

CRITICAL COMPLEXITIES

(from marginal paradigms to learning networks)

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Abstract	The concepts of critical theory require critical changes. Strategies of a Frankfurt school had been transformed in the new academic and institutional environment. The development of scientific research programs resulted in a flexible restructuring of research communities. The new complexity of research networks is less hierarchic, more mobile, not easily centralized. Theories of organizational learning reflect methodological compromises with respect to the paradigms and political compromises with respect to the governance structures. Nomadic, virtual and flexible research communities float in cyberspace discovering the fundamentals of democracy in an era of informational affluence.	
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Motto:

„The only people who see the whole picture are the ones who step out of the frame”(Salman Rushdie)

Abstract:

The main thesis of the present paper is that our concepts of „criticism” and „criticality” require serious re-examination. Change mechanisms are changing and so are the concepts of a critical change. The critical theory of the representatives of the Frankfurt School was critical in the same sense in which an official parliamentary opposition used to be critical of the ruling parties. Institute for Social Research was founded as an alternative to the academic mainstream research. Adorno and Horkheimer were the robber barons of the era of knowledge rush (European population started reaching the full literacy levels in the 1930ies). They established and ran their alternative, marginal research paradigms as the safeguards of criticism in the process of the growth of knowledge. However, they have styled their paradigm after the model of the established one, generating their own critics and marginal opposition (Marcuse, Benjamin). When they came to academic power, after WWII, they followed policies analogous to the policies of the former left opposition party conquering the state power.. Adorno was as afraid of the rebellious students in 1968 in Frankfurt as Lakatos in London and the communist governments in Warsaw or Prague.

The development of social sciences in general, and of the sciences of management in particular, resulted in the erosion of the orthodox establishments, in the gradual assimilation of the critics and in the flexible restructuring of research communities. A change of paradigms ceased to be a feared catastrophic emergency so vividly evoked by Kuhn. The new complexity of research networks is less hierarchic, more mobile, not easily centralised. We have to deal with the critical research paradigms continuously networked and re-networked in boundary-less constellations. Postmodernist anarchism („anything goes”) is presently giving rise to the theories of organisational learning which express a methodological compromise with respect to the paradigms and a political compromise with respect to the governance structures. The underlying tensions motivate an ongoing search for a sustainable compromise between a critical thrust of research and a managerial need for governance, accountability and control. Nomadic, virtual, flexible and agile research communities float in cyberspace discovering the fundamentals of democracy in the era of informational affluence.

1. Relevance of a “critical theory”.

Criticism and the growth of knowledge are firmly connected in the methodological mind. No theory can be accepted if it has not been subjected to a fair criticism. One does not have to be a falsificationist to adhere to this view. A critical theory is always relevant – since it allows for less trivial insights into the underlying mechanisms of social processes than a mainstream one. However, the limits of legitimate criticism are being continuously renegotiated within the research communities. Groomed in the philosophy of science overshadowed by Popper and Kuhn in the 1960ies and 1970ies, most social scientists and scholars tend to think that the mainstream “normal science” is still run mainly by the modified neopositivists. They are the principal gate-keepers guarding the gates of scientific journals, research grants, academic promotions and other Bastilles of the Kingdom of Rational Knowledge flying the flags of Enlightenment. When Lakatos and Musgrave edited one of the first volumes of papers on the philosophy of science after the publication of “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions” by Thomas Kuhn, they gave it a title “Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge”. Lakatos believed that scepticism should be kept in check and never allowed to subvert scientific rationality with the extreme relativism. In an unpublished comment on Paul Feyerabend’s “dadaist” treatise “Against Method”, he warned against radical sceptics (for instance, his above-mentioned friend and fellow-Popperian), claiming that “for them, happiness and welfare replaced truth: true was what increased happiness. They argued that the betrayal of reason (or rather “reason”) by man was better than betrayal of man by reason.(...) Ultimately, there is only one type of political philosophy consistent with radical scepticism: the philosophy which equates right with might.”(Lakatos, 1999, p.396).(1) Therefore a modified Popperian philosophy of science (which itself was a response to the crisis of the neopositivist methodology) must counter the excessive scepticism and criticism of a “normal science”. In spite of the influence exerted by the Popperians in the philosophy of science, Lakatos did not think that modified neopositivist methodological doctrines were still dominant. Moreover, those who have tried to apply the neopositivist research program in social sciences, as did, for instance, the father of sociobiology, Edward O. Wilson, encountered the opposition, which made them remark bitterly that: “postmodernism... has seeped by now into the mainstream of the social sciences and humanities” (Wilson, 1999, p.44)(2)

One of the ways to test the conflicting claims about the “mainstream”, “establishment”, “dominant” scientific research programs is to study the role of historically acknowledged “outsider” research programs and their influence upon the subsequent generations of researchers. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School is a case in point. It grew out of a marginal initiative of the leftist thinkers prevented from following a regular academic career. The Marxist theoretical inspiration coupled with the methodology of empirical studies of the working class movements and daily life (sociology of the family) gained a new twist after a forced immigration of the school’s representatives to the United States. The most significant contributions of the Frankfurt School to the criticism of modern society and modern social sciences include their empirical studies of the authoritarian personality (the ethnocentric syndrome) and their philosophical critique of mass culture (cultural industries). The questionnaires developed in the United States allowed them to study the willingness of the individual citizens to follow non-democratic leaders and to

espouse ethnocentric views (which provided a starting point for a democratic citizens' education). Their critique of the cultural industries legitimised by the Enlightenment allowed them to demonstrate the necessity of an ongoing revision of ideologies, programs and paradigms (which provided a starting point for a re-definition of scientific rationality and its sociopolitical boundaries).

Can modern sciences of management find any inspiration in the critical tradition of the Frankfurt School? Can contemporary philosophers, sociologists, social psychologists, historians, economists and theoreticians of organisation pick up relevant themes and discoveries? In 1988 an international congress entitled "The Frankfurt School: How Relevant Is It Today?" has been organised by two members of the faculty of the Rotterdam School of Management of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam(3). An interdisciplinary approach practised by the representatives of the faculty of business management attracted many researchers with different academic backgrounds. They tried to look for the relevance of the "leftist" research community from 1930ies for the critical researchers of the 1990ies. Critical researchers of the 1990ies do not have a recognizably "leftist" political stand. There is no scientific research program which can be compared to a particularly critical, identifiable platform – resembling the political "left" within the academic community, or even carrying leftist philosophy from politics to science (which was still the case with the Marxism of the Frankfurt School). Critical research communities cannot be easily labelled as either "leftist" or "rightist" today. They are servicing both revolutionaries and consultants, both managers and students, both public officials and virtual networks, both identifiable clients and potential audiences. Historians – Rolf Wiggershaus and Martin Jay(4) agreed that there was a recognisable link between the first generation of the Frankfurt scholars – Adorno, Horkheimer – and their disciple, Habermas, who has also established a critical research program built around a theory of communicative action (recognised and used by the US sociologists – Thomas McCarthy, Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen).(5) One should also add, on a generational note, that Habermas, as opposed to Adorno, fared much better with the rebellious students of 1968 and maintained long-term contacts with the red-green politicians who emerged from this generation (for instance, with Joshka Fischer and Daniel Cohn-Bendit).

The congress on the relevance of the critical theory for the sciences of management found place twelve years ago: these twelve years have witnessed an emergence of a number of theories of flexible, learning, innovative, flat, agile and knowledge creating organisational form (cf. Nooteboom,2000).(6) Are any of the views expressed by the participants in the congress relevant for the present-day concerns of researchers in the sciences of management?

Mats Alvelson and Hugh Wilmott claim that the tradition of the critical theory includes at least two constitutive elements; a rational reconstruction (which should reveal the "distortions" caused by powers that be in the social construction of organisation, management, research, in brief – in the ongoing social construction of reality) and what they call a critical self-reflection. They define the latter quoting Habermas, according to whom a critical self-reflection "involves a practical translation of the insights of reconstruction into some form of emancipatory action". Both are relevant for

contemporary studies in organisation theory – for Wood, Urry, Knights, Giddens, Burrell, Morgan, Smircich, and – needless to say – for Alvesson and Wilmott. The latter notice the relevance of the critical theory for modern sciences of management in four broad areas:

- (1) potential development of a methodological research program (although no representative of the critical theory actually ventured so far as to elaborate a complete methodological framework, a number of recent critical studies – e.g. by Guba, Lincoln, Erlandson, Clegg, Aldrich, or Gergen – clearly demonstrate this possibility),
- (2) a critique of prevailing ideology (critical analysis of the one-dimensionality of the managerial ideologies, especially in operations research, e.g. Jackson, Sievers, Boje, Burrell, Harvey),
- (3) empirical studies of organising (especially focussing on the asymmetries of power in companies – Alvesson, Czarniawska, Ingersoll, Adams) and (last not least)
- (4) methodologies of change, with a focus either on a local planning practice (cf. Forester, 1989) or on a broader concern for developing a “conceptual framework that could transform critical theory from a mere research program into a practical tool of critical social inquiry and design”(Alvesson, Wilmott, 1990,p.49, cf. also Marion, Esterby-Smith, Flood, Morgan, for recent critical methodologies of change)

Due to the impact in these four areas, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School is still relevant for contemporary social sciences in general and for the sciences of management in particular. The latter, if pursued by those research communities, which had been influenced by the tradition of the critical theory, stand to win in critical insights and intellectual respectability. Alvesson and Wilmott quote J.K. Benson, who claims that the critical theory’s contribution to the shaping of actual practice of organising consists of: “dereifying established social patterns and structures – it points out their arbitrary character, undermines their sense of inevitability, uncovers the contradictions and limits of the present order, and reveals the mechanisms of transformation”(Alvesson, Wilmott, 1990, p.59).

Other contributors to the above-mentioned volume of proceedings of the 1988 congress on relevance of the critical theory for the sciences of management shared this view. They included, to mention just a few, J.Forester of Cornell University, B. Czarniawska-Joerges of Stockholm School of Economics, Jean Cohen of Columbia University, Lolle Nauta of the University of Groningen, Dick Howard of SUNY at Stony Brook and Brian Turner of Exeter University. Some of the above-mentioned researchers changed their academic environment and affiliation, but most of them maintained their level of participation in highly interactive networks of virtual research communities. It should come as no surprise that most of them reconvene – virtually or physically – every year at the annual SCOS (Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism) conference.(7) The processes of organising of the annual SCOS conference stand in a marked contrast to the processes

of organising the equivalent EGOS conference; they are much more informal and based almost entirely on flexible, individually maintained virtual networks.

2. Virtual networks and the relativist view from nowhere.

Postmodernists have often been suspected of occupying an epistemologically comfortable but ethically suspect relativist, or extremely sceptical position. They were found guilty of rejecting any privileged language game, any privileged grand narrative, and any model dominant enough to “orientate” research. According to Martin Parker, who considers ways of “postmodernizing” the sciences of management, there are advantages to this relativist position. They have been noticed by Terry Eagleton, whom Parker quotes as saying that: “It allows you to drive a coach and horses through anybody else’s beliefs while not saddling you with the inconvenience of having to adopt any yourself. Such deconstruction is a power game... the winner is the one who manages to get rid of all his cards and sit with empty hands.”(Parker, 2000, p.45)(8) If we agreed, we would have to assume that postmodernists are basically opportunists, whose lack of principles makes it easier for them to adapt themselves to the shifting constellations of power both in the academic communities and beyond. However, there are problems with a mechanical comparison of the standards of commitment to a “progressive” social and political change maintained by the representatives of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School on the one hand, and the standards of commitment to a “progressive” organisational change by the postmodernist researchers (nowadays) on the other. To put it bluntly: for the Frankfurt researchers definitions of political left and political right were as clear as differences between a communist and a nazi party. For the present researchers a support for some political position on the ecological or gender issues does not automatically allow to select either a left or a right political party, or any political party (which may be considered irrelevant in the solving of an issue at hand) at all.

There is also a methodological and ethical problem of distinguishing between an empirically and theoretically progressive problem shift (which is, according to Lakatos, symptomatic for a progressive methodological research program) and a theoretically and empirically degenerative one. The problem is both historical and methodological. Historically speaking, a critical research program which inspired both the researchers from the Frankfurt School and moulded a significant generational experience of the postmodernist researchers (most of whom took part in the student rebellions in the years 1966-1975), the Marxist one, has become an official state ideology in the socialist states. Practical activities of the power elites of the communist parties provided a historical falsification of the emancipatory claims of the Marxist ideology(9). State policies ostensibly based on and certainly justified with the latter did not contribute to the construction of superior and sustainable societies. Marxian paradigm did not make all the other paradigms in social sciences obsolete, theories produced by the Marxists failed to overshadow all the other theories. This means, to put it in a nutshell, that critical and politically committed researchers rejected the idea that their struggle should end with the

overthrowing of the “dominant paradigm” and with replacing it with their own, more progressive one (which would have to be defended in order to maintain the dominant position, thus placing them in the position, which would merit the same critique they had launched against their paradigmatic enemies). They have introduced the idea of a “self-limiting revolution” (Jadwiga Staniszkis about the Polish “Solidarity”) or of a social movement which mobilises for temporary issues, not for a life membership (a virtual lobby of “nomads of the present” as Alberto Melucci puts it) (cf. Staniszkis, 1984, Melucci, 1989). The idea of a social commitment and a political engagement ceased to be identifiable with a program of an established political party bent on a long march to the institutional power. Internet-mediated mobilisation of loose citizens’ initiatives and of the grass-roots virtual communities became attractive as alternatives to the established institutions of political parties.

Seattle demonstrations against the WTO conference and “Greenpeace” spectacular actions are episodes in the political learning processes after the fall of the most influential of the critical paradigms in social sciences. A new, rapidly activated and deployed networking mode of political mobilisation is being born.

Methodologically speaking, the problem consists of a difficulty in applying the term “progressive” or “creative” to a scientific research program – philosophers of science tend to replace them with the term “novelty”, “heuristic novelty”, “exploring”, or “creating new knowledge”, and Lakatos sums it up by saying: “If you have serious doubts about a dominant theory then scrap it, and replace it with other dominant theory”(Lakatos, 1999,p.109). What are the consequences of such relativism and does postmodernism offer a contemporary critical alternative to the others, less critical research programmes? Can we consider postmodernism to be a legitimate replacement for critical theories of the past?

Relativism, as Stanley Fish rightly observed, brings about moral and methodological difficulties of two quite opposite types. First, there are those, who claim that a scientific research community should not allow epistemological anarchism or postmodernism to “seep” through (as if it was a lethal virus contaminating research products). Weakening the methodological principles based on an ideal of rationality formulated around the Enlightenment would mean an increased tolerance for a multi-paradigmatic academia, multicultural research society made up of many local communities. It would mean that researchers became prisoners of immediate cultural environments – of their reference group’s culture; values and norms. The latter cannot be objectively evaluated, because we have just got rid of the view from nowhere and of the universal, formal standards or principles. Therefore it is better not to get rid of the view from nowhere, because it provides us a much better guidance and guards us against relativism, which would paralyse us, prevent us from choosing anything at all (why choose A if anything goes, thus B also does?).

Second, there are those, who claim that it is just by abandoning the immediate cultural context, which anchors scientific research community in social processes, by subjecting ourselves to the abstract and universal principles – we become relativists. Rigid

adherence to a principle makes us prefer political correctness at the expense of a context-sensitive analysis and decision. In other words, if we become purely formal adherents of a methodological Verfassungspatriotismus, we will also become relativists, because no access to non-universal values will be allowed, while universal ones have to be neutral and formal. As Fish puts it: “The objection to this line of reasoning is not that it evacuates history – although it surely does that – but that it evacuates morality, by first taking away the usual measures by which we label one act abhorrent and another praiseworthy and then substituting for these measures a mechanical test... in reducing the complexity of moral questions to a single question asked without a nuance, the logic of neutral principles mirrors and reproduces the logic of multiculturalism when it refuses to distinguish between cultural practices on the reasoning that to do so would be to violate the neutral principle of diversity”(Fish,1999,pp. 27-28) Moreover, if we subject all paradigms to the scrutiny from nowhere, how do we avoid having the view from nowhere subjected to the same test? Authoritarian suppression of criticism will not do, while political correctness will make us go against the grain of our local and temporary moral habits.

From the point of the sciences of management the threat of sticking to the universal methodological principles (a view from nowhere) does not loom as large as the threat of getting partitioned and fragmented (into separate methodological provinces, refusing to compare scientific research programmes) on a theoretical horizon. The increasingly non-transparent world of incomparable organisations (large, complex, virtual, non-governmental, networked, small, etc.) motivates an increased interest in the ethno-methodological, phenomenological, symbolist and social-constructivist paradigms and schools of thought, conducting “a substantial body of research which is attentive to the construction of social reality in organisations, the development of meaning patterns, the symbolic nature of organisational life”(Alvesson, Wilmott, 1990,p.37). This new interest results from a recognition of the necessity to avoid the “reified” treatment of the population of organisations and institutions, which would imply an equivalent of a Lamarckian ghost in an organisational machine. It would provide researchers and managers with an apparently “objective” criterion for distinguishing between an innovative, knowledge creating, novelty-exploring organisation on the one hand, and a degenerating, decaying, over-controlled, knowledge-exploiting-only organisational type.

Mechanisms of a cultural change, including mechanisms of a change of the concept of critical change in the academic community, cannot be reduced to a single factor. One cannot employ a simple metaphor and say that – for instance - generational changes explain the methodological ones. It may very well be true that the fellow-travellers of the working class parties in the thirties created a critical theory of the Frankfurt School, while fellow travellers of the anti-authoritarian student rebellion of the 1960ies created the postmodernist methodological framework. However, the transition from a change understood as an overthrowing of a dominant party (either in politics or in science) to a change understood as an empowerment of those involved in the institutional processes came about as a result of more factors and processes, influences and emergencies. It may be true that the authoritarian developments in Russia prompted Adorno and Horkheimer to construct a critical paradigm in a single institute (parallel to Stalin’s decision to

construct socialism in one country, they have decided that a critical theory can only be developed in one institute), while the decline of state socialism and the crisis of global reaganomics made the postmodernists promote piecemeal institutional change and tactical alliances with other communities of researchers. However, the transition from a change understood as a slow development of the “only true” approach to society to a change understood as a gradual synchronisation of autonomous bundles of processes came about as a result of more processes and influences, experiences and struggles. As Alan Neale puts it: “Without institutional change which widens corporate governance and accountability to include other stakeholders as well as shareholders, and protects social and environmental settlements from the ravages of ‘free’ trade, significant advances in social responsibility are likely to remain thin on the ground”(Neale, 2000, p.228) It may be true that the critical theoreticians of the Frankfurt School have still moved in the world dominated by corporate and state bureaucracies, while the postmodernist critical theoreticians participate in too many flexible and virtual networks to believe in a ghost of rationality haunting the bureaucratic corridors of power at the expense of all other organizational forms. . However, it took more than a shift towards less hierarchic and stable institutions and organisations to change the concept of change and to link it to flexible networking. As Gibson Burrell justly observed in his unusual, anti-linear, anti-book publication: “privatisation, franchising, the break-up of large corporations into quasi-independent entities, the attacks upon bureaucracy, the attacks upon middle manager, and so on all meant... that the mode of organisation was altering to the extent that markets and networks were starting to take place of those bureaucracies of which Weber had been a major theorist.”(Burrell, 1997,p.18)

New forms and modes of criticality, new concepts of a critical intervention in ongoing processes and of the build-up of a bottom-up change emerged as a result of a transformation of a subject matter of organisation studies (post-bureaucratic, networked and virtual ones), as a result of a generational shift in the exploding academic industries and as a result of the appearance of new approaches to a political and methodological complexity, accelerated by an almost simultaneous crisis of state socialism and of the “global reaganomics”.

Changed concepts of social and cognitive change resulted in a new view of a legitimate methodological breakthrough. Scientific communities accepted a possibility of a methodological truce and of a temporary peaceful coexistence of alternative paradigms. Defended by the representatives of most of the academic communities and most of the scientific research programmes, rival paradigms and competing research programs tacitly agreed not to wage a total war of attrition against each other. Hybrids and compromises started to appear. Where does it put the new definition of criticism, critique and critical nature of a research program? Which type of criticism can be judged superior if no privileged “change master” (comparable to the political party of the working class considered a change master in a critical theory of capitalism elaborated by Marx) can be a priori considered superior to the competitive social and political forces? Do the theories of chaos, complexity or risk and the formal sophistication of “fuzzy logic” or “game theory” promise a way out of this dilemma? Do they allow us to re-define critical research program in the organisational sciences? Are they superior to their competitors

among the scientific research programs with respect to the theoretical insight and pragmatically successful interventions they guide? Do they – to use the latest idiomatic phrase of organisational sciences – promote organisational learning (as a key to becoming a change master) better than their methodological competition? Are they, with the label of postmodernism or without it, able to develop relevant critique of “large-scale hazards, risks, and manufactured uncertainties that undermine state bureaucracies, challenge the dominance of science, and redraw the boundaries and battle-lines of contemporary politics”?(Beck,1999, p.150)(10)

3. Does postmodernism promote organisational learning as a critical research program?

Organisational learning is a branch of studies, which emerged in the “no man’s land” explored by the researchers mobilised within the competence groups studying organisational behaviour, organisational development, knowledge management and organisational dynamics and influenced, be it rather vaguely, by the interactionist and constructivist paradigms in social sciences.(11) In-between these research provinces representatives of the chaos and complexity theories picked up the interactionist-constructivist concepts and found their predecessors in social psychologists, whose concept of sensemaking and processual interacting has been summed up in the following way:

“Karl Weick argued that the loosely coupled organisation permits isolated units to experiment with novel structures and procedures without committing the resources of the entire system. (...) Small, isolated structures encourage innovation but large megalithic ones don’t. Weick left the story here, but there is more. (...) innovation isn’t born fully developed to diffuse through the network, rather pieces of innovation emerge within moderately coupled systems: they link a few at a time, then many at a time, and major innovation implodes out of the mass of activity.”(Marion, 1999,pp.260-261).(12)

Most of the theories of organisational learning (and of the management of innovation) rely on a similar ambiguous (be small to explore and invent, be large to exploit and profit) approach. On the one hand, researchers try to account for the development of creative thinking and innovative expertise, while on the other they would like to account also for the constraints and incentives present in the ongoing processes of interactions (some of which freeze into institutional structures, but are susceptible to unfreezing and modification). The results of this theoretically complex approach can be quite divergent. Some historians of the web claim that most of the relevant emergent features of this network appeared as essential by-products (of which the gradual turn-around of the military ARPANET into the present day Internet is the celebrated case in point).(13) Some specialists in knowledge management predict, for instance, that the present-day informal (mostly Internet-mediated) communications between individuals can eventually lead to the massive intellectual labour markets, where the exchange of knowledge is being mediated by specialised agents, similar to the Hollywood agents who are assembling creative teams for a single film production. Universities will thus have to evolve into the specialist agencies for “buying and selling of future options of returns to knowledge in

the form of hiring and firing employees, experts and others that essentially represent future intellectual capital returns”(Albert,Bradley,1997)(14) Will they, however, do so in relatively small and relatively isolated organisational contexts as opposed to large institutions? And if they do emerge with creative explorations, what can larger organisational structures do to link and exploit them? Is there a way to stimulate organisational learning, facilitate innovation and change, but also to control the damage of unforeseen consequences?

One of the obvious conclusions is that the model of a coaching management is needed in order to design organisations in a less bureaucratic and more purposefully unpredictable, under-controlled way. The appearance of the critical social theory (1930-1968) in the Frankfurt School was an attempt to insert a leftist (excluded, marginalised, exploited) voice into the standardised academic discourse. The appearance of the postmodernist critical theories of organisation (Boje, Beck, Burrell, Alvesson, Castells, Hatch, Czarniawska, Bergquist, Gergen et al.) in the last quarter of the XXth century is an attempt to introduce an alternative, radical perspective into the research paradigms and theoretical thinking about the processes of organising (the use of a gerund instead of a noun is a conscious device applied in order to draw attention to the processual nature of constructed organisational realities). What exactly is so critical about the critical theories expressed by the postmodernists?

There are postmodernist theoreticians who claim that a critical theory – as opposed to the non-critical one – does not avoid value judgements.(Lemert, 1997,p.65) Indeed, we can easily detect value judgements and pragmatic implications in a definition of postmodernism provided by a critical theoretician of organisation, David Boje:

“The Postmodern is a historical movement, just like trade unionism, scientific management, and human relations are historical movements. The postmodern movement recognizes: (1) the liberated role of women and minorities in the workplace, (2) the need to re-skill the workers, (3) the foundation-backbone need for education, (4) the re-affirmation of both individual and community, (5) entrepreneurial spirit in America, and (6) the need to expose subtle bureaucratic control and surveillance mechanisms for what they are and what they do. (...) The promise of postmodern management is to get rid of management. To empower a diversity of people from women to minorities, to handy-capable, to gays who had been marginalised by center-planned, center-organised, center-led and center-controlled enterprises. In postmodern management small is beautiful, temporary coalitions of small groups is power, social problems can be dealt with better by the oppressed than by their bureaucratic oppressors.”(Boje, Dennehy, 1999, p.41)(15)

It is hard not to notice a striking analogy between Boje’s view on postmodern management’s goal – to get rid of management (presumably due to the gradual democratisation of institutions and empowerment of all members of an organisation) and the proclaimed withering away of the state taken over by the communist parties. The state failed to wither away and systematically increased the size of the repressive institutions. Will postmodern management also fail to wither away? Will the postmodern managers claim, after Hamleth, that they have to be cruel (and increase control) only to be kind (to

reduce control and empower employees)? Is an attempt to broaden participation in decision-making, empower the employees and flatten organisational structures an equivalent of “withering away” of the hierarchic, bureaucratic, elite-controlled mode of organising? Does it signal a new form of critical approach to the processes of organising and managing? Is it reflected in scientific research programs?

Looking for empirical verification we can easily confirm at least the rhetorical lip service paid to the transition from management as supervision to a management as coaching (guided by a superior vision expressed in a strong corporate culture). CEO of one of the most successful multinational corporations, Jack Welch of General Electric, manages GE's corporate image by stressing “corporate citizenship” of rank and file (although he presumably means managerial and professional rank and file rather than a whole population of the employees of GE). In his videotaped discussions with students of Harvard Business School, he mentions a value system as a core of his company's culture. Following these values (“I believe in every one of them”) presumably enables him to counter the adverse effects of hierarchical controls with such techniques as - for example - workout sessions. During the workout sessions, which lump together cross-functional mixes of managers and experts, facilitators make sure that hidden injuries of a hierarchy do not hamper team forming and other group processes. Thus can the employee's creativity become “unleashed” and managers can assume the roles of coaches rather than supervisors. Transfer of knowledge is facilitated by the breakdown of the hierarchy – even if it is only temporary and limited to the upper middle class of corporate managers and experts.

Not everybody would agree that this ideology of managerial control by coaching means that the older, “taylorian” or “fordist” principle “democracy stops at the factory gate” has finally been put to rest. A critical examination of the way in which Japanese methods of unleashing creativity have been applied in an Opel manufacturing plant in Eisenach gives rise to many doubts. German workers in this plant are expected to come up with at least three innovative proposals of improving the efficiency of assembly line operations per month. Failing to do so, they will be stripped of one of their bonuses. As might be expected, they produce more proposals than their counterparts in the factories, which had not introduced this method of unleashing creativity. One wonders if the management does distinguish between unleashing creativity and conditioning behaviour. Andre Gorz, who has compared the Eisenach plant with the Swedish Uddevalla plant (where a celebrated transition from an assembly line to a team working mode has been tried out), remains sceptical. He concludes that the Eisenach experiment constitutes a case of an “order of incentivised involvement”, as opposed to the Uddevalla experiment, where involvement of the rank and file employees had truly been negotiated with rank and file. (Gorz, 1999, p.153) Nevertheless, workout sessions allow Jack Welch to speak of a flatter, less bureaucratic, more agile, boundary-less company (with internal borders crossed by ad hoc teams) and Opel's PR officers are making ample use of the increased flow of innovative proposals generated in the Eisenach plant.

The response of the mainstream academic theoreticians of organisation has been reluctant, late and undecided. They admit a shift in the modes of organising and they are

sensitive to the postmodernist critique, but they remain undecided and prefer to avoid direct quotes from radical critics. James March, who can hardly be accused of being a political radical or to belong to a critical minority, has recently written that boundary-less-ness is, indeed becoming more popular “as reflected in ad hoc construction of project groups or collaborations linked together by constantly changing non-hierarchical networks.(...) These cobweb-like virtual organisations are not yet a dominant component of current organisational life, but they appear to be becoming more important. ((March,1999, p. 187)(16) Pfeffer, while acknowledging that critical perspectives might help the whole research community to prevent overlooking important substantive arenas of organisational studies, warns at the same time that the representatives of the critical research programs should not eschew strategies of co-optation and co-existence, that they should engage the mainstream organisational studies (which he calls “conventional analysis”) in ways “that facilitate interaction rather than rejection”. Pfeffer explicitly points out to the learning effects of a critical voice in an ongoing reconstruction of organisational realities and spells out the preconditions for a successful opening up of a dialogue and of a learning process: “One may question how direct challenges to the established order can succeed when they are launched from a position of less power, directly confront the established literature, and do so not on its own terms but on terms chosen and at times knowable only by those launching the critique.”(Pfeffer, 1997, p.188) In other words, Pfeffer agrees to respect the input of critical theoreticians, but upon the condition that they make an effort to respect a more powerful position of their mainstream colleagues. Compromise or we will not acknowledge your status as members of our broader community of research communities. In order to be acknowledged, recognised and exert influence in a community of researchers, representatives of a critical research program should thus be less revolutionary and more compromising. Otherwise their difference will become threatening, unmanageable for those who represent the mainstream gate-keepers. Can the postmodernist critics compromise and become manageable – within the normative and institutional constraints - for their non-postmodernist fellow-researchers? A positive answer to this question would point towards a contribution of the postmodernist theories of managing and organising to both an better theoretical understanding of organisational learning and to the practical modification of institutional (and normative) constraints on academic interactions.

4. Conclusions: mobility, criticism and the web.

The answer to the question about postmodernism’s possible contribution to a change in institutional framework of the academic research communities on the one hand and to the methodology of scientific research programs on the other depends crucially on transformations of the social context of research in the sciences of organisation. Without these changes there would be less demand for theories of change and here would be less pressure on methodologies allowing to cope with change, coach change agents and maintain facilitating change contexts. Have such changes been observed?

A spectre of a flexible, agile, lean and flat organisational form has been haunting the world of organisations, including the academic ones. Managerial education, especially at

a postgraduate level, with the executive, in-company, part-time and specialist MBA programs offered by the universities did trigger structural changes in the universities. Undergraduate education begins to feel the impact of the earlier commercialisation of the postgraduate managerial education, which coincided with the growth of commercial and quasi-commercial business units, with deans becoming full-time professional managers instead of being temporary exiles from the community of researchers, with a growth of PR and marketing departments to cope with and compete in educational and training markets.

The new organisational forms usually infringe on professional self-government of a traditional guild-like university – for instance deans are nowadays imposed by the boards of directors instead of being chosen from among faculty members. On the other hand professional discretion and international mobility of the academic staff also increases, because participation in international networks replaces organisational career in a single academic institution – “organisation man changes into a spider woman”(17). These changes have been caused by the changing social environment of the academic institutions, primarily due to the diversification of clients on the one hand (governments, business corporations, NGO’s, social associations, individual citizens outside of the traditional educational patterns, internationally mobile students, etc.) and of the workforce on the other (this includes a differentiation of the theoretical paradigms and research programs). The net result of this growing diversification of the clients and of the workforce is a merely formal standardisation of the “managerial body of knowledge” (with less strict selection of acceptable research programs and a greater readiness to abandon or rejuvenate paradigms) and a growing diversification of governance structures (international networks or consortia for research programs, semi-commercial joint ventures of selected profit-centers in the publicly funded organisations, of which “enterprising university” is a case in point). The appearance of new governance structures signals the emergence of “empty spaces” among the existing institutions which have to be filled by diversifying academic institutions and managing academic communities. Since academic professionals find themselves facing a growing number of market opportunities (even within the universities, new profit centers can be financially more attractive than mainstream occupations), they owe less and less loyalty to an academic paradigm, which earlier linked them to a scientific research community and thus to the source of their status and income. This facilitates reception of postmodernist critique in the academia, as some of the postmodernists have observed: “the half-life of paradigms appears shorter and shorter as human affairs become increasingly complex”(Rosenau, 1992, p.183)(18)

Does the concept of organisational learning reflect the influence of postmodernism on contemporary sciences of organisation? Did postmodernists force the mainstream academic gatekeepers to accept a compromise between co-existing epistemological paradigms and methodological research programs on the one hand - and institutional attempts to preserve or recapture identity without putting networks and flexibility at risk (i.e. institutional compromises) on the other? The present author thinks that this is, indeed, the case. The concept of organisational learning emerged as a historical compromise. It is an attempt to reconcile a growing need for a critical theory of managing

and organising without at the same time deterring corporate and government clients who might be interested in upgrading and developing competencies of their employees, but not necessarily with the leftist rhetoric of the critical theoreticians.(19) Fukuyam's gentrified and sanitised Hegelian and Marxian influences made both his first book, "The End of History and the Last Man", and his last one, "The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the reconstitution of Social Order", safe for managerial use, while some brows may still be raised when one reads in a postmodernist manifesto of David Boje: "The ongoing management of change will need to address feminist concerns, environmentally unsustainable business practices and the greedy salaries of Fortune 500 corporate executives. Alternative and new forms of democratic and eco-sustainable organising and managing with social audits of human resources are here.(...) How to deconstruct status quo practice, explore and reverse the problematic hierarchies, and then resituate how the firm is managed? Resituate means learning new harmonies, new balances of power and freedom in a sustainable post-modern organisation."(Boje,Dennehy,1999,p.31)(20)

Is this sort of compromise sustainable (both for the critical postmodernists and for the mainstream researchers)? The present author thinks that indeed, it is, and that there are two reasons for the sustainability of this compromise. The first is linked to the changing nature of modern individual and group identities, which are less dependent on fixed ideological and institutional assets since solid identities of historical subjects, sociologically distinct groups and classes, have already melted into thin air. The second is linked to the emerging participative management of the information space, especially of the information space inhabited by the academic institutions, networks, groups and individuals..

Volatile and fragmented nature of modern identities has been first brought to the attention of sociologists by researchers interested in new social movements, usually linked to the great wave of a social and political protest all over the world. The occupation of Odeon theatre and Sorbonne university in Paris in May 1968 and the subsequent battles against the police prompted historians to label this whole generation of angry young men and women – a generation of 1968. An Italian sociologist, Alberto Melucci, traced the professional advances, upward social mobility and economic success of members of this generation in Italy. When analysing their long march through the institutions and organisational careers he found out that it is very difficult to reconstruct a clear succession of identities in their personal lives, either on an individual or on an aggregate, group level. "Individuals find themselves involved in a plurality of memberships arising from the multiplication of social positions, associative networks, and reference groups. Entry to and exit from these different systems of membership is much quicker and more frequent than before, and the amount of time invested in each of them is reduced."(Melucci, 1989,p.108) The emergence of new technologies of telecommunications ((PC and the Internet access, cellular phone and liberty to move, satellite links and real time contact) further contributed to the decreased loyalty to a single organisational employer on the part of the academic professionals, who saw the market for their research, teaching and consulting activities explode offering many parallel career and arrangement possibilities. The net result of these developments was a

less powerful and less emotional link with any given organisational identity at any point of an individual career in an organisation. This, in turn, contributed to the higher receptiveness to and a broader tolerance for critical theories, methodologies and schools of thought.(21) Being less attached to any given organisation they are much more receptive to the critical theories tracing the transformations of managerial controls and attempts at disempowerment. Power matters and no amount of ideological window-dressing can set the “microserfs”(22) free.

The emergence of more networked and less solid organisational environment for the younger generations of professionals has sometimes been linked to the appearance of an information (or network) society and explained as an outcome of an ongoing struggle between the institutions of the state, the corporations of the market and the new social movements of flexibly mobilised citizens who had been trained in their youth in generation’s new social movements.(23) Indeed, since the appearance of the new networks of telecommunications and since the beginning of their long march through the links to all major data banks and all major human activities, the “information space”(cf. Boisot, 1995) has exerted a significant influence upon our ideas of management offering a clue as to the mechanism through which a critical theory of the past (linked to the political economy of a capitalist society) has been redesigned so as to become a critical theory of the information economy.

The process of redesigning had already started in the 1970ies, when critical theoreticians have started noticing that the old political economy does not suffice to explain the increased role of culture and information in modern society. In a sociological study of tourism Dean MacCannell noticed that: “The value of such things as programs, trips, courses, reports, articles, shows, conferences, parades, opinions, events, sights, spectacles, scenes and situations of modernity is not determined by the amount of labour required by their production. Their value is a function of the quality and quantity of experience they promise. (...) The commodity has become a means to an end. The end is an immense accumulation of reflexive experiences which synthesise fiction and reality into a vast symbolism.”(MacCannell, 1999, p.23)(24) Later an Austrian social geographer who started analysing the mechanisms of fame and notoriety in an age of networked media noticed that pure undivided individual attention to the messages sent by the media became a very scarce resource. He has set off to construct a political economy of attention.(cf. Franck, 1998).

However, it was with the arrival of Boisot’s theory of information space that the first systematic attempt to conduct a critical research of social learning in the postmodernist but compromised (and thus academically acceptable) mode has been made – within the academic communities (Boisot works for the Spanish business school ESADE in Barcelona). Boisot realises that companies and institutions, states and markets, have been made to last and thus must be managed if they are to respond to and facilitate the social learning processes, which are always threatening to some individuals and groups because they include a “creative destruction” of “knowledge assets”. (Boisot, 1999,p.269) He claims that the social learning processes require us to redesign the older, more centralised and authoritarian institutions, so that managing can be accomplished through the

horizontal networks, virtual and real communities and by teamwork arrangements. As Boisot himself puts it: “major ideological battle of the twentieth century was conducted almost exclusively in the upper regions of the I-space, between those advocating a bureaucratic order (Marxism-Leninism) and those who believe in a market order (liberalism). Rare have been those who suggested that the real contest might in fact turn out to be between the lower and the upper regions of the I-space, that is, between a personal and impersonal social order. (...) Contrary to the predictions that computers would allow firms to grow ever larger and more impersonal, this downward trend has coincided with the rapid spread of information technology.”(Boisot, 1999, p.259).

Can small, then, turn out to be not only beautiful, after all, but also more fit for survival in then information space of a network global society?

Notes:

- (1) Lakatos quotes Bertrand Russell, who said in 1941, writing about the ancestry of fascism, that “Once the conception of truth is abandoned, it is clear that the question ‘what shall I believe?’ has to be settled by the appeal to force and the arbitration of big battalions, not by the methods of either theology or science”. However, he admits that in the 1960ies Bertrand Russell apparently changed his mind and wrote “Remember your humanity and forget the rest” somehow admitting that a bounded rationality of scientific research programs required more moral guidance than members of the research communities were willing to admit.(Cf. Lakatos, 1999, p.396)
- (2) Wilson laments the confusion brought about by the postmodernists, but grants them a significant place in the broader scientific community on the strength of their “unyielding critique of traditional scholarship it provides. We will always need postmodernists or their rebellious equivalents. For what better way to strengthen organised knowledge than continually to defend it from hostile forces?”(Wilson, 1999, p.46)
- (3) Frits Engeldorp-Gastelaars and Slawomir Magala. We have been joined in the editorial work with congress proceedings by a German colleague of ours, Othmar Preuss.
- (4) Both are the authors of widely acclaimed histories of the Frankfurt School respectively, in German and in English. Both came to the above-mentioned congress and both focussed on the critical nature of the scientific research program developed by the Frankfurt School and those around the “core” researchers of the school(cf. Wiggershaus, 1987, and Jay, 1986)

- (5) Thomas McCarthy has been translating Habermas into English, while Cohen and Arato have published a major study of the alternative social movements, in which they refer to an emancipating potential of the theory of communicative action by Habermas, on a par with the critical theories of Foucault and Luhman (cf. Cohen and Arato, 1994)
- (6) Nooteboom clearly wants to have a theory which reflects the significance of criticism in the growth of knowledge, including the “revolutionary”, “subversive” criticism. He says that “the greatest challenge is to develop not just a theory of incremental innovation, first order learning and exploration, but to go beyond that in a theory of radical innovation, second order learning and exploration.”(Nooteboom, 2000, pp. 23-24)
- (7) The volume of congress proceedings entitled “Critics and Critical Theory in Eastern Europe” included the Yugoslav, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, East German and Polish papers by social researchers linked to the critical tradition of the Frankfurt School. Nothing illustrates this link better than the subsequent political career of Zoran Djindjic, a fellow-Humboldt researcher of the present author. He became one of the chief political rivals in Milosevic’s Serbia leading one of the three major opposition parties and becoming at one point a mayor of the city of Belgrade. Another author, whose paper appeared in the last volume of the proceedings, “Wirkungen kritische Theorie und kritisches Denken”, Peter Sloterdijk (“Was bedeutet Solidarität mit der Metaphysik im Augenblick ihres Stürzes?”), has come the full swing with critical theorising and subjected Habermas to a philosophical and socio-political critique in 1999. One of his main critical points was that Habermas has tried to manage an orchestrated boycott of Sloterdijk in academic communities and in the media as a result of a difference of opinions on genetic engineering. The present author had invited Sloterdijk to Rotterdam on the strength of his interesting study in political philosophy – “Kritik der zynischen Vernunft”, which dealt with one of the most fascinating experiments in cynicism conducted in the XXth century. The experiment consisted of mock trials of top bolshevik leaders as a prelude to the great purges which formed part and parcel of the stalinist genocide. Soviet management in the years 1917-1989 remains one of the least understood complex processes of modernity, as does, as a matter of fact, a chronic inability of Russians to come to terms with their genocidal past. Compared to Milgram’s experiments in obedience, the Moscow trials of the 1930ies remain a much superior source of valuable data on unlimited capacities of human resources subjected to a resolute and morally unrestrained management.(Cf. Engeldorp-Gastellars, et al., 1990b,c)
- (8) Parker comments ironically that this postmodernist view from nowhere does not have to prevent its academic representatives from “writing books for managers on the use of postmodernism for management practice – ‘In Search of Difference’, ‘Postmodernism for Pleasure and Profit’ and so on”(Parker,2000,p.47). Indeed, why should it? Lakatos seems to have been right in saying that a relativist finds it easy to let powers that be decide where methodological powers fail to do so.

- (9) Lakatos makes a half-hearted attempt to rescue the Marxist paradigm by saying: “Nobody has ever tried to find an answer to questions like: were Trotsky’s unorthodox predictions simply patching up a badly degenerating programme, or did they represent a creative development of Marx’s programme?”(Lakatos, 1999,p.109), but admits that there is little interest in the research communities of social scientists to subject themselves to this scrutiny: “I cannot get students to do research programmes in social sciences because they obviously do not like to antagonise their professors by showing that the whole subject is nonsense, even though the papers would well be received in our department.”(ibid.,p.107)
- (10) Beck states quite clearly that he considers the critical theories of the Frankfurt School and of Foucault obsolete, because within the reflexive modernisation a world of institutions and organisations does begin to change and contrary to Weber’s beliefs about the iron cage – “the cage of modernity opens up”(Beck,1999,p.147)
- (11) Nooteboom is one of the first authors of treatises on organisational learning and on institutional policies facilitating innovation to acknowledge this influence expressis verbis. He accepts the view that socio-cognitive structures are responsible for the variety of organisational learning modes (thus making ample use of the constructivist methodologies) but claims that a constructivist, interactionist theory should be “underpinned by the non-mainstream, situated action theory of knowledge and language”, contrasting with the “computational-representational view(...) and stressing the mutual interaction between mental structure and context-specific behaviour”(Nooteboom, 2000, p.251)
- (12) Marion illustrates this with a simple case: “Numerous technologies emerged over the course of the XXth century – cathode tubes, microcircuits, memory chips, processors, electronic storage and playback, higher order languages for binary instruction. These pieces began to link with one another in hand-held calculators, transistor radios, tape players, computer terminals, mainframe computers, and the such. In 1975 the networks achieved sufficient critical mass to implode and the microcomputer resulted.”(Marion,1999, p.261)
- (13) “The internet was built” – writes Janet Abbate – “and funded by the Department of Defence, yet here I was using the system to chat with my friends and to swap recipes with strangers – rather like taking a tank for a joyride!”(Abbate, 1999, p.2)
- (14) “The increased relevance of intellectual capital to the Gross National Product of Western Nations suggests that these labour market exchanges are increasingly important to the health of knowledge-based economies. A knowledge exchange that can accurately surmise the market conditions and efficiently allocate scarce resources will eventually produce higher levels of productivity.”(Albert,Bradley, 1997,p.167)
- (15) The authors are quite explicit in political and social critique of the managerial class in the US enterprises: “The postmodern organisational system is supposed to be the servant of the creative, innovative, and skilled individual, not the dominant and

silent elite at the top of the great pyramids taking fat bonuses while laying off millions of American workers made unemployable by years of dependency and deskilling. Illiteracy is rising each and every year, productivity is falling, earnings are falling, and jobs are getting scarcer. Why should we continue to privilege the voice of industrial leaders and management consultants...?"(Boje, Dehenny, 1999,p.41)

- (16) While March remains a mainstream representative of a behavioural theory of the firm and looks forward to empirical studies on organisational decision-making as the best method of observing and improving organisational learning, he does voice a cautious critique of the "macdonaldization", as a distorted, neo-fordian rationalisation of corporate operations: "Adaptive combinations of efficient components are familiar to the modern world. Throw-away technologies, where design maximises short-term efficiency rather than flexibility or reparability, are common in modern engineering. Throw-away personnel policies, where emphasis is placed on selection and turnover rather than on training and learning, have become common in modern business, politics and marriage. In such a throw-away world organisations lose important elements of permanence. For various legal and institutional reasons, they may preserve the semblance of continuity – a corporate name and skeleton, for example. But they become notably more temporary."(March,1999,p.187) Needless to say, as a representative of the mainstream theory of organisation he fails to acknowledge his conceptual and theoretical debt to George Ritzer - a sociologist, who analysed the processes of macdonaldisation as the continuation of modern capitalist rationalisation in many walks of life. (cf. Ritzer, 1996)
- (17) Cf. Johansen, Swigart, 1994, p.8. The authors refer to the title of a famous sociological study of corporate careers by R. Whyte in the 1950ies (his "Organisation Man" was published in 1962 and became an instant classic, whose title has been paraphrased more often: for instance Kanter's first study of corporate careers from a feminist perspective was entitled "Men and Women of the Corporation"). The second part of the simile has been drawn from a popular TV cartoon in which a heroine is a Superwoman moving in a jungle of a big city with her spider-like webs of ropes and nets. The above-mentioned authors say explicitly: "Climbing the organisational hierarchy is no longer like climbing stairs in a stable structure. The stairs have become rope ladders, with managers climbing desperately for balance. Organisation Man is changing into Spider Woman"(ibid.)
- (18) Asking the question what will remain of the influence of postmodernism on contemporary social sciences, Rosenau claims that even if it fades away: "At the very least they will esteem and employ science more critically and less naively than in the past. They may even lower their expectations of the value and products of science. They may come to more widely recognise the economic, social, and political context of science, its uses and abuses. A broader acceptance and appreciation of the qualitative may emerge and gain a greater audience.(...) It may push the arc of the pendulum further than usual, that might, just possibly, expand horizons in the social sciences."(Rosenau,1992, pp. 183-184)

- (19) Incidentally, a label of “political correctness” is sometimes attached to the academic communities, and it usually means that this community leans leftwards on a political stage. In fact, a quick glance at the curriculae of most business schools makes us certain that this label could be much more fittingly used by the leftists against “political right”.
- (20) Most of the representatives of the theory of learning organisation and of the area of business studies known as knowledge management are much more cautious in their critical remarks. Thus, for instance, the author of an interesting study of a relative neglect of development centers (which could help managers upgrade and coach their employees for long-term innovative and more productive performance) concludes somewhat meekly: “Development centers can be a strong instrument for strategic purposes in organisations: it is an information-rich instrument that achieves its effects best for long-range goals. This study has shown that its deployment is still in its infancy but also has strong potential to be an integral part of performance assessment instrument in organisations.”(Tillema, 1996,p.167)
- (21) Melucci claims that an individual power to challenge the existing codes in information age grows and thus empowers individuals and groups “to expand the intimations of public discourse into an authentic public space, into an arena of language where the meanings, priorities, and ends of comunal life can be named and compared.”(Melucci,1996,p.228)
- (22) This is the title of a novel by Douglas Coupland, a young American writer representing the so-called “generation X”, which came of age in the USA of the 1990ies. The novel in question is devoted to the highly educated and intellectually inventive, sophisticated professionals who are, in fact, “serfs” of the Microsoft-like, high-tech companies from Sillicon Valley. They belong to the elite of salaried experts, but their dreams and leisure are limited to the hyperreal Las Vegas.
- (23) Some sociologists explain the emergence of an information society as an unplanned outcome of disparate processes of change: “These processes have separate trajectories: the information revolution coincided with the worldwide crisis of capitalism and statism in the early 1970ies and the rise of the new social movements around feminism, environmentalism and human rights. The interaction of these levels led to the emergence of the information society.”(Delanty,1999,p.193) The others try to present the contemporary paradigmatic cease-fire within the academic communities as a historical compromise between mainstream “realistic” and critical “constructivist” philosophies of social sciences (Collins,1988,pp.858-881)
- (24) MacCannell’s theory of tourism includes a single footnote which can serve as an instance of a hypothesis on demographic or generational source of the fresh input of critical theoreticians into the academic institutions. He says that: “It is my impression that the radicalisation of marginal colleges and universities in the United States during the past decade resulted from dumping of Ph.D.’s trained in the mainstream during the latter part of the 1960’s. As the post WWII baby boom crested through

then colleges, there were insufficient facilities and teachers for them. The response of the institutions was disorganised, and after some initial build-up to meet the problem, as the population levels began to stabilise, there was much discussion of cutbacks and of the overproduction of Ph.D's. Interestingly, there has been no discussion of using the new, broader manpower base to strengthen the institutions.”(MacCannell, 1999, p.206)

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