

Higher Education Institutions and Networked Knowledge Societies

Jussi Välimaa

17/06/2016

Main Challenges

- How to understand & explain contemporary societies?
- How to explain theoretically the roles Higher education institutions play in contemporary **networked knowledge societies?**



On Sociological theories: How to explain societies & social change?

- **Gesellschaft** (state machinery) vs. **gemeinschaft** (Society / voluntary organisations) (Tönnies)
- **Social class** & dialectic development (Marx ↔ Hegel)
- Integration, differentiation, solidarity (Durkheim)
- Systems theories (Parsons, Luhmann)
- Field theories (economic, cultural, social capital (Bourdieu)
- Theory of structuration (Giddens), Micro sociology (Goffman), Risk Society (Beck) ...
- & nationalistic history writing

How to see society through a theory?



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Main problems with the grand social theories

- ❏ **Education** (or higher education) is often **ignored** as a social phenomenon; YET it is related to **socialization** into **values & norms, culture** of society, and to **(re)production of social structures**
- ❏ **Only Bourdieu** (field, capital, habitus) and systems theories to some extent) recognise education as a social / socializing force
- ❏ **The production of new knowledge** -mainly ignored in grand social theories –with the exception of knowledge society theories- YET: it is related to economic growth more than capital, labour or land



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Main Challenge

- What are the most important phenomena that shape, change and ultimately define contemporary societies with respect to higher education?

↔ CINHEKS Project (2009-12) & book (2016)

International cooperation can ...



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.... be also innovative & fun...



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How to explain contemporary societies –in relation to HE?

■ Three families of explanations:

- 1) **Knowledge-focused** (Knowledge Society & Knowledge economy)
- 2) **ICT-focused** (networked mobile society, information society)
- 3) **Network-focused** (ANT, Communication Power, Rhizomes, Empire)

“Intellectual traditions not only have histories, they also have homes” (Peters 2007)

1) Knowledge in society & economy

Role of knowledge is increasing in societies & in industrial production => **Knowledge society** in a double sense:

1) the sources of innovation derivate increasingly from research & development: a) new relation between science and technology, b) the centrality of *theoretical* knowledge

2) the weight of the society -measured by a larger proportion of GNP & a larger share of employment- is increasingly in the knowledge field (Bell 1973)

“in the new, informational mode of development the source of productivity lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol communication.” (Castells, 1996)



Perspectives to Knowledge Society: a social theory

- the relationships between **labour and property (capital)** no longer provided the intellectual insight necessary to describe, understand & explain modern societies
- 'modernization essentially involves multiple and necessarily unilinear processes of 'extension' and 'enlargement' (Stehr 1994)*
- exceptional is the quantity of knowledge (and information) produced daily & the use of information technologies in the data-intensive processes
- > the modernization processes within the knowledge society are **processes of extension** rather than social transformation



Perspectives to Knowledge Society: a discourse

- Knowledge Society creates **an imaginary social space** in which everything related to knowledge or knowledge production can be included & interconnected
- Knowledge Society is both the **objective of policies** and debates & an **agent promoting policies and debates** concerning its' potentials (in Western world)
- the term itself is **a social and political actor** when discussing the goals of the societies (in Western world)



Competing theoretical perspectives to Knowledge Society

1) Knowledge Economy, focus on the relationship between economic productivity and knowledge ⇔ *innovations, economic growth, new jobs*

- Hayek (1937, 1945) *price system*
- Machlup (1962): the production and distribution of knowledge in the US economy
- Becker (1964): human capital theory
- *A family of research traditions proceeding from different assumptions & use different methodologies*

Learning society & Information society

- 2) **Learning Society** crucial ability is how to "learn how to learn" ⇔ *life-long learning*
- 3) **Information society**, rooted in ICT, focus on the potentials of information & data processing; *too technical approach*
- Important for higher education research:** in the field of policy making academic theories tend to turn **into performative ideologies** => needs to be studied academically

Variant of Information Society: Mobile Network Society

- time and space (the traditional bounding categories of human history significantly transformed because of ICT (wireless mobile & internet))
- individual social spaces ⇔ the **culture of individualism**: the primacy of individual projects and interests over the norms of society or reference group (Castells 2006)



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3) Network as a new form of social order –*networks & networds*

- *“A new isomorphism, a common form with differing content, of the times.” (Cavanagh 2007,23)*
- *“... the network has become a common form that tends to define our ways of understanding the world and acting in it.” (Hardt & Negri 2004, 142)*

=> Networked theorizing

networks as a new form of social order / perspectives:

- **A Social Theory:** Communication power (Castells 2009). *Where is and what is power?*
- **A Political Theory:** Empire (Hardt & Negri 2000). *A theory of everything?*
- **A Powerful Metaphor: Rhizome** (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) *no structure, but logic*
- **A Methodology: ANT** (actor-network theory) (Latour 2007 & Callon). *Follow the actor (human & non-human)*
- **A Method: SNA** British & American traditions

On Networks

- **Network and networking as**
 - 1) an intellectual device (**social theory**)
 - 2) as **a norm** (one should network!)
 - 3) as a **metaphor** describing everyday **experience of people** living in network societies
- related to social change from a traditional **hierarchical society** (with its strictly defined hierarchies & borders between the inside and outside) into communication-based open cooperation, NETWORKS (Eriksson 2009)

Networked theorising -family of social theories

- Networks based on distance between nodes
- Networks are not stable but dynamic social entities, in the processes of change
- Power related to protocols, codes and standards & identity of a network
- No clearly defined differences between inside & outside
- Closely related to modern ICT
- antithesis to hierarchical organizations & societies

Main problems with these three social theories

- **Knowledge Society** does not take seriously enough the means of communication (ICT) and emerging new social structures (*networks*)
- **Mobile Network Societies** emphasizes ICT too much as a source for change
- **Network theories (ANT)** and **Network Society** do not pay enough attention to the contents of communication (*knowledge*)

=> Networked Knowledge Societies

- Contemporary societies can not be defined **either** knowledge societies **or** network societies; but **both** describe important social phenomena of contemporary global (Western?) realities

=> to explain social change & relationship with HE:

- 1) **CONTENT:** The need & use of knowledge
- 2) **MEDIUM:** Information technology
- 3) **SOCIAL FORM:** Networking as the social form of communication & knowledge production

CONTENT

Knowledge:

- The quantity and quality of the needs for most up-dated knowledge is a new phenomenon -> **research and HEIs are crucially important.**
- **the content** of information and communication is crucially important matter in itself
- Knowledge: communicated data & information, interpretations, value statements
- **Knowledge needs to be taken seriously as the core element** in contemporary societies.

MEDIUM

Information Technology

- ICT has re-defined the categories of time & space, social relations \Leftrightarrow identity, social forms, society
- However, institutions & social structures continue to frame social choices & resources available
- Wireless communication & internet enhance considerably the choice of interlocutors & the intensity and density of interaction.
- **HEIs may act as important nodes of knowledge networks** because of their intellectual and material resources (academic, administrative & physical)

SOCIAL FORM

Networks

- **Networking** as the social form of communication & knowledge production: Networks are based on non-hierarchical social relationships
- New forms of knowledge production, where knowledge is produced in networks of partnerships & cooperation with academics and universities & other stakeholders outside HEIs
- Networking and networks are the most efficient way to organize these multiple and flexible academic, business and social partnership relations

Trends in the Changes of Knowledge

Dimensions of Knowledge:	(Traditional) Hierarchical Society:	Networked Knowledge Society:
<i>Locus of knowledge</i>	Local & national institutions	Global networks
<i>Nature of knowledge</i>	Controlled /closed	Open & free
<i>Mode of knowledge production</i>	Universities	Cooperation: universities & others
<i>Production of knowledge</i>	Individual academics	Collective cooperation & peer production
<i>Storage of knowledge</i>	Libraries & archives	+ internet
<i>Access to knowledge</i>	Limited, controlled	Open & free
<i>Mode of knowledge transmission</i>	Teacher-centered, lecture rooms	Student-centered, web-based learning

Trees and Rhizomes?

Academic networks as
rhizomes?

Universities as trees?

Fin



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HEIs in NKS

- NKS as a synthesis of social theories from the perspective of higher education.
- Alternatives ways to see HEIs:
- Rhizomes and organizations
- HEIs as platforms for multiple interests
- HEIs as resource bases
- UNIVERSTASIS as a process rather than a structure, a space rather than a place

Universtasis as way forward?

- CHALLENGE: how to find a dynamic balance between different stakeholders' expectations, institutional processes, the nature of academic work and the traditions of HEIs?
- Combination of **organisational structures + academic networks** balancing with conflicting needs & expectations from local, national, global level
- **Universitas + stasis** (balance, greek)
- ***Universtasis* is a space and a place, a process and a structure where academic networks meet with and are supported by institutional infrastructure and hierarchies and fulfilled by society's variety of needs**





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