Chapter 13
Higher Education 3.0: Knowmads Create Their Own Value!

John W. Moravec and Ronald van den Hoff

The future is not pre-designed. Rather, it is conversed and created as we go along. Recognizing this, John Moravec and Ronald van den Hoff engage in an imagined conversation on their ideas about "higher education 3.0" and how their visions for the 3.0 world are being actualized.

John: Ronald, what is your vision of *Society 3.0*?

Ronald: We live at a juncture. There is no escaping it. Certainties of yesterday are gone. One day after another, we are again faced with crisis. Our financial systems failed and dragged us into an economic recession of unknown proportions. The cogwheels of our society have stopped. Everywhere you look, there are traffic jams. "Crisis?" It is more like a global social transition! Our technological potential for social mobility is greater than ever. Our world seems to have shifted into top gear. But why are the wheels not turning? Every proper-minded person must agree that our countries are being derailed structurally. Our craving for the faster, bigger, and better has crippled us. This makes us at Seats2meet.com (my company) angry. We are angry that we don't allow ourselves to use new technologies, new ventures, or new legislation; and, that the political and governmental elite of Europe (and, with it, perhaps the entire Western world) is redistributing, in a very inefficient way, over 50 % of our Gross National Product the same way they did 100 years ago. That is done with the approval of the established, larger corporations.

Schools still educate people in an industrial way. Students are "end products," however. Universities are preparing them to fulfill jobs that no longer exist. This is an enormous mismatch. Youth unemployment throughout the European Union is staggering. What about the healthcare system? There is no movement there either.

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Big players in the system bicker about capacity. They bicker about remuneration, quality, funding, fears of overspending, and about preserving a "free market." But what about the patients? They are left totally out of the picture. On top of that, we are getting older and older. The costs of elderly care as well as our health systems are astronomical.

The resulting indecisiveness of our political leaders has proven to be crippling for the innovative force of Europe. Somehow, our political system has survived itself. The gap between the voter and candidate has never been so wide.

We are living in the aftermath of the plutocracy of the last century. We are stuck due to the dynamics around us, many of which were rooted over several hundred years ago. Some European countries are still rich, while some are not. Step-by-step, there is an acknowledgement that our wealth is gone. There is awareness, especially among younger people, that things can and have to be organized differently. Forced innovation or "revolution" by the "lower caste" is something of concern to all age groups. So, be prepared. The feeling that "all is quiet" can, under the influence of modern social media, change in no time.

Robert Adams mentions in his book, *Decadent societies* (1983), five drivers lead to the decay of rich and influential societies:

- Indecisive leadership;
- Extreme taxes;
- Social inequality;
- Extensive laws and rules; and,
- Smugness and arrogance.

Does this sound familiar to you?

Therefore, it is time to for something new. Since the traditional system no longer works, we have to reinvent ourselves, our social systems, our political systems, and our business models to create new value. This includes transforming our educational systems to be ready for a new time – a new format of society, which I call *Society 3.0*.

John: My vision of Society 3.0 is quite similar. From my investigations of this emerging reality, it seems clear that we are moving into a society dominated by accelerating technological and social change, escalating globalization, and an innovation society fueled by *knowmads* (Moravec 2013).

Vernor Vinge (1993), Ray Kurzweil (2005), and Hans Moravec (1988) have popularized the notion that the exponential growth and performance of technologies are leading to an era of machine augmented intelligence and artificial intelligence within the next two decades. These accelerating technological developments also prompt personal and social transformations. Many futurists predict that a *Technological Singularity* will emerge by 2045, when change will occur so quickly that it will appear to happen instantaneously for human observers, defying our imaginations.

The idea of a Singularity is, and will be, under debate for a while, but the general consensus is that we are entering an age of massive uncertainty and constant

change. We built our economic and education systems for an industrial paradigm of simple, rational decisions and relationships. But, now that the world is much more complex – and further *complexifying* at an increasing pace – the challenge for education is becoming quite clear: We need to prepare people for jobs that we can no longer imagine.

Our relationships with each other used to be simple and easy to define. Now they are much more complex. Today's organizations might look like they have clear lines of reporting and responsibilities among their people, but when we really look closely, organizations are starting to resemble a plate of spaghetti and meatballs more than a neatly-organized pyramid. We used to be much more transactional in how we related with others, but now we are forced to seek out synergies – and this is compounded by the challenge that we all perceive the world a little bit differently from each other. How we create value in this emerging 3.0 paradigm is closely tied with our abilities to contextually apply the individual knowledge that each of us possesses (Moravec 2008a).

Moreover, in a rapidly changing world, we need to create our own work. In the past, jobs and work used to be commingled together as one. Now we are seeing a tremendous division emerge. *Work* is something that is very personal, and is connected with one's individual knowledge and skills. A growing segment of the population is taking on *jobs* as gigs – like *free agents*, or as I prefer to call them, *knowmads*.

A knowmad is:

> […] a nomadic knowledge worker – that is, a creative, imaginative, and innovative person who can work with almost anybody, anytime, and anywhere. Industrial society is giving way to knowledge and innovation work. Whereas industrialization required people to settle in one place to perform a very specific role or function, the jobs associated with knowledge and information workers have become much less specific concerning task and place. Moreover, technologies allow for these new paradigm workers to work within broader options of space, including "real," virtual, or blended. Knowmads can instantly reconfigure and recontextualize their work environments; and, and greater mobility is creating new opportunities. (Moravec 2008b)

Knowmads are 21st century extensions of Peter Drucker's (1993) knowledge workers who can adapt and thrive in periods of accelerating change. The general consensus is that free agents and knowmads will comprise 45 % of the workforce by 2020. Even today, in 2013, one in three U.S. Americans are estimated to be members of the knowmadic, free agent workforce (see esp. summary by Disney 2013).

The question is, how do we train for "anytime, anywhere, with almost anybody" careers if our schools and universities are still focused on developing human capital for old, industrial paradigms of work and society?

Ronald: I guess there will be many more locations in which to learn in the near future, as well as a greater variation of content. We will see more tailor-made programs, if you like; so instead of going to school for six years, you pick up knowledge, when and where you need it, about 1,000 times per year, for a period of 30 years, and so on.

If we want to be usable as interdisciplinary junctions in the knowmadic value network, remain employable in the process of value creation, and keep our new organizations up to par in these dynamic times, then we will have to assume an attitude of learning for life. By "being usable," I mean as human beings who are aware of the qualities and responsibilities that reach far beyond technical skills. Learning is becoming more accessible to the broader population through technologies. Information and knowledge can often, and easily, be found on the World Wide Web. Knowledge is shared with people from all over the world, and as a result, new insights and knowledge come into being. We need to prepare our children for this.

So, the question is: Do we still send our youth to school, and if so, how would they develop? What does "learning 3.0" look like?

John: In the old paradigm, meaning was dictated to us. Knowledge experts or others licensed or chartered by the state/institution told us what the right answers were, and how to find them. In a world that is constantly evolving, the "correct" answers are now often socially constructed and contextually reinvented. We live in a world where one plus one does not always equal two, and, invariably, the *context* of the problems and solutions we explore are critical for the determination of the most plausible solutions.

Teaching was done from teacher to student, but in a world that is infused with ICTs, and where the contextual utilization of our individual knowledge is critical, we now have multiple pathways for instruction: Teacher to student, student to student, people utilizing technology to co-teach others. In essence, this is technologically augmented co-constructivism.

With technologies, we can break down the "place" of an institution as belonging within a building or campus. Indeed, we have many online options today, but it is also possible to embed technologies within the social environments in which we interact with. We can create smart learning and discovery options that are thoroughly infused into society (i.e., within cafes, workplaces, city parks, transit stations, etc.).

This 3.0 paradigm embraces an ambient presence of technologies that link us together socially to share, augment, and build upon each individual's personal knowledge. This is a big break from what have traditionally done in education. In primary and secondary-level schooling, ICTs are managed very carefully or are often completely absent. In tertiary education, the possibilities are more open, but universities are having a hard time figuring out what to do. In essence, they are trying to map old practices to new technologies, which cannot be expected to result in innovations.

Ronald: I agree. The rise of alternate learning locations, like coworking centers, tech labs, and corporate *intra*preneurial departments, open to external peers of an organization, are excavating the exclusive right of a physical university (building) to be the center of learning and research. "Boundless" and "blurring" are themes of Society 3.0, which, obviously, are also emerging in education.

John: There are a number of places that inspire me around the world, including:

- **E-180** in Montreal, Canada: A peer-to-peer learning platform based on the concept of enabling individuals as "lifelong teachers" (Renaud 2013).
- **General Assembly** in New York, USA: Integrates business opportunities with courses focused on technology and design.

- **KaosPilots** in Aarhus, Denmark: A hybrid design and business school with an emphasis on leadership and entrepreneurship.
- **Knowmads Business School** in Amsterdam, The Netherlands: A one-year social entrepreneurship program for change makers.
- **Shibuya University Network** in Tokyo, Japan: Founded by a young adult who was so disenchanted with Japanese higher education, he created his own school (CNN 2007) that is integrated into the community and facilitates peer-based learning.

While the bulk of universities have experienced the phenomenon of "McDonaldization" (see esp. Hartley 1995; Ritzer 1993), these postsecondary providers buck the trend by diversifying their approaches, and show some interesting commonalities:

- **Smaller, boutique-like:** By being smaller in organizational size and bureaucracy, and by focusing on a particular, unique mode of learning, it can be argued that each provider is more nimble in regard to its abilities to adapt to changing educational, economic, and social environments.
- **Focused on community:** Whereas traditional academic institutions often set themselves apart from the communities they serve (the "ivory tower" analogy), these 3.0 institutions are more closely embedded with – and collaborate with – the communities they serve.
- **Value generative:** Rather than providing top-down, managed educational services, these institutions engage in more "horizontalized" strategies. That is, they often engage in peer-based learning and collaborations with community partners that are more focused on co-creating mutually-beneficial value than transaction-based profit.

With your work at Seats2meet.com, what are the implications for traditional universities?

Ronald: I am looking toward a direction where our educational institutions have to develop self-learners who can produce knowledge by sharing what they know with others and remix what they learned from others to form new ideas. These graduates will find change and continuous development necessary, and also a common aspect of their lives. They are people who present themselves and behave like meaningful beings; people who can mobilize their knowledge, experience, and information for themselves, and in relation to others. These are global citizens of knowledge and innovation-based society – the knowmads.

In order to join that global game of value creation in the future, our educational systems, from primary through tertiary levels, must be fundamentally changed. Pumping improvement money into a dead system in order to gain a competitive advantage, as many governments are doing presently, is disastrous. We no longer need a closed institution; rather, we require an open space that is dazzling, creative, and social; virtual and physical, with places for meetings and activities in the community, village, or city where the school is located.

John: Indeed, we need to open the learning space to modern formats. It seems to me that, in an era of accelerating uncertainties, we need to expand our ecology of options

for higher education. It does not make sense to invest so heavily (economically and culturally) into one mode of learning and certification if we know other models are just as equipped, or better equipped, to meet future challenges. My fear is that if we universally invest into the mainstream higher education format as our single, most valued mode of postsecondary development, then we face the risk of failing universally.

Ronald: It is impossible to imagine life without learning for life. If people want to remain employable, they will have to take refresher courses or retrain during their working life. Finishing school is not the end of one's learning process, it should be the beginning. By making immense amounts of information available, the World Wide Web is helping people actualize this, but how users (consumers?) convert this access into meaningful knowledge is a shared challenge.

Likewise, education (and community) leaders should embrace the metaphor of the Web to incorporate new social and economic inputs into a larger "web" of continuous education and sharing. I refer to this as "The Mesh" (van den Hoff 2013) – and, in essence, it means that all levels of continuous education become more of a cultural product that is embedded in our daily lives rather than discrete experiences.

John: It is interesting that you bring culture into the socioeconomic mix. It seems to me that you are alluding to an emerging crisis in higher education, where we are focusing too much on Adam Smith-type economics and industrial modes of production. As Hakken (2003, p. 355) notes, we need to create a "knowledge theory of value" that can help us navigate the Mesh-like relationships that are emerging in society that mirror the transformations occurring in cyberspace.

We are at a juncture with two conflicting approaches to teaching and learning. Can the industrial model adapt or co-exist with a value-based social model? What if universities fail to adapt?

Ronald: I started this conversation with, "we live at a juncture." That does not mean we have a choice! We are presently in the middle of our own revolution. Society is rapidly evolving into a new era: Society 3.0. It is up the global Society 3.0 citizen to reinvent our social and economic systems. This reinvention is where we can find the opportunity – an opportunity to get us out of this turmoil. It is not an easy journey, as the established, industrial-focused old guard is resisting; however, their inability to show us the way out and guide us to this new era demonstrates that the industrial system, with its political and economic components, is really at its end.

Therefore, if organizations, universities, governments, or corporations do not adapt, we will simply bypass them and they will lose their *raison d'etre*. Teaching is not the exclusive right of schools and universities anymore. Recent research from the Rotterdam School of Management (van de Vrande et al. 2013) shows that know-mads working in our Seats2meet.com coworking locations report an improvement of their business skills (47 %), an improvement of their products or services (41 %) and the development of new products or services (37 %). They learn by collaborating with others and do not necessarily need (or desire) the backing of an official institution to learn. The sooner the ivory tower establishment realizes this, the better!

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