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere

## Conclusion: Misrecognition and Pathologies in the Economic Sphere

In this paper, we presented and defended an expanded taxonomy of (mis-)recognition in the economic sphere. Our taxonomy tracked recognition claims that are grounded in different aspects of need, esteem and respect. Furthermore, we argued that doing justice to the diversity of struggles for recognition in the economic sphere requires distinguishing with regard to all three principles of recognition – i.e. need, esteem and respect – between a productive and a consumptive dimension and identifying what kind of economic relationship is at stake (i.e. between employers and employees).

To conclude, we briefly want to come back to the issue of the relationship between our expanded taxonomy of misrecognition and attempts to diagnose pathologies of misrecognition. Identifying an instance of misrecognition in the economic sphere is not the same as diagnosing a social pathology since the latter task requires an additional step. However, our expanded taxonomy is a useful tool for social pathology theorists. For if one is in the business of diagnosing pathologies of misrecognition in the market sphere, one has to appreciate the *full range* of variants of misrecognition that forms part of the economic sphere.<sup>17</sup> However, when it comes to evaluating whether particular instances of misrecognition are indicative of a social pathology one has to draw on, and apply, the account of social pathology one considers to be most convincing. The Frankfurt School, of which Axel Honneth is a proponent, endorses, for example, a distinct notion of social pathology that encompasses five interconnected elements, which are interpreted in different ways by different members of the Frankfurt School (Honneth 2009, 19-42): First, they all believe that reason is socially effective since norms are supposed to underpin social spheres. Second, a society as a whole, or a sub-sphere of it (like the economic sphere), can fail to live up to its rational potential if it does not realise the norms underlying it as comprehensively as possible. Thirdly, they give sociological explanations (invoking macro-social entities like social structures and processes) to explain why a society fails to live up to its rational potential (Freyenhagen, forthcoming). Fourthly, Frankfurt School theorists assume that the failure of a society to live up to its rational potential negatively impacts the opportunity of its members to realise themselves which, in turn, brings about social suffering and an emancipatory interest in overcoming the rational deficits marring the society in question. Against the backdrop of this admittedly very brief sketch of the

Frankfurt School's distinct notion of pathology, one can already sense how much philosophical (and sociological) work is required to defend and apply it. It is, however, important to note that neither the approach of the Frankfurt School to pathology nor Honneth's specific recognition-theoretical interpretation of it is the only game in town.<sup>18</sup> Frederick Neuhauser (2012), for instance, developed on the basis of his reading of Rousseau an alternative notion of pathology as self-perpetuating and worsening negative dynamics that dovetails with our expanded taxonomy since Rousseau – like Honneth – gives pride of place to human beings' desire for recognition when explaining social misdevelopments.

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<sup>1</sup> For an overall account of Honneth's theory of recognition, see Zurn (2015). It is now widely acknowledged that the model of recognition can make sense of some aspects of the economic sphere. However, many argue that other systemic factors not reducible to issues related to recognition also shape outcomes in the economic sphere (Fraser, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> The need for such a widening is in part due the fact that with regards to the economic sphere, the early and middle Honneth's focus – and by implication the focus of most of his readers – was almost entirely on what we call production-esteem (Honneth, 2003: 150-159; Zurn, 2015: 127-154). The picture changed with the publication of *Freedom's Right* in 2011, but it still remained too narrow. Moreover, the discussion has since then shifted to the issue of whether the market is, or could be, a sphere of social freedom (Honneth, 2014: 176-252; Jütten, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we distinguish between monotonous or repetitive work and meaningless work. In the latter case, we have in mind productive activities that, in the view of those engaging in them, do not make a valuable contribution to society (irrespective of whether the activity is repetitive or highly complex).

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the same managerial imperative that drives the 'systematic deskilling' of most work (Foster 1998: xvi) also underpins the aim 'to further divide workers and centralize control' (Foster 1998: xvi), which, in turn, undermines what we call production respect (Braverman 1998: 26-27).

<sup>5</sup> See The National Archives (1974) Health and Safety at Work etc Act. Available at:



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<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents> (accessed 17 May 2018).

For a transnational example, see The International Labour Organisation (1981) *Convention concerning Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment*. Available at:

[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C155](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C155) (accessed 17 May 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Australian Government: Fair Work Ombudsman (2018) *Compassionate & Bereavement Leave*. Available at:

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/compassionate-and-bereavement-leave> (accessed 17 May 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Already Hegel noticed that the market is not only about the satisfaction of material needs like ‘food, drink, clothing, etc.’ (Hegel, 1991: §189A) but also about generating needs that are sensitive to the opinions of others (Hegel, 1991: §191; Honneth, 2014: 199).

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, BBC News (2018) for some pay gap stories involving female employees of the BBC.

<sup>9</sup> Unlike integrative accounts of meaningful work that tend to focus on the overlap between different dimensions, our aim here is to discern the different types of recognition that are at stake. Yeoman, for instance, argues that for work to be meaningful it has to have a certain ‘interior content’ and ‘structure’ (Yeoman, 2014: 23). We consider this aspect that pertains to the nature of the task in our discussion of developmental and exercise needs. Yeoman also states that we must be able to see our contributions as valuable from a point of view that belongs to ‘an at least notional community’ (Wolf, 2010: 26). As we have just pointed out, this aspect is an issue of production-esteem according to our account. Finally, Yeoman argues that individuals are ‘more likely’ to experience their work as meaningful ‘when it is organised democratically’ (Yeoman, 2014: 5) since this means they are involved in ‘interpreting, shaping, and ordering purposes’ (Yeoman, 2014: 32). We cover this aspect as part of our discussion of production-respect.

<sup>10</sup> The (problematic) relationship between consumption and social standing is another venerable topic in modern social and economic theory. Authors like Rousseau (Neuhouser 2013), Veblen (2007), and Bourdieu (1979) focus on (the social features driving) what we would call pathologies of consumption-esteem. For they are mainly concerned with ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen 2007: 49-69; Honneth 2014: 201) as a means to

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demonstrating one's social superiority or improving one's social status (whereas we are interested in consumption as an activity that is crucial for expressing and realising one's individuality).

<sup>11</sup> There is, thus, a similarity between a Hegelian account of the importance of private property for one's identity and our claim that it is vital for individuals' identity that they can understand their consumptive behaviour as manifesting their particular tastes, conceptions of the good etc. (Hegel, 1991: §46; Honneth, 2014: 75-78; Waldron, 1988: 370ff).

<sup>12</sup> See below for an account of the difference between consumption-esteem and consumption-respect.

<sup>13</sup> European Parliament (2017) Same brand, lower quality: MEPs tackle unfair food practices.

Available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20171009STO85661/same-brand-lower-quality-meps-tackle-unfair-food-practices> (accessed 12 March 2018).

<sup>14</sup> For an argument for 'workplace democracy' both 'at the level of the task and at the level of the organisation', see Yeoman (2014: 3, 96-122, 154-184).

<sup>15</sup> For a critical evaluation of one of the most prominent contemporary attempts to pragmatically hold on to the commitment to workplace democracy under the conditions of globalisation, see, for instance, Latinne's account of the Mondragon cooperative, which was founded 'as an industrial cooperative in the 1950s' and is 'now a transnational enterprise' (Latinne, 2014: 1).

<sup>16</sup> EUR-Lex (2015) Interpretative Notice on indication of origin of goods from the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 (2015/C 375/05). Available at:

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<sup>17</sup> We are agnostic in this paper regarding the question of whether all pathologies in the economic sphere are pathologies of misrecognition. All we are claiming is that our expanded taxonomy of misrecognition in the market will prove helpful for anyone attempting to diagnose pathologies of misrecognition in this sphere.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the changes Honneth's views on social pathology have undergone and a critical evaluation of them, see Freyenhagen (2015).