



# UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES  
ÉCONOMIQUES ET SOCIALES  
Département de sociologie

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## Ordre du jour – séance du corprof du mardi 25 août 2009, 16h30-17h30, salle M2020

Points	Thèmes
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.	Adoption du procès-verbal et de l'ordre du jour Restructuration : premiers pas Enseignement : réforme BA/MA – lignes directrices (LB + MB) Thèses : ligne directrice de la procédure (AD) Thèses soumises : - acceptation ou non du mémoire préliminaire de Steffen Roth (Annexe) Dates des prochaines réunions corprof, staff Divers

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# The Markets of Society: A Theory of Robust Innovation

## PRÉMEMOIRE

to the attention of

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submitted by

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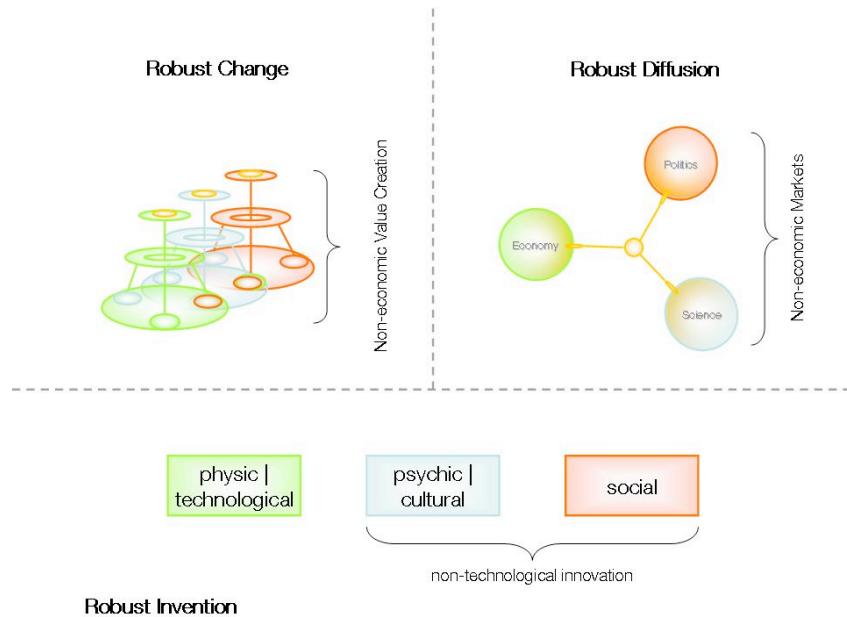
The impact of innovations is still been indicated by their impact on the economic market. This is surprise because, at the same time, most innovations have to be defined as the outcome of a pan-societal “triple-helix discourse” which is performed not only by representatives of the industries, but by representatives of governments and of universities, as well.

This paper draws two consequences from this contradiction: On the one hand, we assume the existence of non-economic innovations. And with special regard to the diffusion of these non-economic innovations, on the other hand, we have to take the existence of non-economic markets into account, too.

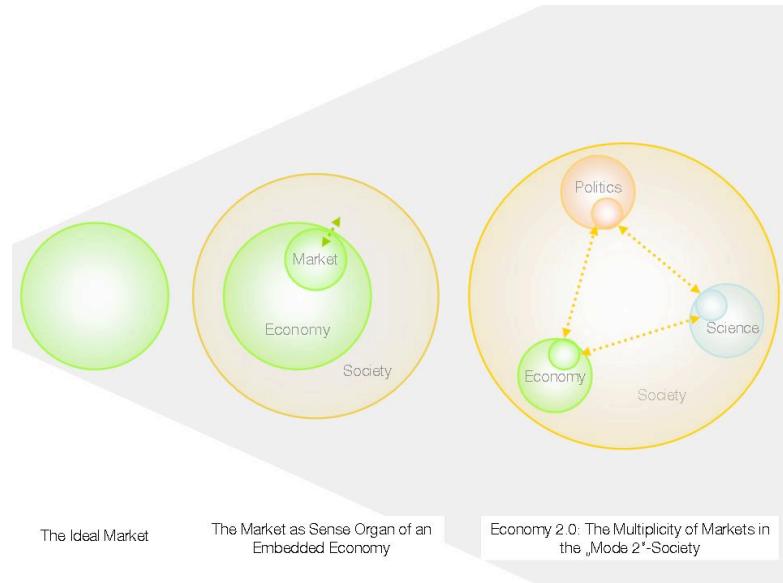
Based on these assumptions, we adopt the formerly knowledge-based concept of **robustness**: Therefore, robust innovations are defined as innovations which succeed in more than one market. Concerning markets, we distinguish in terms of functional differentiation. Consequently, markets are not longer seen as exclusively economic phenomena: In

fact, we can act on the existence of political markets, scientific markets, religious markets, juridical markets, sports markets, and so on. Given this, robust innovations are defined as innovations which succeed in more than one of the markets of society. To that effect, robust innovations are more profitable. Thus, we suggest, that organizations shall target non-economic markets, too.

The basic structure of the paper consists, first, in an integrative definition of innovation which is distinguishing between invention, change, and diffusion as the distinct dimensions of innovation.



Second, the paper derives the existence of non-economic markets from evidence from Urban Archeology, Economic History, Ethnology, Etymology, Capital and Resource Theory, Research on the Mode-2 of Knowledge Production, and Embeddedness Concepts of Economic Sociology. So, this paper is not about bringing market back in society, but rather about the very opposite: **Bringing Society Back in Market**.

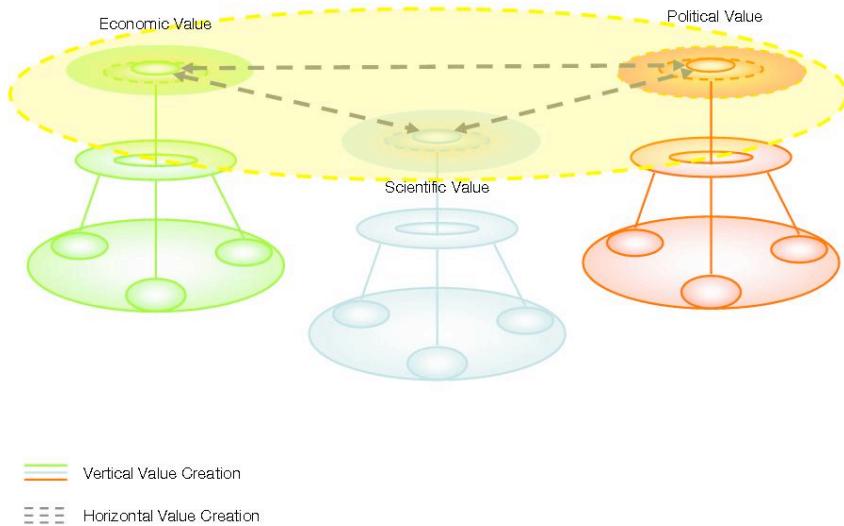


Given this multitude of markets, the paper sketches a research program focused on the analysis of

- How both the terms of trade and the forms of value-creation are varying in these distinct markets, and
- How the distinct values and outcomes of these very markets are charged against each other.

Thus, one of the basic conclusions of this paper is that next generation sociology is to focus on the **Exchange Rates of Society**: How is knowledge (and truth) converted into money? By what means can we convert religious values into power? How is sportive performance converted into money? How do these concrete exchange rates interact and vary over time? And, finally: What do we know about the Market of Society, on which these exchange rates are fixed and negotiated?

Finally we argue that the knowledge of these very exchange rates is an essential prerequisite for the proper understanding and the adequate design of robust innovations, this is for innovations which are not only valuable in terms of sustainable economic profit, but rather are useful for society as a whole, too.



Major problem of the **operationalization** is to find a proper research design for the detection and measurement of the Exchange Rates of Society. In order to investigate the existence and the constant (re-)creation of these exchange rates, the paper focuses on the implementation of virtual business incubators in peripheral regions of Europe<sup>1</sup>. The good thing about this focus is that virtual incubators of geographically widespread people need to be IT-based incubators. In other words: Triple-helix negotiation processes which usually take place in terms of more or less informal face to face communication can now be observed in mediated form. Thereby, mediation means storability, and thus, better documentability, too.

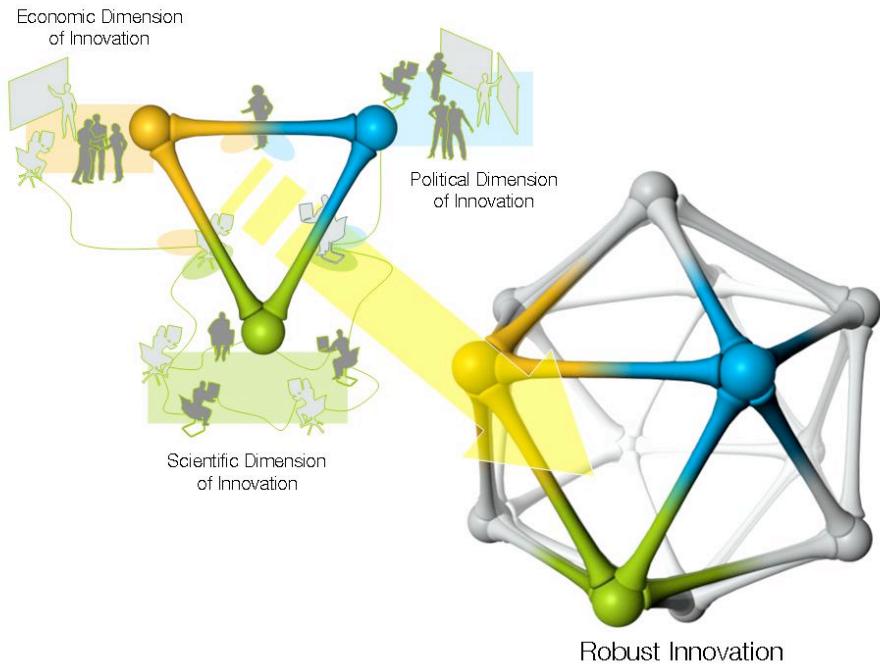
In concrete terms, the paper will focus the implementation of **Brainspace** technology ([www.brainspace.ch](http://www.brainspace.ch)) in the context of virtual business incubation: Brainspace is an IT-based tool which is developed for the support of distributed cognitive systems. The most interesting aspect of Brainspace is that the system arranges all relevant persons according to a certain structure which allows both topic-centered focusing and the best possible diffusion of knowledge. This very effect is achieved by iterative interaction within a polyhedral structure in which each person acts as an edge between two communicative knots; this is, between two discourses which focus on sub-topics of a given principal topic (e.g. enhancing IT-innovation in the Emmental region).

Given our interest in the markets of society, in our context discourses will focus on certain functional aspects of the principal topic: Thus, each discourse will specifically focus on the scientific dimension, the economic, and the political dimension of a given innovation issue. By this means, we both combine an IT-based tool for the support of distributed cognitive systems with the most advanced of the current concepts of innovation regimes and en-

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning this the paper benefits from its embeddedness into two international research programs on this very issue.

hance the latter which makes it applicable for distributed & virtual innovation practice, as well.



By this means, the participating persons are involved in two functional discourses, each aiming at the optimization of a certain functional outcome: The Design of the most profitable innovation (economy), the most accepted innovation (politics), the most "objective" innovation (science) ... Thus, the participants will be forced to both perform on specific markets of the society and to correlate their performances to each other.

Given this, on the one hand, it will be most interesting to investigate how individual people deal with the problem of the incommensurability of the distinct values of these very markets: Money cannot be (directly) converted into truth, truth cannot be converted into money, and – even worse – most often these very values are most antagonistic when it comes to moments of decision.

On the other hand, it will be most interesting to analyze collective decision making processes, too: What are the differences and similarities of value creation processes within the markets of society? How will the relative value of these values be estimated in terms of exchange rates between the functional systems? How does a virtual incubator decide whether it is to follow economic, or political, or scientific **guide values** in the case of conflict between these very functional values?

In this sense, the virtual incubator is one of the most ideal research areas for both the analysis of the Exchange Rates between the Markets of Society and the empirical test of a Theory of Robust Innovation.

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