

The Social Structure of Knowledge Societies

Christoph Biester

Universität Duisburg Essen
kontakt@biester.info

May 14th 2007
International Conference on Sociology
Athens, Greece

- 1 Introduction: Research Questions
- 2 Graphical Representations of Social Structures
- 3 Social Structure of Knowledge Societies
- 4 Conclusion

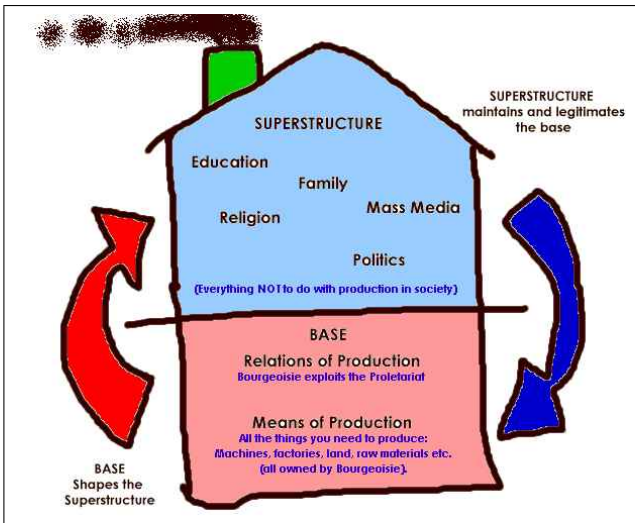
- To describe social structure of societies is part of sociology. We have done this for agrarian societies as well as for industrial societies.
- These descriptions are shown in graphical representations.

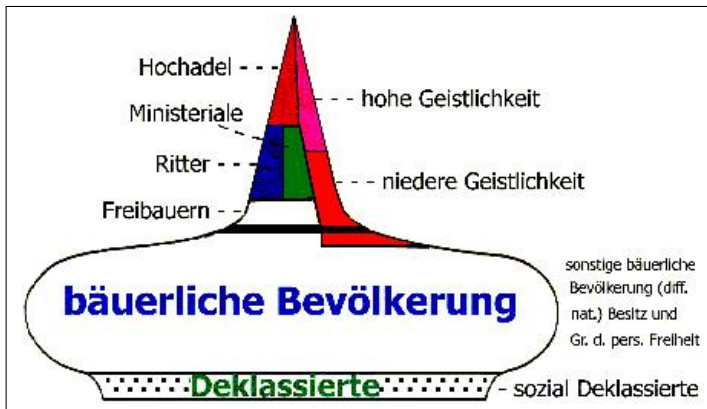
- Does the popular term *knowledge society* describe society in the same meaning as the terms *agrarian and industrial society*?
- Can the term *knowledge society* be used to give a social structure description in the meaning of a graphical representation?
- Social structure means everything that can be considered as a relatively constant social relation; e.g.:
 - Relations between individuals and groups.
 - Relations between man and society
 - Relations between man and societal values (ideologies or even ethics)

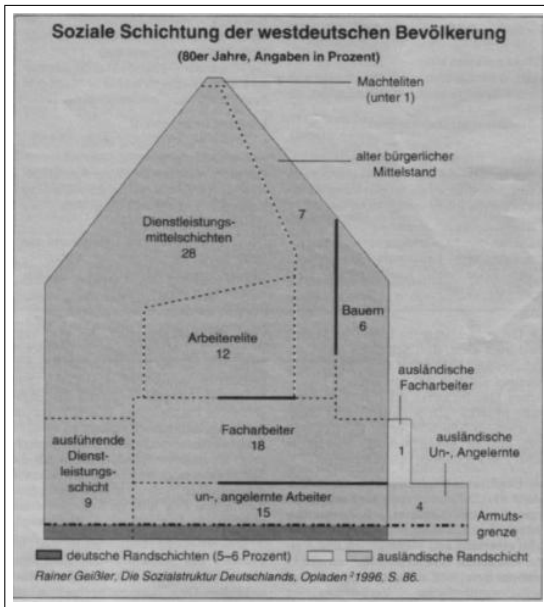
Hobbes Leviathan



Marx's Base Superstructure Model







- „The term „knowledge based economy“ results from a fuller recognition of the role of technology and knowledge in economic growth“ (OECD, 1996, p.9)
- The worth of a common computer only consists of about 5% manual labor. The remainder is intellectual capital (Bühl, 1996)
- „Knowledge-intensive service sectors, such as education, and communication, are growing even faster. Indeed, it is estimated that more than 50% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the major OECD economies is now knowledge based“ (OECD, 1996, p.9).

- Within agrarian society the ownership of land has been the structuring category.
- Within industrial society occupations have been the structuring category.

If we try to use knowledge as the structuring category of knowledge society we have certain problems:

- exclusive private ownership of knowledge
- exchanging knowledge

Yes, the popular term *knowledge society* describes society in the same meaning as the terms *agrarian and industrial society*.

To use this term in order to give a graphical representation of knowledge society causes the mentioned problems.