


## Chapter 8

# Implications and Asymmetries of the Knowledge Society: An Analysis of 82 Constructs

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### ABSTRACT

*The term knowledge society brings together many of the transformations that are taking place in today's society, and its definition serves as an indicator of these changes. The related concentrations or asymmetries that arise from the phenomenon are also the subject of analysis and dispute. Its development and scope have been uneven, constantly incorporating new meanings to the existing terminology, hence the need to analyze 82 concepts of the knowledge society through a frequency count in Google Scholar, with a subsequent categorization saturating in six dimensions, in order to analyze their framing. The methodology used a higher-order association, establishing the most significant combinations and weightings. From these results, the concept of the knowledge society is defined by the dual economic-social category, according to its frequency of use in Google. This shows economic influences as a determining factor in the knowledge society, engendering processes far from the common good or the general interest.*

### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge progresses although its acquisition is neither linear nor equal for everyone. Nor is it a new phenomenon since the existence of an intellectual bourgeoisie is as old as history itself and is common in all societies. It is enough to consider a list of leading magnates or politicians to understand the relationship between their origins and their success or the similarity between their political and business doctrines. In other words, elitist schools of thought available to a select few generate extensive networks for the commodification of knowledge. Similarly, the aristocracy of the church is an elite that has traditionally benefited from the tools of the transfer of knowledge. Currently, cognitive capitalism is democratizing the character of exclusivity for the benefit of private interests through the processes of appropriation

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## ***Implications and Asymmetries of the Knowledge Society***

and privatization of elements of the common good, such as the land and its natural resources, which are transferred to other dimensions such as knowledge itself or culture. These are often mistakenly considered to be of open access but, in reality, remain of restricted use. A clear example of this is the Internet, a tool that masquerades as one of necessity and modernity but whose full use and benefit is associated with the economic status of each individual, that is, the wealthier the users, the greater their enjoyment and the coverage of their needs. The majority of the public are, by contrast, subject to the exploitation of the data they generate, being ultimately mere spectators that increasingly fall under the influence of the empire of technological practicality that controls this knowledge with impunity (Morozov, 2015; Barassi, 2020). According to the philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2018), *“Macrodata has made thought superfluous because if everything is countable everything is the same ... We are in the middle of dataism: man is no longer in charge of himself but is instead the result of an algorithmic operation that controls him without him realizing it. We see it in China with the concession of visas according to state data, or in face-recognition technology.”*

Once again, the debate on free access to knowledge arises, which, beyond being desirable, comes to incorporate the inevitable conflicts of private property ownership. Knowledge, ranging from aerospace technology to a large proportion of technological improvements, is not shared equally, but is agglutinated in a few countries and a minority of hands, exemplifying the clear pattern of a commodity that appears to be free and universal, yet is quite the opposite. Further examples come from the armaments or chemicals industries or indeed the agri-food sector, which develops agroecology products such as transgenic seeds; all pivot around the concentration of knowledge through the use of the tools of accumulation by dispossession. One of the facilitating elements of the creation of proprietary knowledge are free trade agreements, which are constructed through legal processes that exert pressure and domination within states (Ziegler, 2013; Luque & de Pablos, 2016).

At present, knowledge and its management is one of the greatest sources of value production, innovation and inequality. Its circulation, despite being asymmetrical, has been democratized through new technologies and an information society that is dependent on them. From this melting pot of possibilities, society has accentuated the possession of knowledge, applying one of the greatest mantras of military geopolitics: “to know is to win”. As Stiglitz (2015, p. 40) contends, *“We can consider that, generally speaking, the ‘innovation system’ of an economy runs from basic research, usually funded by the government and sometimes by a monopoly authorized by the government and produced by universities and government research laboratories, to applied research, which sometimes develops from these basic ideas and sometimes perfects and develops prior knowledge.”*

One of the greatest challenges facing today’s society is the formation of existing forms of knowledge production from new technological practices associated with scientific knowledge, together with the diversification of economic processes and changes in social, economic and political relations. Let it not be forgotten that science also involves a great deal of corruption and elitism, which condition the transfer of knowledge in favor of vested interests. Consequently, it is clear that regulation or so-called green-washing processes are not sufficient to eliminate the existing asymmetries or knowledge gaps, rather the solution must come from a re-coding of principles and values (many of them imposed) in favor of the general, non-economic, interest (Luque, 2018; Johns & Oppenheimer, 2018). The accumulation of knowledge and its access also inherently generate high levels of poverty and precariousness through associated processes of expulsion and degradation, aspects that have been widely discussed in the academic literature (Naredo, 1999; Harvey, 2007; Sassen, 2015; Laval & Dardot, 2017; Han, 2017).

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