



Harmonization and Ethnographic Critique in the Context of Innovation Politics

Torbjörn Friberg | Associate Professor of Social Anthropology, Malmö University

ABSTRACT This article focuses on the intrinsic potential of ethnographic critique challenged in the context of innovation political projects equipped with the harmonizing Triple Helix model. An ethnographic approach has been used to generate the initial problem of harmonization, which is discussed in relation to Henry Etzkowitz' textual assumptions on harmonization in the Triple Helix model, followed by two ethnographic cases concerned with the practices of harmonization. Harmonization is described as making consistent different provinces of meaning or worlds, unrestricting them from conflicting structures of relevance. Therefore, the concluding remarks attempt to broaden the scope of critical ethnographic strategies with the help of a Weberian differentiation between a political and a social scientific world.

Keywords: Harmonization, Ethnography, Critique, Innovation Politics, Triple Helix

Introduction

Social anthropology is used to terrains shifting under its feet. Things observed from afar suddenly become near, and the knowledge economy is an example. [C]onsider the place of anthropology as a discipline in a world where creativity becomes an adjunct of productivity, interdisciplinary collaboration becomes a paradigm for innovation, and everyone is valued for their expertise. How to lead a critical life emerges as a new kind of problem. (Strathern 2006)

In 2015, I had participated in a seminar in which a significant number of organisational representatives had gathered in order to establish two world-leading research facilities – ESS¹ and MAX IV² – as “Growth Engines” in the Öresund region (the Southern part of Sweden and the Copenhagen area). The Danish and the Swedish representatives were about to work on an interregional application with a focus on research, development, and innovation. The main idea of the application was to establish a future collaborative interregional project that went beyond national as well as organizational borders. Such work, however, demanded a project leader entrusted with the task of visualizing and thematically focusing on the diverse interests of the various representatives to make the project fruitful. As the project leader, Emil had successfully been able to simplify the heterogeneity with the help of four integrated “bubbles”: Industry-Academy, Research-Education, Border Barriers-Service-Information, and Marketing. While pointing to the power-point slide with the colored bubbles, Emil said,

¹ The European Spallation Source (ESS) is set to become a multidisciplinary research center based on the world's most powerful neutron source. It is planned to be finished in 2019. <http://europenspallationsource.se>

² The MAX IV laboratory will support three areas of research: accelerator physics, research based on the use of synchrotron radiation, and nuclear physics using energetic electrons. Construction started in 2010, and the opening ceremony was scheduled for 2016. <https://www.maxlab.lu.se>

Where are we today? It has been an extensive process, and many of you have been involved from the beginning. Today we have come to a point where it is possible to view a common thread running through the different projects. Previously, we were just different parts, but now we have constructed a whole. However, we need to give an account of the broader societal benefits. Creating wholeness is essential. How are we to knit the results from the various parts? The interregional project cannot live its own life without any societal connections. Everything must harmonize with each other.

Thereafter, the four interdisciplinary representatives of the “bubbles,” one by one, gave an account of how to contribute to the regional, and societal development. After we had finished listening to the representatives, Emil said, “I think we can find a great interregional added value. All the parts now hang together and point towards the same thing – exchange. By integrating the four bubbles, we can create an innovative win-win-situation.” Emil posed a question to the strategic project leader: “Marja, how are we to think when writing this interregional application?” Marja responded,

It seems evident that this collaborative, interregional project could apply from EU’s innovation strategy – *Horizon2020*. Most of us here are interested in innovation. So, there is an obvious connection to the two research facilities: ESS and MAX IV. These two research facilities can produce smart social and economic growth within several sectors.

As an ethnographer, I wonder how we can comprehend these public expressions in terms of a political project or model.

In a rhetorical ethnographic approach, the vignette above is “thick” (Geertz 1973) with meaning as it gives a social expression of the trendsetting Triple Helix-model used as an underlying ideal and practical foundation for contemporary innovation politics. The aim of innovation projects could be comprehended as increasing the economic and social growth in the existing welfare society by striving towards one common integrated future (cf. Strathern 2004). Policymakers and policy-linked researchers (government employees) working on “innovation” usually depart from the Triple Helix-model (Etzkowitz 2004, 2005; Shinn 2002), since it provides them with idealistic and practical principles on how to construct productive relations for imagining an uncertain future. In contrast to the notion of a centralized model in which the state controls the academic and industrial worlds, and the *laissez-faire* model in which the academia, the state, and the industry collaborate to a certain extent across explicit boundaries, the Triple Helix-model undertakes hybrid and collaborative relations between university, industry and the state (this has been further elaborated upon in this article). In this context, I would like to suggest that we are dealing with a phenomenon that logically could be comprehended in terms of harmonization (see Nader 1990, 1997). Not least because of the phenomenon in question (Triple Helix) could be understood as attempts of making different worlds (expressed above as “bubbles”) consistent in the sense that they become unrestricted from conflicting structures of relevance that give meaning to specific related “objects” (see Schutz 1999). The processes of harmonization, thus, poses a challenge for a Weberian distinction between politics and social science/ethnography (Weber 1977).

Marilyn Strathern (2000: 286–7, 2004, 2006; see also Godin 2015, 2017) has underlined that anthropologists ought to become critically alert about the new emerging relationships, between innovation politics and ethnographic projects since there are several indications of increased harmonizing monologues on behalf of more critical dialogues. At

the backdrop of this ethnographic and critical reflection on a new emerging harmonizing phenomenon, it seems reasonable to ask the following questions: What do the harmonization processes look like in an ideal textual world? What do the harmonization processes look like in a practical everyday life world? The two questions are addressed through textual and empirical relations in order to paint a dynamic image of the harmonizing processes in the Öresund region. With the help of this textual and empirical case, the purpose of this article is to extend the disciplinary conversation on ethnography with critical strategies (Marcus and Fischer 1999; Strathern 1987).

The article proceeds in four steps. First, I have provided a brief historical background and development of the classic ethnographic project with critique. Second, I have given an account of my ethnographic approach in order to demonstrate how it generated an awareness of the relationship between harmonization and ethnographic critique. Third, I have presented the result and discussion, which is divided into two parts: the Triple Helix in its textual and practical expression. I have then moved on to the concluding remarks in which I have discussed the two questions before extending the disciplinary conversations concerning critical ethnographic strategies.

Background

In this step, I have made an attempt to outline a brief historical background of the ethnographic project, against the processes of harmonization, to clarify the problem at hand. As I present a brief exposé concerned with the classical ethnographic project, and its development during the mid-1980s, the principal point is of a pedagogical matter about highlighting the intrinsic potential critique in the qualitative method.

When reading Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* ([1922] 2002), it becomes understandable that he continuously struggled with the practically and conceptually interrelated work, between the modern capitalistic world and the non-modern world of the Trobriand Islanders. As Malinowski was setting out to describe the extensive and sophisticated trading system of the Kula, he claimed that the goal of ethnographic fieldwork is based on three avenues: 1) a clear outline and documentation of the culture and its structure; 2) taking fieldnotes on action and behaviors that articulate the cultural experiences; and 3) documenting the natives' point of view by (in)formal interviews. It follows that he came to discuss the problem with preconceived ideas about the meaning of "Ownership" (Malinowski 2002: 89). Malinowski underlined that the meaning of the word ownership changes depending on its relation to a specific social context. In western capitalistic societies, ownership closely relates to economic and legal institutions, which might not be the case in all societies around the world. To own an object in a western society, constituted by a capitalistic logic, indicates that people have the legal right to sell it for personal profit (cf. Barnett & Silverman 1979: 40-81). Use of the western word "own" in the description of a collective native society is, according to Malinowski, an example of how the ethnographer unconsciously relies on preconceived ideas in the ethnographic project. To sincerely understand the meaning of ownership, in a different society than our own, he stated that the ethnographer ought to deal with his or her preconceived ideas in the interpretation of other customs, traditions or rites.

From the perspective of Alfred Schutz (1999), Malinowski's discussion engages with understanding preconceived ideas, as researchers dealing with two different provinces of

meaning, also known as worlds. Schutz rightfully emphasized the intersubjective fact that human beings live in multiple provinces of meaning. In the everyday lifeworld, there are infinite provinces of meaning – such as art, economy, politics, and science – with their own logical, temporal, bodily, and social dimensions. It means that people making a Kierkegaardian “leap” between different provinces need to consider its “belonging structure of relevance” which gives meaning to closely related material and conceptual “objects.” All provinces of meaning are, according to Schutz, to be treated and assumed as systemic contexts of objects with specific reciprocal relationships to each other. When people “leap” between different provinces, it follows that they, initially, encounter different conflicting meanings and objects – usually known to ethnographers as *culture shock*. This kind of shocking encounter, thus, generates various methodological problems, such as the case of Malinowski’s discussion on preconceived ideas. In other words, in the classical ethnographic project, here explained with the help of Schutz, there are no harmonizing relationships between various provinces of meaning. As Malinowski considers the meaning of ownership among the Trobriand Islanders, there is an intrinsic contrast between an individualistic modern Western capitalistic (economic) world and a non-modern (gift giving) province of meaning constituted by the collective. As a reader of Malinowski’s world-famous book, it becomes evident that the existence of the two Schutzian provinces or worlds creates an opening for potential ethnographic critique.

As is well known to most anthropologists, Marcel Mauss succeeded in intensifying Malinowski’s intrinsic potential critique when launching his groundbreaking theory of gift giving (see Friberg 2012). Today we are aware of the socio-political fact that Mauss carried on with the intellectual tradition, analytically concerned with social transformations during the nineteenth century: the rise of individualism, the decline of religious solidarity, the disappearance of traditional authorities and the growth of the market as a medium for human relationships. In this intellectual context, *The Gift* ([1925] 1972) could be measured as a search for the origin of the social contract. By taking a departure from an enormous amount of ethnographic material (foremost the material of Boas and Malinowski), Mauss was able to criticize the contemporary theories of self-interest and the idea of pure economic relations. Mauss’ critique expressed itself through a proper form of gift giving theory, situated somewhere between communism and individualism, as an honorable approach for the reader to follow in his or her everyday life (1972: 88).

Along with the “representation crises” in the mid-1980s (Clifford and Marcus 2010 [1986]; Geertz, 1988), which seriously questioned the asymmetric relationship between the modern capitalistic world and the non-modern peripheral provinces in anthropological writings, ethnographers struggled to develop the Malinowskian ethnographic project (Marcus 1998). Consequently, the ethnographic horizon became increasingly directed towards the institutional domains of the West, which gave meaning to the expression of doing “anthropology at home” (Jackson 1987). As a result of this, the rationality among many anthropologists became that of ethnography as a new and potential ground for societal and cultural critique. In *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* ([1986] 1999), George Marcus and Michael Fischer claimed that ethnographers could no longer operate under the ideal that they were discovering new provinces or worlds, since they were stepping into ready-made representations. Along with this argument, the authors claimed that a “primary framing task of any ethnography is to juxtapose these preexisting representations, attempting to

understand their diverse conditions of production, and to incorporate the resulting analysis fully into the strategies which define any contemporary fieldwork project.” (Marcus and Fischer 1999: xx) They suggested that the basic critical strategy was that of defamiliarization, which means attempts to disrupt common sense, placing familiar subjects in unfamiliar settings to make the reader conscious of different worlds (Marcus and Fischer 1999: 137). I want to propose that the ethnographic practice of defamiliarization is surprisingly much the same as the literary approach of Wendy Brown who claims that critique is about taking an object (with power to organize and govern us) “for a different project than that to which it is currently tethered” (2005: 16) However, the notion of defamiliarization, according to Marcus and Fischer, is to be agreed as critical reflection, that is, contemplation on the Others’ as well as the ethnographers taken-for-granted “objects” in the everyday lifeworld. The message of this form of criticism is that the natural order of material and conceptual objects is to be considered as culturally constructed. Similarly, Strathern (1987) discussed critical strategies to utilize when doing ethnography “home.” It followed that she initially avoided a binary division between “home and away.” For Strathern, conducting ethnography was not about a spatial, social, or national belonging; instead, it was a strategic decision about the organization of knowledge. Being at “home” means that the ethnographer is organizing the knowledge aligned with the informants’ way of organizing knowledge. In both the case of Marcus and Fisher and Strathern, it seems they attempted to construct specific ethnographic strategies in purpose to make a distinction between what we could comprehend as a Schutzian academic ethnographic province and the Others’ worlds, with the primary purpose to evoke critical thought.

In sum, while reading the classic Malinowskian ethnographic project, it is possible to detect a distinction between two central Schutzian worlds, which implies an intrinsic potential critique. As was illustrated above with the help of Mauss, this potential critique could be intensified in a various situation if necessary. As noted, however, the “natural” distinction between the worlds seems to have become challenged with the emergence of the representation crisis in the anthropological discipline. Consequently, some creative anthropologists began to experiment with various critical strategies, which is grasped as a way to re-establishing the notion of different Schutzian worlds here – a return to a potential critical approach. With this as a backdrop in mind, the point is that the intrinsic potential critique in the ethnographic project – constituted by dualism that strives towards the multiplicity of the horizons of the lifeworld – again, becomes challenged in the context of innovation political projects with Triple Helix as a trendsetting policy model. As noted in the introduction, the main reason for this form of contemporary challenge is due to the political fact that the intentionality of innovation politics is that of a single integrated future world (Strathern 2004).

A Note on the Ethnographic Approach

In opposition to philosophical inquiry based on pre-constructed concepts (armchair anthropology), distinctive for the ethnographic project here is the empathic attention towards the Others’ expressions (textually and practically). The relational form of listening to the Others’ expressions, such as the case of the introductory vignette, creates a continuous flow of reflective questions as the ethnographer struggles to make sense of the phenomenon in the field. Hence, most of the ethnographic questions appear and force themselves on

the ethnographer during fieldwork, when he or she gets (re)involved in new as well as old relations (Agar 1986; Friberg 2018). Here, the ethnographer will always find him- or herself in the middle of historical and contemporary relations that should be described – from experienced relations to textual ones in the form of a monographs or scientific articles. Strathern (2005: vii) calls attention to this form of ethnographic knowledge production as using interpersonal relationships to uncover and create conceptual relationships, which is a reasonable way to describe my own ethnographic approach.

Ethnographic material was collected through participatory observations, interviews, and documents within a life science network in the Öresund region between 2014 and 2015. As a fairly stable node in this network, my ethnographic base was in a Swedish life science research foundation (more about this later) that arranged specific meetings aimed at discussing and creating collaborative projects over the boundaries between universities, the Danish and the Swedish state, and industries – they assumed the Triple Helix policy model. From this node in the life science network, I became aware of the existence of the interregional project presented above. Consequently, I followed the last two collaborative seminars to a postponed successfully funded interregional project, which gave me the opportunity to see how the Triple Helix operated in interpersonal relationships. When conducting participant observation and doing interviews, I got a sense of how the Triple Helix model influences other organizational structures, and challenges critical strategies (see Friberg 2017, 2018). Accordingly, I drew conceptual inspiration from Nader (1990, 1997) because many of the ethnographic situations could be understood and explained as variations of the same theme (Lévi-Strauss 2016: 76–82) – the phenomenon of harmonization. As demonstrated by Nader, many of today's Western political models actively influence and persuade individuals and groups – as an imagined natural virtue of civilizing progress. According to Nader, the controlling processes have shifted from social or coercive complications to become cultural or persuasive matters. In this new unipolar world order, differences and antagonism are considered “uncivilized,” while the notion of harmony is seen as a western civilization process.

With the backdrop of these interpersonal and conceptual relations, I became concerned with the expression of innovation political harmonization processes and their relationship to the ethnographic project with potential critique.

Results and Discussion

This step is divided into two main parts. The first part demonstrates the textual model of harmonization with a close reading of the Triple Helix policy model. The second part illustrates the practices of harmonization with two ethnographic cases. This division allows for the demonstration of harmonization processes – both textually and empirically – as an analytical precondition for understanding their influence in everyday lifeworld.

I. A Textual Model of Harmonization

The contemporary popularity of the model has led to the construction of the official Triple Helix Association, with Professor Henry Etzkowitz as its current president. The Triple Helix Association now has its own website, journal, workshops, and conferences. Consequently, there is a global network of researchers and policymakers with interest in organizational collaboration between universities, industry, and government in various contexts.

According to the Triple Helix Association, just as the three worlds retain their own specific identities, they are also supposed to assume “the role of the other.” This form of interaction based mainly on technical and economic development is the foundation of innovation. Etzkowitz writes,

Moving beyond product development, innovation in innovation then occurs through “taking the role of the other,” encouraging hybridization among the institutional spheres, creating new organizational formats, such as the venture capital firm, from elements of the various institutional spheres. (2004: 69)

It follows that the actors involved will attempt to capitalize on new knowledge in order to develop and strengthen regions (Etzkowitz 2005: 19–24). Etzkowitz argues that the model itself is a “rational way” to gather common resources and reduce competition between various worlds (Etzkowitz 2005: 72). The three worlds – universities, businesses, and the state – are seen as relatively equal partners in innovative strategic development. As such, Etzkowitz considers the model to be “endless,” as it continuously generates new harmonizing options as to what a region, company, university, and state can do.

Etzkowitz’s Connection to the Regional Context

I have mainly focussed on the content of Etzkowitz’s Swedish book *Trippelhelix – den nya innovationsmodellen Högskola, näringsliv och myndigheter i samverkan* (The Triple Helix: University-Industry-Government Innovation in Action, 2005) on account of the book’s close socio-political and organizational relation to the regional context around which I conducted my original fieldwork.

Etzkowitz’s book was commissioned by the Centre for Business and Policy Studies (Studieförbundet Näringsliv och Samhälle), an organization that presents itself as a politically independent Swedish think tank. According to their homepage, this organization – consisting of leading decision makers in Sweden – is concerned with making an impact on decision makers in business and public administration through activities such as research, seminars, and publications of various kinds.³ As I interviewed several Swedish policymakers in the Öresund region, many of them referred to Etzkowitz’s book, which in itself indicates its impact. Even though the Swedish policymakers did not always agree with Etzkowitz’s line of argument, the overall influence of his ideas became apparent to me when the policymakers informed me about certain procedures. They referred to activities such as “creating regional collaborative clusters,” which is a direct adoption of Etzkowitz’s argument. Moreover, the policymakers explained that they had established a specific innovation unit in their own public organizational setting, which is another obvious reference to Etzkowitz work.⁴ The innovation unit, for example, had the specific function to encourage and to create new innovations and thus promote regional economic and social growth, which is one of Etzkowitz’s main points. The policymakers’ arguments and practices, as we will see, are thus consistent with Etzkowitz’s textual intentions, and any congruency between them is not a surprise for anyone who has made a close reading of the book. Already in the Preface, the reader has learnt that there has been a longstanding relationship between Etzkowitz and the Swedish innovation system, which is mainly represented by an organization called

³ See <http://www.sns.se/artikel/om-sns>

⁴ See <http://www.skane.se/organisation-politik/Naringsliv-och-arbetsmarknad/#>

VINNOVA.⁵ It is worth noting that the former director-general of VINNOVA, who at the beginning of my fieldwork was the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University, was closely related to Etzkowitz.⁶ This close relationship, between the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University and Etzkowitz, seems to have played a significant regional role in promoting and organizing the establishment of ESS and MAX IV using the Triple Helix model (Carlén and Wulff 2014). During my fieldwork, the Vice-Chancellor publicly claimed that the harmonization of the state, the universities (mainly represented by ESS and MAX IV), and the industrial world would lead to new innovation and, thus, regional economic and social development.

The University

According to Etzkowitz (2005: 172), the main pillar of the Triple Helix model is the university because of its centrality in a knowledge-based society/economy. However, it is not the traditional Humboldtian university (i.e., a world separated from the state and the market) that he has in mind. In this context, Etzkowitz advocates the “Entrepreneurial University” as the main engine of technological, economic, and social development. It follows that the core mission of this kind of university is the capitalization of knowledge, establishing the university as an independent economic actor (Etzkowitz 2005: 37). As the main engine of the Triple Helix, the entrepreneurial university is to be controlled neither by the state nor by industry. Etzkowitz’s ideal university determines its own strategic directions, regulated more or less by the critique of students and some university teachers (2005: 56). In essence, universities will act as venture capitalists. On a meta level, Etzkowitz argues that venture capital is an “innovation of innovation” – that is, a new creation with new organizational mechanisms designed to promote technological, economic, and social innovation. Unlike holding companies, which may seek to retain ownership, the venture capital model has a strategy of withdrawing from the investment by means of sale within a reasonable time (Etzkowitz 2005: 97–99). In summary, the entrepreneurial university can be characterized in terms of five partly contradictory norms that should be balanced to achieve optimal results:

1. *Capitalization*: Knowledge must be obtained and transferred to be of practical use. The capitalization of knowledge is the foundation of economic and social development.
2. *Interdependency*: Instead of being an ivory tower, the entrepreneurial university interacts with the state and business.
3. *Independent*: The entrepreneurial university is not dependent on other institutions.
4. *Hybrid formation*: To solve some of the contradictions of interdependency and independency, the entrepreneurial university needs to create new hybrid organizations.
5. *Reflection*: The internal organization of the entrepreneurial university must be continuously transformed as its relationships with state and business change. Corresponding organizational changes should occur within the state and companies. (Etzkowitz 2005: 43–44)

⁵ According to their homepage, “VINNOVA – Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems – is Sweden’s innovation agency. Our mission is to promote sustainable growth by improving the conditions for innovations, as well as funding needs-driven research.” <http://www.vinnova.se/en/About-VINNOVA/>

⁶ See Etzkowitz’s (2005: 11–12) personal gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University (Per Eriksson).

In a fully developed entrepreneurial university, research is designed through the collaboration of scientists and external actors, with the overall goal being to create useful and applied knowledge.

The State

In Etzkowitz's Triple Helix model, the state is to be understood as "the innovative state." This means that the state should attempt to recreate the sources of productivity in science and technology – not as the sole actor but through new forms of collaboration. Summarized below are the 10 principal rules of an innovative state:

1. Expand control of violence within the territory, from the public to the private sector, to promote stability and security.
2. Introduce government guarantees for private capital to increase risk-taking in relation to new investments.
3. Change the tax system to protect the nation and promote welfare.
4. Offer tax relief for research and development.
5. Introduce rules that structure economic life.
6. Introduce new hybrid institutions to promote innovation.
7. Make use of legislation to create specific rights, such as patents.
8. Ensure that universities control the intellectual property rights created by public funding.
9. Supply resources for basic research in order to foster innovation.
10. Supply venture capital in order to create a linear model of innovation. (Etzkowitz 2005: 60–61)

Etzkowitz states that many contemporary European societies (e.g., Great Britain, France, and Sweden) are constituted by a post-corporate collaboration between the state, the business world, and the entrepreneurial university. "Post" signifies the replacement of unions with universities in collaboration with the state (Etzkowitz 2005: 72). The innovative state therefore seeks new partners when striving to develop its regions. The consequences are half-public spaces – hybrids of the private and the public. According to Etzkowitz, this is what knowledge-based economic development – innovation systems – is all about.

Business

In the Triple Helix model, business comprises "Relationship businesses" constituted by organizational and technical innovations. In contrast to a contract business based on transactions across explicit boundaries, a relationship business emerges in a network that transcends institutional boundaries; it is part of cooperation processes that include other units, such as research groups within entrepreneurial universities (Etzkowitz 2005: 77). Etzkowitz writes that new businesses usually emerge in response to various strategies for developing a region. Heterogeneous partners meet to solve a regional problem and get to know each other, creating long-lasting alliances and reciprocal trust; according to Etzkowitz, this kind of cross-fertilization is the key to innovation. However, knowledge-based companies are usually successful because of specific people with "double lives" who have learned from the "other side," for example, a physicist who has learned about marketing research products from an economist. The ideal person in the Triple Helix model is one with degrees or

qualifications in two or more particular subjects, which allows him or her to function as a translator – a creator of bridges – between disparate worlds (Etzkowitz 2005: 81, 85).

Innovation and Regional Development

Etzkowitz believes that the Triple Helix model is superior to previous political innovation models that were based on the interests of particular worlds. Referring to VINNOVA's role in research and innovation for sustainable growth, Etzkowitz (2005: 72) claims that the core issue in Swedish innovation politics is to reduce centrifugal forces – that is, to increase collaboration on a local, regional level. When research is applied, is useful and comprises innovation, it also becomes a political question for the local and regional economy. In contrast to identifying regions as geographical, cultural, and industrial areas, Etzkowitz argues that we need to understand them as innovation units – Triple Helix regions. The development of such regions cannot be seen as linear because it has various points of departure and involves multiple actors. The process of regional change is neither purely market-oriented nor purely politically driven because of its heterogeneous objects and subjects. The ideal Triple Helix is observed as the hybridization of semi-autonomous actors with process perspectives, a multifunctional approach outside institution-bound thinking. The ultimate goal is a *self-generating process of enterprising* unconnected to a specific university or regional initiative. According to Etzkowitz, a Triple Helix region based on several heterogeneous sources of knowledge can reproduce itself. He further writes that the roles of the three worlds within the regional organization process can be replaced if necessary. For example, if political decision-makers are lacking, a company can encourage a branch of trade to collaborate with the universities. This is a way to ensure that Triple Helix regions continue to generate economic growth (Etzkowitz 2005: 110–112).

With these textual claims in mind, the following step enables us to understand how the harmonizing Triple Helix model is practiced in regional social life.

II. Practices of Harmonization

This part demonstrates the practices of harmonization by using two ethnographic cases as examples. The first case is an attempt to illustrate how, when, and why policymakers from Region Skåne (The County Council of Scania County in Sweden) use the Triple Helix model. The second case shows how the Triple Helix is used as a harmonizing organizational model for regional life science in general.

Case 1: How, When, and Why Harmonize?

When I asked how the regional policymakers were applying the Triple Helix model, some said that it is usually put into practice to establish a basis for organizing people to meet formally. They told me that the model is used primarily as a deliberate strategy to dissolve boundaries and shorten the distances between established institutions, organizations, worlds, and professionally active people. In a conversation with a policymaker, I was told,

We begin by buying the first lunch so that different people start talking to each other about collaboration, and this will hopefully lead to a point when people need to decide whether or not they want to be part of the collaboration. We do, however, reserve the right to put our foot down when needed ... and it is damned hard for many involved to accept that!

This statement should be understood in the context of the policymakers' desire to bring people together to "create added value" in the form of new job opportunities and new innovative products in the market. Another policymaker said that this is "a way of modelling the social world – in a nice way." Despite this nice opportunity for modelling social realities, it is clear that not everyone considers crossing boundaries and dissolving distances as being in their interest. As the quotation illustrates, the policymakers sometimes need to "put [their] foot down." This prerogative depends on the fact that they perceive themselves as being entitled to remind people to take responsibility for collaborative regional development. The Triple Helix model – with the presupposition that collaboration is inherently good and competition bad for regional development – seems to aim to harmonize divergent interests. As noted by Strathern (2006: 192), such innovative, collaborative social situations might well be conceived as forms of micromanagement. I was told that the management of harmonizing differences emerges from policymakers portraying themselves as having "a regional overview."

It is not that the policymakers uncritically apply the Triple Helix model. During my fieldwork, it became obvious that although the policymakers see the model as "a good tool to think with," the model is treated as far from being complete. It has built-in limitations, which are occasionally discussed among policymakers. This means that the three strands of the helix – academia, business, and the state – are actually seen as excluding other partners. Some policymakers have therefore begun to experiment with involving one or several other strands, such as "customers," "citizens," and "NGOs": These extended social models are referred to in terms of Penta Helix or Quad Helix. However, in accordance with Etzkowitz, I never heard any discussions about involving unions (as a form of modern representative democracy) as an additional fourth helix.

After several months in the field, I wondered when and under what social circumstances do the policymakers treat the Triple Helix model as a useful organizing resource. It soon became clear that the model appears especially useful when working with organizations which and individuals who have long historical backgrounds of self-determination in professional working life; therefore, it should be well suited for academics of both public organizations and entrepreneurs from the private sector. It is assumed that academics are usually very difficult to harmonize; in this regional field, most academics are described as acting like "cats," implying that this group is difficult to manage and are perceived as individual mavericks. In an interview with another policymaker, I asked whether he had experienced any problems with academics, and he stated that this was "a really difficult group." He told me a story about a specific meeting that was intended to encourage material scientists to collaborate with representatives of the state and entrepreneurs from the business world. The policymaker in question remembers it as an unpleasant encounter, as the scientists responded to his invitation by asking, "Who are you to define Material Science?" He explained that the material scientists essentially questioned his position as a representative of the state. They were upset because they imagined that he was trying to define and control what "the research community should consider relevant collaborative inquiry." He said that he used the Triple Helix model to illustrate how collaboration could bring in "extra economic funding for further research and education." When it came to the last group, the entrepreneurs, it seemed that many policymakers were fairly patient when dealing with them. This kind of patience, I was told, depends mostly on the economic fact that "the

entrepreneurs are not funded by the state,” unlike most academics. However, according to the policymaker, the most difficult task with this group was to convince the entrepreneurs of “the added value in the long run.” This was because “most of the entrepreneurs have a short-term economic business perspective ... they find it difficult to see what’s in it for them.” It follows that some policymakers apply the Triple Helix model to make it clear to the entrepreneurs why they should consider the latest academic research. The point here is to enlighten the entrepreneurs about how collaboration will make them more competitive in the markets. Many policymakers argue that maintaining or improving one’s position in today’s markets is only possible if entrepreneurs collaborate with representatives of the state and academia (including both research and education).

The main reason for harmonizing social realities seems to depend on the policymakers’ firm belief that hybridizing various worlds and people will create innovations that advance regional, social, and economic development. Such harmonization, I argue, is the practice whereby most regional policymakers appear to find *hope* in the new knowledge economy (Strathern 2006). It should also be emphasized that such harmonization – as it symbolically explains and represents three heterogeneous objects (i.e., universities, business, and the state) and subjects (i.e., researchers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers) – enables policymakers to control and manage various heterogeneous groups at a distance. I was told by a policymaker that this is not a question of party politics:

If you think about most representatives today – whether Social Democrats or from the Moderate Party – nobody is against Triple Helix or innovations. I cannot think of anybody who would disagree with the model ... it would perhaps only be an extremist party that would raise such a critical question.

He was not alone in stating that most politicians favor the Triple Helix model, and it could be argued that the practice of harmonization instills a kind of hope in contemporary Swedes.

To summarize, the Triple Helix as a harmony model is used by policymakers as a micro managerial tool by bringing together historically autonomous actors – as a harmonizing apparatus to persuade people to collaborate in line with their own interests. This is done on the basis of instilling hope for future regional development.

Case 2: Harmonizing Life Science

After illustrating how, when, and why many regional policymakers apply the Triple Helix to harmonize various social realities, this case has a more concrete research orientation. I have focused on the Triple Helix as a harmonizing organizational model for regional life science in general.

When I first contacted one of the main Swedish regional initiators of a life science collaborative network in southern Sweden, I asked if it would be possible to interview their organizational strategists. As the foundation (called Life Health in this example) is partly sponsored by the county council of Region Skåne in Southern Sweden, the organizational strategists were very open-minded and informed me that it would be possible. Although they were extremely busy participating in other activities, after several weeks I made an appointment to conduct my first interview. I went for the interview well prepared, but the strategist said, “Sorry, but I am not sure you will need that,” pointing to my digital tape recorder and interview questionnaire. I was a bit surprised, as she told me that she had prepared “some slides for me” and that I could ask questions “after the brief lecture.” I

was lectured about the foundation's history and its close relationship to the organizational structure of the foundation. Beginning with the historical emergence of Life Health as a foundation, she explained the political preconditions. "Something had to be done on the regional level," she explained, because one of the region's largest life science companies had decided to move its operations to another region. As a result of this relocation, "approximately 900 well-educated life scientists suddenly found themselves unemployed," which prompted reactions from both private and public investors. Eventually, Region Skåne in collaboration with Lund University began to think of a collaborative forum for regional life science based on the commercial fact that life-science knowledge can easily be patented and transformed into exclusive products in the market(s). The strategist continued the story by explaining that a well-known entrepreneur was contacted who later "donated ten million Euros to establish the present foundation." The entrepreneur, policymakers, and representatives from the university established a regional forum for research and innovation concerned specifically with life science. The strategist clarified that the collaborative relationship between the university, Region Skåne (the state), and the entrepreneur should be seen as a kind of Triple Helix, which is the explicit organizational structure of the foundation. "This is," she argued, "a hybridization of the private and the public spheres."

Later, when discussing the harmonization of regional life science communities with a policymaker (engaged with the regional work of Life Health), I was told,

Policymaker: It is within these kinds of hybridized organizations that universities become more like companies, concurrently as the companies become more "academized." When they drift together, this creates possibilities for new collaborative projects. One can walk in, out, and over to academia. This is an innovative way to work together. It might have been the life scientists who first started collaboration between universities and companies ... The Triple Helix boundaries are very fluid, and I am positive that this will increase in the future.

TF: So ... there are no longer any explicit boundaries, as in the case of modern society?

Policymaker: No, it is about new frames. The old industrial society – with its manufacturing industry – was part of a different period. As I said, companies today are becoming more research-oriented, and the universities are becoming more entrepreneurial. It is natural that people are crossing boundaries. And the personal relationships are becoming tighter and tighter.

TF: What role do you think today's companies have in regional development?

Policymaker: It is all about collaborations between companies and universities. Companies like to be close to universities, research, and development. They usually drift together in the long run.

TF: So ... what do you think will happen to the critical practices as universities collaborate with companies? Is it possible to critique the Triple Helix, for example?

Policymaker: Well ... those universities that depend on government funding will have no problems criticizing policymakers and the state ... even though they get their money from the state. But sure, if the universities are completely in the grip of the companies there may be some problems. It might be easier for a life science-oriented rather than a humanities-oriented university to work with companies. If a university brands itself as red [i.e., leftist], it will have difficulties attracting money from the business world. Well, I mean it is a free choice ... but, sure, there are certain complex problems.

This dialogue concerning the Triple Helix and life science illustrates how regional companies and universities seem to merge into a common identity, while the traditional modern boundaries between the worlds are becoming more fluid. The Triple Helix model is seen not only as having regionally productive functions but also as potentially causing fewer critical strategies.

Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have argued that the intrinsic potential critique in the ethnographic project is challenged in the context of innovation political projects equipped with the harmonizing Triple Helix model. To make this argument, I started with a brief disciplinary discussion to make the point that the classic ethnographic project is (re)constituted by the dualism between different worlds, which generates an intrinsic potential critique. From there, I scrutinized the harmonization processes of Triple Helix – in its textual as well as its practical expression. In this analytical context, the harmonization processes appeared in an overlapping manner in which the subjects (the concerned people) are supposed to take “the role of the other,” while the objects (the concerned institutional worlds) are to be hybridized with each other. It follows that the entrepreneurial university acts as a venture capitalistic motor, while the innovative state simultaneously attempts to hybridize the private and the public, while the related business operates in networks beyond institutional boundaries. If this works out, the Triple Helix model will ideally make it possible for the emergence of a self-generating process of enterprising – an endless, harmonizing transformation process towards *one* everyday lifeworld. This seems to be essential for the formation of a knowledge economy, which has a focus on regional development constituted by commercialized knowledge. Consequently, as presented in the two ethnographic cases, the Triple Helix model provides policymakers with textual-practical-possibilities of challenging critical strategies. In this sense, it seems relevant to remind ethnographers that the academic ethnographic project is organically situated in the emerging entrepreneurial university (cf. Strathern 2000, 2004, 2006).

The relationship between the disclosed harmonization processes, in the context of innovation politics, and the ethnographic project is generative to think through for contemporary ethnographers, primarily as it extends the conversation concerned with critical ethnographic strategies (Marcus and Fischer 1999; Strathern 1987). The primary critical strategy I have in mind is not about defamiliarization, nor concerned with the organization of knowledge, but instead with the (re)establishment of a Schutzian (1999) ethnographic province of meaning or world. Such a critical strategy would imply a structure of relevance constituted by the modern Weberian differentiation between politics and social science (Weber 1977: 25, 41). While the province of innovation politics gives meaning to “knowledge” as a means to achieve something else (the political pursuit of power or influence on checks and balances), the province of ethnography would signify “knowledge” for the sake of knowledge (social scientific analysis of political processes, such as harmonization).

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my colleagues Renita Thedvall and Carlo Pinnetti for productive conversations. I also want to thank the two anonymous reviewers for admirable advice, which enabled me to improve the article significantly.

References

- Agar, M. 1986. *Speaking of Ethnography*. London: Sage Publications.
- Barnett, S and M. Silverman. 1997. *Ideology and Everyday Life: Anthropology, Neo-Marxist Thought and the Modern World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Brown, W. 2005. *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carlén, J. and A. Wulff. 2014. På spaning efter universitetet: Om forskning och högre utbildning i den globala kunskapsekonomin. Lund: Lund University. <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=4275685&fileId=4275688>
- Clifford J. and G.E. Marcus. 2010 [1986]. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Etzkowitz, H. 2004. The triple helix and the rise of the entrepreneurial university. In Grandin, K., Wormbs, N. and Widmalm, S. (eds.), *The Science–Industry Nexus: History, Policy, Implications, Science History Publications*, pp. 69–91.
- Etzkowitz, H. 2005. *Trippelhelix – den nya innovationsmodellen: högskola, näringsliv och myndigheter i samverkan*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.
- Friberg, T. 2012. Vad kan vi lära oss om tystnad genom en närläsning med Marcel Mauss? *Tidskriften Antropologi* 65: 69–83.
- Friberg, T. 2017. From ethnocentrism to policy-centrism. *Ethnography and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2017.1365254>
- Friberg, T. 2018. The phenomenon of collaboration in a life science network. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-03-2017-0013>
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, C. 1988. *Works and Lives*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Godin, B. 2015. Innovation: From the Forbidden to a Cliché. *Journal of Business Anthropology* 4(2): 219–27.
- Godin, B. 2017. *Models of Innovation: The History of an Idea*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Jackson, A. 1987. *Anthropology at Home*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 2016. *We are all cannibals: and other essays*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Marcus, G. 1998. *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Marcus, G. and M. Fischer [1986] 1999. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Malinowski, B. [1922] 2002. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge.
- Mauss, M. [1925] 1972. *Gåvan*. Uppsala: Argos.
- Nader, L. 1990. *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Nader, L. 1997. Controlling Processes: Tracing the Dynamic Components of Power. *Current Anthropology* 38(5): 711–723.
- Schutz, A. 1999. *Den sociala världens fenomenologi*. Uddevalla: Daidalos.
- Shinn, T. 2002. The Triple Helix and New Production of Knowledge: Prepackaged Thinking on Science and Technology. *Social Studies of Science* 32(4): 599–614.
- Strathern, M. 1987. The limits of auto-anthropology. In Jackson, Anthony (ed), *Anthropology at Home*. London: Tavistock Publications, pp.59–67.
- Strathern, M. 2000. *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*. London, Routledge.
- Strathern, M. 2004. *Commons and Borderlands: Working Papers on Interdisciplinarity, Accountability and the Flow of Knowledge*. Oxon: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- Strathern, M. 2005. *Kinship, Law and the Unexpected: Relatives Are Always a Surprise*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern, M. 2006. A community of critics? Thoughts on new knowledge. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12(1): 191–209.
- Weber, M. 1977. *Vetenskap och politik*. Göteborg: Korpen.