Habermas on Civil Society, Lifeworld and System: Unearthing the Social in Transformation Theory

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Abstract: *The debate as to whether transformative learning theory takes adequate account of the social has contributed to the clarification and development of the theory. But this debate has been, to a great extent, framed within transformation theory. This paper outlines some key ideas from Jürgen Habermas - civil society, public sphere, lifeworld and system, democracy and discourse - that are crucial to unearthing the social in transformation theory. Discursive democracy is proposed as an antidote to lifeworld colonization and the uncoupling of system and lifeworld. The intellectual genesis of transformation theory, as detailed by Habermas, has the practical intent of working for transformation of the lifeworld and also for institutional and system change that is redefined in this paper as a process of discursifying the system.*

Transformation theory has been critiqued on the basis that it does not have an adequate understanding of the social (Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990; Clarke & Wilson, 1991; Cunningham, 1992a; Newman, 1994; Inglis, 1997) prompting clarifications and further development of the theory (Mezirow, 1989; 1991; 1995; 1996; 1997; 2000). The critics assert that Mezirow's emphasis on transformation, as a primarily individual act, is not representative of the sociological emphasis of Habermas's critical theory. The critics, according to Mezirow, misunderstand transformation theory. This paper will briefly look at these critiques, the responses, and look to the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas as a useful starting point for unearthing the social in transformation theory.

The missing social in transformation theory?

Collard and Law (1989) say transformation theory is overly concerned with individual change, while Clarke and Wilson (1991) say it locates "perspective transformation in the individual…and fails to explore the constitutive relationship between individuals and the sociocultural, political and historical contexts in which they are situated" (p. 90). Newman (1994) asserts that transformation theory does not show how learning might contribute to the political struggle. Inglis (1997) states that there is an "over-reliance on the individual rather than social movements as the agency of social change and, consequently, an inadequate and false sense of emancipation" (p. 6).

The response from Mezirow (1997, p. 61) is to spell out the connection between transformation and social action by suggesting that learners be helped to analyse their common problems through participatory research; discover options for social action; build solidarities with others and develop the ability to work with others in order to take social action. His response is to also identify the role of educator as a teacher of the skills and other knowledge required for social action. Mezirow is concerned to place action at the centre of the transformative process and if oppression is by a landlord, employer or anyone else the action necessary may indeed be collective social action (Mezirow 1997, p. 60). If the distortions are of a sociocultural nature, then the action may be social or political (1989, p. 173). Mezirow (1997, p. 61) always draws a distinction between fostering critically reflective learning and fostering social action. Action is seen as individual or social but not exclusively one or the other. Epistemic or psychic distortions may not require social action and adult education can have goals other than collective social action (Mezirow, 1989). It may sometimes be appropriate for adult educators to join in solidarity with others taking social action and Mezirow (1997, p. 62) emphasizes how distortions in meaning schemes and perspectives are placed there by society and culture

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It is the persistence of these misunderstandings that prompts this paper. The debate is usually framed in the context of transformation theory and less often in the context of the theories of Jürgen Habermas that provide the intellectual genesis of transformation theory. We turn then to key ideas from Habermas on civil society, public sphere, lifeworld and discursive democracy in order to identify the social as a key part of transformation theory.

Civil society and the public sphere

There has been a renewed interest in civil society, particularly since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Block. The radical political Left in Europe sees civil society as a location for radical political action. Civil society has recently become the central focus of the debates regarding the perceived decline of American society and it is argued that civil society must be strong for democracy to prevail, the economy to grow and social problems to be resolved in a post-industrial global society (Hall, McKnight, & Pandak, 1999). Adult educators are also interested in civil society as a way of critiquing how the state and the economy operate (Durish, et al., 1999). More recent concerns about state and economic globalization see adult education playing an important role in developing a global civil society (Fleming, 1998).

While acknowledging the various meanings given to civil society by Adam Smith, David Hume, Hegel, Marx and Gramsci, it was the latter who initiated the process of adding three crucial components to the understanding of civil society (Murphy, 2001). The first was an emphasis on the cultural and symbolic dimension of civil society - its role in the formation of values, action-orienting norms, meanings, and identifications. From this perspective, civil society does not only transmit or inculcate established practices or beliefs; it is also a site of social contestation, in which collective identities, ethical values, and alliances are forged.

The second major contribution of twentieth-century analysts was an emphasis on the more dynamic, creative side of civil society - informal networks, initiatives and social movements, as distinct from more formal voluntary associations and institutions. Social movements articulate new social concerns and projects, and generate new values and collective identities. In struggles over democratization, they seek to reform not only the polity, but also the institutions of civil society itself.

The final key contribution in this century has been the communicative, deliberative conception of the "public sphere," developed primarily by Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas the coffee houses, salons and table society of Europe were examples of inclusive literary public spaces because of their equality, critique, accessibility, reflexivity and problematizing the unquestioned. The ideal of a public sphere asserts itself as a bulwark against the systematizing effects of the state and the economy. The public sphere is located in civil society and is where people can discuss matters of mutual concern as peers, and learn about facts, events, and the opinions, interests, and perspectives of others in an atmosphere free of coercion and of inequalities that would incline individuals to acquiesce or be silent. This involvement develops individual autonomy; is a learning process; and creates a politically relevant public opinion.

It will be sufficient for our purposes to see civil society as "a sphere of interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary organizations), social movements, and forms of public communication" (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. ix). The current interest in civil society is partly because of its connections with ideas of democratization and Cohen and Arato, in reconstructing the concept of civil society on the base provided by Habermas, connect civil society and a particular kind of discourse. Civil society is frequently seen as a locus for limiting the power of the state. The core of civil society comprises a "network of associations that institutionalizes problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organized public spheres" (Habermas, 1996, p. 367).

Radical adult educators have long been involved in identifying spaces where critical learning can take place - Freire's culture circles, Mezirow's women returners of the 1970s, Flecha's (2000) literary circles - and now civil society is regarded as a prime location for

learning that is free from domination by either the state or the economy. Civil society is also seen as the space that promotes full participation by citizens, ensuring that we strive towards a participatory democracy (Cunningham, 1992b, p. 12). On the other hand, it is important not to romanticize civil society, as frequently the state and dominant classes achieve their hegemony through the organizations of civil society. It is clear, for example, that in Northern Ireland much of the violence is located in civil society – beatings, punishment shootings, teen gangs and family violence.

The tradition of radical democracy includes, in different ways, figures such as Jefferson, Emerson, Marx, Gramsci, John Stuart Mill and John Dewey. What makes them radical, according to Warren (1995), is the view that

> democratic participation is an important means of self-development and self-realization. They also hold that more participation will produce individuals with more democratic dispositions – individuals who are more tolerant of difference, more sensitive to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgment, and more prone to examine their own preferences – all qualities conducive to the success of democracy as a way of making decisions. (p. 167)

Cohen and Arato (1992, pp. 416-17; 560-562) follow Habermas in assuming that democratic transformations of the self are most likely to take place within social movements located in civil society because the external imperatives of markets do not interfere with self-reflective processes. These groups in civil society range from political parties, to citizens' initiatives, new social movements, voluntary associations and consciousness raising groups. The concept of the public sphere is the normative core of the idea of civil society and the heart of any conception of democracy. The political legitimacy of modern constitutional democracies rests on the principle that action-orienting norms, practices, policies, and claims to authority can be contested by citizens and must be affirmed or redeemed in public discourse. The public sphere is the primary locus of the struggle to protect the lifeworld.

Lifeworld: colonization and uncoupling

Habermas (1987a) defines the lifeworld as "the intuitively present, in this sense familiar and transparent, and at the same time vast and incalculable web of presuppositions that have to be satisfied if an actual utterance is to be at all meaningful, i.e. valid *or* invalid" (p. 131). The life-world is "the reservoir of implicitly known traditions, the background assumptions that are embedded in language and culture and drawn upon by individuals in everyday life" (Cohen & Arato, 1992, p. 427). In other words, "the lifeworld is a stock of knowledge composed of basic assumptions which function as an implicit or tacit horizon in everyday processes of communication" (Wildemeersch & Leirman, 1988, p. 19). The lifeworld is the context and background in which communicative action takes place and is formed by always unproblematic, taken for granted convictions; it is the source of definitions of the situation; and is the repository of the interpretive work of past generations (Alway, 1995, p. 113).

In the attempt by Habermas to understand modernity he proposes an integrated concept of system-lifeworld. His (1973, p.159) previously used concepts of work and interaction become, at the level of society, system and lifeworld - a rethinking of the Marxist concepts of base and superstructure within a communication paradigm (Alway, 1995, p. 113).

Habermas develops the concepts of colonization and uncoupling to describe the relationship between system and lifeworld. Problems arise when the system, constructed to serve our technical interests, invades the practical domain of the lifeworld and intervenes in the processes of meaning-making among individuals and communities in everyday life. The lifeworld, he says (1984, p. 12), is colonized by the functional imperatives of the state and the economy, characterized by the cult of efficiency and the inappropriate deployment of technology. The imperatives of the economic and political-legal system remove the internal communicative action that underpins the formation and reproduction of lifeworlds, providing in its place an external framework of ideas, values, meaning and language based on systems. As a result the symbolic reproduction process of the lifeworld (cultural reproduction, social

integration and socialization) incorporates a discourse of functionality and individuals and groups increasingly define themselves and their aspirations in system terms and see themselves as consumers and clients (Habermas, 1987a, p. 356).

The economic and political-legal systems have become insensitive to the imperatives of mutual understanding on which solidarity and legitimacy of social orders depend. The increase in legal regulations governing social life, what Habermas (1987a, p. 350) calls, a "juridification of communicatively structured areas of action," along with commodification in the economic domain are symptomatic of colonization. Leisure, family life, sexual relations, are all targets of commodification (Habermas 1987a, p. 363). The resulting loss of meaning deprives individuals of coherent consistent interpretations of the world and so makes individuals more susceptible to colonization. This has implications for working with organizations.

The system's steering media of money and power have become so effective that it is difficult to maintain collective social grounding in a shared culture, social order and social identity. Money and power have begun to operate on their own terms, so that individuals "become invisible" (Kemmis, 1998, p. 279); are seen by the economy as consumers and human resources; and by the political-legal system as citizens, voters or clients of bureaucracies regulated by policies and laws. The steering media have created their own discourses (of monetarization, bureaucratization and juridification) that regulate exchange and interactions. These discourses are "indifferent to the dynamics of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization necessary for the development and reproduction of lifeworlds" (Kemmis, 1998, p. 280). When these systems function according to their own rational, they seem to the individual to be natural and common sense; indifferent to the individual; beyond their control; and not subject to communicative action. This reification is what Habermas means by the uncoupling of system and lifeworld. Lifeworld and system are in need of transformation.

The theory of communicative action aims to offer a vision, that allows the effects of uncoupling and colonization to come into perspective. It allows us to

> become conscious of the *difference between steering problems* and *problems of mutual understanding.* We can see the difference between systemic disequilibria and lifeworld pathologies, between disturbances of material reproduction and deficiencies in symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld….Money and power can neither buy nor compel solidarity and meaning. In brief, the result of the process of disillusionment is a new state of consciousness in which the social-welfare project becomes reflexive to a certain extent and aims at taming not just the capitalist economy, but also the state itself. (Habermas, 1987b, p. 363)

If the economic and political-legal systems have become insensitive to the imperatives of mutual understanding on which solidarity and legitimacy of social orders depend, the solution, according to Habermas, is to revitalize autonomous, self-organized public spheres which are capable of asserting themselves against the media of money and power. Not only does the lifeworld need to be defended but the state and capitalism need to be "socially tamed" (Habermas, 1987b, p. 363).

Adult educators will argue that grass-root movements, many self-help groups as well as classrooms where participatory research is conducted and collaborative enquiry is pursued are examples of such public spheres. Programmes of transformative learning in organizations attempt the same goal by alerting the system world to issues and problems of motivation and legitimation that are a symptom and consequence of uncoupling the system and lifeworld. Shaw & Taylor (2000) and Davis & Ziegler (2000) illustrate well how this takes place through leadership development and organizational in workplaces by encouraging discursive will-formation through reflection and dialogue.

Making change in system and lifeworld

In what way can change be brought about as a reaction to colonization and uncoupling? According to Habermas (1987b);

> Self-organized public spheres must develop the prudent combination of power and self-restraint that is needed to sensitise the self-steering mechanisms of the state and the economy to the goal-oriented outcomes of radical democratic will-formation…we have a model of boundary conflicts – which are held in check by the lifeworld – between the lifeworld and two subsystems that are superior to it in complexity and can be influenced by it only indirectly. (p. 365)

This commitment to a view of change that is gradual and a long-term experiment in transformation is consistent with Habermas's view of what it is to be human, i.e. oriented towards achieving mutual understanding through discussion and dialogue. Central to this, according to Always (1995), is the view that transforming the world must involve, not "a revolutionary transformation of society, but the creation and protection of spaces within which a radical concept of democracy, as a process of shared learning carried out in and through communicative action, might flourish" (p. 127). In transformation theory it is the lifeworld that gets transformed. The lifeworld concept indicates that the person is dialectically related to the cultural-social context. The task of the left and of a democratic civil society and of adult education is one of de-colonizing the lifeworld and of addressing the consequences of uncoupling the system and lifeworld (Habermas, 1987a; Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 455). For each person, according to Habermas (1996), the lifeworld;

> remains largely unthematized, but the theorist can differentiate its resources into three broad components: the stock of taken-for-granted certitudes and ideas ('culture'); the norms, loyalties, institutions, and so forth, that secure group cohesion or solidarity ('society'); and the competencies and skills that members have internalized ('personality'). A viable lifeworld is reproduced, then, through the cultural transmission of ideas, through forms of social integration, and through the socialization of its members. (p. 518)

Transformation of the lifeworld involves changes in its cultural, social or personality dimensions and, for Habermas, these three differentiated elements are interconnected. The individual personality is linked to society and culture as well as to the two differentiated elements of the system world (state and economy). Personal transformations are doubly linked to the social. The three components of lifeworld may give an interesting way of describing frames of reference, as used by Mezirow, as having cultural, social and personality dimensions, as the lifeworld does. This allows us identify the beginning of the process of unearthing the social in transformation theory and of countering Newman's (1994) critique about the absence of a political/social action agenda in transformation theory.

Welton (1995, p. 28) writes about the defence of the lifeworld as reappropriating the learning processes in "the family, the public sphere, community life, and cultural expressions" from the grasp and control of technical reason and putting them back in the hands of citizens engaged in democratic consensual dialogue. Again the social is central.

Adult education and democracy

Habermas (1996) places discourse at the centre of democratic theory, conceived as a means of resolving disputes, enabling collective actions and also as a measure and justification of democratic institutions. 'Why should I obey?' is answered by Habermas in this way: not because of the police or state or strategic interest but by the force of the better argument. Political force generated by discourse, where all motives except that of the cooperative search for truth are excluded, is what compels and legitimizes action.

The core of Habermas's critique of capitalism is that the public sphere or public discussion has been reduced by the activities of politicians, advertisers, public relations and the media in general. He links the concept of a public sphere with that of civil society to provide an account of how control can be exercised over markets and bureaucracies (Habermas, 1996). Civil society operates on the basis that the government is not fully representative of the people. There is a democratic deficit - a gap between actual democratic practices and the ideal. The feminist movement, for example, has always identified a democratic deficit and bias in the system world. The agenda of civil society is influenced

strongly by this analysis of undemocratic or partial democratic achievements and by a certain conception of what democracy might mean. Civil society has the dual function of ensuring that those who exercise power do not abuse it and of transforming the system to regenerate more democratic practices. In a complex modern society the quality of democracy ultimately depends on the existence of the public sphere, on people's intelligent involvement in politics and on organizations and associations which help form opinion through discourse. A vibrant civil society is essential for democracy. The conviction that free, open, public discussion has a transformative function is central to Habermas's thinking. The way to reach a true understanding of people's needs and interests is to engage in a democratic debate in which these needs are shared and in the discourse, clarified and transformed.

When Habermas suggests debate, what kind of debate is he talking about? He means a debate that is aimed at resolving practical disagreements and involves the implicit commitment to a set of rules. These rules of discussion involve the equal rights of all concerned; having appropriate evidence in support of arguments; an obligation to provide reasons for challenging what others assert; and the examining of alternative and other people's perspectives.

Habermas outlines a concept of discourse as a debate where proposals are critically tested; information is shared in an inclusive and public way; where no one is excluded and all have equal opportunity to take part. There is no external coercion as they are bound only by criteria of what is reasonable, and free of internal coercion in that each has equal opportunity to be heard, introduce topics, make contributions, suggest and criticize proposals and arrive at decisions motivated solely by the unforced force of the better argument. All decisions are for now, provisional and can be returned to at any time. These deliberations also include the interpretation of needs and wants (Habermas, 1996, p. 305). There are three principles of this discourse: (a) universalization - it constrains all to adopt the perspectives of all others in the balancing of interests - in a scaled down version of Kant's categorical imperative, (b) only those norms can be valid that meet with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in the discourse; (c) consensus can be achieved only if all participants participate freely. There must be, in addition, a sense of solidarity between participants - concern for the well-being of others and the community at large. Habermas is aware of issues of power but assumes that this one area at least is, ideally, immune from power. Power is a key concept in Habermas's conception of communicative rationality and it is here that Habermas gives grounds for arguing with Inglis (1997) who asserts that Mezirow has no theory of power. These are the necessary conditions for a democratic society and for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1995, p. 67).

It is on this basis that transformation theory asserts that the dichotomy between individual and social development is a spurious one for educators. Effective learners in an emancipatory, participative, democratic society - a learning society - become a community of cultural critics and social activists (Mezirow, 1995, pp. 68-70) and the dichotomy of individual and society is transcended by an epistemology of intersubjectivity.

Habermas proceeds to examine the possibilities for revitalising a public political sphere which has side-lined mutual understanding in favour of system self-regulation through the steering medium of money and power, and which is now paying a high price in terms of the withdrawal of motivation and legitimacy from these systems.

Habermas (1987a) has developed the concepts of legitimation and motivational crises, earlier outlined in *Legitimation Crisis* (1975), but now in a form that is more specific to systems, i.e. as a withdrawal of the support or motivation necessary for the reproduction of systems. The resulting crises give rise to anomie and in order to ensure the motivation and legitimation necessary for the reproduction of the system, both culture and personality come under attack. Material reproduction is achieved at the expense of symbolic reproduction and psychopathologies, mental illness and loss of cultural traditions are inevitable (Habermas 1987a p. 142). It is at the point where domains of action that rely on the medium of communicative action become commercialized or bureaucratized that the process of normal mediatization pass into pathological colonization (Habermas, 1987a, p. 318). This is a

powerful analysis of the situation faced by transformative educators working for individual, institutional or social change – a vision in which all these are interconnected.

Adult learning and decolonizing the lifeworld
Resistance to colonization has, according to Habermas, taken on new forms and class conflicts have been replaced by conflict at the seams or boundaries between system and lifeworld (1987a, p. 395; 1987b, p. 357). Education, community development and grassroots movements can bring about change, as can self-organized groups conducting participatory research and collaborative action research in system settings – all examples of autonomous public spheres (Kemmis, 1996, pp. 280-282). In these groups an

> Alternative practice is directed against the profit dependent instrumentalization of work in one's vocation, the market-dependent mobilization of labour power, against the extension of pressures of competition and performance all the way down into elementary school. It also takes aim at the monetarization of services, relationships, and time, at the consumerist redefinition of private spheres of life and personal life-styles. (Habermas, 1987a, p. 395)

New social movements are concerned with overcoming the effects of the colonization of the lifeworld. This is not the radicalism of Marx or Lenin but a self-limiting radicalism where change is brought about by creating autonomous public spheres of debate and discussion, while allowing for the continuing functioning of the economic and administrative systems. This may give educators interested in transformative change a clear mandate to work in the seams and at the boundaries of systems to humanize and transform them so that they operate in the interests of all.

Will adult education serve the system or the life-world? The increased role of the system in education, family life, community activities, etc. leads Collins (1991, p. 94) to identify a new "problem zone that has arisen on the borders separating the system and life-world." A deskilling of the life-world has been facilitated, at least partially, by adult education and its persistent involvement with the system.

In this context adult educators find themselves with options. As with Freire, who said education was never neutral, one can be for system or lifeworld. Adult educators find themselves working very often in the state sector (in schools, second chance provision), in the economy (job skills training, organizational change) or civil society (community education). The challenge is how to be for decolonization of the lifeworld? Part of the problem is that some systematically distort public communication (education debate) by narrowing discussions to issues of technical problem-solving and denying the very conditions for communicatively rational collective will-formation.

Critical adult education has as its normative mandate the preservation of a critically reflective lifeworld (Welton, 1995, p. 5). Critical theory holds out the promise of enabling us to think of all society as a vast school. Habermas addressed a multiple audience of potential transformative agents working in the social movements and in various other institutional sectors of society (Welton, 1995, p. 25). In identifying actors, such as journalists, who emerge from the public with a critical mandate, he summarizes the tasks they *ought* to fulfil (Habermas, 1966, p. 378) as that of a central and systemic player in the construction and support of a critical public sphere. Journalists, he says, and the media ought to "understand themselves as the mandatary of an enlightened public whose willingness to learn and capacity for criticism they at once presuppose, demand, and reinforce" (1996, p. 378). It might be a useful starting point for defining the role of an adult educator as located in the same public space, helping adults both decolonize the lifeworld through democratic, critical discourses and transforming systems (organizations, bureaucracies and workplaces).

Adult learning and discursifying systems
In proposing the social goal of transforming the system-world social movements play a key role in making systems more sensitive to the imperatives of mutual understanding. Sonnert (1994) suggests an approach that frames the question this way: In the context of

Kohlberg's (1984) theory of moral development and Habermas's discourse, is a moral stage 6 society possible? At stage 6 of Kohlberg's moral reasoning the correct solution to a moral dilemma is assumed to be constituted in the process of discourse (Sonnert, 1994, p. 129). But in realising that we cannot live always in a state of discourse, because society cannot function if all action is suspended for discourse, there is need for stable institutions that get on with the business of society and operate efficiently. Society, according to Sonnert, must include some non-discursive institutions (the state and economy), that function at a lower than stage 6. Habermas too accepts the necessity of non-discursive institutions and accepts that the complete discursification of society is unrealistic. Sonnert suggests that metadiscourse is a way of delineating the discursive domain (interested in justice, care and mutual understanding) from the non-discursive (interested in efficiency and feasibility). Metadiscourse is thus characterized by a linking of the pragmatic with the principled (Sonnert, 1994, p. 131).

In outlining metadiscourse, Sonnert takes discursifying bureaucracy as an example and it is reasonable to extrapolate from this and suggest that systems could be discursified. Metadiscourse would then address the question as to how to structure the system so as to accommodate principled discourse as much as possible without loss of efficiency. Sonnert suggests three strategies for discursifying bureaucracies and we here suggest these might be strategies for discursifying systems. The strategies are boundary definition; metadiscursive review and transformation of the system.

In *boundary definition* the necessity for the non-discursive is recognized and its sphere of influence is demarcated and contained. Metadiscourse addresses the question of where the demarcation line should be drawn (1994, p. 133). Habermas had "suggested a division somewhere between the domain of material reproduction that would be appropriate for bureaucratic institutions (and for the market) and the domain of symbolic reproduction where discursive structures should prevail" (Sonnert, 1994, p. 133), i.e. between system and lifeworld. This is similar to the "model of boundary conflicts…held in check by the lifeworld" discussed earlier (Habermas, 1987b, p. 365).

A *metadiscursive review* would evaluate how movement could be made from discursive to non-discursive moments, from metadiscourse to operational activities.

Finally, *transformation of the system* inserts discursive elements into the system itself. This strategy aims at transforming the inside of structures, whether bureaucracies, organizations, institutions or the economic and political-legal systems. This discursification of systems also implies the institutionalisation of discourse (Sonnert, 1994, p. 133).

There is a tradition in adult education of working for more discursive structures in institutions. In particular, Argyris (1987) and Marsick (Marsick, Bitterman, & van der Veen, 2000) have proposed ways of making transformative learning happen in systems, organizations, institutions and communities such that efficiency is not hindered but enhanced, motivation increased and crises avoided or resolved.

Conclusion

These ideas from Habermas are those that inform transformation theory and lead us to conclude that transformation theory is grounded in and infused with a sense of the social. The social, along with culture and personality, are differentiated and interconnected elements of the lifeworld. These ideas point to a dual agenda for transformative education. Firstly, it involves the strengthening of the lifeworld against colonization by the system. Secondly, it involves taking into the system a commitment to fostering critical reflection and critical learning and supporting discursive understanding. This transformation of system and lifeworld, work and interaction places the social at the centre of transformation theory.

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