THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POTENTIAL OF CIVIL SOCIETY

József Veress
Corvinus University
1093 Budapest Fővámtér 8

ABSTRACT

The civil society due to its transformational dynamism is a major driver of the emergence of cooperative, sharing, and genuinely sustainable knowledge society. Historically the civil society is simultaneously the domain and the outcome of the civil activism. This activism interplays with the dynamism of civil society, capitalizes on and catalyses its transformational character. This transformational capacity provides the civil society organizations' potential to facilitate changes in the broader environment, creates their capability to affect and shape the resultant pattern of interplay between digitalization and the approximation among the societal macro-sectors by enhancing their association-prone character.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically the civil society emerged together with the industrial society. Its members' activism played crucial role in practical implementation of the principles arising from the 'glorious triad' of liberty, equality, and solidarity (once coined as fraternity). This activism generated institutional changes which (i) contributed to enhanced social productivity providing the potential to liberate 'increasing volume' of time from wage work and (ii) enforced changes enabling to mobilize growing part of this free time for voluntary activities.

The paper analyses causes and mechanisms of the civil society organizations' dynamism and discusses their transformational outcomes in context of the emergence of knowledge society. It explores how its interplay with the civil activism can affect the enactment (Orlikowski 2000) of the new, primarily digital technologies what in turn has the potential to promote more cooperative dynamism across social fields by shaping patterns of approximation among the macro-sectors.

2. TRANSFORMATIONAL DYNAMISM OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The study of civil society organizations, their emerging networks and the related changes helps to explore sources and outcomes of their transformational dynamism generating the potential of empowering social agency by 'going after the small picture' (Giddens 1984). The exploration of community clusters representing broad array of civil society organizations provide ample empirical data for combined deployment of the methodological pluralism (Van de Ven and Poole 2005), an extended version of the scientific realism (Bhaskar 1978, Tsoukas 1989), and the ideal-type constructs that Weber (1949) proposes. This setup enables to identify sources and mechanisms of the civil society organizations' dynamism, its transformational impacts on their broader environment by identifying emerging long-term transformational tendencies - currently in phase of their nascence.

2.1 Transformational dynamism: sources and mechanisms

The exploration of the transformational dynamism unfolded through recursive triangulation among the (i) empirical data extracted from five clusters of communities, (ii) the relevant research literature, and (iii) the emerging constructs which the iterative analytic efforts identified deploying methodological pluralism. It indicated that the interactions among members of civil society organizations taking place in the empirical domain (Bhaskar, 1978; Tsoukas, 1989) create feed backing changes unfolding in actual domain (Bhaskar, 1978; Tsoukas, 1989) and impacting multiple dimensions simultaneously. These alterations are mutually catalytic what facilitates also their patterned aggregation into re-emergence of the volunteers' organizations which possess transformational dynamism. This transformative impact affects simultaneously the interacting members, their activities and relationships, as well as their organization and its wider environment (Table 1).

Personal context:	Empowerment
	Individuation
Relationships:	Power relations
	Institutional changes
Activities:	Work
	Competition
	Value creation
	Resourcing
	Social agency
Community alterations	Social capital and trust
self-transformation:	Networking self-upgrading
	New dialectics of cooperation

Table 1: Components of the civil society organizations' transformational dynamism

The volunteers' intertwined intra- and inter-personal dialogues carry out meaning and decision making (Stacey 2010) and simultaneously aggregate into self-communication which "…multiplies and diversifies the entry points in the communication process. This gives rise to unprecedented autonomy for communicative subjects to communicate at large"(Castells, 2009:135) (Figure 1). Such autonomy facilitates and capitalizes on the robust institutional shift to dual primacy of non-zero-sum approach and interdependence therefore the volunteers' self-communication enacts and re-creates (primarily) association-prone institutional settings. This autonomy enables to bring cooperation into competitive environments (Benkler 2011) and to maintain collaboration despite the presence of robust institutional isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) that the broader environment 'promotes' generating domination-seeking and colliding instead of cooperative relational dynamism.
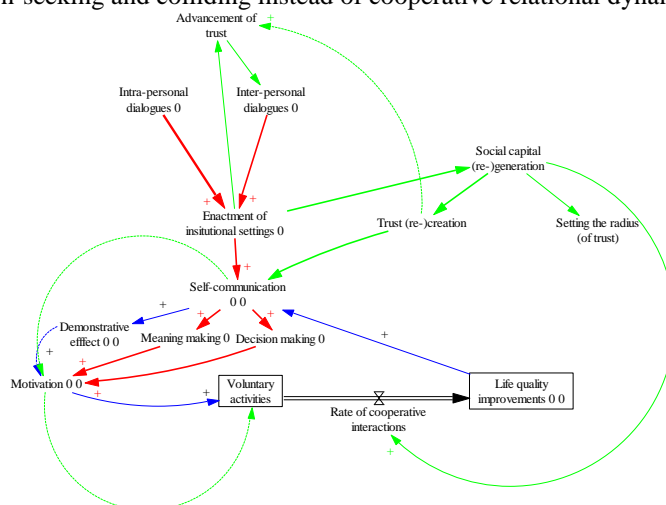

Figure 1: Self-communication re-generating motivation and trust

The volunteers due to such enhanced autonomy can carry out collective pursuits through communicative interactions what enables to socialize or 'participate for the sake of participation'. The volunteers' perceive their contributions to common pursuits as passionate and sharing co-creation, as non-wage work which improves their shared life quality - and re-generates their motivation to participate in and contribute to collective efforts. It amends primary motivation to volunteer that the often tacit wish to socialize creates.

The cooperative institutional-relational dynamism in the civil society organizations feeds back with robust transformations in characteristics of power facilitating to replace hierarchies with broader horizontalization tendencies. The volunteers don't accept attempts of domination and control, their power (relations) possess horizontal, non-zero-sum, non-hierarchical, shared and sharing character. This integrative power or 'power with' (Kreisberg 1992) is non-zero sum therefore it could be strengthened or increased through sharing by simultaneously enabling mutual empowerment.

Due to these trends the civil society organizations become commons which serve as shelters against alienation and estrangement tendencies and facilitate their members' empowering individuation. Their empowerment "[unfolds as a] multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It …fosters power in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important… To create change we must change individually to enable us to become partners in solving the complex issues facing us. In collaborations based on mutual respect, diverse perspectives, and a developing vision, people work toward creative and realistic solutions. This synthesis of individual and collective change…is our understanding of an empowerment process" - explain Page and Czuba (1999). "…There is an important distinction between…- what could be called selfish individualism - and what is sometimes referred to as individuation…Beck and Giddens…argue. Individuation is the freeing up of people from their traditional roles and deference to hierarchical authority, and their growing capacity to draw on wider pools of information and expertise and actively chose what sort of life they lead. Individuation is…as Beck points out… about the politicization of day-to-day life; the hard choices people face…in crafting personal identities and choosing how to relate to issues such as race, gender, the environment, local culture, and diversity" - describes the individuation Grenier (2006:124-125).
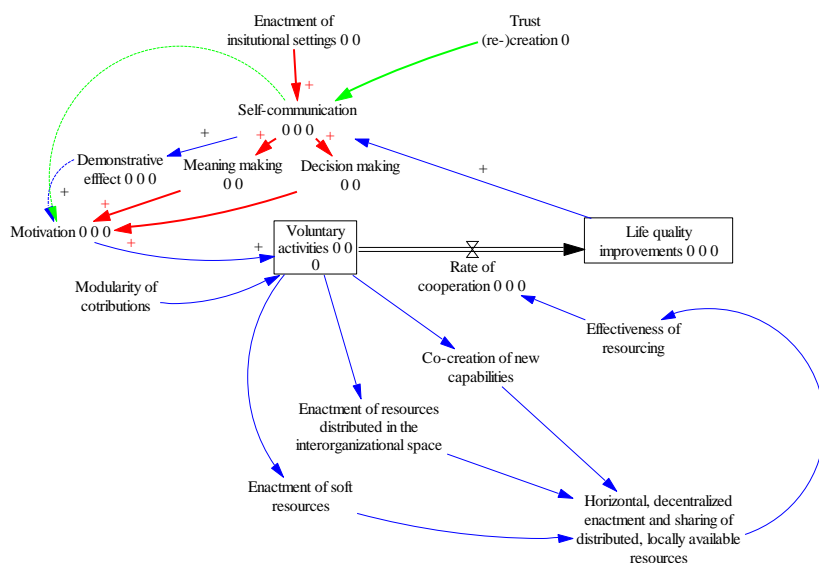

Figure 2: The volunteers' communicative interactions interplaying with feedback loops

These tendencies are mutually catalytic and their interplay amplifies cooperative atmosphere. The collaboration facilitates to combine the members' individual capabilities and through symbiotic and synergistic tendencies improves the effectiveness of collective resourcing (Csányi 1989) (Figure 2). The volunteers tend to limit the complexity, size, and resource intensity of particular tasks. Such "modularity of contributions" (Benkler 2011) enables during their parallel, distributed, and mutually adaptive interactions simultaneously mobilize also resources therefore the volunteers' resourcing follows horizontal, decentralized, distributed and sharing pattern. The autonomy which their self-communication provides enables to follow diametrically

opposite trends in resourcing than the market sector which tends to maximize the resource intensity and complexity of the tasks what allows decreasing the number of the wage workers. By contrast the civil society players aim to increase the number of participants. It facilitates to raise also the overall volume of the contributions since the volunteers' communicative interactions simultaneously carry out the distributed and locally available resources through horizontal and decentralized enactment and sharing. The collaboration facilitates to capitalize on networked patterns of resourcing, which has "…the core assumption…that giving oneself to the larger networked community optimizes the value [also the shared power and resources] of the group as well as its individual members…[similarly to the] Internet"(Rifkin, 2011:268). The volunteers share information, knowledge, and other soft resources similar to creativity and various cognitive, relational, emotional, and psychological energies. Since the soft resources are non-depletable and non-rivalrous (Bollier, 2007:28) these could be shared and also multiplied what helps to extend and upgrade the collective resource base.

The civil society entities are the most important sources of the co-creation and amplification of social capital and trust (Fukuyama 1999) which are indispensable resources also for market and public sector organizations. The social capital is "…an informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals… [These norms] must be instantiated in an actual human relationship [and generate] trust…[which is] epiphenomenal, arising as a result of social capital but not constituting social capital itself"(Fukuyama 1999:1). The abundance of social capital strengthens cooperative relationships and enables to re-generate and increase trust and extend its radius and the growingly trustful atmosphere amplifies the motivation to cooperate (Figure 1 - above).

Since the abundance of social capital facilitates to extend the radius of trust it can cross over and reach beyond the boundaries of particular organizations. Such networking among members of various groups and entities amplifies their relationships cooperative dynamism and facilitates the emergence of quasi-field(s) where organizational boundaries cease to divide volunteers into various groups. This enables to overcome and prevent the re-emergence of exclusive and fragmented cooperation unfolding only 'within (organizational) boundaries' and which often is oriented against other groups or individuals in the name of group solidarity. The qualitative shift to inclusive and un-fragmented cooperation prevents its self-alienation - a paradox when intra-organizational cooperation generates inter-organizational competition. Consequently, the changes in nature of cooperation interplay with simultaneous self-transformation, the networking self-upgrading of civil society organizations.
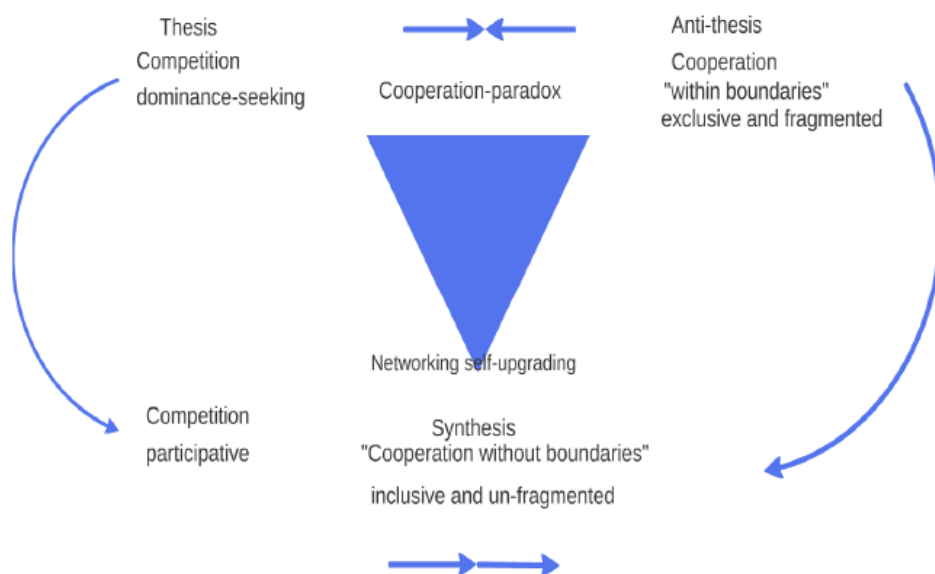

Figure 3: New dialectics of cooperation and competition

When collaboration among individuals belonging to diverse entities turns into inclusive and un-fragmented the competition also becomes participative. Indeed the volunteers compete through improved participation and attempts to provide more effective contributions to common efforts instead of seeking dominance over each

other. Their inclusive and un-fragmented collaboration "without boundaries" appears together with the emergence of altered, participative competition and their interplay follows altered dialectics (Figure 3 – above). Due to the new dialectics between cooperation 'without boundaries' and participative competition the quasi-fields of civil society entities catalyse association-prone dynamism across social fields - it provides the capacity of social agency.

2.1.1   Self-organizing structuration generating transformational dynamism

The volunteers' intertwined sense and decision making intra- and inter-personal dialogues aggregate into self-communication which enacts association-prone cultural schemas (Sewell 1992), taken for granted perceptions (Perez 1992) and structures (Giddens 1984). "Structures are not the patterned social practices that make up social systems, but the principles that pattern these practices… Structures do not exist concretely in time and space except as "memory traces, the organic basis of knowledgeability" (i.e., only as ideas or schemas lodged in human brains) and as they are "instantiated in action" (i.e., put into practice)"(Sewell 1992:6). Since the volunteers suppose and expect (high probability of) reciprocity of cooperative behaviour, i.e. mutually advance trust they can start (self-) communication which enacts association-prone institutional settings by re-generating trust and facilitating cooperative communicative interactions (Habermas 1995). The association-prone institutional settings that the self-communication enacts regenerate trust and enable the volunteers' communicative interactions - operate simultaneously as social capital and organizing platforms. Indeed the in depth analysis of the processes taking place in real domain (Bhaskar, 1978; Tsoukas, 1989) indicates that the civil society organizations' transformational dynamism is dynamic resultant of the interplay among association-prone reconfiguration of structuration and continuously unfolding self-organizing.

The volunteers' self-communication enacts association-prone institutional settings which catalyse the cooperative character of their communicative interactions and (the pattern of their) aggregation. The cooperative interactions generate change processes in multiple dimensions - including institutional, relational, power, communication and resourcing - that aggregate into continuous patterned (re-) emergence of commons. The association-prone institutional settings operate as soft organizing platforms, facilitate continuous self-organizing that carries out "organizing without organization" (Shirky 2008).

The self-communication simultaneously generates the volunteers' awareness of improvements in shared life quality which their communicative interactions create. Such demonstrative effect generates motivation, facilitates to repeat the patterns of communicative interactions which generate perceived improvements in effectiveness of resourcing (Figure 2 - above). Such perception serves as selective factor which facilitates to repeat particular (communicative) interactions and to aggregate them into continuous self-organizing. The patterned interplay of self-reinforcing feedback loops can unleash "cooperation trap"(Csányi 1989), generate spiralling up cooperation tendencies. The patterned (re-)emergence of the commons helps to increase the complexity of cooperative pursuits. It serves as important mechanism of growing creativity, capacity to innovate, generate change - creates and amplifies the capacity of (social) agency. Since self-organizing enables to "organize without organization" the growing functional complexity is independent from structural complexity, don't generate bureaucratic tendencies.

In civil society organizations the continuous self-organizing is intertwined with simultaneous changes in structuration (processes) (Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992; Orlikowski 2000), their association-prone reconfiguration. Such re-shuffling simultaneously capitalizes on and (re-)creates cooperative changes in power, communication and sanctions, i.e. in all three systems of interactions (Figure 4 and 5). The collaboration becomes the "primary structure" in civil society entities. It takes place through the volunteers' mutual co-inspiration and resource enactment and replaces domination that unfolds through authorization and allocation. This shift is intertwined with switch to reciprocity and sharing operating as facilities of power - by replacing authority and property. These alterations are intertwined with simultaneous transformation of the very power. The volunteers' cooperation can be mutually empowering and they are unwilling and unready to tolerate attempts to exercise hierarchical control and domination. In civil society organizations the integrative 'power with' (Kreisberg 1992) is non-domination and non-hierarchical, associational and lateral which can be shared and sharing.
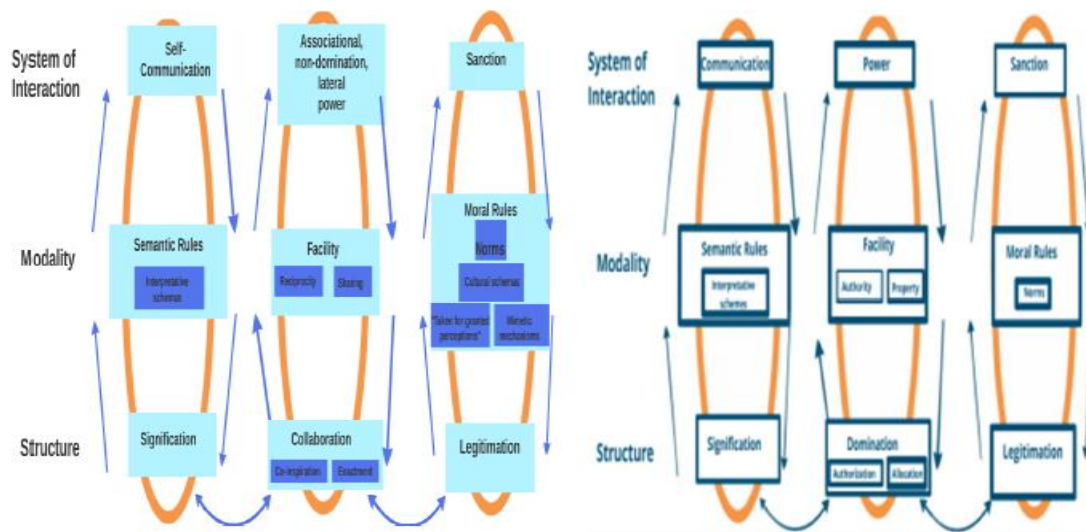
Figure 4: Modified dimensions of the Modalities of Structuration – based on Stillman (2006: 150)

Figure 5: Dimensions of the Modalities of Structuration - Stillman (2006:150)

The volunteers due to their willingness to socialize and inclination to collaborate generate 'positive sanctions' for cooperative behaviour. They enact moral rules, including norms (Giddens 1984), taken for granted perceptions (Perez 2002), and mimetic mechanisms (Scott 1995) possessing robust and growing association-prone character. Their feedbacks play important role in driving and shaping recursive daily interactions that carry out routines and praxis constitutive of everyday life (Perez, 2002). Through deliberate un-learning (Scharmer 2007) the volunteers can accelerate association-prone changes in taken for granted perceptions and in other patterns of moral rules (re-)shaping the recursive daily activities (Perez, 2002).

The volunteers' self-communication enacts interpretative schemas and semantic rules, follows horizontal, lateral patterns, and is compatible with cooperative, association-prone dynamics of institutional settings. This constellation allows establish and maintain autonomy - the self-communication replaces and prevents the re-emergence of hierarchical, top-down (patterns of) communication. Since the broader environment is characterized by primacy of hierarchies and dominance-seeking competition the endorsement of the lateral approach has eminent importance. Consequently, the association-prone character of signification and legitimation can establish, maintain and amplify cooperative dynamics in local cultures by facilitating to compensate and offset effects - similar to institutional isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) - generated by dominance-seeking competition in the broader environment. The association-prone re-configuration of structuration feeds back with the civil society organizations' transformational dynamism providing their capability and capacity of self-empowerment and social agency.

2.2 Self-empowerment of the civil society: civil economy – patterns of approximation among societal macro-sectors

The civil society is simultaneously the domain and the 'product' of its members' political activism which drives both its emergence and institutionalization as a societal macro-sector. The civil society is a relatively new historical phenomenon appearing 2-300 years ago and rather tightly connected with (the development of) the industrial society. The (formal) right to carry out self-organizing voluntary activities is connected with and created by the individuals' legal freedom, which is characteristic (and necessary) for the industrial era. However, the legal equality and liberty brings about transformation into wage-worker in individual context. Although the increasing social productivity in the industrial era potentially enables to liberate more and more time from wage work, only the self-organizing political activism of civil society enacts this potential through enforcing the institutionalization of standards of decreased work time and changing patterns of redistribution.

The civil society organizations due to their transformational dynamism possess a tendency to networking self-upgrading into quasi-fields characterized by new dialectics of inclusive and un-fragmented cooperation. These fields interplay with emergence of large-scale patterns of cooperation similar to Wikipedia and

communities of free and open source software (F(L)OSS). These - probably rather rudimentary - large-scale patterns of cooperation are generative and constitutive of transitions to a knowledge driven society taking place through mutual approximation among the three macro-sectors. These are "…a core vector through which the transition to a networked society and economy …happening" (Benkler 2011). These can operate as precursor and catalyst of systemic change(s) similarly to merchant capital acting in early days of industrial era. The market and public sectors and the civil society interplay in multiple ways, frequently exhibit diverging or even controversial tendencies. However, these diverging trends, somewhat paradoxically, can also aggregate into convergence bringing about association-prone patterns of of mutual approximation among the macro-sectors Figure 6.
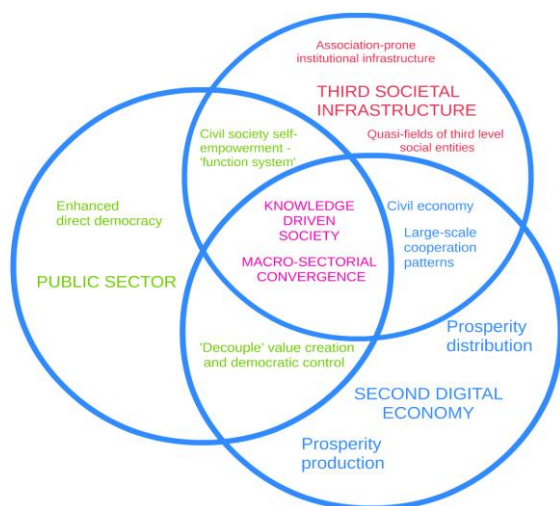

Figure 6: Components of macro-sectorial convergence (…)

The cooperative tendencies are intertwined with increasingly association-prone character of the institutional infrastructure, the "…wider social and cultural context…[the] environments [which] create the infrastructures - regulative, normative, and cognitive - that constrain and support the operation of individual organizations"(Scott, 1995:151). The institutional infrastructure's growingly cooperative character interplays with primacy of non-zero-sum approach and interdependence which facilitates to establish cooperative relational trends also in competitive environments (Benkler 2011).

The strengthening cooperative character of institutional infrastructure and the enhanced self-empowerment of the civil society through emergence of quasi-fields of self-upgrading third level (Vitányi 2007) social entities are mutually catalytic. Their interplay operates as a third societal infrastructure which is catalyst of mutual approximation among the macro-sectors by following cooperative, association-prone tendencies affecting also social fields. (The roads, rail- and, water-roads, pipelines, electric grids, lines of transmission and telegraph lines aggregate into globally inter-linked and expanding networks of transport and communication capacities constituting the first societal infrastructure. This includes 'traditional' forms of telecommunication, facilitates global mobility of goods, service delivery and "human capital". The second societal infrastructure consists of the global network(s) of mostly digital information-communication technologies most often connected through the Internet. It creates and amplifies the individuals' quasi-instant mobile connectivity with (growingly) global reach. The current emergence of the "Internet of Things" (IOT) may physically re-link the first and second societal infrastructure.) The third societal infrastructure facilitates association-prone changes in market and public sectors and amplifies them in the civil society.

The association-prone dynamism of third societal infrastructure is connected with emergence of a civil economy including large-scale patterns of cooperation. This interplay feeds back with the (character of) accelerating digitalization tendencies shaping resultant pattern(s) of emerging second digital economy (Arthur 2011). The stronger is this interplay the bigger is the probability of successful (re-)connection of the (re-)distribution of prosperity with its production. It is the political activism which can strengthen the feedbacks between the association-prone character of third societal infrastructure and the digitalization trends by generating and amplifying the cooperative and sharing character of the convergence among the macro sectors and of their aggregation into a cooperative, sharing and sustainable knowledge society.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The transformational potential of the civil society organizations is the resultant of the interplay between continuous self-organizing and the reconfiguration of structuration providing their robust association-prone dynamism. It feeds back with the volunteering members' political activism that can generate and enact enhanced patterns of direct democracy facilitating the civil society's self-empowerment. These tendencies are also constitutive of its capacity to operate as function system of the society (Reichel 2012) which can ensure "...the provision of stability for joint collective action for something greater than just individual benefits...for the common good and social coherence …to solve…[also wicked] problems that are not solved by any other part of society"(Reichel, 2012:58-60). Indeed its transformational capacity provides the civil society organizations' potential to facilitate changes in its broader environment: amplify the association-prone character of interplay between digitalization and the societal macro-sectors' convergence by acting as major driver of the emergence of a cooperative, sharing, and genuinely sustainable knowledge society.

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