



# **Notes for a Deleuzean-inspired theory of social innovation – towards a new sociology of knowledge?**

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*'the aim of the game is ... to find the conditions under which  
something new may be created'*

**(Rajchman, 1998: 33)**



# Structure:

- ❧ on knowledge and social innovation
- ❧ the sociology of knowledge
- ❧ a Deleuzean-inspired theory of social innovation
- ❧ two questions:
  - how does Deleuzean-based theory differ from other sociology of knowledge theories with regard to social innovation?
  - how might we recognise or stimulate lines of flight or windows of opportunity for socially creative strategies?



# Sociology of Knowledge

## Three waves:

- 1. included the work of Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim. In the 1920s, German-speaking sociologists, such as Max Scheler, Karl Mannheim and Max Weber used phenomenological foundations for their interpretive sociology.**
- 2. dates from the 1960s and especially from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) phenomenologically-informed dialectical analysis of the relationship between structure and knowledge.**
- 3. Some developed from a growing uncertainty about what counted as social structure. Others (eg the Science, Technology and Society (STS) School of Latour, Callon, Law et al) developed from the work of Michel Foucault and concern the relationship between discourse, structure and knowledge and the microphysics of power (eg Keller, 2005, 2007).**



# A New, Contemporary Approach

*'The ultimate aim is to find a place for change again, for social innovation'*  
(Massumi, 2002: 69)

**For Deleuze, social innovation takes place through windows of opportunity for social creativity (ie along lines of flight) which emerge as challenges to institutional legitimacy. Innovation often emerges from conflict. Opportunity spaces often are at micro-levels which make possible creative strategies at macro-levels.**

- ❖ **'The aim is ... to find the conditions under which something new is produced' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987: vii);**
- ❖ **'... how are the production and appearance of something new possible' (Deleuze, 1986: 3);**
- ❖ **'The new ... calls forth forces in thought that are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable terra incognita' (Deleuze, 1994: 136).**



# Theoretical issues:

- ❖ **the social and the political are inseparable from sensation and creation;**
- ❖ **a relational approach, concerned with networks of transversals which interconnect entities;**
- ❖ **a philosophy of immanence, or becoming; of creative transformation, experimentation and the production of the new:**  
**‘à quelles conditions le monde objectif permet-il une production subjective de nouveauté, une création’ (Deleuze, 1988: 107);**
- ❖ **a logic of innovation; an ‘understanding that is bound up with seeing politics, movement, change, as well as space and time, in terms of the transformation and realignment of the *relations* between identities and elements rather than in terms of the identities, intentions, or interiorities of the wills of individuals or groups’ (Grosz, 2001: 92, emphasis added);**
- ❖ **a logic of pragmatic creativity derived from problematisation;**
- ❖ **an experiment; to explore what might happen if .... : ‘the creative production of new combinations of elements’ (Baugh, 2005: 91)**



	<b>Deleuzean Mutiplanar Theory</b>
<b>Concept of Society</b>	<b>complex multiplicities of connectivity; networks and lines of flight/resistance/escape; contingent, dynamic, transformative, fluid.</b>
<b>Form of participation in spatial planning and governance</b>	<b>inclusive participation, recognising diversity, multiplicity and resistance, conflict and agonism</b>
<b>Planners' role</b>	<b>to facilitate affirmative access to decision making, cognisant of power and politics</b>
<b>Treatment of Space</b>	<b>fragmented, folded, multiple networks; space as performative</b>
<b>Treatment of Time</b>	<b>multiple, non-linear, Bergsonian duration</b>
<b>Materiality</b>	<b>post-representational</b>
<b>Concept of Development</b>	<b>multiple, continuously emergent trajectories of de- and re-territorialisation</b>
<b>Treatment of Scale</b>	<b>rhizomic relational reach in different networks</b>
<b>Process</b>	<b>collaborative, nomadic, contingent, multiple</b>
<b>Favoured Methods</b>	<b>participatory inclusion, ANT, scenarios/futuribles/foresighting</b>
<b>Ethical Basis</b>	<b>Deleuzean poststructuralism</b>
<b>Key Role of Community</b>	<b>self-determination</b>
<b>Location of Power</b>	<b>nomadic, multiple contingent</b>
<b>Role of Government</b>	<b>facilitate redistribution of public resources; facilitate movement along trajectories</b>
<b>Philosophical Aim</b>	<b>justice, freedom, pragmatism</b>
<b>Competing Values</b>	<b>multiplicity of parameters</b>
<b>Ideal State</b>	<b>deregulation; open-ended fluid networks; smooth space</b>



- ❖ **an ontology of difference:** ‘difference marks the real dynamic of being’ (Hardt, 1993: 2). It is difference that founds being and provides it with its necessity and substantiality (Deleuze, 1956).
- ❖ **emergence and path-dependence.** Complex systems display behaviour that results from the *interaction* between components. For any emergent perspective, there will be the influence of many sediments of the past: ‘it’s just the set of more or less negative preconditions that make it possible to experiment with something beyond history’ (Deleuze, 1990: 1).
- ❖ **multilevel/multiplanar micropolitics and macropolitics.** Several (or perhaps one collectively preferred) trajectories or ‘visions’ of the longer-term future, including concepts towards which actants desire to move (Deleuzian plan(e)s of consistency or immanence); Shorter-term, location specific detailed plans and projects with collaboratively determined tangible goals (Deleuzian plan(e)s of organisation or transcendence) (Hillier, 2007).



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- ❖ **a 'flat' rather than a multiscalar world.** Events should not be regarded according to traditional criteria of scale. One only needs places that are connected and the possibility for actors and information to circulate.
  - ❖ **relationality (rhizome):** conjunction - 'and' – connecting elements, issues and ideas. The rhizome maps a process of networked, relational and transversal thought. It can challenge and transform structures of reified, fixed and static thought into a 'milieu of perpetual transformation' (Colman, 2005: 233) composed of causal and/or aleatory (chance) connections and links.
  - ❖ **democratic inclusion: democratic space beyond governmentality.** The emergence of some structuring principles is not only inevitable, but necessary for a society to function coherently. 'Just a little order to protect us from chaos' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 201).





# How does Deleuzean-based theory differ from other sociology of knowledge theories with regard to social innovation?

Classical SoK Theories	Poststructuralist Deleuzean-inspired Theory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Tend to be economics-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Tend to be philosophy-based. Commits the social and political at the core of being. Economics is but one force of several.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Tend to be structural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Poststructuralism is concerned with the construction of relations/connections. A question of (contested) structuring <i>processes</i> rather than structures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Role of particular <i>milieu innovateur</i> (Aydalot, 1986)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ All milieux have creative potential</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Role of deep, co-operative relationships (Moulaert and Sekia, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Deep, co-operative relationships (<i>agencement</i>) (Hillier, 2008a; Hillier and MacCallum, 2008)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Innovation as creative process (Moulaert and Sekia, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Innovation as creative process</li> </ul>



☞ Innovation as problem-solving (Moulaert and Sekia, 2003)

☞ Problems are not defined by solutions (tendency to destruction rather than creativity); problems are not solved once and for all but provisionally reformulated; there is no solution as solutions are actual, stable identities and problems are inexhaustible virtualities – not obstacles to be removed but points round which new ways of thinking take shape (Rajchman, 2000: 104). No one truth – only possibility. ‘A problem is a series of tensions that must be met with a constructive act’ (Williams, 2003: 57).

☞ SoK may be evolutionary (eg evolutionary economics) and temporal based on organisational learning and path dependency (Moulaert and Sekia, 2003). The past derives the present.

☞ Broadens field of economics (Gibson-Graham); broadens possibility beyond extrapolation and path dependency. ‘Experimentation isn’t historical’ (Deleuze, 1990: 1); ie new modes of existence may be conditioned /constrained by history but not determined by it. The future is anticipated according to the image of the past which is itself moulded from the present (Al-Saji, 2004: 205). Is both temporal and spatial (Hillier, 2007). Regards space and time not as independent variables but as abstractions of subjective lived experience.

☞ SoK has phenomenological roots

☞ Non-phenomenological. Claim that phenomenology brackets issues of power, conflicts of the visible and sayable etc (see Lambert, 2006; Diaz-Bone, 2007)

☞ Knowledge exists in ‘items’; an entity-like ‘item’ that is possessed, pre-given and essentialist

☞ Knowledge is dynamic and driven by social construction: ‘the given is constructed’ (Duzer, 2007: 250).



<p>☞ Knowledge seen from universal, dispassionate perspective from which practical decisions can be taken leading to chosen ends</p>	<p>☞ Knowledge = capacity to direct the self, through encounters and connections, towards a more interesting, ‘better’(?) future.</p>
<p>☞ SoK tends to be humanistic</p>	<p>☞ Can be post-humanist. Allows non-human actors.</p>
<p>☞ SoK talk about ‘balance’ between specific relations (Moulaert and Sekia, 2003)</p>	<p>☞ Relations not ‘balanced’ but are force relations – role of power, affect etc.</p>
<p>☞ Recent SoK institutionalist</p>	<p>☞ Institutionalism distinguishes between the individual and society/the group/institution. Deleuzean thinking does not: it concentrates on relations.</p>
<p>☞ SoK tends to be individualistic (eg Schumpeter’s idea of creative agency). Networks as aggregations of individuals.</p>	<p>☞ See above comment. <i>Agencement</i> is not aggregative but emphasises strategic agency of relational forces.</p>
<p>☞ Schumpeter as foundation for social innovation aspects.</p>	<p>☞ Deleuzean pragmatism lineage pre-dates Schumpeter.</p>
<p>☞ SoK – agents of change drive innovation</p>	<p>☞ Relations and experimentation drive innovation</p>
<p>☞ Innovation/change = linear, between measurable points</p>	<p>☞ Change is continuous: a ‘creative advance’ (Chia and Tsoukas, 1999); spiral rather than linear</p>
<p>☞ Acts ‘on’ the world</p>	<p>☞ Acts ‘with’ the world</p>



<p>☞ SoK = realist; the concept of knowledge refers to everything that exists</p>	<p>☞ Reality isn't something to which people relate as passive observers but as creators and producers (Tormey, 2005).</p>
<p>☞ SoK is static – collective stacks of knowledge/institutions constitute a historical a priori for embedded individual actors</p>	<p>☞ Emphasis on intensive processes of spatio-temporal dynamics. 'Driving force for innovation lies exclusively in the social realm of epistemological creation' (Steinberg, 2007: 12).</p>
<p>☞ Hierarchical embedding</p>	<p>☞ Rhizomic entangling</p>
<p>☞ SoK approaches to social innovation can be seen as local ethical practices (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2008) in which individual desires are integrated with group strategies for achieving 'better' quality of life etc.</p>	<p>☞ (See notes on individual/social above.) Ethics = commitment to maximising connections and powers that expand possibilities (Marks, 2005). There are no transcendent values against which judgement (eg of 'better') takes place. 'Rather than judging, we need to make something exist' (Marks, 2005: 86). Ethics concern relations rather than representations (Goodchild, 1996: 205-210). Ethics = vitalist. Ethics = political.</p>
<p>☞ Social innovation in governance tends to emerge from grassroots and be participatory. Tends to be an institutional view.</p>	<p>☞ Politics tends to be viewed in terms of subjectivity: subjectification and subjectivation.<sup>[1]</sup> Resistance to subjectivation reconfigures and creates new possibilities of modes of existence and practices.</p>



<p>☞ <b>Social innovation tends to subjectivate people as lacking; emphasis on needs of marginalised groups; is negative rather than positive view.</b></p>	<p>☞ <b>'lacks' are not deficiencies or problems but creative potentialities – look at assets rather than lacks (ABCD); is positive rather than negative.</b></p>
<p>☞ <b>Social innovation views actors and territories as interrelated elements.</b></p>	<p>☞ <b>Agree, but poststructuralist Deleuzean thinking goes further.</b></p>
<p>☞ <b>SoK is an interpretive approach.</b></p>	<p>☞ <b>Some people argue poststructuralism can be interpretive (especially use of Foucauldian discourse-analysis). Others argue that interpretive approach is replete with incommensurabilities across 'worlds', with each conceptual scheme constructing its own reality. Emphasis on performative force of discursive practices is insufficient. Need also to consider 'the virtualising potential of affect, the difference immanent to the ongoing interaction and performance of a multiplicity of relations' (Latham and McCormack, 2004: 707). (See also Hillier, 2008b.)</b></p>
<p>☞ <b>Effect of innovation on knowledge is a collective adjustment of knowledge.</b></p>	<p>☞ <b>Effect of innovation on knowledge is a disruption of previous experience and knowledge construction.</b></p>



# **How might we recognise or stimulate lines of flight or windows of opportunity for socially creative strategies?**

- Trace the entities and forces and especially the relations between them, highlighting diagonals/transversals. To trace, or interpret, entails looking back, often from above, in a systematic manner. To trace is to describe and to analyse the diversity of relations, the modalities of co-ordination, the discourses, the emotions, affects etc, and how they were mobilised to shape actants' frames, representations and behaviours. Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatism is agonistic, referring to the role of relational difference and conflict in creative transformation.**



What might forces of social innovation look like? Forces would include discourse, materialities, power, subjectivations, codings/territorialisations, ie a robust theoretical combination of Deleuzian 'axes' and Foucauldian *dispositif* (Hillier, 2008a; Pløger, 2008).

The *dispositif* implicates three fundamental elements of experience: relations of power, games of truth or knowledge, and forms of relation to oneself and to others (subjectivization and subjectification).

Deleuze and Guattari complement the *dispositif* by defining the concepts of assemblage/*agencement* along two axes. One axis defines the *roles* which components may play, from the purely material to the purely expressive (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 503-504). The second axis concerns the reterritorialisation/deterritorialisation, coding/decoding and stabilisation/destabilisation of assemblages/*agencements*. The axis of territorialisation is concerned with *process*.



- ❖ **Identify (map) a range of diagrams of possibilities. Deleuzean maps are concerned with creative potential. Creative mapping of connections and potentialities pays attention not only to affect and the trajectories of future becomings, but also to the already-delineated tracings of *dispositifs*, representations and signification: the beliefs and habits which express actants' desires.**
- ❖ **Intervene to assist/facilitate actualisation of selected diagram/s. Mapping, as above, generates 'a set of various intersecting lines' (Deleuze, 1995: 33) or diagram. The diagram is a map of the discursive and material forces expressing the immanent relations of power. It allows evaluation of the organisational potentiality of various *agencements* to actualise. In strategic practice mapping would entail attempting to select and to facilitate potentially 'good' encounters and to avoid 'bad' ones by entering the relations between elements and 'tweaking' (Massumi, 2002: 207) as many as possible in order to get a sense of what may emerge.**

**NB who gives 'us' the ability/legitimacy to judge and intervene and on what basis? What would legitimise intervention?**





# How might this be done in practice?

- ❖ ***Appreciative enquiry*** (l'investigation positive) - focuses on positive experiences, memories and successes of a community: 'locating the energy for change' (Elliott, 1999).
- ❖ ***Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)*** - an assets or strengths based approach to community practice which identifies the resources, expertise, skills, capacities within communities rather than focuses on problems or deficiencies. (See Asset-Based Community Development Institute website [www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/](http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/))



# Conclusions

a Deleuzean-inspired ontology offers:

- ❖ **'a more *complete* model' (Houle, 2005: 91) which folds together both human and non-human; social, psychological, natural-material, economic and political.**
- ❖ **does not restrict social innovation to a limited number of possibilities, nor potentially 'successful interventions' to already-prescribed outcomes or solutions.**
- ❖ **a more flexible approach and a more fluid and dynamic vision of the time-spaces of territorial and social innovation.**
- ❖ **an emphasis on innovation, experiment, 'the spark of the new.'**
- ❖ **the welcoming of difference; experiments in future living: 'experiments in which those excluded, marginalised and rendered outside or placeless will also find themselves' (Grosz, 2001: 166).**
- ❖ **social innovation.**

