

EMIL A. RØYRVIK

Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Political Science, NTNU.

Røyvik_question1

What are the processes and mechanisms for creating value in societies and what kinds of implications or consequences have those value mechanisms on society?

Røyvik_system1_being1_group1_power1_economy1

Capitalism is a social system and it's a system that has various mechanisms for creating value for different groups and wealth and welfare in society. Currently there are competing variations of the capitalist system, competing logics and competing versions that struggle to dominate how the capitalism as social system is working.

Røyvik_system2_being2_power2_group2_economy2

What are the major stakes in the struggle? At the one hand, we can say it's a more of an open system, where capitalism functions as a system to enhance the welfare throughout the whole of society, that benefit everybody. And in this version of capitalism, capitalist corporations are considered as institutions of society that should further benefit and good life for everybody in society. So on the other hand or the other system that is dominating internationally is a system where capitalism is making a selected lead or a small group very very rich and the majorities in society is left behind.

Røyvik_system3_technology1_power3_economy3

In that system capitalism is all about making profit for owners, so it's based on owners of the corporation/cooperation? of technology and so on - an ideology that perceives of the capitalist organisations as organisations that are owned by private persons and their legitimacy is to make profit for those owners.

Røyvik_system4_power4_economy4

In that system it's only about making profit for owners and in that sort of direction, the global system and also in Norway, has become very strong that view of capitalism and that, I would say, is more of a closed system. And it's also opposed to free market capitalism, so it's not as simple as to say it's a left or right kind of dichotomy, in a sort of a more negative closed version, it's a lot about monopolization, so you have big actors that control the markets.

Røyvik_transfer1_system5_economy5

A very important way in which people are making money today is pure financial transactions. The majority of all economic transactions today is pure monetary transactions.

Røyvik_reality1_being3_economy6

This financial role creates its own sort of reality and makes money out of that. On the one hand it creates its own reality, but on the other hand it sort of functions as a parasite on the real economy, it feeds of the real economy.

Røyvik_force1_evolution1_collapse1_power5_economy7

When you see the crisis in Spain and in Greece, where the financial sector got so much power, and the financial reality grew so big and strong, it affects the real economy, the whole society, when it collapses.

Røyvik_flow1_connection1_economy8_evolution1

When we come to crypto currencies, it's a different kind of money logic, so if it grows very big it maybe will have an affect on how capitalism works. But it's too early to tell actually.

Røyvik_system6_reality2_power6_economy9

Because of neo-liberal systems of deregulations etc this real virtuality of the financial sector got room to grow that big and that powerful.

Røyvik_reality2

Virtual reality that's when you go into some game or some place where you are immersed in a virtual re-

ality, but what the concept of real virtuality tries to, is to describe this space that the financial institutions and markets have created.

Røyrvik_economy10_transfer2_reality3

Just the derivative economy, which is pure financial speculation and transactions, is ten times the size of the global gdp and in a sense it's just virtual.

Røyrvik_reality4_evolution2_force2_collapse2_system7_change1

If we are talking about the hyperreality of the financial system throughout history there has been several of these huge sort of hyperreal bubbles and then they have collapsed and then during some decades it has build up again to become a new big hyperreal financial bubble and it has collapsed and so on. So throughout history this has actually changed quite a lot. There has been many small such bubbles and crises, but only a few very big ones. And with the big ones the whole social system of capitalism has changed.

Røyrvik_system8_evolution3_economy11_power7

We can say that capitalism as an idea, or a small system, was invented in Italy and at some point it collapse, we are talking about 500 years ago or something like that, and it collapsed because the financial side of the economy grew too strong and too big, and it was reinvented in Holland, and then Holland dominated the capitalist system and in the first phase it was characterized by a material expansion and growth for many people, but at some point the financial side of the system grew too strong and it collapses and then it was reinvented in Britain and the same thing happened, and with the collapse of the British system we were in the 1920/30's. Before the United States took over, as the dominating political power of the system, so it was reinvented after two world wars and after the second world war the United States was the center of the system and build it again.

Røyrvik_system9_collapse3

With the financial crisis in 2008, I think it signals that the system is again about to collapse, because of the financial hyperreality has expanded out of real gigantic proportions, compared to the productive economy.

Røyrvik_collapse4_force3_evolution4

The balance between the financial actors and the productive industrial actors is shifting through time, and when that imbalance become too strong, then we get these bobbles and collapses.

Røyrvik_power8_collapse5_system10_evolution6_economy11

It seems like the United States as the dominant political power in global capitalism is about to decline and collapse. Will some other political power take over? Or will it mean the end of capitalism? Some people think that, that we can carve out a new type of system that is not capitalist at all. But I think most people who is doing research think that there will be another political power that will take over.

Røyrvik_information1_complex1_learning1_meaning1_communication1

A lot of people confuse knowledge with information and data and so on. Along one dimension we can separate - we can start with data and then go to information, then to knowledge and to something like wisdom. So you have a development from something very particular and not very deep to something more complex and deep.

Røyrvik_reality5_learning2_object1_communication2

We can differentiate between knowledge and knowing for example. Knowledge is some insight about the world that you possess like an object in a sense, while knowing is more the processual side of knowledge.

Røyrvik_reality6_learning3_being4_meaning2_object3_communication3

Knowledge is something that we as humans have learned, it's not an inert quality. We have learned something about the world, if it's people, phenomena , things or objects in the world. So we can say that knowledge comprises of the kind of interfaces between our inner worlds of meaning, thoughts and ideas and the

outer world that comprises of people, objects etc.

Røyrvik_group3_learning4_communication4

We learn and accumulate knowledge both individually in idiosyncratic unique ways, but also as members of society groups we learn in collective ways, we learn some of the same things through the institutions and memberships in the groups we participate in.

Røyrvik_connection2_learning5_group4_communication5

Those socializing mechanisms they produce sorts of collective knowledge. And we learn that collective knowledge through conscious teaching and so on, but not least through more direct implicit ways, through the practices we participate in with others.

Røyrvik_reality7_information2_learning6_group5_being5_transfer3_communication7

Knowledge sharing has become very important because we live in a knowledge society, knowledge economy with high levels of educations and high techs and all kinds of things. So it's an economy and society very much based on competences and knowledge, so sharing all that knowledge is very important for creating both values and a good society.

Røyrvik_body1_information3_transfer4_group4_communication7

But there is a problem with sharing knowledge, because knowledge is both a fact based knowledge, but on the other hand you have the more tacit or implicit kinds of knowledge that is more related to each individual or each group's bodies and things we can do, but we can't explicate it or put on a paper and say what exactly we are doing.

Røyrvik_transfer5_information4_connection3_group5_communication8

We say that to become an expert in something means that you have to make it more implicit, more tacit, so the more expertise you have, the more difficult it is to explain what you are actually doing. So that creates a problem for knowledge sharing in society because the most valuable knowledge is also the knowledge that is the most difficult to share.

Røyrvik_stories1_meaning2_group6_communication9

A myth is a story or a narrative that comprises some of the major or important meanings that a group or a society subscribes to, that's important to them. So myths are the vehicles to reproduce some of the more important meanings and understandings in a group or society.

Røyrvik_group7_transfer6_connection4

It's a kind of window into the ways, or the cultural understandings or assumptions that we are sharing in groups or communities.

Røyrvik_stories2_evolution7_connection4_transfer6_group8

You can say that rituals and myths belong together. Rituals are the performative sides of myths - the ways that we in practise shape and reproduce some of the important notions, ideas and signs that a group or a community is concerned with.

Røyrvik_stories3_group9_connection5_information5_transfer7

Myth are narratives about important topics, issues, values.. They are vehicles that convey some of the cultural premisses and ideas that are important for members of a group. Then we can say that through narratives it is possible to share some of the more implicit, more tacit knowledge that we have.

Røyrvik_stories4_complex2_transfer8_information6

Narratives they convey a more complex story than just exchanging facts, they bring along normative assumptions, ideas about morality and ideas about values that we want to convey. The more implicit, tacit

types of knowledge are embedded in social circumstances that are characterized by values and norms etc. So through narratives, myths and rituals we are sharing more of those more difficult kinds of knowledge.

Røyrvik_stories5_information7_transfer9

Studies have shown that in high tech environments like physics labs for example, the scientists are telling each other stories about their research, and that's how they are sharing knowledge, but when they write their papers all those stories are not in there.

Røyrvik_change2_stories6_group10_connection6_evolution8

We say sometimes that cultural characteristics are slow to change, and that's partly because of the fact that myths and rituals are part of the cultural collective in a sense, that stands outside or are partly independent from each individual member of the group, but they are of course dependent upon the group to reinvent it and reproduce them over time. But many studies have shown that some myths and rituals can lie dormant for a number of years, and then they are sort of brought to life again, when there is a need for them.

Røyrvik_stories7_force4_complex3_group11

The myths they are vehicles of some of the fundamental issues at stake, fundamental concerns and principles in a society. They are both vehicles and they convey them. Sometimes they are contradictory, they are not always conveyed as simple charts, that are very easy to understand, they can be contradictory and complex.

Røyrvik_time1_reality8_change3_evolution9

From the scientific revolution, from the renaissance and onwards, we have had several periods in time where the western culture have been more or less obsessed with counting, measuring, standardizing, so it's not totally unique for our current period. From the renaissance and upwards we changed our perception of the world, we evolved the capacity to see the world in quantitative terms, so we learned to see the world through numbers.

Røyrvik_time2_reality9_change4_being6_body2

We sort of invented time. With the clock we invented abstract time, we learned how to count time, and thereby our whole reality changed, because we started to think about time in a completely different way. Before that, time was more perceived as being an integral part of actions, time was integrated in practices. So you couldn't save time, etc. With the clock we can sort of.. Time is abstract and measures all kinds of activities. So activities changed and our perception of activity, and what we are doing and feeling and thinking in the world.

Røyrvik_reality10_change5_consciousness1_technology1_environment1

With the invention of this quantitative perception and quantitative thinking, very important dimensions of our reality and how we think about and are in the world changed.

Røyrvik_technology2_system10_reality10

The computer is one of the reasons that calculations, counting, measurements etc have increased again, because the computer makes it very easy to create these calculative systems, all the evaluations and reports that people in our society is characterized by.

Røyrvik_technology3_system11_being7

It's more and more substituting human knowledge processes, human evaluations forms... Substituting the human forms of judgement and thinking with technological systems that are taking over more and more of human judgement.

Røyrvik_technology3_intelligence1_evolution10_change6

The next step that we see now, in this substitutions of human judgement with technological calculations and measurement, is that we are entering the phase of more intelligent technologies, A.I. etc. Already we

see that more and more decisions are being taken by these smart technologies, they learn by themselves and are taking over... Not only the simple routine tasks, but more and more decision making.

Røyrvik_system12_change7_evolution11_technology4

We see a transformation, not only are these metric systems taking over more and more of human judgement, but also taking over more and more decision making. The decision making take over is still in the early stage, but I think that will increase very much in the future.

Røyrvik_technology4_system13_meaning3_reality11_intelligens2_power8

With technology that increasingly is getting so smart that the majority of people, and also the majority of technical experts don't understand how these systems work, we can envisage a future where people are feeling less and less in control of their environment.

Røyrvik_technology5_culture1_system14_power9_being7

There are these nonhuman technological, very capable and 'smart' systems that are controlling, managing and deciding so much of what is going on in our society, so people will be more alienated and feeling less and less as the center of their own life, in a sense.

Røyrvik_technology6_information8_intelligens3_power10_reality12

There is an utopian and a dystopian scenario for all this. The utopian scenario is that all of the smarter and smarter technologies are just making society better for everybody. We will get more interesting work, we don't have to do all the routine, all the boring work, the machines will do it for us, so we can concentrate on creative, interesting knowledge work. So that's the positive scenario. The other scenario is of course the matrix scenario - that the machines take over, take control over us. Lots of important technologists today are afraid that this development will happen, that this dystopian route might actually be realised.

Røyrvik_technology7_system15_evolution12_change8_infant1

The first thing that might happen is that all these advanced robotics, smart systems will wipe out a major part of the middle class jobs that exist today, so a lot of people are afraid of that, are concerned, but so far we haven't seen that coming, but it might still happen. Because so far the smart technology development is still quite in its infancy, so it hasn't yet had the time to take over the more complex, advanced work.

Røyrvik_consciousness2_network1_connection7_intelligens3_question2

The question that triggers me the most is 'what is consciousness'? I mean it has been researched and studied by so many people, the smartest minds, but they still have, basically no clue. I think personally, that are asking the wrong question - they ask how the brain produce consciousness, but it might not be the case. There could be another relation between the brain and consciousness.

Røyrvik_question3_change9

Is a post-capitalist society possible? And how can we make it happen?