

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF INNOVATIVE STUDIES – SELECTED MECHANISMS

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is the reconstruction of innovation studies. The object of analysis will be selected knowledge forming mechanisms applied within this scientific area. There will be made an attempt to prove that the idea of innovation was used as the element of hegemonic strategy imposed by international organizations in order to maintain the existing rules of social reproduction. The methodological perspective adopted in the analysis is the constructivist model of cognition, among others, represented by A. Zybertowicz. According to it, the knowledge is determined by the circumstances and mechanisms of the social structures acting in the processes of converting interpretation into facts. Consequently, one is searching for the answer to a question: what role in this process play institutions of the power and money and their rhetorical devices. The research problem is analysed through the prism of two mechanisms: the motion of selective tradition and the strategy of expertise involved. Analysis of existing data and organizations' reports, reveals that associates of the organizations, e.g. Ch. Freeman, constructed knowledge about the innovation on the foundation of ideological *pre* assumptions entered in their mission. Also the mechanism of selective tradition had no basis in the form of scientific research in the area of innovation studies, still it was applied due to the hegemonic rationality of the international actors. Therefore, in the field of innovation studies, the knowledge does not perform teleological function nor reach the essence of things, which in scientific cognition is the true, but allows to maintain the state of hegemony for prevailing classes. Paradoxically, innovation studies does not provide much information about innovativeness itself.

KEYWORDS: *innovation, innovation study, hegemony, social constructionism, selective tradition, expertise involved*

INTRODUCTION

The genesis of the development of innovation studied dates back to the second half of the 20th century, when in the situation of growing economic crisis, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development sought to popularize the view that the commercialization of technological innovation was the remedy to the economic recession. Due to deficiency of empirical evidence justifying this thesis, it was necessary to construct appropriate theoretical concept legitimizing ideology advocated by international organization. Here, it is worth noting that innovation has been the subject of analyses conducted within the American school of research on technological change, where its origin was not restricted only to the provenance of technological innovation and where innovation was not attributed to the direct impact on the economic growth of the state. The issue of the relationship between innovative companies and the economic competitiveness of the state was rather treated as the problem insufficiently explored scientifically, which required further systematic research.

Otherwise happened within the European tradition, in which on the basis of not scientifically determined *pre* assumptions, the British economist and longtime OECD expert Christopher Freeman performed the selection of area of innovation only to commercialized technological innovation, the implementation of which he *a priori* considered a panacea for the economic problems of European countries struggling with the recession. Already at the construction stage of new tradition, recognized by Freeman as breakthrough, even before there was taken any empirical studies of the field, from the area of innovation studies were eliminated inventions resulting from the non-technical e.g. cultural activity. Kind of thought constraint mechanism was the attribution to what is new the feature of economic profit, what, in many cases, excluded solutions from the field of broadly understood humanities.

RESEARCH METHODS

The constructivist model of cognition is the method of analysis adopted in the article. Quoting Andrzej Zybertowicz *what we notice as reality is constituted (or constructed) as the part of culturally regulated social practices,*

also cognitive ones, and the truth of our beliefs depends on the social context they act with (Zybertowicz, 1995, p. 59). From many cognitive perspectives functioning in society, broad acceptance receive not the interpretations closest to the truth, but the ones that conform to conceptual schemata accepted in a given time, in a particular cultural space (Zybertowicz, 1995, p. 108–152). The denomination of the proper representation is achieved by the one support of which involved more effort of political, economic and cultural kind. In order to have access to act in such different areas of social reality, one must have power, and, accordingly, occupy a dominant position. Therefore, the adoption of such a complex exertion, equivalent to exercise continuous control over the culturally accepted world view, is the game about whose definition of the world gain social legitimacy and who will maintain, or maybe win, hegemony and mandate to rule. According to Antonio Gramsci, the strategy is typical for democratic countries of advanced capitalism (Gramsci, 1961, p. 12–16). Hegemony, interpreted as having moral and intellectual authority by certain social groups, is exercised by imposition the framework of interpretation, which then functions in society as the official ways of understanding reality (Wróblewski, 2014, p. 16).

Consequently, this subjective approval of subordinate individuals requires constant activity from authorities. Hegemonic actors influence the common-sense vision of the world of compliant groups forming their own ideological history by using categories, which are the universal elements of popular imagination. So, the current ideas of the world combines *the core of culture, based mainly on stereotypes and hackneyed notions, which makes it an ideal reproducer of conformity and consolidation of the status quo* (Wróblewski, 2014, p. 16). Hence, if components of social consensus are to some extent in accordance with the categories of common sense, the hegemonic actors must use language that appeals to the common view of the world. It is in this narrative that values and interests of privileged groups appear to be the same for groups of subsidiaries. To achieve it, parallel to the manipulative political strategy in the field of culture, hegemonic mechanisms should occur also in relation to the social structure. Therefore, according to Gramsci, the dominant groups systematically influence, and ultimately siphon off, civil

society institutions, e.g. school or unions. Initially, these institutions act as frontons of resistance against the hegemony of higher classes. Kind of position warfare is conducted between dominant subjects and participants of grass-roots social initiatives (Gramsci, 1961, p. 574, 630). Consistently, appropriation of democratic institution by the ideology of dominant groups raises understandable resistance of individuals involved in the dynamics of these bottom-up processes. Accordingly, hegemonic actors undertake numerous attempts to overcome this non-conformism, among others through cultural rationalization of their actions. The method to achieve it is to form the knowledge equipped in scientific, and thus considered neutral, context (Boggs, 1990, p. 11). This “objective” knowledge legitimizes the position of privileged classes, influencing to some extent the content of common knowledge, which, as a result allow for further hegemonic practices of power. Consequently, knowledge obtains the value of symbolic power and, to paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu, performs reproductive function and serves to maintain the power through the transmission of dominant cultural patterns (Bourdieu, 1972). Therefore, by approval of the cultural vision of the world, implemented among others in scientific discourse, society concurrently issue to hegemonic groups the mandate to political institutionalization of ideology exercised by.

To summarize, the content and form of scientific knowledge is determined not only by the objective data about the subject of knowledge, but also by power relations in which it is involved. In the words of Michael William Apple *the relations themselves are the defining characteristics* (Apple, 1990, p. 17). However, is every knowledge to the same degree involved in hegemonic processes? Of course not, the condition of science and its heuristic function are not simple resultant of the power determinism. Besides, hegemonic strategies encounter mechanisms of the resistance, strengthened historically on the basis of the universal value of the knowledge that is the truth. Thus, trench warfare constantly remains, tipping the scales of victory once for one, once the other side. Moreover, while the straggle continues, there are constructed another civil society institutions to which the existing hegemonic mechanisms are ineffective. This peculiar rivalry is in progress also in the area of the European thought about the innovation.

THE MECHANISM OF SELECTIVE TRADITION

The exclusion of issues related to innovations non-commercial and not demonstrating the technological provenance performs the role of essential hegemonic mechanism since it strengthens the already globally dominant attitude of instrumental rationality. Socially valuable innovative activity is therefore the one that bears financial profit regardless of the further social consequences. In this way, there is created a cultural justification for the knowledge society, of which it is difficult to say whether it is developing in the direction of the postulated wise society (Hayrinen-Alestalo, 2001). Except for number of studies about the economic welfare of several dozen states which implemented national innovation system, issues of the development of consciousness, whether cultural, educational and political, are not sufficiently taken. Consequently, scientific cultural transmission becomes the instrument of the selective tradition, which according to Raymond Williams, by the transmission of selected values and social norms strengthens the ideological hegemony of the dominant groups (Williams, 1995, p. 42).

Thus, the aim of selective tradition mechanism was the exclusion from the discourse of innovation attributes of the humanistic world-view. Since the function of innovation study was to justify the strategy of dominant entities, the cognitive practices that could undermine its legitimacy, should be eliminated. Hence, in the discourse of innovation are absent issues concerning adopted axiological decisions. It is *a priori* stated that investments in companies' innovation realize the principle of egalitarian access to the common good. Since, it was taken for granted that citizens will be the beneficiaries of innovation policy, none too were taken any issues concerning social inequality in income distribution. It can be assumed that the mechanism was thoughtful hegemonic strategy, since in the category of Gramsci's common sense, even absent reflection acts as another ideological medium. In some circumstances it is even possible that, what is beyond the adopted perspective, not only scientists are not interested in, but it is also stigmatized by them as unreal (Sojak, Wincenty, 2005, p. 69–79).

Thence, how will commercialization affect the value of innovations? It can be assumed, that just as globalization has influenced the content of cultural transmission. When the diffusion of commercialized technological

innovation is not regulated by normative principles in social common sense, it can actually be controlled only by the law. However, the law is constituted by hegemonic actors and often serves primarily their interests. For example, it is worth to consider why in the face of such dynamic pace of technology development, adequate legislative standards are constructed with a delay or are not formulated at all. In the EU there is still no appropriate legal solutions to protect personal data on the Internet. It is true that, in terms of European law, privacy is protected by states constitutions, however, in the United States, where is registered majority of the most popular international portals, personal data is used in the same manner as any commercial information. The situation can be improved if the EU adopts prepared for several years, regulation, which draft stipulates that all companies operating within Union are subject to its law, so claims about personal data infringement will be proceed in the country from which is the applicant person. At present, even winning the process for the violation of personal data does not guarantee that the US company will comply with this sentence. Actually, it just depends on organization's good will.

THE STRATEGY OF EXPERTISE INVOLVED

The explanations requires the issue of why so heuristically immature battery of notions constituted in the area of innovation studies is the instrument exerting major influence on the process of scientific exploration, undertaken in the discourse represented by epistemic communities and international and government research organizations. Studying Danish innovation system, Bengt-Åke Lundvall and Mark Tomlinson formulate the question, why did such fast diffusion of the innovation system take place amongst scientists and political decision-makers (Lundvall, Tomlinson, 2002, p. 214), but they do not make an attempt to response it. On the foundation of research about the implementation of national innovation system in Sweden, Magnus Eklund concludes that, what seems to be just *a passive fashion-following reception (...)* reveals after a deeper look domestic actors actively pursuing their own agendas, picking up and using fashionable concepts if and when in benefited them (Eklund, 2007, p. 159). Eklund also postulates the need to implement research about the adaptation of innovation systems in particular countries.

So far, the diffusion of system category in scientific and political discourse was not systematically investigated. However, from the fragmentary analyzes currently available, it results that this tool is used to satisfy a variety of interests articulated by many actors involved.

At this point one should refer to the hegemonic mechanisms of knowledge construction. Notions assigned to this concept were determined by the overwhelming impact of the international organizations, inter alia on community research. This practice was based on the construction of international network of experts, whose activity framed public policies in accordance with the ideology of the organization, which can be briefly summarized with slogan *economic capital goes to economic capital*. Hence, humanists were not the representatives of epistemic communities, which participated in research projects about innovation conducted mainly by the OECD, and since the 90's, also by the EU. According to study about innovation research communities by J. Fagerberg and B. Verspagen, these groups composed mostly of economists representing more than half (58%) of community. The share of engineers amounts to the 9%, sociologists was estimated on the level of 5%. Historians, philosophers and psychologists were not found in examined community. In large numbers were represented economic geographers (Fagerberg, Verspagen, 2006, p. 6). Although scientists representing innovation studies recognize the notion battery constructed by them as the trans-epistemic terms, which according to the concept of Karin Knorr-Certina (Knorr-Certina, 1983, p. 101–130) arise in the area of transdisciplinary collaboration between scientists, representatives of public administrations and consumers, it is more reasonable to consider the category of terms as trans-discursive, that is one which epistemic function is subordinate to interests formulated by representatives of discourses other than scientific.

Consequently, the rhetoric about the relationships between science and technology is abundant in terms of the national innovation system, information society, knowledge society, network society, global learning economy and knowledge based economy. All these concepts combine similar ideological perspective, manifested by the attitude of techno nationalism, which establish that the development of technology can only have positive

impact on the common good of citizens. The imposition of this assumption by the hegemonic actors, having a gigantic financial and organizational capital at their disposal, created favorable conditions for the further popularization and legitimacy of this presumption. Fashion issues evoked the interest of many researchers which aspired for fast, individual scientific victory, often having limited basis in cognitive activity realized by them.

Scientific credibility, delivered by the epistemic community, equipped trans-discursive terms in cultural authority as required to gain political hegemony. So, on the initiative of the OECD was the diffusion of concepts, which were used mainly to depoliticize politics, inter alia by the assignment features of scientific objectivity to what ideological and constructed in the interest of the dominance of particular vision of the world. Nexus of political and economic power involved in the construction of national innovation systems was camouflaged by the discourse of scientific innovation studies and methodology developed by international organizations. The attribute of objectivity was therefore granted to the object of knowledge which did not exist until the OECD did not recognize it.

Apple, analyzing reproductive relations in the field of education in the United States, noticed that the construction of high status knowledge serves the expansion of the capitalist economy, strengthening at the same time hegemonic practices occurring in society. This is done by favouring the technical knowledge in comparison to the humanities. In the discourse of innovation studies emphasized is the major importance of the so-called socially useful knowledge. As a result, in the area of science policy of developed and developing countries, the field of science (e.g. mathematics and computer science) is the one which enjoyed the greatest level of public funding. Still, it is the technical expert knowledge that receives the greatest social legitimacy. Consequently, individuals, convinced about direct, positive impact of the capitalism expansion on the level of their life prefer the discourse operating terms assigned to instrumental rationality, at the same time marginalizing, and even disregarding, reflections of axiological nature. Apple, however, underlined that *high status knowledge is seen as macro-economically beneficial in terms of long run benefits to the most powerful classes in society* (Apple, 1990, p. 38). Hence, the knowledge, for which the

economic productivity is the basic attribute is distributed mainly to groups with sufficiently high position in the social hierarchy. However, at the end of the 20th century, evoking the impression of knowledge distribution according to the principle of egalitarianism was manifested, among others, by wide access to higher education.

In consequence, the social domination of the instrumental rationality determines society to appeal in its actions and attitudes primarily to economic values. Therefore, currently of biggest importance is what results from the hegemony of imposed ideology and the narrative of social issues can only be held within this discourse. The individuals who resolve certain social concerns are those who belong to the narrow group of experts. Thus, the very type of social concerns and *the form of the questions becomes an aspect of cultural reproduction since these questions can only be answered by experts who already have had the technical knowledge distributed to them* (Apple, 1990, p. 40). Hence, the subject of innovation study literature is the writing of economics and management, and reports of international and national organizations, mainly the OECD and the EU (Miettinen, 2012, p. 64–69). Moreover, the publication channels of research results of this epistemic communities are anonymous OECD reports, provided with recommendations for public member states. The implications do not reveal any doubts concerning taken theoretical statements since the justification for these was developed in other, often anonymous and not even published, organization documents (Miettinen, 2012, p. 67). From the study by Reijo Miettinen, who analyzed the content of 4 reports issued by the OECD, at the turn of 1997–2005, results that most of the information provided in these publications was justified by referring to other anonymous organization materials. In the report from 1997, the percentage of such references amounted to 37%, in 2005 – 50%. The indicator of references to unpublished conference papers amounted to 14,8% in 1997 and 8,6% in 2005. Most cited scientific journal was, founded by Freeman, “Research Policy”. In the studied documents, there was no reference to the magazines from the humanities.

SUMMARY

Innovation studies abound in numerous terminological constructs espoused in the OECD and UE reports are currently present in the official language of the member states. Innovative society, innovative policy, innovative economy and innovations in education are the battery of notions, which does not perform heuristic function. These concepts are not equipped with credible scientific definitions, and consequently, there are not made attempts to operationalize them. Actually, in the documentation of the OECD categories of innovative society and such policy are treated synonymously. What are the premises towards is? It is also worthwhile to ask, what criteria determine, which new solutions e.g. in education are innovative. It can be assumed, that only those associated with the implementation of new technological solutions. Finally, what are the non-economic effects of the innovation dissemination, vide, whether indeed does it serve the civil common wealth? These issues are not included in the discourse of innovation studies. Admittedly, some of the threads are taken at various OECD conferences, but they are marginal and perform the role of the counter argument to the occasionally alleged criticism that in its activity the organization is discrediting social optics for the commercial perspective. Therefore, the consequence of exclusion of auto correction mechanisms, or, more broadly humanistic perspective, is the performative language about innovation and subordinate to it methodology. As a result, innovation studies establish only positive model, assuming that *most current social, economic and environmental challenges require creative solutions based on innovation and technological advance* (OECD, 2010, p. 30) and *researchers unconditionally assume that the adaptation of innovation is always more desirable than its rejection* (Rogers, 1962, p. 142). Since these claims cannot be justified by the knowledge about explored subject, there are constructed subsequent “facade” cognitive schemes in which knowledge becomes the cultural justification of power, and the methodology is used to measure the artifacts incurred as a result of this entanglement.

For the time being, outside the discourse of innovation, more and more stronger is articulated the thesis of the priority of social capital on the level of innovativeness of local economies (Niosi, 2002). However, the operation of such Dewey’s “community of inquiry” (Dewey, 1981) requires the existence

of appropriate institutional background. Without democratic institutions, indeed, implementing the principle of the common good, between the citizens will not establish relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Thus, innovation will not appear, where citizens are afraid to cooperate because they do not trust each self and do not know how to build relationships other than those based on competition.

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