

On Cultural Perspectives in Higher Education Studies

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high culture?



environment, material conditions & cultural artifacts?

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Culture?

- ❖ **A Social phenomenon:** Cultures develop in *time (history, traditions)* **space & contexts:** geographical & climatic, economic, political
- ❖ **Cultures** based on socially constructed, shared & contested understandings. **Moral orders:** “what is considered to be good, right, desirable & valued as opposed to what is regarded as bad, wrong, avoidable & despised”
- ❖ **An Intellectual device:** **1)** “Network of meanings” (Geertz 1973) **2)** “webs of significance where people simultaneously create and exist within culture (Tierney & Rhoads 1993)



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Two Main Traditions of Cultural Studies in Higher Education

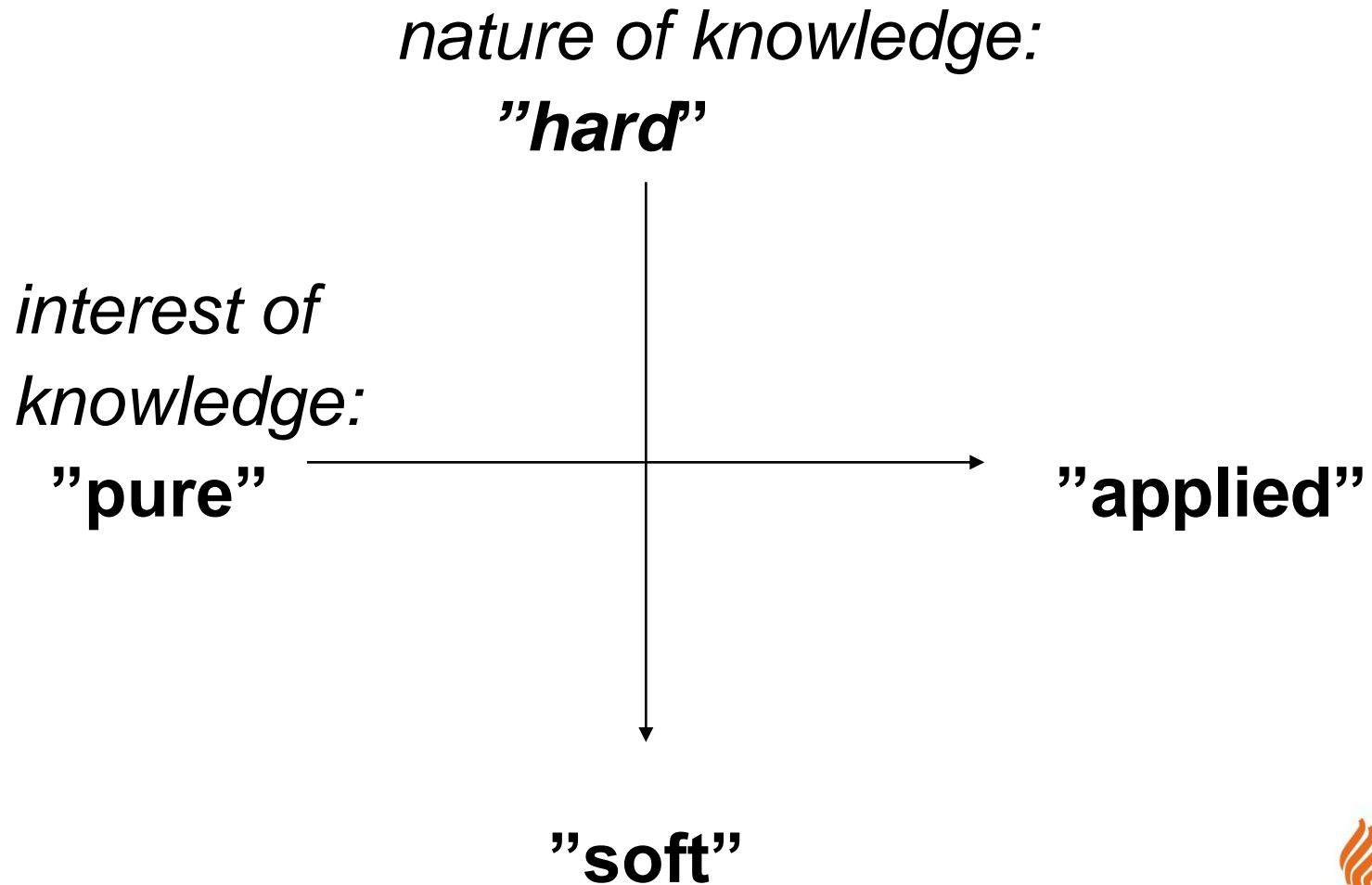
- **Institutional perspective** (1930s =>)
 - how to understand differences of students
 - how to understand differences of academics
 - serve often institutional leadership
- **Disciplinary cultures** (1970s =>)
 - related to sociology of science: Kuhn / 'paradigm', Snow / "Two cultures"
 - How the nature of problem is related with organisation of research & acad. Work?



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Disciplinary Cultures *(Becher 1989)*



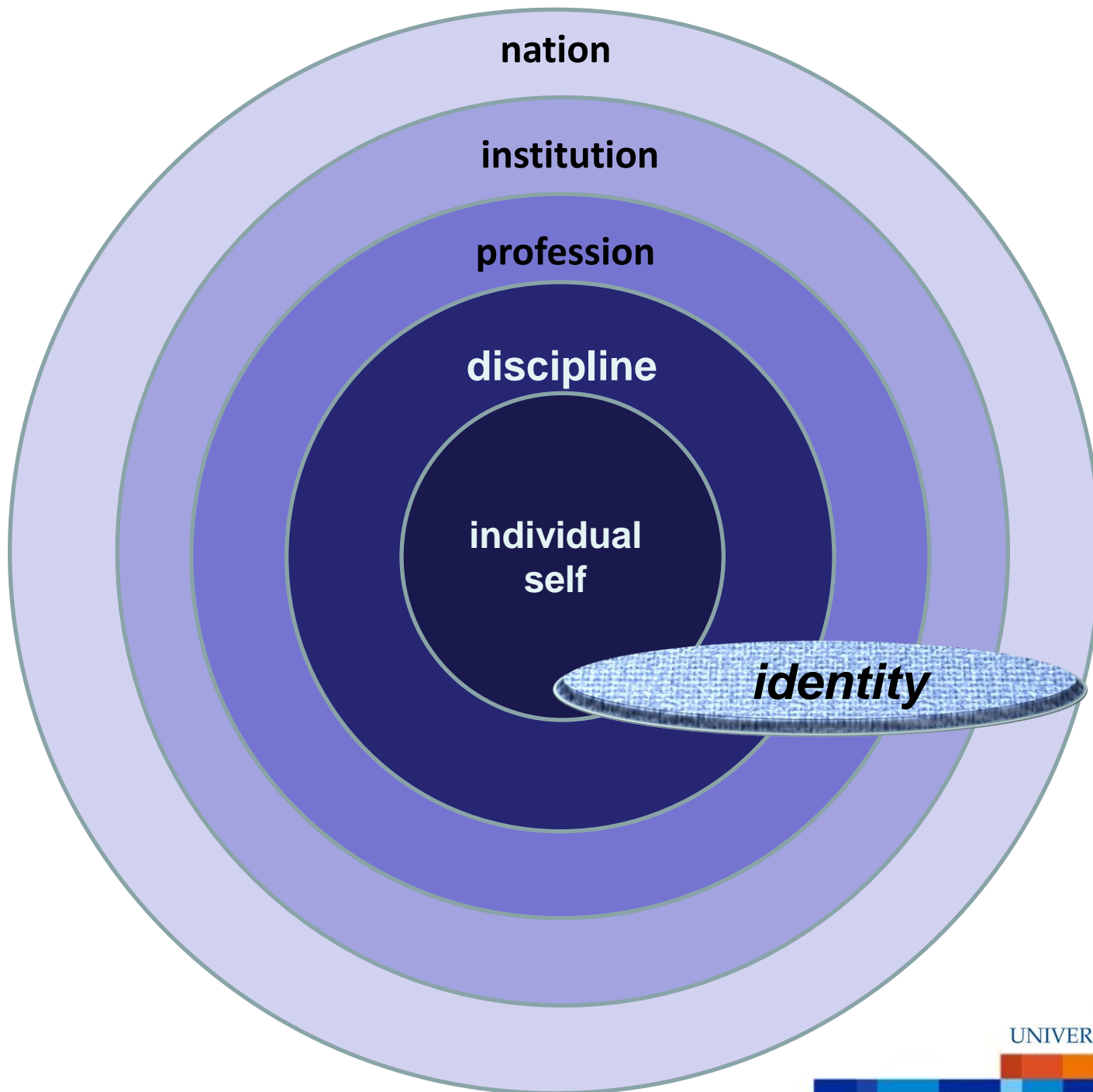
Other Cultural Contexts & Significant others

- ***Identity is a process (significant others)***
- National culture & traditions, family relations
- Institutional memory & identity (*saga*)
- Professional traditions (& connections)
- Disciplinary culture (*traditions & colleagues*)
- Self, or individual, or habitus, cultural & social capital

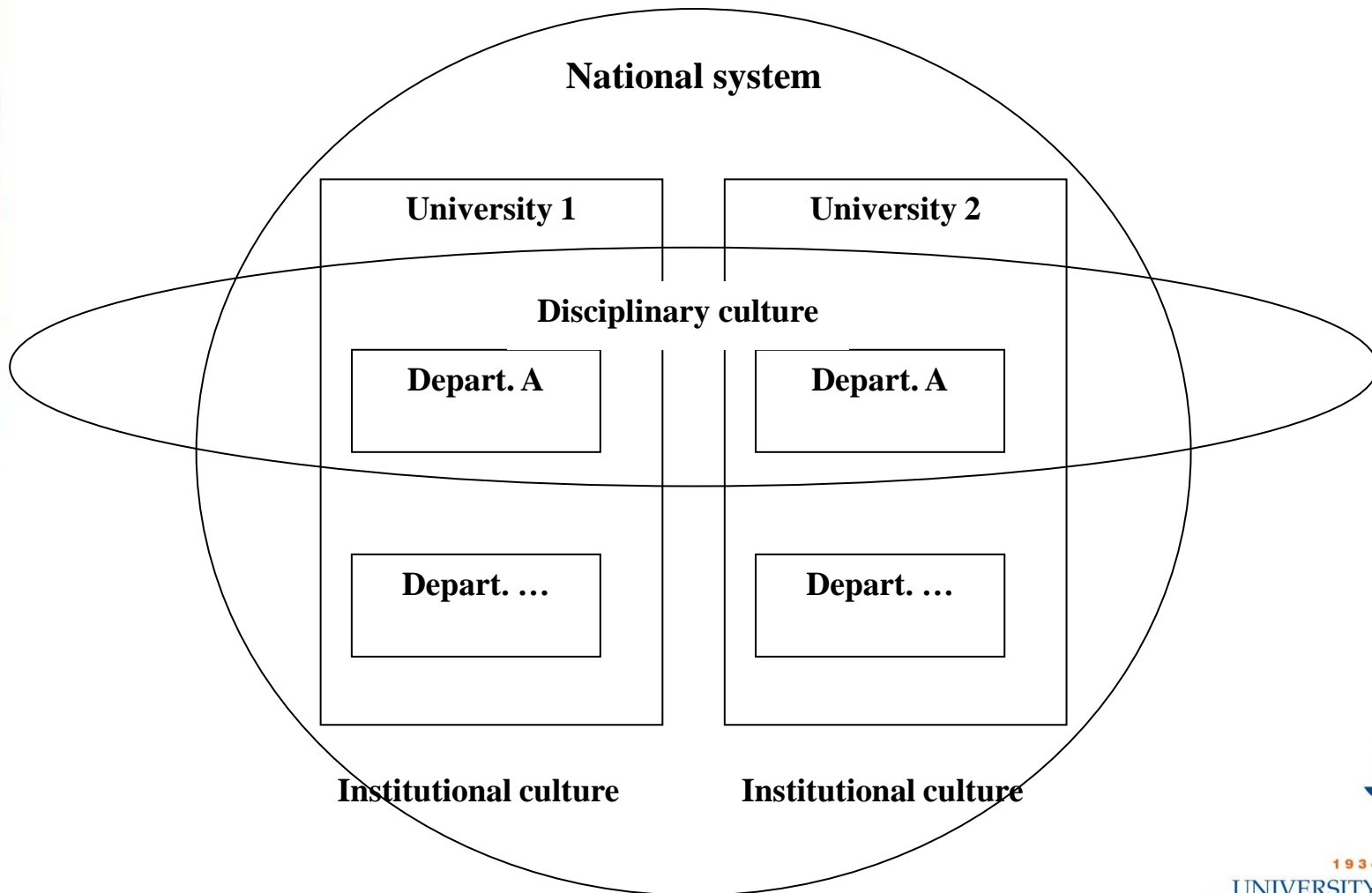


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The Interaction between different cultural environments *(Välilmaa 1995, Cai 2007)*



Institutional identity

- Basic question: “Who are we as an organization?”
- within the parameters of a defined identity-claim conceptual domain **-what?**
- associated phenomenological markers of identity-referencing discourse: **how, when, why?**
- related concepts: **organizational culture, image**



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Institutional culture: "check list"

- **Mission:** how is it defined? Is it used as a basis for decisions?
- **Environment:** how is it defined? Relationships & attitudes?
- **Leadership:** what is expected from leaders? Formal and/or informal leaders?
- **Strategy:** who makes decisions? How to reach them? Consequences of bad decisions?
- **Information:** who has it? how does it spread?
- **Socialization:** what one has to know to succeed in an organization? How are new members socialized? (*Tierney 2008*)



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Where to pay attention to?

- **Environment** -architecture,inside & outside
- **Communication:** verbal & non-verbal, written
- **How to make academic knowledge from what you see & experience?**
- **visual methods**
- **ethnographic methods** (field notes, participant observations, auto-biography)
- ***Field knowledge***



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