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A Conversation with Gernot Grabher

*The interview with Professor Gernot Grabher was made at the University of Bonn, where Grabher is chair of the research area Socio-Economics of Space. The office is located at the end of a corridor of a beautiful building in an area of lovely Jugendstil villas, where the Austrian born geographer works. From his publication list, one can notice that he works a lot.¹ Grabher is the author of several books and numerous journal articles including The Neglected King: Consumers in the New Knowledge Ecology of Innovation. (In: *Economic Geography* 2008, 3, with O. Ibert and S. Flohr); Paradoxes of Creativity: Managerial Challenges in the Creative Industries. (In: *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 2007, 3, with R. DeFillippi and C. Jones); Trading Routes, Bypasses, and Risky Intersections: Mapping the Travels of Networks between Economic Sociology and Economic Geography. (In: *Progress in Human Geography* 2006, 2).*

He is the editor of Economic Geography and board member of six journals. Grabher received his Ph.D. with distinction in Urban and Regional Planning from Vienna Technical University. As the interview begins at a quarter past six on the 26th of June, we talk while the birds' twittering can be heard through the open windows, which makes us feel the fresh air of this early summer day.

I begin by asking Gernot a typical first question of an interview: "How come that you have picked up geography?" I then take a sip of coffee that Gernot has offered me, and begin to listen to what he has to say.

Gernot Grabher: I guess I should start by saying that I was trained as an urban planner and, you know, planning is focused on solving concrete real-world problems, it is less concerned with disciplinary boundaries or – phrased differently – it doesn't have very strong loyalties to any single discipline. So, I think, planning really cultivates a sense of openness, or if you like, shameless eclecticism. And that was the background, in a sense. I first got in touch with geography, during my stay at the *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin*. I'd been invited to join a European Science Foundation Network on regional and urban restructuring and right from the beginning I was attracted by the approaches of scholars like Ash Amin, Nigel Thrift, and Peter Dicken, for example, just to name a few, and what I found so attractive about their approaches was that they

didn't explain regional evolution in terms of the more traditional repertoire of regional-economic variables like the sectoral structure of a region. Rather their analysis was very sensitive to this interrelation between historical trajectories, societal structures, political conditions, and regionally specific conventions, traditions, and norms. So the point for me was that their analysis wasn't only so much more richer, but that they also, in a sense, redefined the relation between economy, society, and space – for me in a very convincing fashion. Space was no longer just conceived as a passive container, in which economic and social forces play out somehow, but space was co-produced through markets and the economy. However, this is the scientific ex-post rationalization. I think of no less importance was the fact that I very much enjoyed the company of these guys from Bristol, Durham, and Manchester, and not just during the conference meetings, but no less afterwards. And as a consequence, British geography was on my radar, as a source of inspiration, but also as a possible place to work. And it didn't take very long before I took up a position at *King's College London*, first as a lecturer, then as a reader in economic geography. So that's basically how I came to geography through this network of British geographers, and not through continental geography, which represents a very different breed of geography that is much more aware of disciplinary boundaries. The British geography, in a sense, was so attractive to me because it had all this openness to a range of social science approaches.

Did you start out from practical interest and then turned more into theoretical problems, or?

I think first it was more the theoretical attraction of working with a completely different set of variables, if you like. Usually, you would start with a somewhat traditional shift-and-share analysis and regional sectoral structures. Working on the decline of old industrial areas, however, I could see you can't explain regional decline just in terms of their sectoral decline – old industrial areas don't decline just because they have the wrong sectoral structure so to speak, but they decline also because there is a whole range of societal, political, cultural factors that reinforce path dependent processes. And to really stop or even reverse these processes of decline, one has to look first and foremost into what appears secondary from a more traditional

economic geographic view, like the particular types of regional networks, the interplay between all sorts of public institutions, the reproduction of a particular regional identity and worldview, and the like.

And that helped me very much in understanding and theorizing regional decline in terms of a lock-in of regional development.

I also know you are having a clear interest in sociology.² Could you say something about the development when you started to see the value of sociological theories and sociological work? Was that at the same time, or would you say that sociology came to you at a later stage?

When I came to the *Wissenschaftszentrum*, I was placed between colleagues like Arndt Sorge, who was internal supervisor of my PhD project, and also Wolfgang Streeck. I was already placed in a milieu that was filled with the respective theoretical debates, but I think to me the real change came – and this sounds really kitschy – when I came across Granovetter's papers. Gary Herrigel was a PhD for some time in Germany, and he just mentioned Granovetter with the words: "Just have a look at these papers". And I thought this is really very helpful for getting a theoretically broader conception of processes of regional evolution, the idea of embeddedness in general, and his reasoning on the strength of weak ties more particularly. That was in 1988-89...before the wall came down. And in a very naive sense not knowing who Granovetter was or what the status of Granovetter was in academia, I as a young PhD, invited him to come to the *Wissenschaftszentrum*. And, surprisingly, he accepted. And that was just wonderful, he was there for six weeks, or seven weeks, and came with the different parts of his manuscript and that opened up a whole new range of literatures to me.

And it is really through Granovetter and his network approach that you discovered sociology, one could say?

Yes, when I was really drawn to this network-embeddedness paradigm, broadly speaking. Later, in 1990, I'd organized a conference at the *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin* (WZB) on networks. I mean I really should be grateful to the WZB for the opportunities to bring in all these brilliant colleagues! At my network conference, Woody Powell was present and that was, in a sense, a confrontation with the concepts and tools of social network analysis. One result of this workshop was *The Embedded Firm* (Grabher 1993), and this book, I think, is amongst two or three other pieces

that brought the embeddedness-network paradigms, for good or for worse, to economic geography. And then the next and that is the closest tie is my contact with David Stark. When I finished my work on the decline of old industrial areas I found myself literally placed within this grand laboratory to study regional and institutional transformation that had opened up when the Wall came down in 1989.

But at the very beginning the research on these transformation processes was either very descriptive or very much phrased and framed in terms of shock therapy, as proposed by Jeffrey Sachs. And so, coming across David Stark's work was just providing a very robust and inspiring alternative of how to think about the transformation process, again as a more path-dependent trajectory, as a non-teleological process. And I was also able to invite him to the WZB. And that time turned out to be very – I think at least for me! – very fruitful and we didn't just work on the post-socialist transformation, but also on this notion of heterarchy and heterarchic organizations and the role of slack und redundant capacities in evolutionary processes. And in fact, the relation with David has grown stronger over the years, and influenced my work on various empirical fields.

What I would like to come to is...how do you relate the idea of network to your own background in geography? Where do you see clashes and where do you see the clear connections where it is easy to tie the two together?

I mean the traditional – and this is really more the continental geography – is referred to as *Länderkunde*, which means your prime object of investigation is a particular space or *Landschaft* that you try to describe and understand in its totality, from the natural preconditions to the population structure. And during the last 10-15 years or so, there has been a shift, there is an ongoing debate on a relational turn in geography. So it's no longer that you focus primarily on this space in its totality, but you try to understand social and economic relations in their historical and spatial contexts. So the prime analytical focus are the relations between individual and collective actors within and across regions. The analytical focus is no longer on understanding the space as a pre-given, naturalized container filled, as it were, with firms, institutions, people etc., in its totality.

And that's where the network-metaphor or template or set of tools really came in. However, I think we tend to use

networks in a very generic sense and although there is some network literacy that goes beyond key notions like *tertius gaudens*, structural holes, or bridging ties, for example – they are rarely applied in the rigorous fashion of social network analysis. So in economic geography people focus more on how these relations evolve, how they change structure or content, how they evolve from a very shallow tie into dense ties which eventually might even end up in social closure. I think economic geography is comparatively good with regard to the content and dynamics of ties, but we're weak on structure, and I think that's something we should really take on board more deliberately.

You mentioned that you are strong on content. Can you give some examples even from your own work or from other works that indicate what you mean by that?

For example, when you analyse the local and global networks of a particular firm. Our analysis might be less concerned with the formal structure of these networks. But we might say something about the more accidental character of the local ties and that they convey more generic information. On the other hand the global ties might be established much more deliberately to source very specific knowledge to accomplish a certain task.

My knowledge of geography is shallow, but I found it interesting that you mentioned that you see the network as metaphorical. Also when I try to figure out what space means, I get the feeling that space has become more and more metaphorical, also used among geographers, for example if one compares old texts in comparison with more recent ones. Is that something you would agree with?

There is an interesting or at least a remarkable *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. On the one hand, parts of the social sciences seem to discover space, I'm just thinking about the work of Woody Powell and the evolution of the biotech-field in Silicon Valley or the proliferation of articles on clusters in non-geographic journals, for example. But usually these contributions employ a topographic perception of Euclidean space. Geography, on the other hand, is now trying to move from this sort of topographic conception to what many people call topological or relational, which means two points in topographic space are located at distance, but the very same points might be very close through dense social networks, a shared professional culture, a political affiliation etc.

The software engineer working in India and the one in Silicon Valley are thousands of kilometres apart in topographical space but in a topological understanding of space they are so close (*Gernot snaps his fingers*), they share the same language, they share the same protocols and codes, they share the same perception of reciprocity, etc. And I think it's a big challenge to swallow such a relational understanding for the non-geographers who might associate geography with locating phenomena on a traditional map or attaching the proper spatial scale to all the social phenomena, this is regional, that is national, and that is global.

Yes, that's a very interesting way to put it. I totally agree that sociologists, for instance, are including space, but they take it very old-fashioned, in a very everyday-notion of space, positions, physical space, that are easy to measure and so on. And it is strange that we have rediscovered it whereas you go in other directions and become more sociological and we to some extent become more old-fashioned geographical. And, of course, the interesting point is where to meet in between, where we sociologists, for instance, can bring our knowledge in and you geographers can bring your knowledge in. You are probably the geographer who has been working closest with sociologists, but do you see others, do you see a tendency that geographers start to work more with sociologists or other social scientists?

O yeah, I think there are a few more recent developments. I think of Karin Knorr-Cetina and her work on epistemic cultures and global microstructures, and this is really very recent, seems in the process of being taken up in economic geography. This is fascinating and challenging alike, challenging because it questions the privilege on relations in coordinating complex global systems, like financial markets or terrorist organizations.

Also more recently, Michel Callon's notion of the economy of qualities has been taken up in economic geography. It is extremely powerful for problematizing and re-conceptualizing markets. Markets are not at the terminus of the value chain but, in a sense, pervade the entire system; and products are not the fixed and frozen things but, in Callon's view, variables. In fact, the entire *Actor-Network Theory* (ANT) tradition had a significant impact on economic geography. ANT, for example, has been employed to problematize functionalistic notions of global commodity chains and to appreciate the instability, ruptures, power struggles within global production networks.

But of course network research is still the key trading zone between economic sociology and economic geography. I already mentioned Woody Powell, but also Brian Uzzi's work has been picked up in economic geography. More recently, I found the work by David Obstfeld and his attempt to push beyond deterministic structuralism by appreciating behavioural attitudes – like his distinction between *tertius iungens* and *tertius gaudens* – very inspiring. Very optimistically speaking, this sort of approach could bring economic geographic concerns with change and evolution closer to the social network concerns for structure. But then, I'm not too optimistic, I'm Austrian.

You just mentioned that sociologists take the notion of space from economic geography – if I understood you correctly – and that we are not good enough on space, or would that be the wrong interpretation?

It's almost a mirror picture, geographers might accuse sociologists of a loose notion of space, and we might be criticized for our generic use of the notion of networks. We are very loose with networks, I think the key problem here is that concepts travel farther across disciplinary boundaries when frozen in their infant rough-and-ready state. The notion of industrial districts, for example, has been discovered by economic sociology and heterodox economics as a model so to speak when it in economic geography already has been regarded as a reification of a very particular phase of development of a few Italian regions.

What more can sociologists learn from geographers?

Economic geography makes a stronger case for the political economic content within network analysis. It is not just this sort of bare-bones of transactional structures and also, locating networks more seriously in macro-institutional contexts. I think the reading of the study by AnnaLee Saxenian's, *Regional Advantage*, in economic sociology is very symptomatic. I think in economic sociology this study is mostly read as an account of two different network configurations – *Silicon Valley* vs. Boston. And yet it is a much richer sort of analysis of regional production cultures. It is not just about transactional structures. In a sense our different readings also indicate our understandings of embeddedness: in economic sociology, embeddedness in the Granovetterian sense seems primarily to refer to personal relations. In economic geography, embeddedness seems to have a stronger affinity to Polanyi's original conception of

embeddedness as an analytical strategy to understand institutions as a complex mix of different social logics.

And I think this is also something geography could bring to the table. We touched already upon this idea that markets, economies, and space are co-produced. Space quite often is seen as a naturalistic pre-given entity. Let me give you an example: if you think about a global commodity chain that is located across the hierarchy of different places or countries. And yet as soon as this global commodity chain is enacted, it starts to reorganize the hierarchy of places, it reconfigures proximities, distances, exclusion. It is a sort of recursive interrelation between the economy – being first layered on a spatial hierarchy, but then re-works space in a second layering, and so forth. There is a wonderful paper on the co-evolution of economy, society and space, it's a classic piece, by Doreen Massey: *Industrial restructuring as class restructuring: Production decentralization and local uniqueness*. (In: *Regional Studies*, Volume 17, Issue 2, 1983, 73 – 89).

Is this the text that you would recommend for sociologists who want to get into economic geography, if you had to pick only one text?

That is always a very tough one...but I'd recommend one of the finest collections of the last years: Trevor Barnes, Jamie Peck, Eric Sheppard and Adam Tickell (eds.): *Reading Economic Geography* (Blackwell 2003).

I would like to turn a bit to your own work. We talked about networks as a central concept. To take a snapshot, what are you working on right now?

One work is on the role of the user in innovation-processes. User-involvement, of course, is not a new phenomenon as such. So far, however, this involvement was largely confined to investment-good markets, like machine building for example, and to a particular type of user, that is the user with intricate knowledge about the product who is able to articulate his needs. This is von Hippel's lead-user. In our project we seek to capture more recent forms of user-involvement in everyday-consumer good markets to newer forms of user-self-organization and open-source initiatives. On the one hand, we are interested in how lay-persons and experts are collectively producing new knowledge. How is lay-knowledge actually translated into the parameters and protocols of an industrial R&D-project? On the other hand, we are interested in the sociology of these user-communities that are involved in inno-

vation processes. What are the chief governance principles of these communities? How can they achieve minimum coherence in the wake of high membership-turnover? I think the specific angle of our project is not to present these new forms of user-involvement as a new master paradigm for innovation. We rather focus on the tensions and frictions between users and producers. And there are a lot of tensions since these types of user involvement challenge the expert status of professional developers. Moreover, some of these user communities are unruly social formations that also develop a life of their own. They get bored, they get angry, they might even turn against the producer. User-involvement is rife with conflicts, in any case more problematic than the *wisdom of crowds*-argument suggests.

Could you say some words on the methods? How you have methodologically approached this?

We started out with a best-practice inquiry through the business press and we identified eight or nine firms that are regarded as leaders in user involvement, like *Proctor&Gamble*, for example. And then we conducted a series of exploratory interviews about how and in which phases of the product development users are involved. On the basis of this first exploratory interviews, we developed a very simple typology in which we made a distinction between the depth of knowledge that is involved in this exchange between producer and user, on the one hand, and on the other hand, how user involvement is organized socially. And as to the latter we distinguish between epistemic and practicing communities. Epistemic communities are really organized like engineering projects, there is a clear aim, there is procedural authority. So, for example, for the next generation of a tomography scanner, Philips hand-picks some leading physicians who then actually become members of the development team. In practicing communities knowledge is rather produced as a by-product of ongoing exchange and lateral communication. The Kraft-food consumer community, for example, is a very large community, it's very noisy, there are a lot debates going on, and only some of these debates are relevant for improving products or the like. Based on our crude 2-by-2 typology we conducted some 40 interviews in US-firms.

And after these interviews we were reworking this typology into a somewhat more complex table that seeks to capture the whole breadth of user-involvement models. In a final step, we are now analyzing communication threads

of nine selected online communities to better understand the social dynamics of these communities.

That is one project. A second one is on social networking software. The starting point is here that economic geography privileges strong ties, it's this sort of "industrial district-tie", which has grown over decades, embedded in trust. This project started from the premise that social software supports a type of network that is both intense and yet ephemeral. I refer to this ephemeral networking as network sociality. And as an example of sociality we choose *LinkedIn*, a sort of a *Facebook* for professionals, the German equivalent is called *Xing*. We interviewed around 30 software-engineers in *Silicon Valley* and we were interested in two things. First, what is the relation between the physical space, *Silicon Valley*, and the virtual networks. Do you need to meet people first face-to-face in order to include them in your *LinkedIn* profile? And second, although this interrelation between actual face-to-face-contacts and the *LinkedIn* profiles played a role, a much more interesting relation between the physical space and the virtual network was the fact that our interviewees perceived *Silicon Valley* as a sort of imagined community.

This place creates expectations. Is this what you meant when you referred to Saxenian's work, so that you can talk of a kind of culture that is related to space?

Yes. *Silicon Valley* was less important as a dense place with high interaction frequency, rather it seemed to provide a certain morale. I mean there are very particular norms of reciprocity prescribing to whom you forward referrals, but also how quickly you need to respond to an inquiry. *Silicon Valley* provides some governance principles for this type of network. People identify with this place, and the place provides a *modus operandi* for your *LinkedIn* network.

We were also interested in the learning of these software-engineers in their use of social networking software. And it started mostly as a homophily process, so that you link up with people who are like yourself and suddenly there is a tipping-point when they realize: Oh, well, I need a complementary contact here, I need a marketing manager there, I need somebody in India. And they very deliberately started to build the network and although there were no respective triggers in our questionnaire, they came out with the Dunbar number, they came up with homophily, they came up with small worlds, they knew Duncan Watts's work, Granovetter of course, and Burt's structural holes. You know, they are so network literate and it

seemed to me that the social network is not just an analytic tool to describe social reality. These people build their social world in network categories, in a very deliberate and reflexive fashion. They engineer their own networks with all this literature.

That is a very interesting development, today one also talks of networking, that is, something you actually do, a deliberate process.

Yes, it is a very reflective process. Not just occasionally collecting business cards, you are very aware of what your portfolio is like, you build a stock of social capital and you know, "I've to invest here and perhaps there".

That was the second project, and the third one is a small one, and it is an off-shot from previous research on temporary organizations. Because again geography is more concerned with long-term phenomena. But when studying creative industries and cultural industries, you discover: it is not necessarily the permanent firm which is the prime locus of operation. Rather, it's short term and temporary projects which are the central organizational unit. This current project is dealing with the Achilles heel of projects.

Projects combine diverse skills very effectively, but they also tend to forget quickly.

As soon as the project task is completed, the project team is dissolved, the knowledge that is acquired in the project is getting dissolved.

This problem is even more acute if projects are performed in very long – and not regular – intervals. For example, cities hosting a world championship or communities that have to deal with natural disasters. So this is a project on learning from rare events, how can you learn from events that happen perhaps every 50 years, perhaps every 10 years? How can you sediment the knowledge and make it sort of usable for subsequent projects? That is the third one with two colleagues, with Eugenia Cacciatori and Andrea Prencipe. Our empirical case was the pope funeral in Rome. Seven million visitors were flooding Rome, how did the city cope with that? What sort of procedures, protocols, are in place to deal with that? We thought there are three distinct elements that support learning from such rare events. First, there are some personal networks which are always re-enacted, be it a major natural disaster or football world championships, you always have key figures who know how to deal with large numbers. Second, what

also seems to be important are artefacts, the layout of the command center in our case – there is so much inscribed in the physical lay-out of the command center. What sort of information is on display; how are the different participants representing different functions and competences placed in the room, who is talking to whom? And third, there are particular protocols and routines which are always followed in emergencies in the widest sense, either if it's a fire, a funeral or a major sports event. These are the projects I am currently involved in.

I would like to touch upon another thing. It seems that economic geographers have a somewhat strange relationship with economists. In the Journal of Economic Geography, for example, geographers co-work with economists, but there are still different editors, one for economics papers, and one for geography papers, for instance. Economics and sociology have really been in long-time struggle with each other, but I want to know how do you see this relation today and how has it developed over the years?

The big change, of course, came with the model that was called the *New Economic Geography* with Krugman and new growth theory with Romer. At the beginning that sounded like a really tempting invitation: eventually economists seemed to acknowledge that there are increasing returns, path-dependencies, imperfect markets, transport costs. So all these assumptions which are in the standard repertoire of economic geography had eventually been taken up by economists. But of course it was still very firmly tied to some sort of neoclassical assumptions. In Krugman's reasoning, for example, there are no real places, there is no historical time and of course it's not very sensitive to social or institutional contexts. One response of economic geography was: "Well, this is not really new economic geography. This is geographical economics." In other words, all these assumptions are not new for economic geographers. And at first many of us, including myself, were thinking this development might be more important in economics than it is important for economic geography. More recently, however, the perception has changed. For one, there seems to be a backlash from the so-called *cultural turn* in economic geography of the 1990ies. This cultural turn in fact brought us rather close to economic sociology, at least in the sense of a profound antipathy towards methodological individualism and rational choice. However, some strands of economic geography have been criticized for becoming too idiosyncratic, localist, and culturalist. So there are in a sense some counter-tendencies which try to bring economic geography

closer to economics. As but one indication of this, the *Journal for Economic Geography* has been founded a few years ago, which is devoted to the dialogue between economic geography, geographical economics, and economics proper. However, the editors just recently concluded that there is still a big rift between economic geography and geographical economics. There are one or two special issues which try to engage in a dialogue, but it seems more that geographical economics tries to be seen and respected by economists rather than taking some of the more qualitative economic geographic work seriously.

Is that an issue of breeding, that people choose one school and then stick to it, or is it also that people actually go between the two fields, economic geography and geographical economics?

I think in terms of socialization there is less mutation. Once you are socialized in a particular school you might verge, towards a more quantitative approach of what you are doing, but as far as I can see there are few cases where you could see an outright switching of people or schools. I think the most prominent exception that proves the rule is Michael Storper who during the last years moved rather far towards geographical economics. His great talks usually start off with a rather fervent critique of the more qualitative approaches in economic geography.

So the distance between these different schools – is it bigger between economic geography and geographical economics than it is between economic geography and economic sociology, for instance?

Yes, I think by and large this is a fair statement. Since economic geography and economic sociology share key assumptions there is more common ground than between economic geography and geographical economics. And not surprisingly, economic geography as a traditional *import discipline* so far has borrowed more from economic sociology than from geographical economics. Moreover, I think economics is regarded more suspiciously as a hegemonic science that in principle is more difficult, or even more risky to collaborate with. Let me phrase it this way: I think they wouldn't just want to play with us, they simply want some of our toys, that is some of our more exciting spatial issues. Having said that, I should add that economic geography is not a unified field but rather subdivided in a range of branches. Currently, evolutionary economic geography is gaining momentum in economic geography and

thus might re-establish some links with heterodox economics.

One thing that I really enjoyed when I have looked at the geography literature is that geographers deal with time. That's another thing which sociologists are very poor at. I mean time is a very complex notion, but there are clear examples of how you can bring in time, and I am thinking of, for example, Torsten Hägerstrand's work. Do you have an idea if time is still a concept that is central in geography?

With respect to economic geography more broadly, I think people would regard their work not only as concerned with spatial contextualization but also with historical contextualization. Of course, this does not necessarily imply that time is explicitly conceptualized. So, I'm not sure if time, in an explicitly reflected fashion, is central to geography in general. But it is definitely central in certain strands of geography. The Hägerstrand tradition of time-geography, you mention, is still very much alive. In fact, time-geography seems to thrive again, not least due to methodological possibilities opened up by modern GIS (Geographic Information Systems). This approach seems particularly useful for understanding and modelling everyday mobility patterns, and it also plays a certain role in urban planning.

So, what does the future look like – what is the relation, and what will be the relation between economic sociology and economic geography in the future?

Well, I think there are promising preconditions for a fruitful and perhaps more intense exchange between both fields. There is this shared skepticism about the worldview of orthodox economics. But of course there's more communality than this the-enemies-of-my-enemies-are-my-friends principle. We also share the concern for problematizing context in the sense that we understand the economy as historically and geographically specific formations, as an institutional phenomenon. And then we share a whole range of ideas, concepts and methodological tools. Well, basically we borrowed them from you. The embeddedness-network paradigm is chief amongst them but there are other ideas as well, I mentioned Callon and Knorr Cetina, for example. And finally, there seems an increased spatial sensitivity in economic sociology. All these communalities and complementarities would seem to encourage the exchange between both fields. And there are some promising indications. Leading economic sociologists like David

Stark or Woody Powell publish in economic geography journals, and vice versa, people like Nigel Thrift or Ash Amin publish in sociology journals. In the UK and also in Scandinavia some human geography departments are now closely associated with sociology departments in one form or the other. This of course does not necessarily imply indefinite collaboration. But it makes mutual ignorance much more difficult. And, well, that's something.

After this highly interesting discussion in Bonn, Gernot drives me back to the main railway station, from where I take the train back to Cologne. The ride is definitely worth a note in itself, as Gernot gives me a lift in his beautiful stretched Citroen CX.

Endnotes

¹For more information see Gernot Grabher's web site:

http://www.giub.uni-bonn.de/grabher/people/t_peo_grabher.html

²See for example Grabher (2006).

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