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Helga Nowotny is Professor emerita of Social Studies of Science, ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) and a founding member of the European Research Council. In 2007 she was elected ERC Vice President and in March 2010 succeeded Fotis Kafatos as President of the ERC. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Columbia University, NY. and a doctorate in jurisprudence from the University of Vienna. Her current host institution is the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF). Helga Nowotny is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Ludwig Maximilians University Munich and member of many other international Advisory Boards and selection committees. From 2005 – June 2011 she was Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the University of Vienna. She is a Foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and long standing member the Academia Europaea and recipient of several prizes and awards.

Helga Nowotny has published more than 300 articles in scientific journals. Her latest book publications include “Naked Genes, Reinventing the human in the molecular age”, (with Giuseppe Testa), MIT Press, 2011, “Insatiable Curiosity, Innovation in a Fragile Future”, MIT Press, 2008, and “Cultures of Technology and the Quest for Innovation (ed.)”, New York and London, 2006.

***Curiosity, Innovation and Complexity***

Taking literally a crude look at the whole, society is nowhere to be seen. It can only be represented in parts, be they groups, individuals or other snap-shots frozen in time and fitting into a frame (or on a vase). We are left with the piercing sense of un-wholeness. My search for society continues by looking crudely for representations of societal change. They are made visible over time and over space. Temporal representations are embedded in linear, sequential time; spatial ones in maps, through cartographies. The un-wholeness and its still largely unrelated parts are moving, but we can only make inferences as to what, how and why. Next comes a crude look at our societal presence: Enter curiosity, innovation and complexity. Society – like life – is non-linear and so is just about everything of interest. Forget the arrow of time pointing from past to present to future. There is no earlier or later in a high-tech present. Begin feeling at home in a time compressed universe created by humans where (almost) everything happens at once. I will conclude with some of the implications that our collective moving towards this unexpected sense of wholeness has for creative work and for social innovation, the dark energy of society.