

## EPILOGUE

One main feature distinguishing the globalised post-Fordist society from the Keynesian Fordist one is the presence and significance of functional regions, acting out of self-interest and often disregarding both national borders and policy. This is of course in line with the economic logic of this era: local and regional bodies should strive to improve their global competitiveness and prosper on their own right. However, this setup has also brought about the million-dollar question in social science today: how could democratic accountability structures and mechanisms be created that take notice of these functional and borderless networks?

Humans are fundamentally social beings, constantly seeking affinity and social context. The functional and flexible, rather than static and territorial, characteristics of societal features, as well as the increased mobility of people, certainly complicate community formation. To illustrate this point, consider the way employment has changed during recent decades. Previously, employment often lasted a lifetime; the profession and the colleagues formed an important part of the identity of the person and his or her social belonging. Now, part-time employments, a proliferation of temporal project recruitments and a general fluidity of the workforce have changed the social function of employment. When the forces of globalisation without detour or mediation touch local communities, it seems that

certain mechanisms lead up to a questioning of the national elite, and finally result in turbulence in society. Sadly, and a bit paradoxically, the parallel proliferation of ICT seems to have only amplified rather than alleviated this turbulence. The collective knowledge of the world is now available in almost every person's pocket, a fact that may be regarded as nothing less than a paramount democratisation of knowledge. This empowerment of knowledge should be a great asset to society, but instead, it often appears to result in a general defiant attitude and a weakened authority position. Government top-down steering just seems to be the wrong strategy under these circumstances.

The question posed to social science is extremely complex, but at the same time cannot remain unanswered. In people's search for context, fundamentalist and populist movements are gaining ground, offering solutions involving closed borders and gated communities. The necessity to choose between tribalism and cosmopolitanism just is not a good option, since we essentially want both: we want to live in open borderless societies where people are able to shape their lives at their own discretion, at the same time as we want the sense of belonging local social contexts offer. The answer to the question posed is closely connected to the individualisation of society and seems to involve the empowerment of citizens, in other words, citizens having a part to play in local governance.

The great contemporary challenges are strikingly global to their nature—climate change, growing inequality and migration are issues that must be addressed on an international level. These challenges seem to boil down to two main issues: how can we achieve (1) growth in a finite world and (2) democracy in a multilevel, borderless world? The multilevel aspect is fundamental for a global society to function, and although these challenges must be met globally, the implementation will always be local. Unresponsive top-down steering may even counteract the intended objective, as is well illustrated by the example of environmental protection. In the literature of the management of natural resources, the necessity of involving locals is well evidenced (see e.g. Holling et al. 1998). Mere legislative protection of certain territories or species without any communication with local communities may easily render locals to oppose the law and even destroy the natural values they sought to protect. Enlightening the local communities about circumstances relating to the local environment is still only one half of the value of inclusion in this matter. The other involves the fact that often, the knowledge of ecosystems is not universal, since every ecosystem may hold local specificities, and obviously, only local

communities may have knowledge of these special features. It is just not possible for central governments or national research institutions to continuously update changes of the specific features of local ecosystems in every corner of the nation—this knowledge will always primarily be local. Additionally, when seeking growth by making use of natural resources in simultaneously more productive and sustainable manners, as the EU is doing through its Blue Growth strategy for instance, innovative solutions depend on local knowledge of ecosystems.

Instances presented in this book suggest that while global challenges must be addressed, implementation should be carried out through empowering, legitimate and inclusive local self-governance. Setting up a multilevel structure is complicated and a large hurdle to overcome, but we still need to keep looking for a system that works. Digital participative platforms exhibit some promising features regarding this matter (see e.g. Horelli 2013). Participation may through such kinds of platforms become more continuous and accessible, at the same time as the possibility of interactive visualisation, through models or maps, offer simplification of complicated matters. The availability and visibility opinions receive through such platforms may serve as an impellent for civil servants to pursue their implementation, raising the legitimacy of the whole system. Digital platforms may also operate as hubs for innovation systems, allowing researchers access to local knowledge previously hidden, and offering local entrepreneurs and decision-makers scientific ideas and solutions. In fact, innovation systems have become central parts of the post-Fordist order—the development route mapped out by innovation strategies is certainly felt throughout society. These strategies are written on local, regional, national and supra-national levels, instantiating the multilevel character of the globalised society. In a way, strategies may be viewed as soft steering mechanisms, setting up global common objectives, and by financing opportunities, steering local and regional action in certain directions. Still, regional innovation and development strategies to some extent offer a leeway to self-governance, and this is especially evident in the case of the EU, whose financing strategies largely slip past national state control, offering regions alternatives when choosing development path. The model for setting up innovation system strategies is not the complete picture here, but in a society revolving around growth, the inclusive and democratic qualities of this system potentially play a large part in the general legitimacy of the society system.

A large portion of this book has been devoted to explaining the reason why direct forms of participation, introduced as responses to and alleviations of the legitimacy deficiency of contemporary politics, easily fall outside of the actual decision-making apparatus. The hierarchic representative system is just not able to handle direct input in a justifiable manner. Hopefully, the issues that have been highlighted here might aid in finding an operational form for participative functional networks; at the least, some kind of empowering of local and regional bodies seem to be necessary.

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# INDEX

## A

- agonism, 16, 17
- agonistic planning theory, 131, 132

## B

- Baltic states, 96
- Bernstein debate*, 2
- bottom-up development, 33, 95
- bottom-up processes, 7, 8, 15, 29, 33, 50, 62, 65–7, 81, 82, 91, 92, 116, 123. *See also* bottom-up development
- Bretton Woods, 87
- business development, 63, 79, 158, 161, 167, 168, 170, 171, 174, 175, 178, 179, 181, 182, 211
- business development agency, 158, 167, 170, 174, 175, 179, 181, 182
- intermediate organization, 80–2, 185–214

- Keskipohtjanmaan  
teknologiapalvelukeskus  
(KETEK), 202
- technology development centre, 209

## C

- Cohesion Fund (CF), 108, 121
- connectedness, 46–8, 50, 73, 80, 81, 83, 116. *See also* networking
- culturification, 43
- Czech Republic, 96

## D

- decentralisation, 4, 74, 88, 92–4, 95, 97, 99–101, 115, 122
- democracy theory, 8, 9, 11, 53
- accountability, 23–5, 27, 128, 135–9, 145–7, 149, 151, 153, 165, 166 (*see also* (responsibility))

decentralisation (*cont.*)

- aggregative democracy, 9, 20, 63
- audience democracy, 12–15, 17, 19, 20, 50, 51
- classical democracy, 8, 10, 19, 20
- deliberative democracy, 23, 128, 132, 133, 137, 138, 142, 150, 151, 153
- demos, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17, 20, 50
- integrative democracy, 9, 18, 20
- legitimacy, 8, 11, 23, 24, 29, 51–3, 74, 77, 89, 92, 99, 122, 127, 133, 134, 138, 149, 151, 152, 167
- liberal democracy, 8–12, 15, 16, 18–20, 23–6, 51–3, 128, 150, 151
- parliamentary democracy, 12, 13, 20, 51
- participation, 9–11, 16–20, 22–4, 28, 49, 50, 52, 53, 62–4, 66, 73, 77, 82, 83, 89, 93, 96, 122, 127, 131–3, 137–9, 141–3, 145, 147, 149, 150, 153, 165, 166, 172, 188, 207, 221, 222
- parties democracy, 12, 14, 20, 51
- post-liberal democracy, 9, 11, 15–20, 27, 51, 52, 89, 122
- representative democracy, 8–10, 11–17, 20, 24, 99, 134, 135, 137, 153

**E**

- ELY-centre, 62, 73, 105, 108, 109, 112, 114, 117, 118, 141, 143, 162, 163, 174
- environmental protection, 220
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), 104, 108, 110
- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), 108

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), 73, 102, 108, 110, 118, 120, 175

European Social Fund (ESF), 73

- European Union (EU), 26, 35, 37, 40, 44, 53, 62, 66–8, 69, 72, 73, 75–7, 80, 82, 91, 92, 94–6, 100–4, 105, 108, 109, 111, 113, 116, 117, 120–2, 161, 162, 168, 170, 172, 185, 203, 205, 206, 212, 221. *See also* Cohesion Fund (CF); European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD); European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); European Social Fund (ESF)
- additionality principle, 95
- Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), 102
- Community Led Local Development (CLLD), 110
- LEADER programme, 62, 102, 104, 110, 116
- local action group, 105, 110
- Smart Specialisation Strategy, 40, 67, 109, 185, 212, 213
- Structural Funds Programme, 95–7, 100–2, 104, 110–12, 113, 116, 118, 119, 129, 162, 163, 170, 206, 211
- experimentalism, 67, 187, 201

**F**

- Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES), 111, 120, 163, 202, 207
- Florida, Richard, 44, 46, 59, 198, 201
- Fordism, 29–31, 32–6, 48, 51, 64, 190, 191
- post-Fordism, 29, 32–6, 48, 51, 190
- Founding Fathers, 8, 10, 11
- functional networks, 88, 99, 222

**G**

- geoeconomic practices, 98
- geopolitical practices, 98
- Giddens, Anthony, 3, 50
- globalisation, 16, 20, 21, 34, 62, 64, 66, 68, 85–91, 93, 98, 109
  - hyperglobalisation, 85, 86
- governance, 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 15–29, 33, 38, 43, 46, 48, 49, 51–3, 54, 127–53
  - governance networks, 8, 16, 23–5, 27, 28, 51–3, 60, 62, 75, 77, 78, 80, 81, 88, 89, 100, 127–53, 159, 189, 211
  - governance network theory, 24, 127, 128, 133–8, 149, 150, 152
  - metagovernance, 23–6, 27–9, 49, 51, 52, 54, 60, 82, 88, 89, 135, 136, 138, 140, 141, 149
  - Multi-level governance, 92, 94–7
  - New Governance, 7, 8, 16, 19–29, 33, 48, 49, 51, 62
  - self-governance, 16, 17, 25, 52, 61, 73, 77, 106, 129

**I**

- identity, 9, 14, 22, 97, 98, 121
  - regional identity, 97, 98
- individualisation, 13, 19
- industrial restructuring, 158–60, 163, 165, 166, 172
  - restructuring legislation, 159, 172, 180
  - restructuring policy, 158, 159, 163–72, 179
- innovation, 1, 29–32, 34–40, 43, 44, 47, 48, 50, 53, 60, 64–6, 67, 70, 72, 73, 80–2, 87, 93, 104, 109–11, 120, 185–200–2, 203, 205–13, 221
  - Centre for Expertise Programme (OSKE), 103, 105, 110, 111, 113, 115, 117, 123, 163, 202, 203, 205, 207, 213

- innovation modes, 40, 187, 190–2, 194, 196, 197
- innovation systems, 35, 37, 43, 47, 48, 50, 67, 80, 185, 187–200–2, 203, 210–12, 213
- Innovative Cities Programme (INKA), 66, 110, 111, 113, 115, 120
- National Innovation Systems (NIS), 64–6, 67, 72
- Quadruple Helix, 47, 53, 185–214
- Quadruple Helix Intermediate Organisation, 185–214
- regional innovation systems, 185, 186, 190, 196, 200–2, 203, 211
- Triple Helix, 47, 53, 74, 80, 81, 186, 189, 197–9, 206, 211, 213
- institutional thickness, 45
- iPhone, 41–3, 48

**J**

- Jessop, Bob, 25, 33, 35, 36, 43, 44, 51, 76, 88, 97, 158, 181

**K**

- Keynesian economy, 20, 89
  - Fordist-Keynesian state, 33
  - Keynesian welfare state, 32, 33, 35, 51, 67, 75, 93
- knowledge, 14, 17, 27–9, 30, 32, 34, 36–48, 50–2, 53, 59, 60, 65, 75, 77, 80, 81, 93, 94, 103, 109, 220, 221
  - diversified knowledge bases, 38, 187, 190–2, 194, 195
- knowledge economy, 36–8, 44, 51, 52, 185, 187, 190, 199
- knowledge networks, 185, 186, 190, 191, 195
- knowledge society, 14 (*see also* (knowledge paradigm))

knowledge (*cont.*)

local knowledge, 27, 28, 48, 50, 51,  
149, 151, 195

Mode 3 Knowledge Production  
System, 47, 186, 190, 193–6  
paradigm, 29, 32, 37, 38, 195

Kondratiev waves, 29–32, 47, 50

**L**

learning, 27, 28, 33, 36, 40, 43–7, 48,  
51, 53, 69, 70, 73–5, 78–80,  
91–123, 191, 192, 201, 202

learning regions, 36, 40, 43–7, 53

localised learning, 36, 44–6

policy learning, 27, 28, 53

SECI model, 177, 179

social learning, 27, 28

transnational learning, 27, 28, 157–82

Living Labs, 200

**M**

Manin, Bernard, 9–15

Metsä-Botnia, 171, 173–5, 176, 179

modernism, 19, 51

post-modernism, 29, 51

**N**

neoliberalism, 7, 21, 22, 33

networking, 37, 38, 43, 48, 50, 60,  
67, 100, 101, 116, 117, 122,  
165, 191, 192

Nordic countries, 67–71, 74, 78, 81,  
103, 133, 186, 201

Denmark, 69, 202

Finland, 46, 59–64, 66–76, 79, 91,  
92, 100–13, 114–21, 122,  
127–53, 157–63, 170–9,  
180–2, 202–4, 205, 209–11

Nordic welfare state, 61, 67,  
68, 210

Norway, 69, 78, 79, 152, 157–70,  
176–9, 181

Scandinavia, 60, 61, 77, 78

Sweden, 61, 69, 200, 206

unitary states, 60, 74, 91, 96, 160

**O**

Ostrobothnia, 59–83, 92, 101–3,  
113–15, 117, 118, 120–2,  
127–53, 157, 158, 170, 173–6,  
177–81, 204, 206, 209, 210

Kaskö, 157, 158, 170, 171,  
173–81, 182

Kokkola-Jakobstad region, 71, 80,  
81, 186, 202, 209

Southern Ostrobothnia, 78, 114,  
157, 170, 173–5, 177–81 (*see  
also* (Syd-österbotten))

Vaasa region, 70–2, 113–15, 120

**P**

path dependency, 63, 76, 81, 97, 121,  
158–60, 181

planning theory, 128, 131, 132, 138

pluricentrism, 15, 29, 50, 52, 81

Polanyi, Karl, 2, 85

Programme for Cohesion and  
Competition (KOKO), 105,  
112–14, 117, 119, 120, 122

public administration, 22, 101, 127,  
128, 160

New Institutionalism, 22

New Public Management, 21

New Public Service (NPS), 22, 23

regional administration, 63, 73,  
101–3, 105–8, 128, 139, 158,  
160–3, 162, 180



**R**

- Reflexive modernization, 50
  - reflexivity, 2, 70
- Regional Cohesion and Competitiveness Programme (COCO), 163, 170, 179. *See also* Programme for Cohesion and Competition (KOKO)
- Regional Council, 63, 70–2, 73, 75, 77, 100–3, 105, 106, 108–10, 112, 113, 115–19, 129–31, 139, 141, 143–5, 146, 148, 149, 162, 163, 174, 175, 179, 181, 206, 210, 211
- regional development programme, 102–5, 112, 116, 117, 127, 129, 161, 163, 170
- regions
  - functional regions, 98, 99, 112, 121–3 (*see also* (functional networks))
  - regional development, 37, 44, 48, 51, 60–2, 65, 72, 73, 77, 78, 82, 96, 100–6, 111–13, 115–17, 121, 127–33, 142, 150, 151, 160–2, 163, 169, 170, 181, 187–90, 192, 193, 200, 201, 209–11, 212, 214
  - regionalism, 92, 97–9, 100

- regional mobilization, 91–123
- regional planning, 128–30
- related variety, 40, 41, 46, 186, 187, 190, 192–4, 195, 212, 213
- unrelated variety, 140, 193
- responsibility, 2–7, 25, 61, 62, 79, 99–102, 106, 109, 111, 112, 134, 136, 139, 159, 161, 162, 167, 168, 171, 172, 178, 179, 182

**S**

- Schumpeterian Workfare State (SWS), 29, 35, 51, 53, 67, 75
- Slovenia, 96
- society systems, 49, 89, 187, 188
  - systems theory, 187
- Sörensen, Eva, 8, 9, 15–18, 23, 25, 51
- strategic relational approach (SRA), 94–7, 121, 158, 181
- SWS. *See* Schumpeterian Workfare State (SWS)
- Syd-österbotten, 70, 71, 73, 78–80

**T**

- The Third Way, 1–4