

**TRANSFORMING CAPITALISM
THROUGH REAL UTOPIAS**

TWO FOUNDATIONAL PROPOSITIONS

FOUNDATIONAL PROPOSITION OF CRITICAL SOCIAL SCIENCE

Many forms of human suffering and many deficits in human flourishing are the result of existing institutions and social structures.

FOUNDATIONAL PROPOSITION OF EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Transforming existing institutions and social structures has the potential to substantially reduce human suffering and expand the possibilities for human flourishing.

Alternatives as “*Real Utopias*”

Utopia: Alternatives to dominant institutions that embody our deepest aspirations for a just and humane world.

Real: Alternatives to dominant institutions that are attentive to problems of unintended consequences, self-destructive dynamics, and difficult dilemmas of normative trade-offs.

Four tasks of an emancipatory social science

- 1. Moral Foundations*
- 2. Diagnosis & Critique*
- 3. Alternatives*
- 4. Transformation*

Moral Foundations: three principles

Equality: *In a socially just society all persons would have broadly equal access to the material and social means necessary to live a flourishing life.*

Democracy: *In a fully democratic society, all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary means to participate meaningfully in decisions about things which affect their lives.*

Sustainability: *Future generations should have access to the social and material means to live flourishing lives at least at the same level as the present generation.*

Diagnosis & Critique of Capitalism

Equality: *Capitalism inherently generates levels of inequality in income and wealth that systematically violate social justice and perpetuate eliminable deficits in human flourishing.*

Democracy: *Capitalism generates severe deficits in realizing democratic values by excluding crucial decisions from public deliberation, by allowing private wealth to affect access to political power, and by allowing workplace dictatorships.*

Sustainability: *Capitalism inherently threatens the quality of the environment for future generations because of imperatives for consumerism and endless growth.*

Alternatives

Three faces of alternatives

- 1. Desirability**
- 2. Viability**
- 3. achievability**

**Important to focus on viability first
and then work on achievability**

(I): Images of social systems

- 1. Organic:** society is like an organism
- 2. Ecosystem:** society is like a pond

(II) Ways to make the world a better place:

- 1. Ameliorative reform:** Look at existing institutions, identify their flaws and propose improvements.
- 2. Real utopias:** Envision the contours of an alternative social world that embodies emancipatory ideals and then look for social innovations we can create in the world as it is that move us towards that destination.

Some Examples of Real Utopias

1. Participatory budgeting
2. Wikipedia
3. Public libraries
4. Solidarity finance
5. The Mondragon worker cooperative
6. The Quebec social economy council
7. Urban agriculture with community land trusts
8. Internet-based gift-economy in music
9. Policy juries and “randomocracy”
10. Unconditional basic income

**A framework for exploring
real utopias in & beyond capitalism:**

Taking the “social” in socialism seriously

Three kinds of power deployed in economic systems

1. Economic power: power based on the control of economic resources.
2. State power: power based on the control of rule making and rule enforcing over territory.
3. Social power: power based on capacity to mobilize voluntary cooperation and collective action.

POWER WITHIN ECONOMIC STRUCTURES: CAPITALISM, STATISM AND SOCIALISM

Capitalism: an economic structure within which economic activity is controlled through the exercise of economic power.

Statism: an economic structure within which economic activity is controlled through the exercise of state power.

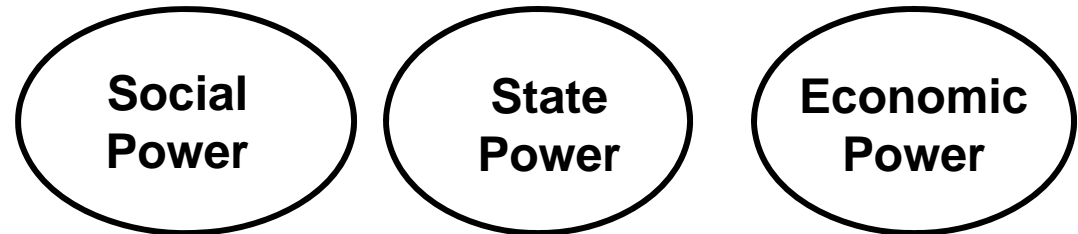
Socialism: an economic structure within which economic activity is controlled through the exercise of “social power” -- power based on capacity to mobilize voluntary cooperation and collective action.

The idea of *HYBRIDS*:

All real economic systems are complex combinations of capitalism, statism, and socialism.

VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF POWER CONFIGURATIONS

Three types of power:



Interaction of forms of power:



Strength and autonomy of power:

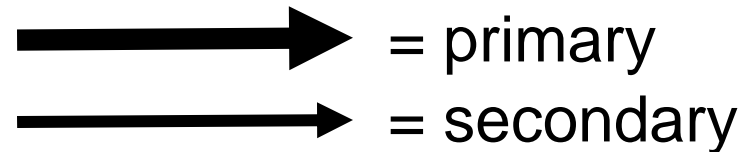


Illustration of Power Configurations

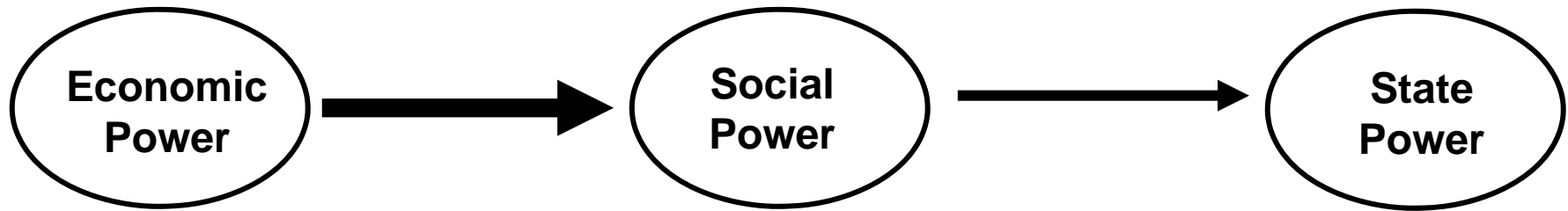


**Conventional democracy:
Social power dominates state power**

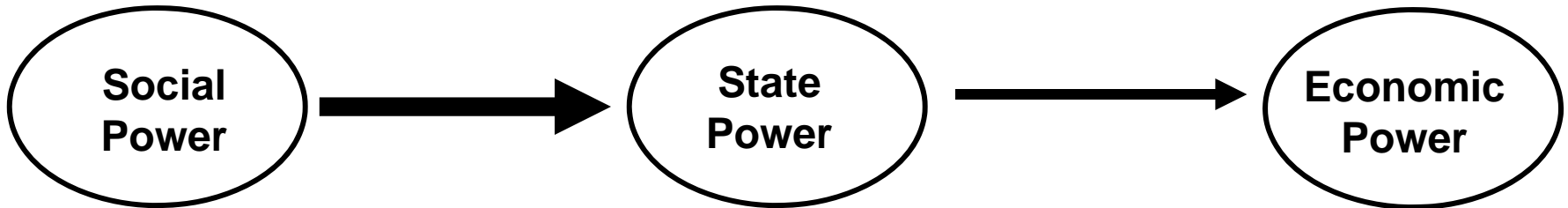


**Corporate control of political parties:
Economic power dominates social power**

Illustration of Power Configurations



Corporate control of state power via funding of political parties



Social control of economic power via state regulation of capital

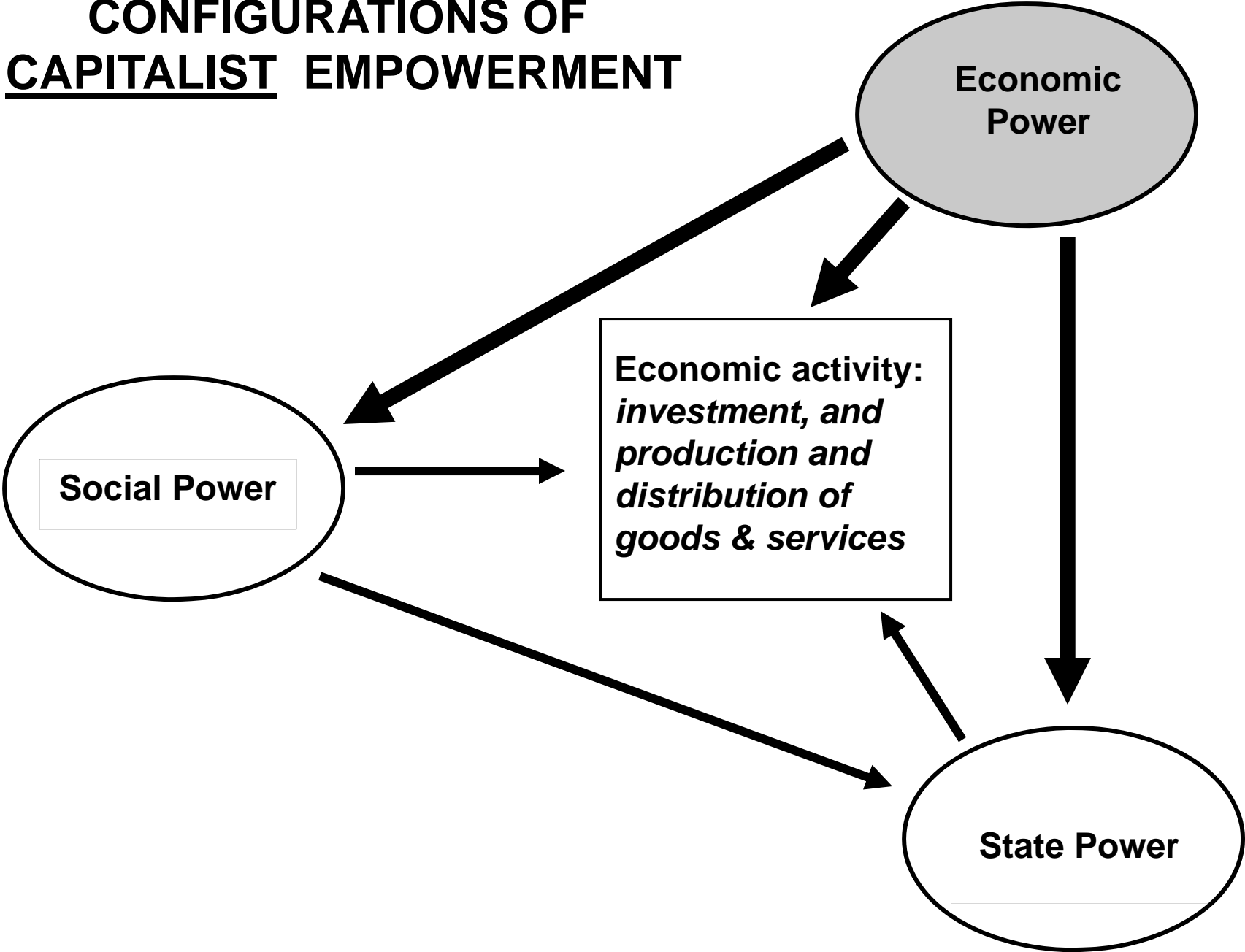
Economic Power

Social Power

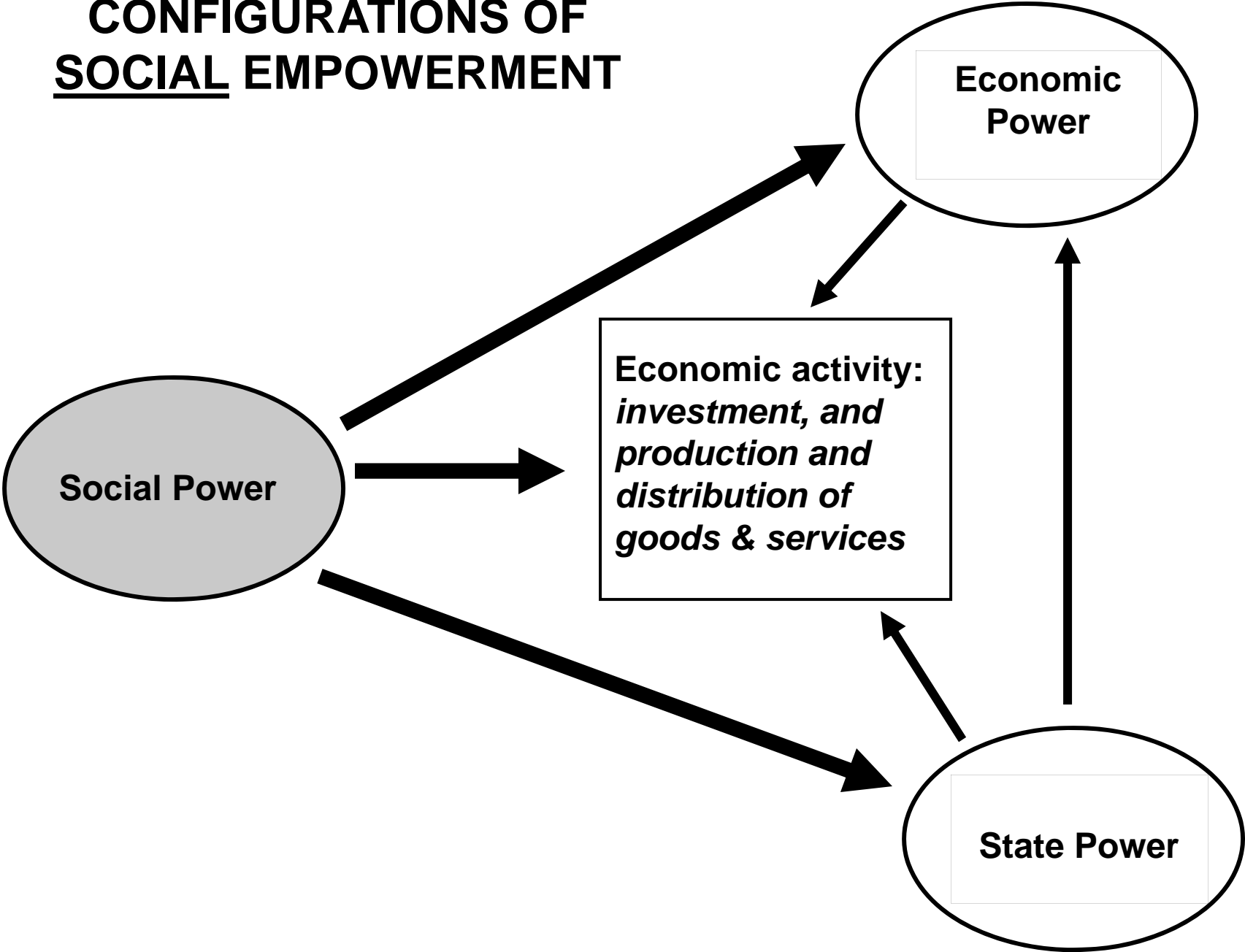
**Economic activity:
*investment, and
production and
distribution of
goods & services***

State Power

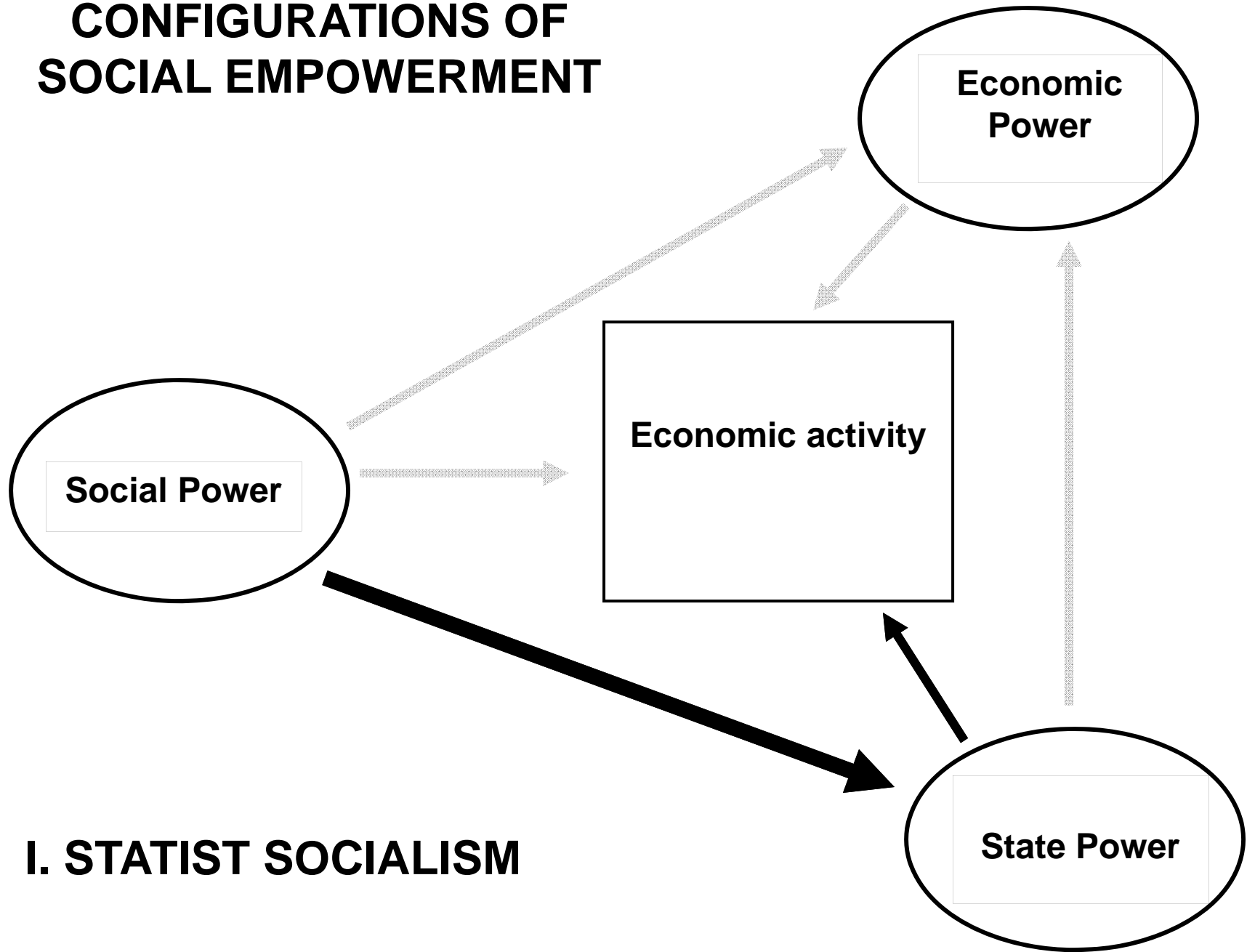
CONFIGURATIONS OF CAPITALIST EMPOWERMENT



CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

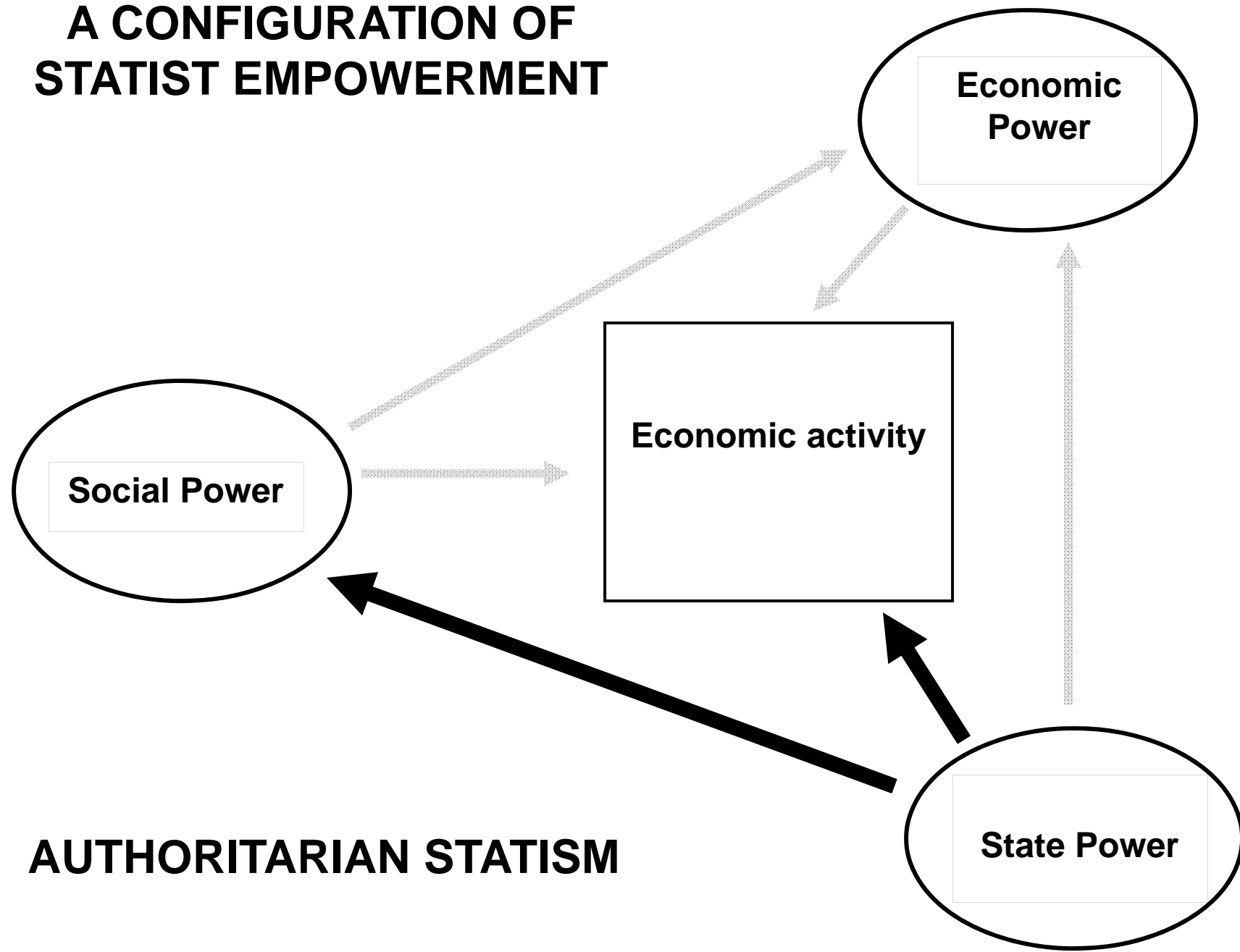


CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



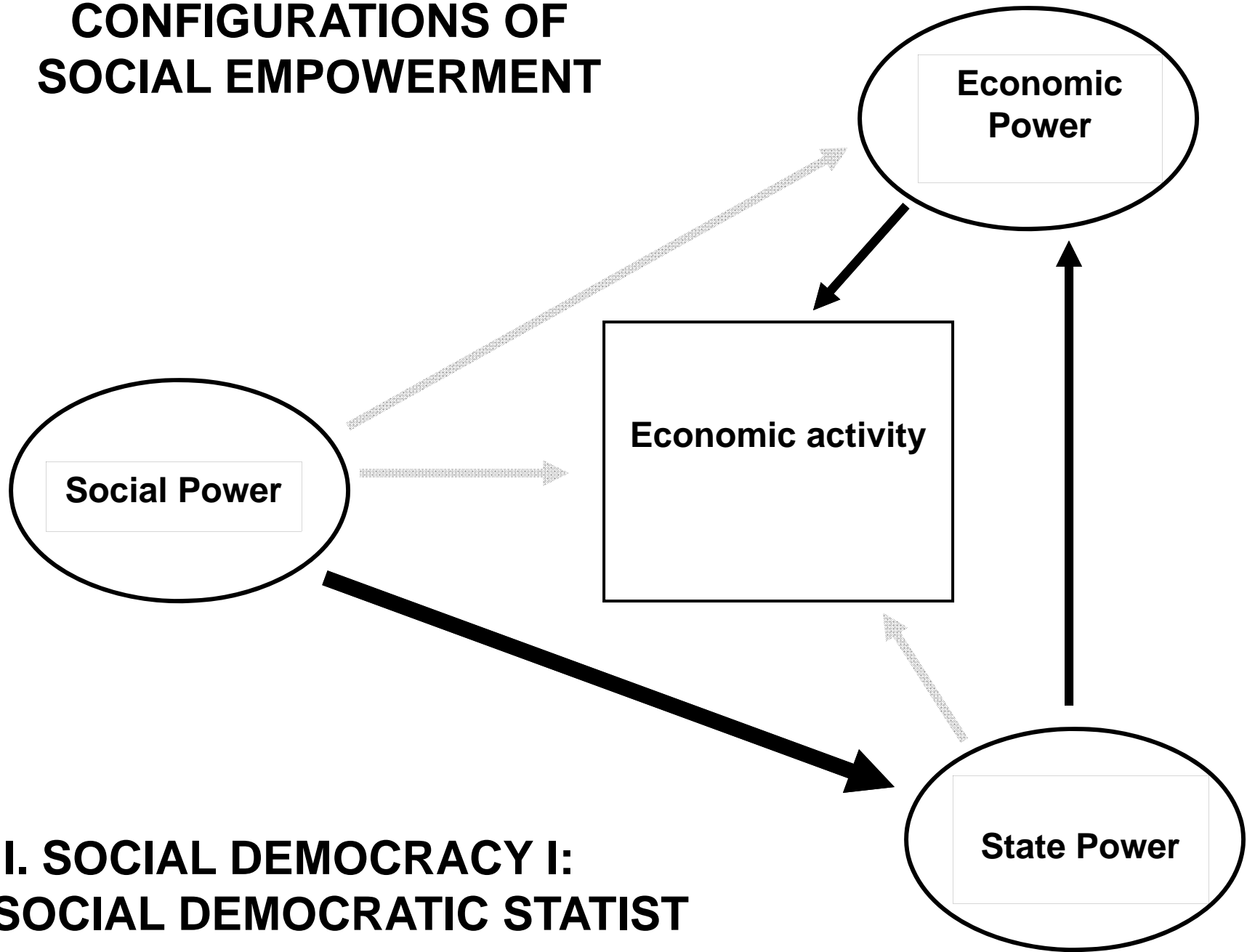
I. STATIST SOCIALISM

A CONFIGURATION OF STATIST EMPOWERMENT



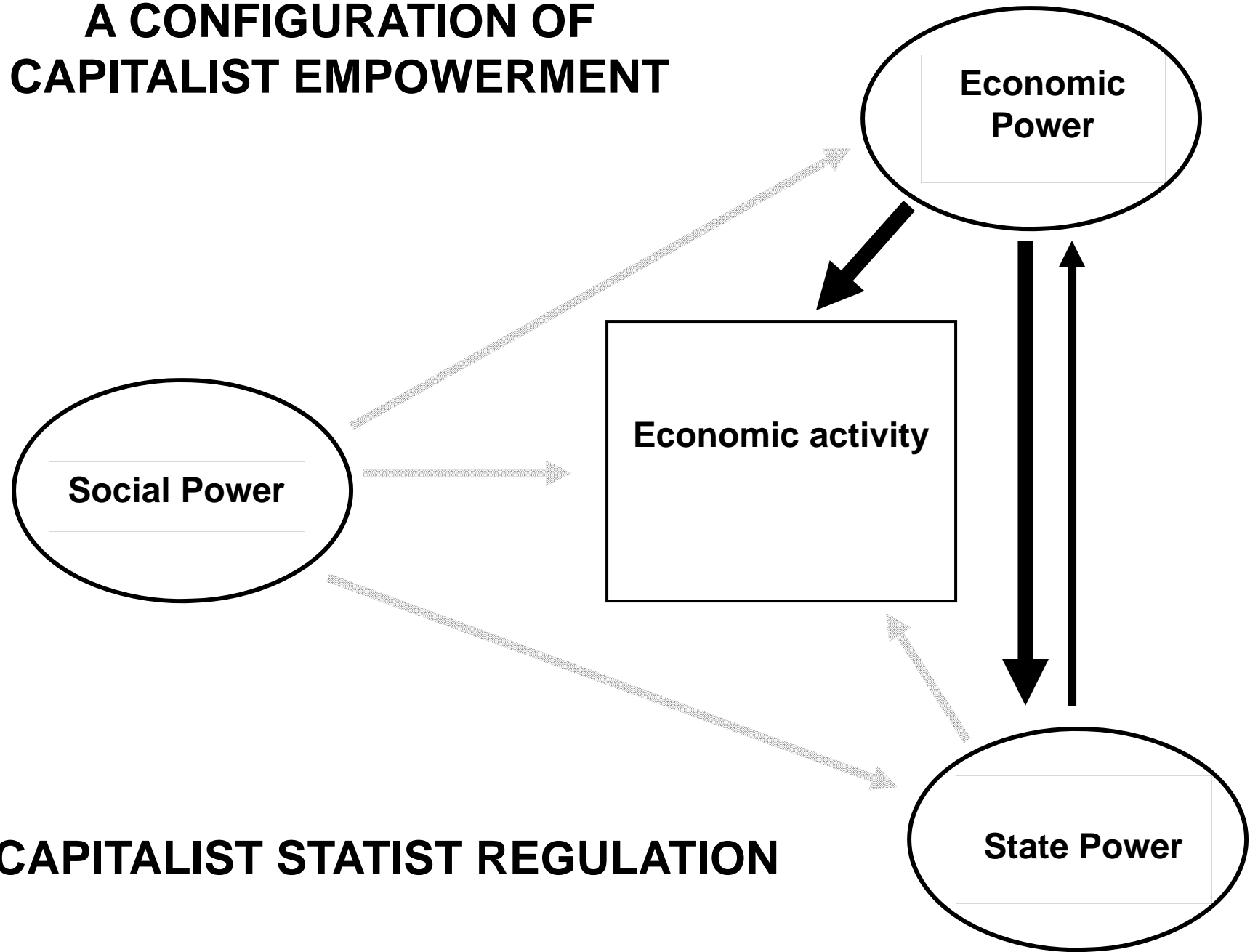
AUTHORITARIAN STATISM

CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

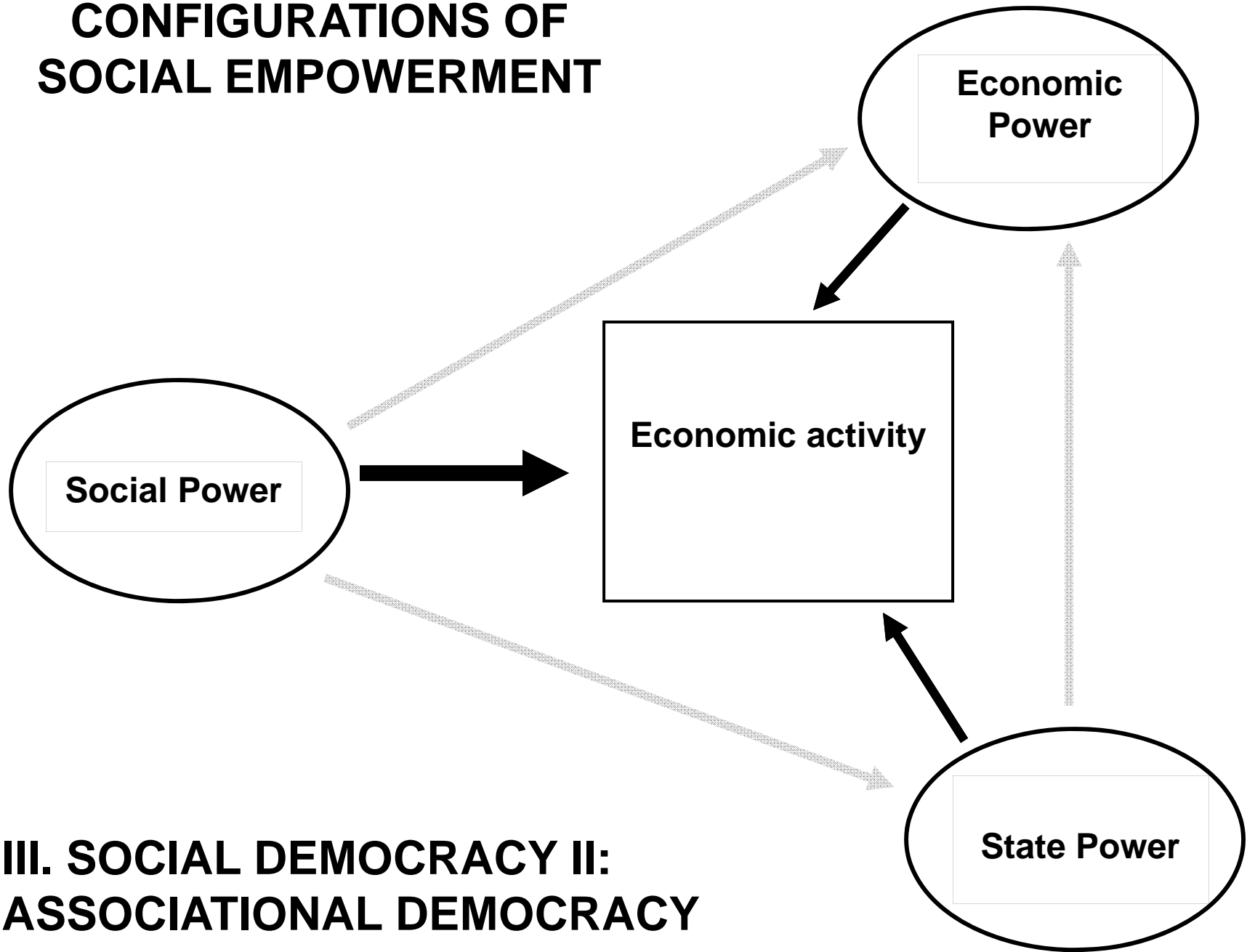


II. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY I: SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC STATIST REGULATION

A CONFIGURATION OF CAPITALIST EMPOWERMENT

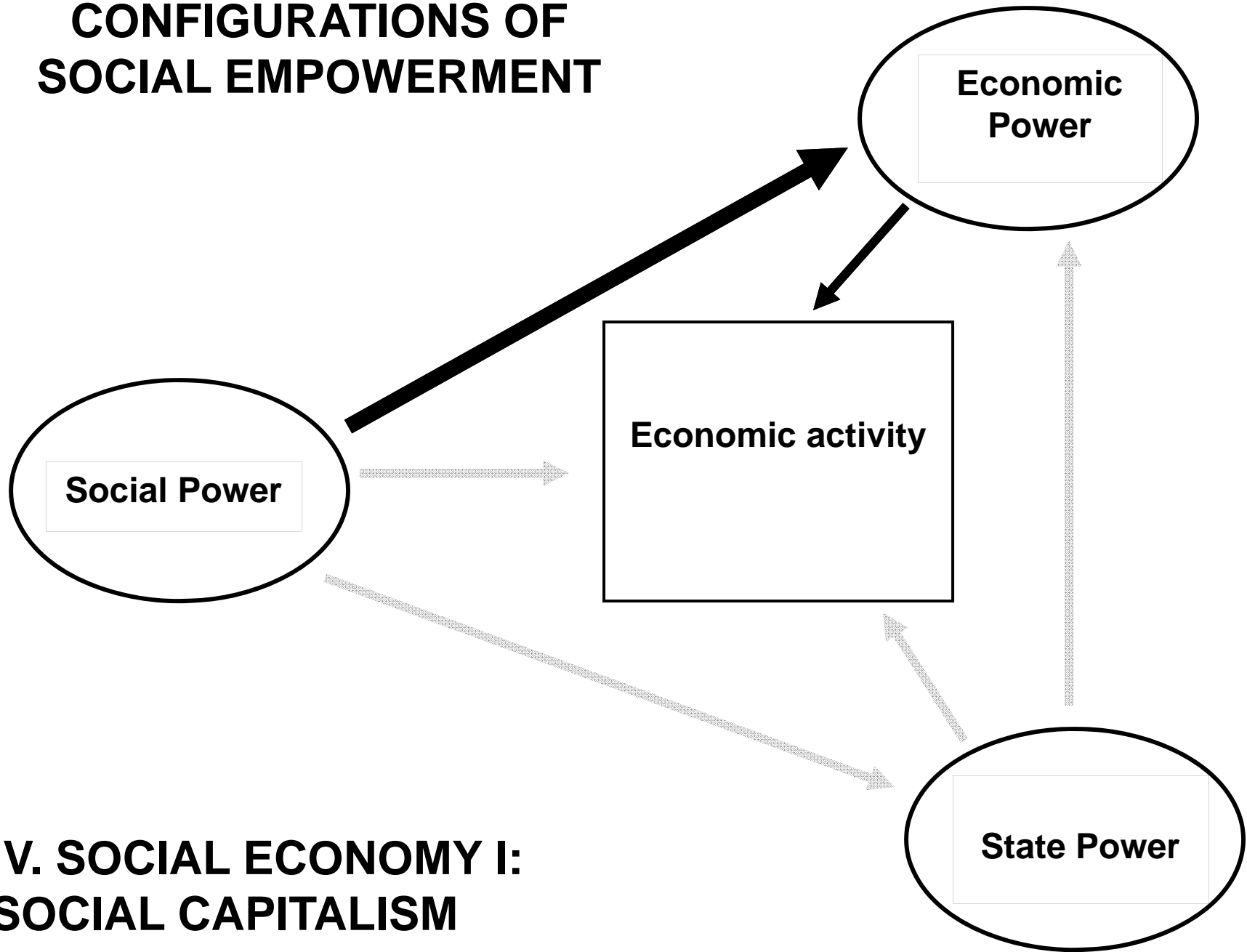


CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



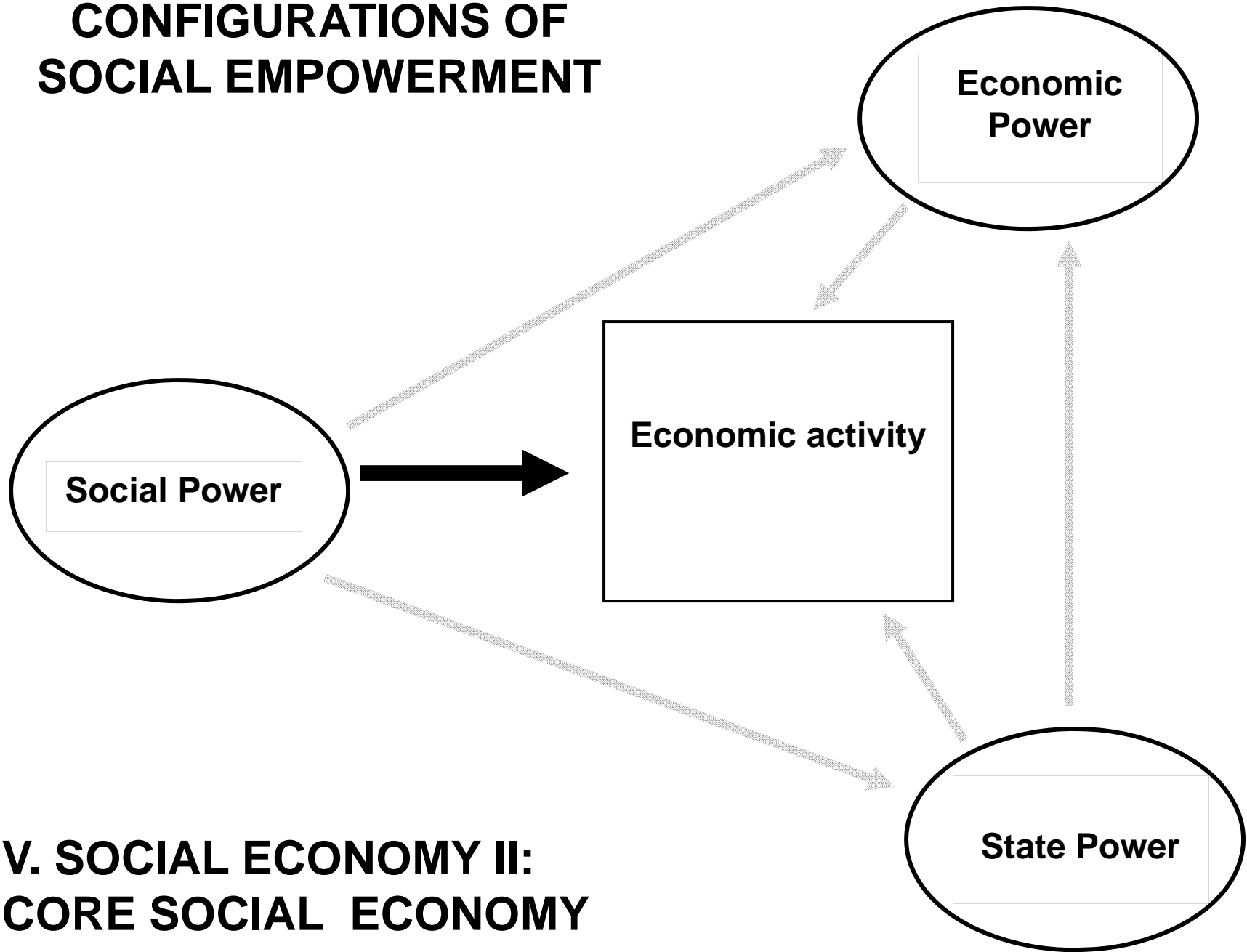
III. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY II: ASSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY

CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



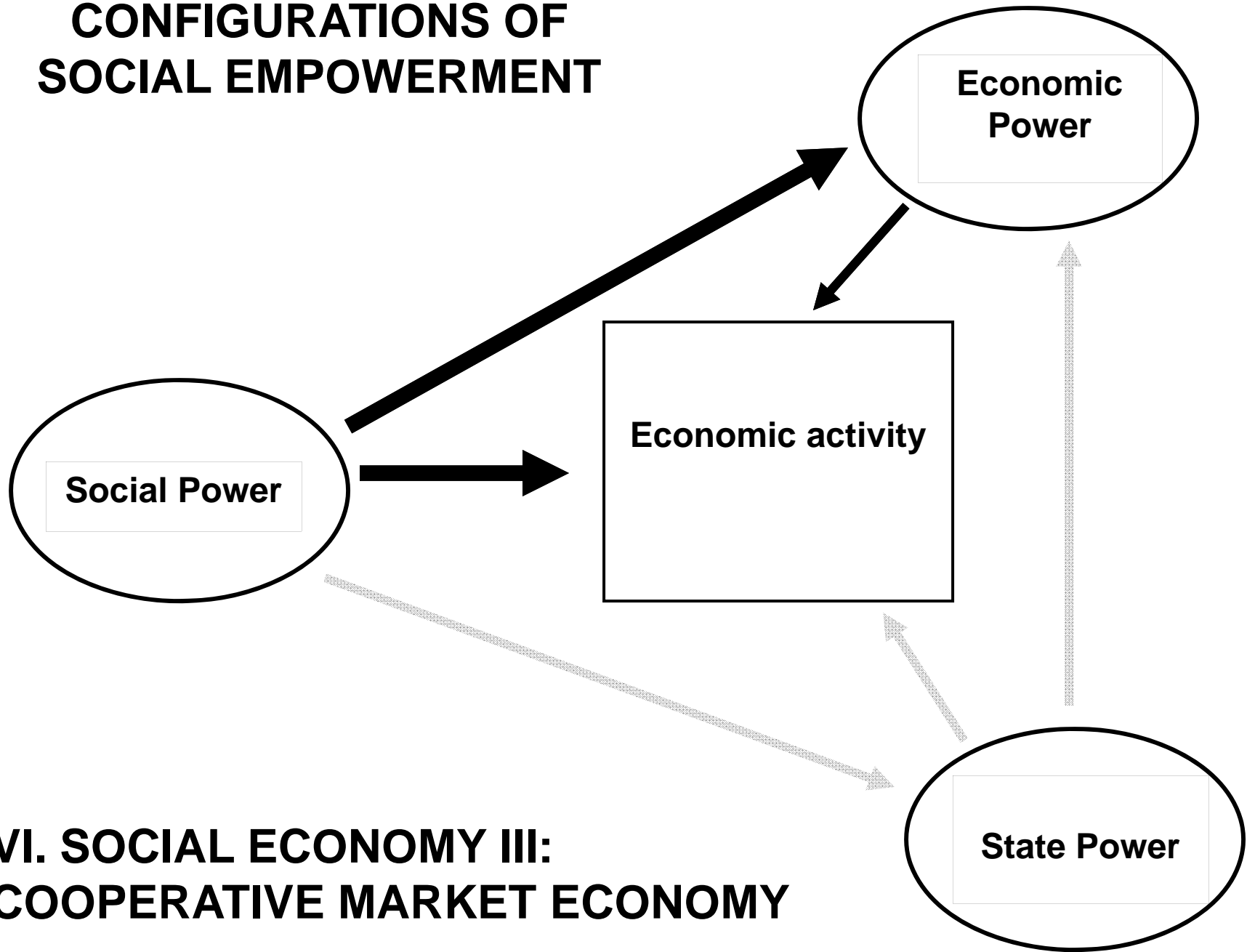
IV. SOCIAL ECONOMY I: SOCIAL CAPITALISM

CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



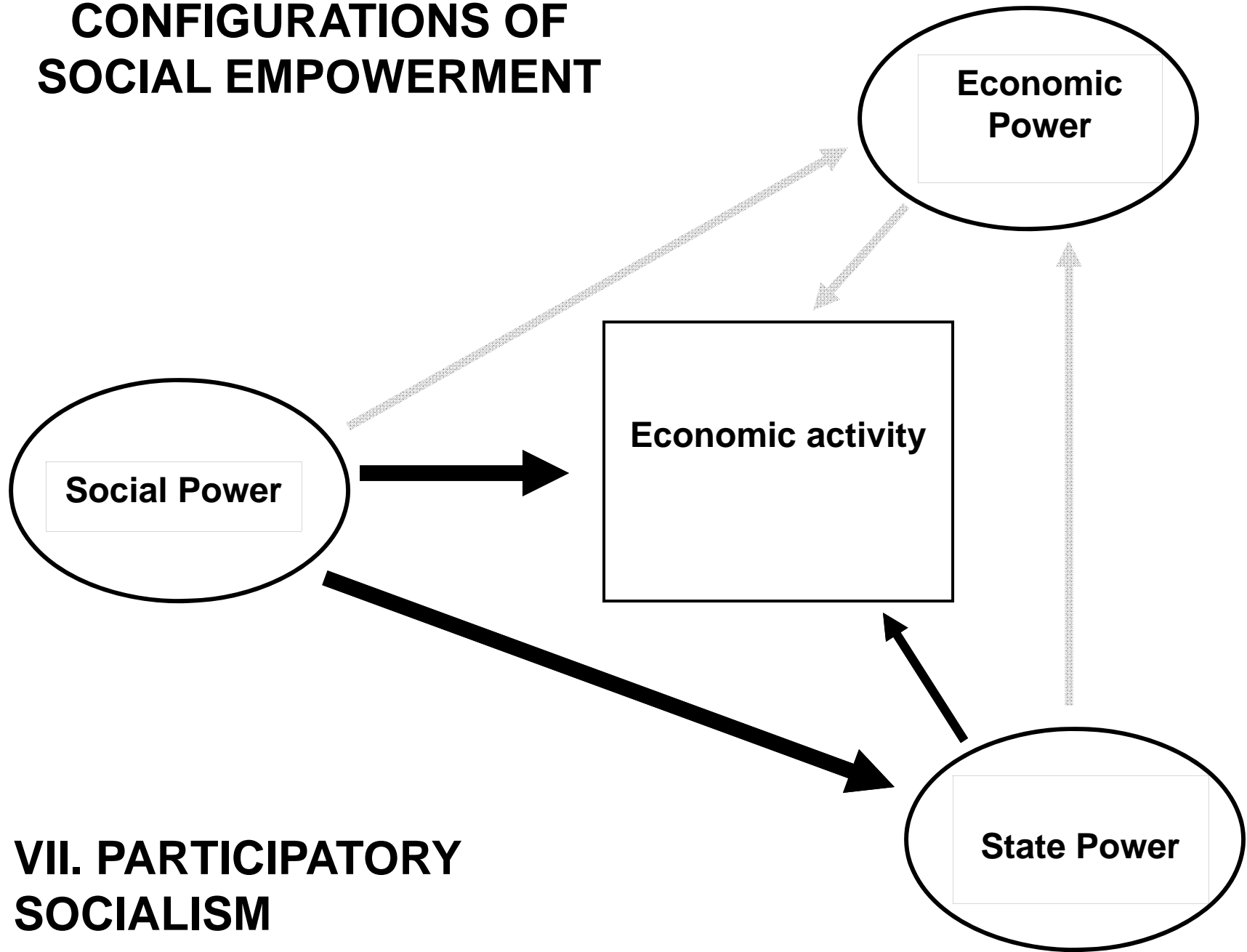
V. SOCIAL ECONOMY II: CORE SOCIAL ECONOMY

CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



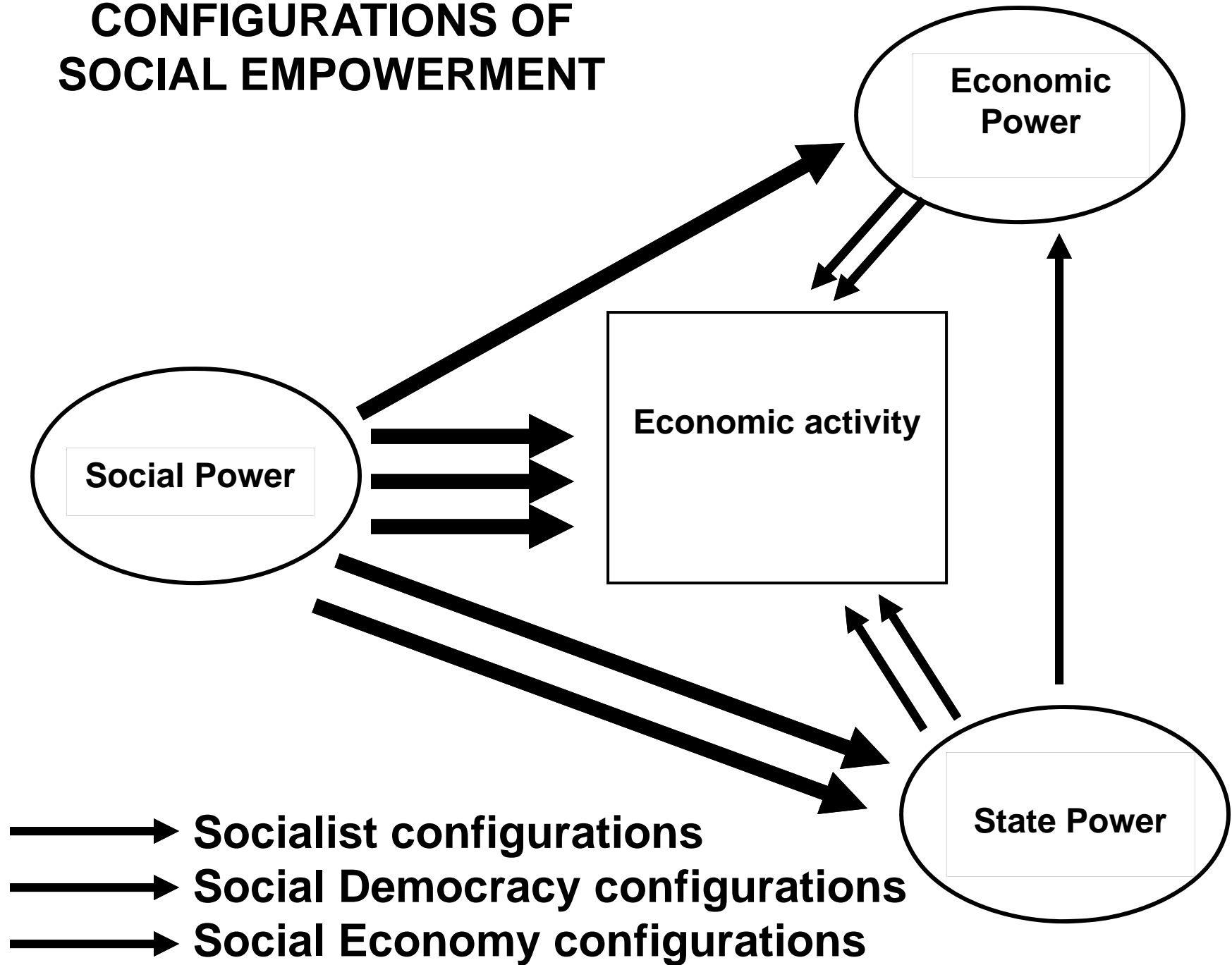
VI. SOCIAL ECONOMY III: COOPERATIVE MARKET ECONOMY

CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



VII. PARTICIPATORY SOCIALISM

CONFIGURATIONS OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT



Strategic logics of Transformation

1. Ruptural (radical break in institutions):
Revolutionary socialist tradition
2. Interstitial (build new institutions in the
cracks of the system): Anarchist tradition
3. Symbiotic (use existing institutions to solve
problems in ways that transform
institutions): Social democratic tradition

A Strategic Vision for the 21st Century

1. Ruptural strategies directed at capitalism as a system are implausible, but ruptures in specific institutions may be needed to open up possibilities for symbiotic transformations.
2. Symbiotic strategies are needed to expand the space for interstitial transformations.
3. Interstitial strategies create the building blocks of emancipatory alternatives.

CONCLUSIONS

1. *Democratization is the central problem for transcending capitalism.*
2. *Institutional pluralism and heterogeneity: there are multiple configurations of social empowerment*
3. *There are no guarantees: socialism is a terrain for working for equality, democracy and sustainability, not a guarantee for realizing those ideals.*
4. *Strategic indeterminacy: there is no one way*
5. *Opacity of the future limits of possibility: We cannot know in advance how far we can go in this trajectory of social empowerment.*