

AWL 6

Alternative Ways of Life: Towards a Typology

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1. A typology is only useful if it can guide us theoretically and practically in accounting for the past, understanding/acting on the present and envisaging the future. A purely empirical listing of seemingly related phenomena with sub-headings will not do. A good typology has to cut into a phenomenon so as to make it transparent in one or more directions, comprehensible. It should account for empirical phenomena in the sense of accommodating them, but also leaving empty slots for possible future (or past, but not encountered) phenomena. A typology, needless to say, must like all intellectual tools undergo revisions.

2. I see the AWL phenomenon as partly reactive, partly active - a rejection of the dominant way of life, and a search for something alternative. Consequently, one way of constructing a typology would be based on the reactive aspects: what is it in the dominant way of life that is rejected, leaving open how the alternative is being shaped (for this see "Typology Attempt" by Monica Wemegah). I shall follow that approach in this effort.

3. I take it that the dominant way of life that is being rejected is what I have elsewhere referred to as the bourgeois way of life, BWL.

Four characteristics:

B ₁ : Non-manual work	hence	A ₁₁ : More manual work
B ₂ : Material comfort	"	A ₁₂ : Less material comfort, more natural life
B ₃ : Familism, privatism	"	A ₁₃ : Communal life
B ₄ : Predictable security	"	A ₁₄ : Less predictability

4. This, however, can only be understood within a social structure referred to as technocratic:

T ₁ : bureaucrat-intensive	hence	A ₂₁ : self-management, auto-gestion
T ₂ : corporate-intensive	"	A ₂₂ : self-sufficient, informal
T ₃ : intelligentsia-intensive	"	A ₂₃ : self-defining

5. But it should also be understood within an economic structure referred to as exploitative:

E ₁ : Productivity-oriented	A ₃₁ : More artisanal
E ₂ : Expl. of internal proletariat	A ₃₂ : Co-operative domestically
E ₃ : Expl. of external proletariat	A ₃₃ : Co-operative globally
E ₄ : Expl. of nature	A ₃₄ : Partnership, integrative

6. However, without specifying the content of the active dimension beyond what has been done, it is important to say something about where it is enacted; in which space:

S₁: inner space - mind, spirit
S₂: micro - family, commune, peers, friends
S₃: meso - "local", municipal

S₄: macro - "national", domestic
S₅: regional (eg first, second, third worlds)
S₆: global - "world" level
S₇: outer space - cosmos

One general, obvious, hypothesis would be that at least up till now the focus has been on S₁, S₂ and S₃ -- because S₄ is seen as dominated by technocracy or one/two of its components and S₅ and S₆ either by inter-technocratic elites, or to be determined and beyond manipulation and/or to be too far away -- something like S₇. No doubt in AWL there is a concentration on closeness, on depth, on "Innerlichkeit." A major theoretical/practical problem is what happens to AWL when it goes beyond S₁₋₃ - eg through networking, (con)federations, etc.: will it develop some of the features described as T₁₋₃ and E₁₋₄ above? Will there then have to be a new AWL, AWL₂?

7. This gives rise to a total of $4 \times 3 \times 4 \times 3$ types = 144 types, by combining the dimensions, using each one as a fundamentum divisionis:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} A_{11} & A_{12} & A_{13} & A_{14} \\ A_{21} & A_{22} & A_{23} & A_{24} \\ A_{31} & A_{32} & A_{33} & A_{34} \\ A_1 & S_2 & S_3 & \end{array}$$

As the types in each dimension do not exclude each other there are actually many more. Thus, the typical commune would be

$$A_{11-14}, A_{21-23}, A_{31-34}, S_{1-2}$$

meaning it is a very total form. But types less rich, missing in some of these categories, could still be recognized as AWL.