

# The Ecosystems of Research and Visibility: Inspiring Histories and Uncertain realities

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*“The natural philosophers (of the XVII century), as well as the painters that used mirrors to center their attention and disrupt their visual habits, they should also attempt to maintain in suspense their expectations when they observed nature through optic instruments. Until they did not make it they couldn't produce the scientific revolution”.*

(Translated from Snyder, 2017, p. 183)

In her beautiful book *The eye of the observer: Johannes Vermeer, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek and the reinvention of the look*, Laura Snyder shows in a wonderful way the multiple associations between artists, scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, artisans, traders, politicians, men of power and common people, with political, social and economic dynamics, and, even, with the private world of interpersonal relationships, with knowledge development.

On her detail trip to discover the secrets of Vermeer, of the *Young of the Pearl* or the incredible details of the microscopic world that Leeuwenhoek discovered, Snyder (2017) highlights the importance of the impact of knowledge development in the social aspect. As well as Andrea Wulf describes exceptionally way on her book *The invention of nature: The new world of Alexander von Humboldt* (2016) and as it is confirmed in the wonderful edition of the *Humboldtiana Neogranadina* (2018), it shows evidence of how Humboldt in his *Cosmos: a personal journey* targeted not only the academic appropriation of knowledge but the social appropriation itself.

Humboldt, a precursor of ecology, as near as the year 1800, understand how knowledge is a complex web of actors and how the actions of these actors influence the development of research. It is determined that the production of knowledge is linked to the social dimension and this author showed it when he influenced not only scientists such as Darwin and Haeckel Muir, but thinkers as Thoreau and poets of the dimension of Goethe, and among all, when he inspired figures

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that transformed histories such as Simon Bolivar and Thomas Jefferson (Wulf, 2016).

These beautiful books show how since more than 400 years ago, these scientists and artists understand how the dynamics of production, communication, formation, innovation and management of knowledge are consolidated as complex dynamic networks. An “ecosystems of knowledge” in which researchers end up immersed in diverse structures (systems of financing, training, visibility and diffusion) and actors (editors, reviewers, managers, students, directives and technocrats).

The interactions between actors and structures often happened between strong asymmetries of knowledge, formation and interests that, by fortune or misfortune, can consolidate or paralyze the research processes. When research, as in the case of Colombia, is deeply linked to the University, researchers are subjugated to directions related to other substantives functions such as formation, at the same time that the services and directions of the institutions are permanently looking to produce conditions to generate excellence indicators.

Additionally, researchers are under pressures linked to socioemotional relations, as reflected on the intra and intergroup dynamics of the communities, since they are permanently under the influences that come out from them.

On the other hand, these academics are subdued to the permanent changes of the national systems of assessment of science and technology that respond to the political, financial, legal and even ideological dynamics of the transitions of government.

The idea of the named *ecosystems of knowledge* is in prescriptive terms to point out that the processes of production, communication, formation and innovation should be sustainable, which implies that the researchers and the designers of politics pointed to promote scientific knowledge include a perspective that takes into account all the actors and subsystems involved. Unfortunately, in descriptive terms, reality shows that these *ecosystems*, as mentioned before, are in countries such as Colombia, inconsistent systems

on their politics that act as devaluators and, due to this, are distant of being sustainable.

Nonetheless, history seems to show that we can find on these exceptional academia characters models and that we can produce transformations in the middle of the mention difficulties if the passion for the search of knowledge and for contribute to our world becomes missional.

*“a fountain with many squirts that flow in a refreshing and infinite way, and we only have to put vessels under them”*

Goethe about Humbolt (Snyder, 2017).

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