

# The Dynamics of Time and Space in Sociological Theory

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## Contents

Introduction.....	2
1 - Linear-Causal Time and Homogeneous Space.....	4
1.1 - Introduction to Durkheim's Spin on Time and Space.....	4
1.2 - Social Facts Span Time and Space.....	4
1.3 - An Assumed Future: The Problem of Induction.....	5
1.4 - A Critique of Essence.....	6
1.5 - Where are the People in Linear Time?.....	7
1.6 - The Internalization of an External Reality.....	7
1.7 - But Wait! Individual Actions DO NOT Run Parallel with Social Facts.....	8
2 - Non-Linear Time and Homogeneous Space.....	9
2.1 - An Introduction to Marx's Spin on Time and Space.....	9
2.2 - The Process of Naturalizing Social Facts.....	10
2.3 - But Wait! The Social World is not Uni-Dimensional.....	11
2.3 - Looking Towards Multi-Dimensionality.....	11
3 - Non-Linear Time and Heterogeneous Space.....	12
3.1 - Introduction to Multidimensional Space with the Help of Einstein.....	12
3.2 - But Wait! How Does this Relate to Sociology?.....	12
3.3 - Foucault and Isolated Social Spaces - Similarities and Differences with Einstein.....	14
3.4 - Anti-Normative Social Spaces.....	14
3.5 - We Do Not Live in a Void.....	15
4 - The Inner Dynamics of Social Spaces.....	16
4.1 - What is a Field?.....	16
4.2 - From Past to Present Within A Field.....	17
4.3 - Past and Present as Future in Fields.....	18
4.4 - Past and Present in Fields and Capacity for Future in Other Fields.....	19
5 - Fields and Interspatial Movement: People in Unfamiliar Spaces.....	20
5.1 - People as Carriers of Symbolic Experience.....	20
5.2 - Interacting People in Social Spaces: Strangers, Outsiders, and Insiders.....	21
5.3 - I am Aware, that You are Aware, that I am Aware of You.....	21
5.4 - People Represent the Space they Come From (Or What I Think I Know About Where They Come From).....	23
5.5 - Differentiation and Opposition Within Spaces.....	23
Conclusion.....	26
References.....	27

## Introduction

I, like many others, have fought with the abstractness of sociological theory. I attribute my struggles to the ways in which the ideas of sociological theorists have, time and again, been introduced to me as being incongruent with one another, substantively distant, and entirely oppositional in content and application. Always being asked to identify the differences between the theoretical principles of the 'holy trinity' (Durkheim, Weber, and Marx), I have been trained to abstract each theorist from the other, to consider them apart and independent, and in doing so, encouraged to pick sides. It was not until very recently that I began to take a deeper interest in sociological theory and came to the realization that thinkers and their theories need not be abstracted from one another; the key to understanding sociological theory, I found, was to identify the commonalities, the points at which they are speaking the same language, not in the sense of using the same words (e.g., structure, agency, consciousness, power etc.), rather, where they all seem to share a common goal.

When diverting attention away from the differences, we find that no matter how fundamentally dissimilar theoretical approaches may seem, all sociological theories share a common goal of enquiring into the sociality of human behaviour, to penetrate the fabric of the social world in order to say something about the observable and/or unobservable social forces that enable or constrain human activity (Abend, 2008; Adam, 1990; Baert, 2000). At the most fundamental level, sociological theorists share a common objective of not only identifying problematic social phenomena and attributed social inequalities, but also seek to provide insights into ways of rectifying the problems. In this sense, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and every other social theorist that came before and after, all in some way share a fundamental investment in the future. In other words, they are all attempting, in one way or another, to understand the complexities of *yesterday* and *today* in order to say something, implicitly or explicitly, about *tomorrow*; to take a present problem and provide informed insights to help ensure that it does not remain a problem tomorrow.

Considering further this notion that a sociologist's primary direction of care is toward the future, if we strip away for the moment, all the deeply anchored concepts and dualities (e.g. structure/agency, nature/nurture, society/individual, quantity/quality, object/subject, matter/mind, etc.) that are often a point of comparison and differentiation among sociological theories (Adam, 1990; Elias, 1992), we are able to expose a common sociological language grounded in time. When reading sociological theories with an eye towards time, we can pick up on a common usage of expressions and ideas pertaining to: flow, rhythm, progression, procession, sequence, regularity, evolution, adaptation, tempo, timing, age, generations, heritage, stability, and duration. While these words are substantively different in the way they portray time – differences which will be made clear throughout this essay – they draw attention to a common theoretical discourse on the sociality of human behaviour *within* and *between* the 'time horizons' of past/history (yesterday; what was/has been), present (today; what is), and future (tomorrow; what will/might be) (Adam, 2010; Bergson, 1910; Bourdieu, 2000; Elias, 1992; Schutz, 1959; Tarde, 1901).

To date, there has been much emphasis on, and critical enquiry into, the variety of ways sociological theories examine social life, social organization, and human conduct within and between the past and present time horizons (Adam, 2010). Under the auspice that no authentic anticipation of what we may 'have to be' (future) is possible without borrowing from the resources of what we already 'have been' (past) and 'currently are' (present) (Ricoeur, 1980), sociological inquiry has been primarily focused on the relationship of an experiencing person (or

persons) within the complexities of past events and present circumstances as a means to reveal insights toward the future of social organization (Adam, 1990; Baert, 2000). The reasons for this focus on investigations into past and present time horizons are because, according to Adam (1990, 2010), they are facilitated by the presence of an observable and material reality consisting of identifiable documents and tangible objects that can be identified, observed, interpreted and measured. Whereas, investigations into the future are working within a different reality status all together, one that does not contain identifiable material and empirically accessible facts, thus making it much more difficult to study in that it is focused on a reality that does not yet exist (Adam, 2010). Given that only materialized processes of the past and present have the status of factual reality (what is real is observable), conclusions and predictions about future events, which are essentially beyond the realm of the material and observable, remain at the level of the senses, as an aspect of the mind, and are seen as belonging to the realm of the 'ideal' and the 'not the real' (Schutz, 1959).

Sociologist (among many other disciplines) have had difficulty making claims and predictions about a social reality that has not yet come about; prediction of the 'what will be' in social science is inherently difficult because human activity is voluntary (Winch, 1958). There has been great difficulty in according 'factual' status to the intangible dimension of future events without resorting to linear conception of future as being based on the routine repetitions and succession of a natural order in society; a narrow understanding of time considered largely with respect to the duration or the simple progression of sequences of events that persist into the future (Abbott, 1997; Adam, 1990). Very little attention has been paid to examining the relationships between conceptions of past experiences, present situations, and future forecasting in sociological theory. While there is a growing body related to sociological theories of time, which tend to treat time as an object that can be allocated, measured, perceived, and documented (e.g. allocations of time at home and work, calendar or clock time, measurable time and its influence on social order etc.) (Baert, 2000), there is a significant gap in our understanding of how conceptions of 'time' and 'space' inform the orientation of sociological theories (Adam, 2010; Elias, 1992). As I will attempt to show over the following pages, notions of time and space are foundational to classical and contemporary sociological theories and represent a common ground from which we can appreciate the substantive similarities that have all too often been abstracted from one another.

Given the abstract nature of the 'time-space' content that is to follow, I have structured the paper into five sections that capture the principal ways that I have interpreted concepts of time and space in classical and contemporary sociological theory. I have also included a series of figures to accompany each section in hopes that they will serve as a visual guide through the somewhat complex ideas. The first section will critically examine the work of Emile Durkheim, which emphasizes the externality and regularity of social facts believed to span a homogeneous social space and endure over time; a view that reveals a particularly linear conception of time and a homogeneous (i.e., universal, general, common etc.) understanding of social space. The second section will focus more specifically at the work of Karl Marx and consider non-linear sociological theories which emphasize the importance of incorporating a processual understanding of social reality that is grounded in the social actions of people within a homogeneous society. The third section will continue within the framework of non-linear sociological theories and incorporate the spatially oriented theories of Bourdieu, Foucault, and Tilly (and the not directly sociological theories of Einstein) who argue that the social world is multi-dimensional and partitioned into distinctive social spaces, fields, or sites that are

relationally configured with their own internal logics, regulative principles, and social rhythms. Following these three broader discussions of linear and non-linear time and spatial principles in sociological theory, the fourth section will draw upon the work of Bourdieu, Elias, Mauss, and Schutz to engage more specifically with the processual relationship between past and present (habitus), and future as it plays out through the social actions and interactions of people intimately connected with social spaces. The fifth section will draw primarily upon the work of Mead, Schutz, Simmel, and Tarde, to further consider the idea of inter-spatial movement among social actors and critically assess how cross-spatial movement relates to social change. The paper will conclude with a critical assessment of the variety of ways that time and space have been incorporated into sociological theories, how it has translated into our ability to address the 'not real', the 'not yet', the 'what might be', the 'future', and how a more concerted focus on time and space might reflect a useful way forward.

## **1 - Linear-Causal Time and Homogeneous Space**

### **1.1 - Introduction to Durkheim's Spin on Time and Space**

Durkheim's logical approach to a scientific form of social enquiry was the inspiration for generations of sociological theorists and empirical researchers who respect the scientific grounding of his methods and appreciate the role he played in elevating social analyses to the level of the sciences. Grounded in the fundamental belief that the social world consists of both an internal and an external reality, Durkheim sought to demarcate sociology from the 'pre-social' psychological forms of explanation – which was the dominant model at the time – by way of developing a scientific approach to the study of the social forces that exist independently of individual consciousness (Durkheim, 1982). His ontological belief in an external social reality consisting of measurable social facts (or objective things) is coupled with an epistemological belief that our ability to explain social life requires an objective account of the regularities of social nature (i.e. social facts). In short, he sought to identify the enduring and constant social facts (i.e., social rules, norms, beliefs that exist in society) and their essential characteristics believed to have existed in their essential form in the past, present, and future.

Starting at the point where the conscious mind enters into a relationship with the pre-existing regularities and natural laws of society, Durkheim employed objective observations and experiments to identify the social facts that constitute society and the social norms and rules that preside over social organization and action (Durkheim, 1982). He sought to identify the social regularities that exist and persist in isolation from individual manifestations; his ultimate goal being to eliminate all that is subjective and variable as a means to reveal the objective commonalities that structure a society: the social fact. While he makes a distinct demarcation between the objective and subjective world, finding the objective to hold the 'truths' that govern the subjective world, it is important to understand how an emphasized focus on the external world relates to time and space in his theory.

### **1.2 - Social Facts Span Time and Space**

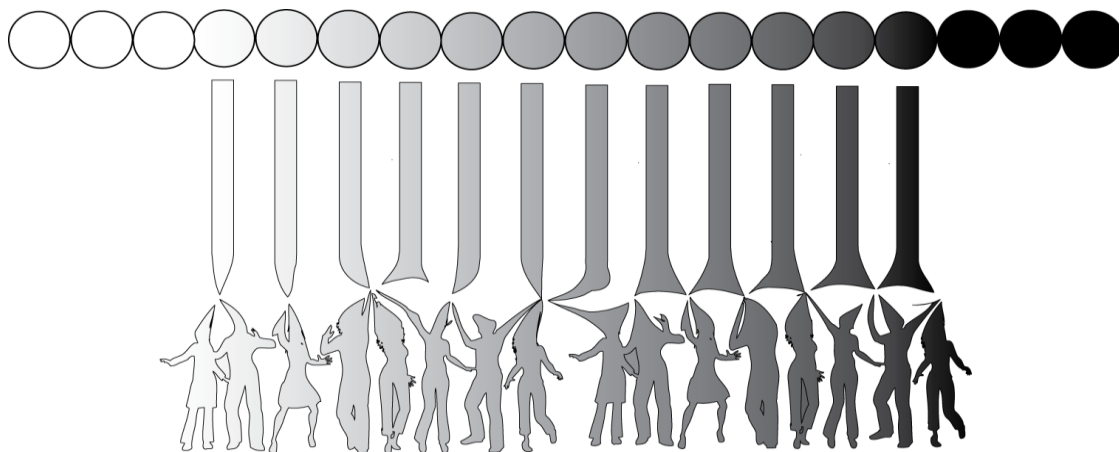
The view that social facts exist external to the individuals in society, as facts that have existed prior to the individuals existence and will continue to exist after they are gone, reveals a particularly linear view of social reality. For Durkheim, social facts have a rhythmic consistency, timeless quality and regularity that are believed to persists over time and span across space, stating that "the history of the world has been only another aspect of the history of society. The

one commences with the other; the periods of the first are determined by the periods of the second" (Durkheim, 1965; 442). In this sense, social facts are thought to have a universalistic character that exists throughout time, embracing all particular durations, an essence that lives outside of and above social agents and exists "at every moment of time [and] embraces all known reality" (Durkheim, 1965: 444). This understanding of a timeless social fact is described by Elias (1992) as following an *absolute* or *universal* conception of time. Absolute time is portrayed as:

"immense, without origin, without end, has always existed in the same manner, will exist in all future and does not appertain to any one person more than to any other. It is divided into three types of time - past, present and future; of these, the past is without entrance, the future without exit, while the intermediary present is so short and incomprehensible that it seems to be nothing more than the conjunction of past and future." (77-8)

When social facts are taken in this way, as social realities that exist independent from human influence, they assume a distinctly linear, repetitive, and unchanging character; "a social rhythm that dominates and embraces the varied rhythms of all the elementary lives" (Durkheim, 1965: 442), a persistent *essence* that carries the same durable force and influence at consecutive points in time: past, present, or future. (See Figure 1 on the following page for a rough visual representation)

**Figure 1:** The circles at the top are a simple representation of a social fact that exists external to the social actors in a similar form (shape) with function (cause) changing over time (color). The social fact imposes itself upon the individuals, who embody them in a fairly direct manner and change in tandem over time, as is represented by the parallel gradient color change.



### 1.3 - An Assumed Future: The Problem of Induction

The logic of forming arguments based on normative social beliefs (i.e. what is common to all within a society), generalizing over particulars, is probably the most common kind of logical inference that is carried out in empirical social research, what is referred to as inductive logic. More specifically, inductive logic is the process of predicting that unobserved states of affairs, or future events, are going to be essentially like states of affairs that we have observed, or events that are in the past. Induction presumes that nature itself (or a social fact in Durkheim's case) is regular and uniform (the uniformity of nature) (Emirbayer, 1997; Martin, 2003), a point captured by Durkheim's assertion that "if they [social facts] existed before he did, it follows that they exist outside him" (1982: 51). Essentially the logic of the argument follows that, if nature were not uniform, then there would be no way to move from what we have observed in nature to some

prediction about what has not yet been observed in nature. To think that nature is going to remain uniform in the future because it has been 'proven' uniform in the past is just one more instance of predicting the unobserved on the assumption that it's going to be essentially like those things we have already observed. The belief in uniformity or regularity of social facts is absolutely essential to the kind of inferences that Durkheim is able to make about future events in society.

The normative assumptions that undergird inductive logic reflect a particularly linear (or absolute) conception of time, whereby factual 'probability based' assertions about the future of social facts are made based on the assumed belief that they contain essential/normative features that have been empirically proven to have existed in the same manner at sequential points in time and will continue to exist in the same way for the foreseeable future. It is the logical assumption of the continuation of what are deemed to be historically existent social facts, where theorists such as Tarde, Schutz, Weber, Elias, Bourdieu and Bergson (to name just a few) make the argument that it is erroneous to assume that social reality proceeds in a linear fashion, "like the march of an army on a map" (Bergson, 1910: 180). Furthermore, basing predictions of future events on the 'divine constancy' and routine repetitions and succession of social facts believed to partake in the same typicalities over time, what Schutz calls the idealization of the 'so forth and so on,' (Schutz, 1959: 87), is severely problematic at many different levels. While one would be hard pressed to entirely dismiss the notion that there are social regularities and typicalities that are common across social spaces and persist over time in society, opponents of functionalist and similarly 'linear' approaches to social enquiry question the correctness of assuming that social facts "typically similar to those which have been proved as practicable in the past will also be practicable in the future." (Schutz, 1951: 167)

#### **1.4 - A Critique of Essence**

The assumption of 'natural', 'normal' and 'essential' social facts that exist external to human influence have been a major point of critique by theorists from a wide range of disciplines, all of whom fundamentally question the decisive criterion of 'regular' occurrence and re-occurrence (Weber, 1949), the "universalistic illusion fostered by analysis of essence" (Bourdieu, 2000: 224), the hypothetical assumption that time follows a unitary and uniform continuum (Elias, 1992) etc., all of which reflect a fundamental opposition with the notion that social reality contains 'essential', 'pure', or 'universal' characteristics that span time (Abbott, 1997; Bergson, 1910). The position that phenomena have essences that are 'frozen' over time is thought to produce an overly deterministic and mechanistic vision of a world that inclines us to take a fatalistic view that nothing can stop what was to have been (past), and nothing can prevent from happening that which has to happen (future) (Tarde, 1901:123). In the same vein, Weber argues that only a certain side of the infinitely complex concrete phenomena, namely those which are attributed a general cultural significance, are able to be known, expressing that "an exhaustive causal investigation of any concrete phenomena in its full reality is not only practically impossible — it is simply nonsense." (Weber, 1949: 78) In other words, the same features that are 'essential' today may not be essential in the near or long future, that is, if they continue to be features at all. The social world and the objects that exist in them can be perceived in different ways because they always include a "degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness [...] because, as historical objects, they are subject to variations in time" (Bourdieu, 1985: 728), which in another sense, can mean that what is considered 'normal' in society today may very well be abnormal tomorrow. Furthermore, what was considered 'normal' in the past may very well be considered abnormal today.

The fundamental logic of the time based critique described thus far draws our attention to a prominent limitation, and common point of critique, inherent to causally oriented sociological theories that propose a linear vision of social time. Up to this point, the discussion has focused primarily on the existence and persistence of social facts over time. The acceptance of 'timeless' social facts that persist over time is further questioned when we consider the accuracy of concepts such as 'normal' and 'regular' when taken in the context of social actors. The question being, can we assume that social beings will follow the same linear trajectory as set out by the scientifically proven social facts? Or in other words, can we assume that people who start from the same circumstance will repeat identical trajectories throughout life (Tarde, 1901) in the same repetitive pattern as the social facts believed to exist external to them? To answer this question, we will continue our discussion of Durkheim's linear theory of social facts with a closer examination of how social beings fit into his theoretical paradigm and how the notion of a collective consciousness reveals a homogeneous (all encompassing) view of social space.

### **1.5 - Where are the People in Linear Time?**

Let's start by considering the simple question: where do people fit into Durkheim's theory of social facts? Following his logic that social facts exist across time in a linear reality, people are seen as being born into a world that consists of pre-existing social norms, a "universal order of succession [that] imposes itself upon all minds and all events." (Durkheim, 1965: 441) Building upon the notion that an appropriately identified social fact possesses a timeless quality that 'dominates and embraces' all the elementary lives of the social actors, social facts are believed to exist "outside of and above individual and local contingencies" (Durkheim, 1965: 444), as realities that essentially span across a homogeneous social space and embracing all known reality. People are born into a commonly shared reality, a universal social space with pre-existing social rules, norms, rhythms, and regularities that structure and shape the beliefs of the people living within the rules. For Durkheim, people live in "an ongoing society which already has a definite organisation or structure which conditions his own personality" (Durkheim, 1982: 86). In this sense, not only do social facts exist outside of social beings, but are also internalized by all in a way that allows the embodied social facts to span across physical social space via the bodies of the people and their shared understanding of social rules and regularities (i.e. social facts). The *collective consciousness* refers to the permanent and essential aspects of social facts being crystallized into communicable ideas among the social actors, that which "furnish[es] the mind with the moulds which are applicable to the totality of things [...] [and] translate the ways of being which are found in all the stages of reality." (Durkheim, 1965: 444). But social facts do not just become a known reality, as a knowledge that people are born with, there is an element of learning, socialization, and embodiment of the social facts into the social actors.

### **1.6 - The Internalization of an External Reality**

While Durkheim makes clear that the social world consists of external and internal realities, he nevertheless believes that most of the internal ideas and tendencies of individual actors are not developed by themselves, rather, they are formed as a result of the external social forces (e.g. customs, norms, social conventions) that are imposed upon them throughout the process of socialization and formal and informal social education (Durkheim, 1982: 53). A notion that is further developed by Marcel Mauss who provides an example of the ways in which external social realities are imposed upon the internal senses. He writes:

"the child, the adult, imitates actions which have succeeded and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have

authority over him. The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action, involving his body. The individual borrows the series of movements which constitute it from the action executed in front of him or with him by others." (Mauss, 1973: 73)

As this example illustrates, much like Durkheim, Mauss argued that the actions of individuals are more or less habitual in the sense that they coincide with the traditions and techniques that have persisted and are constantly transmitted and assembled through social education within the society to which they belong (Mauss, 1973). In other words, the existence of an external social rhythm consisting of social facts and norms, are thought to furnish and condition the individual minds with a social (or collective) consciousness, which is thought to inform the future actions of the socialized individuals who will follow the collective norms and traditions that exist in their society.

### **1.7 - But Wait! Individual Actions DO NOT Run Parallel with Social Facts**

Holding true to the belief that events, including human cognition and behaviour, decision and action, are largely determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences and traditions, Durkheim gives a handle to the law of causality through the assertion that a degree of probability exists between the 'regularity' of the actions and the enduring and consistent normative rhythms of the traditions of a shared collective life (Durkheim, 1965). It is in his strict adherence to a parallel 'causal' connection between the patterns of social facts and the patterns in social actions that sociological theorists tend to find problematic. While many accept that people do indeed become a part of the social structure(s) that they are born and raised in, the common point of critique stands in opposition to the notion that the rhythms of the social life corresponds directly with the rhythms of the individual life; as is illustrated by the parallel gradient color change in Figure 1.

The rejection of this mechanical connection between social structure and subjective agency is perhaps most forcefully argued in the work of Henri Bergson (1910) whose explicit critiques of the dominant positivist positions of his time (not directly aimed at the work of Durkheim), questioned the widely held belief that we can attribute senses and freedom with the same qualities of the materials and objects that were thought to exist external to the individuals in social space (Bergson, 1910). Primarily concerned with the deterministic process of associating all actions along with the external social facts believed to exist in a homogenous space, he fundamentally rejected – as did Elias and Bourdieu – the mechanistic illusion that our *selves* macroscopically obey the external laws of 'nature' (Bergson, 1910: 219), or in a Durkheimian sense, that the mechanistic laws of nature impress upon individuals a robotic sensibility that at all times, coincides with the natural laws of their society.

Although Bergson, Elias, and Bourdieu accept the existence of an external world that is quite distinct from ourselves and support the notion that all social minds do indeed have a 'common share', what Bergson refers to as the "intuition of a homogeneous medium" (1910: 236), and to varying degrees accept that there is a consistent regularity to social life that "forms an integral part of the unique personality structure of every human individual" (Elias, 1992: 142), they do not commit the 'future' of the external world and the 'future' actions of individuals to the same timeless and unchanging fate projected by Durkheim and other 'positivists' of his time. Where Durkheim amended the same linear conception of time to social structures and individual agents across a uniform social space, oppositional theories argued that it is illogical to assume that the lives of social people follow the same rigidity as the external social facts believed to structure the social world (Bergson, 1910; Elias 1992). In terms of time and space, comparable

beliefs are held regarding the presence of the past in the present, but the point of differentiation is found in the unjustified assumptions made about the future as following a linear 'and so forth and so on' trajectory (Schutz, 1959). The notion that people will invariably follow the same parallel trajectory as the social facts believed to structure their lives is found to be untenable in that it misappropriates an individual's ability to create and alter a social fact.

As I will argue in the following section, the notion that acting individuals have an interdependent connection with social facts and an ability to alter their external reality reveals a important point of comparison with a linear understanding of time in sociological theory. Pace Karl Marx, whose research into the origins of capitalist culture made the argument that social facts do not exist in 'absolute time', without origin, without end, and always in the same manner, rather, they come to exist through the actions of the people in society. Here we find a radically different non-linear take on time that merits further examination.

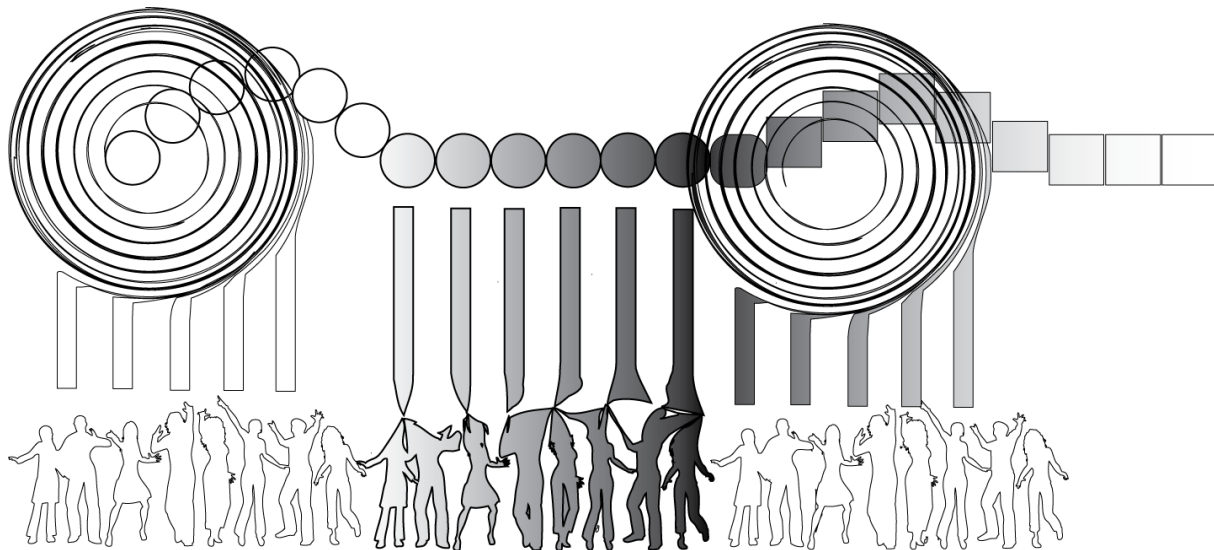
## **2 - Non-Linear Time and Homogeneous Space**

### **2.1 - An Introduction to Marx's Spin on Time and Space**

Marx and Durkheim, while sharing some similarities with their ontological beliefs in the existence of externally observable social facts and realities, diverge significantly from one another in the way they understand the time sequences of social facts. Like Durkheim, Marx believed in the existence of an external material reality consisting of social facts that have power and a 'life' independent of the will of people, stating that "the social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are; i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under *definite material limits*, presuppositions and *conditions independent of their will*." (Marx, 1968: 6; my emphasis) While sharing similar beliefs in an empirically observable reality and accepting the importance of examining the ways in which structural forces and the associated materials configure society and shape the abilities for people to act, Marx argued that social structures (i.e. external material realities) are born from the processes and actions of socially oriented individuals, as opposed to having a timeless existence external to individuals. In short, he argues that social facts do not exist because they serve a social function, they exist because the actions of people infuse them with a life that comes to appear as a necessary social fact that serves a social function. Based on the fundamental principle that social facts have a point of origin, or a point of emergence, Marx's sociological theory does not adhere to the same linear conceptions of time as proposed by Durkheim. (See Figure 2 for a visual representation of Marx's non-linear take on time)

With a focus on the emergence of social facts through social process, Marx makes a similar case to that proposed by Bergson, Bourdieu, and Elias, namely that social facts do not run parallel with human actions over time with the corresponding neatness and regularity proposed by Durkheim, rather, he emphasizes that social facts are at all times interacting with social actors. The relations of individuals are shaped by their interactions with the material world and vice versa, people don't just act in relation to one another, they also act in relation to the material reality that structures society. Based on the notion that the material world is an integral part of human relations, whereby social facts are not removed from social interactions, but are an integral part of the conversation (Emirbayer, 1997; Martin, 2003; Schinkel, 2007); both people and materials are part of the productive force that shapes the composition of society.

**Figure 2:** The distorted causal lines on the left hand side represent the emergence of a social fact from the action/labour of social beings. Over time a social fact is formed and changes, eventually coming to have a similar causal effect on the people who at one time created it – as is represented in the center section of the figure. The right side of the figure represents the process of changing a social fact through social action, whereby the 'circular' fact takes shape as a 'square' fact.



Thus, in contrast to Durkheim's belief that social facts are the natural and everlasting foundations of social reality, Marx argues against any empirically informed assumption that social facts have a timeless quality and essence that persists over time, making clear that we must always maintain a focus on the productive forces of acting individuals upon social facts: "the writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men." (Marx, 1968: 6)

## 2.2 - The Process of Naturalizing Social Facts

While Marx argues that the origins of social facts are grounded in the activities of social beings, he makes the point that the social facts that people produce come to take on a life of their own and "an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations" (Marx, 1978: 13). What is being argued is that the actions of interacting people come to reify social relations into social realities and social facts, whereby the reality of a social fact sets in over time and across generations, where people come to accept as 'natural' a reality that is ultimately the product of their own making. Thus, where Durkheim argued that social facts are indeed 'natural' facts that have existed over time, Marx argues that social facts are the product of human action (or conflict) – but come to be perceived as 'natural' over time. This point is captured in the following excerpt from the German ideology:

"The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these." (Marx, 1978: 13)

As this quote illustrates, people come to believe that social facts and material realities have always existed and will continue to exist long into the future, there is a false consciousness that we develop which leads to the belief that social facts are unchangeable – a reality of our world that is external to us, a taken for granted reality that is persistent and determined. In this sense the false consciousness leads people to see social reality as being timeless, linear, and unchanging, a reality that has existed prior to their existence and will continue on long past their death. The appearance of a social reality that seems to have no history at all, leads to the accepted belief that the social orders of society are predetermined (existence in the past) and inevitable (existence in the future).

By grounding his theory firmly in the social activities of people and their conflict with a self-produced material world, Marx gives a dynamic, non-linear quality to social facts by arguing that they do have a historical point of emergence, an identifiable point in time where the activities of social beings gave rise to a social reality (e.g. capitalist culture). Furthermore, while he argues that the emergent social facts may come to appear as enduring, never ending, and fundamentally timeless (i.e. capitalism can't be stopped), he is very clear on the point that people have the power to change the social facts that they created. Social facts do not exist in 'absolute time', they have a beginning (the time where they emerged from human actions) and they can also have an end, which can come about in the same way they emerged, through human action. In essence, Marx did not hold a linear view on time, he was a believer that people have the ability to alter their futures and change the social facts that exist in their world; in other words, their future is not destined to follow the same mechanistic and linear trajectory proposed by Durkheim and his contemporaries.

### **2.3 - But Wait! The Social World is not Uni-Dimensional**

While Marx made a significant contribution by bringing the notion of time back down to the level of the individual, his adherence to the belief that social facts, while born from social process, come to impose themselves upon all minds and events within a broad social space, gave rise to important theoretical discussions about the contextual layers and 'dimensions' of social space. Reflecting on Marx's conception of social space, Bourdieu finds that "the inadequacies of the Marxist theory of classes, in particular its inability to explain the set of objectively observed differences, stems from the fact that, in reducing the social world to the economic field alone, it is forced to define social position solely in terms of position in the relations of economic production and consequently ignores positions in the different fields and sub-fields [...] It thereby secures a one-dimensional social world" (Bourdieu, 1985: 736). Essentially, what Bourdieu argues is that while Marx was accurate in his assessment of social facts as existing in a non-linear relationship to human actors (i.e. social facts do not transcend time), he finds limitations in his argument that social facts – principles of economic production, in this case – exist in the same way to all people across all social spaces. Similar to Durkheim's argument that social facts exist beyond local spaces and among all people (Durkheim, 1965; 444), Marx argues that within industrial societies, the capitalist mode of production – or more simply, the power of capital – was a universal social reality that shaped the behaviour of actors in the all encompassing space of the market economy and played the primary role in configuring society.

### **2.3 - Looking Towards Multi-Dimensionality**

The perceived spatial limitations of Marx's sociological theory are taken up among theorists such as Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Charles Tilly, who found social space to be a crucially important aspect for sociological theory, captured by Foucault's assertion that: "I believe that the

anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space." (Foucault, 1986: 23) Here, Foucault raises a key point about the importance of understanding the context of the social spaces in society, a common position that is developed by many sociological theorists such as Bergson, Bourdieu, Elias, Simmel, Tilly, and Weber, who reject the notion that the social world consists of a common-to-all homogeneous space. Whether one takes the position that social facts follow a linear or non-linear trajectory through time, the accepted understanding is that "no social fact makes any sense abstracted from its context in social (and often geographic) space." (Abbott, 1997: 1152) In other words, objects may have similarities, objective similarities that we can identify, but they might also possess differing qualities within other spaces. As the following sections will reveal, the investigation of social spaces and sub-spaces within a society allow us to further question the notion of 'continuity' among social phenomena across social space and over time.

### **3 - Non-Linear Time and Heterogeneous Space**

#### **3.1 - Introduction to Multidimensional Space with the Help of Einstein**

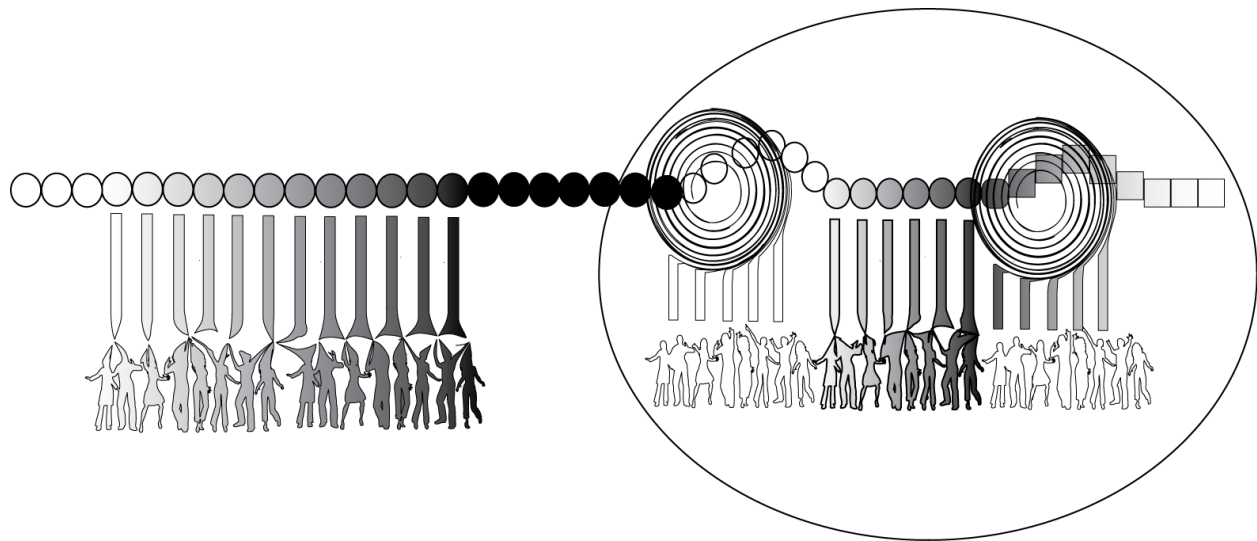
As we further question the Durkheimian assumption that social facts exist "outside of and above individual and local contingencies" (1965: 444) and transcend time and space, perhaps the most useful introduction to our discussion of heterogeneous social space comes from the work of Albert Einstein and his theory of relativity, whose critique of the Newtonian hypothesis that time follows a linear and uniform direction throughout the whole physical universe, revolutionized the way we think about the relationship between space and time (Elias, 1992; Latour, 1988).

At the time of Einstein's breakthrough in physics, it was universally accepted that time (light) followed a unitary and uniform continuum throughout the whole of the physical universe (Elias, 1992). In seeking to correct the Newtonian time concept, Einstein set up a scientific experiment to observe the position of stars around the sun during a lunar eclipse to see if the positions appeared different. He found that the positions of stars around the sun appeared to change when viewed during a lunar eclipse, which supported his hypothesis that light was in fact capable of bending when passing through the strong gravitational space around the sun. In showing that light (i.e. time) did not always follow a linear trajectory across all space, Einstein was able to disprove the long held belief that time, in the form of light, was linear and unchanging; conclusively showing that the behaviour of light is in fact relative to the forces present in the spaces which it passes through. No longer was time seen as an objective flow, rather, it was understood in terms of its relationship with space, whereby under certain circumstances and in certain spaces, time was capable breaking from the law of linearity and universality by 'bending' when passing through the gravitational powers of space (Elias, 1992). (See Figure 3 below for a visual illustration of the influence of space on linear time)

#### **3.2 - But Wait! How Does this Relate to Sociology?**

While this example may seem to be far removed from the social sciences, it illustrates the importance of considering the role that social space plays in the way we think about time, as a spatial environment capable of shaping the trajectory and form of what may otherwise be characterized as a universal social fact.

**Figure 3:** This is a visual representation of Einstein's theory of relativity in a social context, whereby the linearity of the 'external' social fact on the left side changes rhythm upon entering a social space made up of differential social force propagated by the behaviours and actions of the social actors inside. The point being that the force of a social space can have an influence on a social fact otherwise believed to be linear and enduring.



Referring back to the law of induction described earlier, when we introduce the notion that the force of a social space (e.g. the force imposed by the actors and objects present in the space) has the capacity to change the trajectory of a social fact, we call into question the inductive assumption that an observed social fact will remain uniform because it has always appeared to be uniform across all observable instances. Furthermore, in revealing that sub-spaces with differential forces (e.g. the space around the sun) exist within a greater universal space and have the potential to influence and change the character of a social fact, the universality of space and time as set out by Durkheim is further questioned. Bringing the abstract principles of Einstein's quantum physics back down to the level of the social sciences, Latour (1988) points out that the importance of Einstein's work to the social sciences is that he reconceptualizes the notion of universality as being relative to space. Rather than reject the existence of universal laws, Einstein's work urges us to question the taken for granted assumption that laws of nature are universal, stable and unchanging, and consider how physical or social laws might 'contract' or 'expand' in different spaces or contexts.

To be clear, Einstein's theory of relativity should never be confused with a theory of relativism; he sought to understand the internal logic of isolated 'frames' (i.e. space) with the ultimate goal of relating 'frames' to reveal the common stable form that traverses all spaces (Latour, 1988: 20). The search for a *general* principle of relativity speaks to Einstein's scientific quest to uncover the scientific logic of isolated spaces in hopes of revealing a more general inter-spatial, universal theory. In sociological parlance, we might say that Einstein believed that the internal logic of isolated social spaces, if properly understood and considered in relation to one another, can reveal a more general theory of the social (i.e. universal social norms). The importance of Einstein's contribution for the social sciences finds itself in his revolutionary thoughts about the multi-dimensionality of space and the forces within the differential spaces, which translates very well to sociology and the notion that *social* space also has the capacity to be multi-dimensional and contain powers that can similarly 'bend' and 'contract' the constitution of the social facts that exist within or pass through.

### **3.3 - Foucault and Isolated Social Spaces - Similarities and Differences with Einstein**

A deeper investigation of the contextual dimensions of social space raises fundamental questions about the laws of nature and the notion of universal/timeless social norms. While Foucault does not share Einstein's pursuit to find a general sociological theory, they share similarities in their treatment of space as being independent yet related containers of power and force, as floating frames and pieces of different spaces with their own differential logics, principles and features (Foucault, 1986). While grounded in substantively different approaches, both grapple with the notion that people do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, rather, the social world is heterogeneous, consisting of multiple social dimensions within society, what Foucault would call heterotopias, or "those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others." (Foucault, 2000: 361) He uses the term heterotopia to describe spaces that have more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than immediately meet the eye, whereby "places of this kind [heterotopias] are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality." (Foucault, 1986: 24) In contrast to utopic spaces, which are described as a direct analogy with the real space of society that are representative of society in a perfected form (Foucault, 1986), heterotopic spaces represent the social spaces that contradict the taken for granted and perfected forms of utopic spaces, they are social spaces with their own set of rules and regulations that differ from the generalizable norms thought to exist in utopic spaces. The contrast between heterotopic and utopic spaces speaks to the multi-dimensionality of social space and fits well with the spatial arguments made by Einstein.

### **3.4 - Anti-Normative Social Spaces**

Similar to Foucault's assessment of heterotopias as anti-normative spaces, Einstein's discovery was hypothesizing the existence of what could be called a heterotopic space, where the laws of time function in accordance with the differential gravitational force in the space around the sun, which at the time could be considered an 'unreal' space that existed somewhere in the shadows of Newton's linear and universal laws of space-time. The anti-normative heterotopic spaces essentially represent the social spaces that run in contradiction to the systemic norms believed to transcend social space in the positivistic traditions. In this way, Foucault argues that 'things' such as madness, sexuality, and criminality are not universal categories that exist across all spaces (and time), rather, the reality and the unreality of such concepts reveal themselves in the context of heterotopic spaces, the social spaces that run parallel to the utopic versions of social reality.

Heterotopic spaces represent parallel spaces, the 'other' spaces that contradict utopic versions of reality and are "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible." (Foucault, 1986: 25) E.P. Thompson's work on the different time rhythms within diverse social spaces provides a useful example of the variations that can exist among social spaces. Comparing the 'normative' work routines of industrial and farming occupations, each of which represent social spaces that have different social rhythms that shape the actions of the workers (i.e. inhabitants of the spaces), Thompson writes: "In a similar way labour from dawn to dusk can appear to be "natural" in a farming community, especially in the harvest months: nature demands that the grain be harvested before the thunderstorms set in." (Thompson, 1967: 60) He finds that the labour of peasants and farmers are attuned to the rhythms of nature (animals, seasons, weather etc.), what he calls task-oriented labour, is substantively different than the 'timed labour' of industrial labourers who are accustomed to work days structured by the time of the clock and rhythms of the market (Thompson, 1967). This attention to the differential social rhythms of labour within different

work spaces illustrates the point that the social world may not march to the beat of the same drum, as Durkheim seemed to infer.

### 3.5 - We Do Not Live in a Void

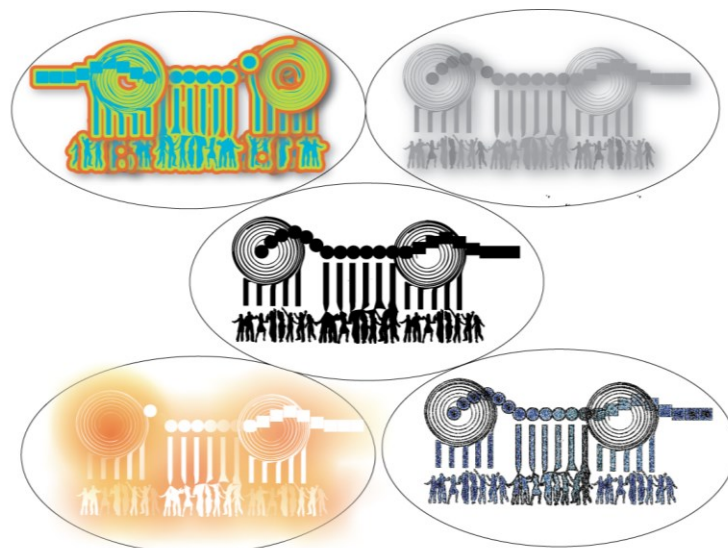
In similar fashion to Foucault and Einstein, Bourdieu and Tilly – who are well known for their theoretical insights into social fields and sites – argue against the existence of essences and universal realities that span space and time, developing important arguments for the multi-dimensionality and heterogeneity of social spaces, supporting the need to make a "radical break with the one-dimensional, unilinear representation of the social world" (Bourdieu, 1985: 736) to better understand the oppositional and contradictory spaces that escape investigations focused on explicating the shared principles of a universal social space. What we find in the spatial descriptions of a heterogeneous social world put forth by Foucault, Bourdieu and Tilly is an argument against the assumption that individuals, groups, and physical objects exist in an enduring form within a singular, abstract, continuous space (Tilly, 2001). A sentiment deeply held by Foucault, who writes:

"we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." (1986: 23)

Captured in this quote is support to replace the vacuous notion of an all encompassing society with that of social spaces, settings, frames, or fields, which reflect society as "an ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of "play" that cannot be collapsed under an overall societal logic." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 16-17) (See Figure 4 below for a visual illustration of a multi-dimensional social space)

The idea that society is multi-dimensional and consists of relatively autonomous fields provides an important inroad to explore social facts, concepts and mechanisms as they 'exist' within spaces of relations, and make known the distinctive features and common factors that form the differences and gaps among individuals and groups within society. Where Durkheim

**Figure 4:** The content of these five social spaces illustrates how the social facts, and the people who live within particular social spaces, can have a different rhythm and 'shading' compared to other spaces. While there may be similarities across all, it is argued that there exist physical, mental, and symbolic differences and/or social boundaries that make each space (and the people within) unique.



argued that "a social fact can be verified by examining an experience that is characteristic [...] as they are and indeed as they have always been" (1982: 54), emphasizing the search for continuity among *past* experiences shared by the many living in a society, sociological theories focused on the multi-dimensionality of society reject the 'traditional' search for continuity and seek to better understand how *past experiences* within multiple social spaces relate to a social actors *present circumstances*, beliefs, views, dispositions, and *future abilities* to act within familiar and unfamiliar social spaces. Referring expressly to the ongoing theme of time and space, what we are asking is whether past experiences and time spent among the people that populate particular social spaces translates to a social actors future potential and ability to act freely in diverse kinds of social spaces (i.e. are they more or less influenced by the forces in different spaces). However, before we can discuss the inter-spatial movement of social actors within the spatial dimensions of society, we must first start with a brief introduction to sociological theories of fields.

## 4 - The Inner Dynamics of Social Spaces

### 4.1 - What is a Field?

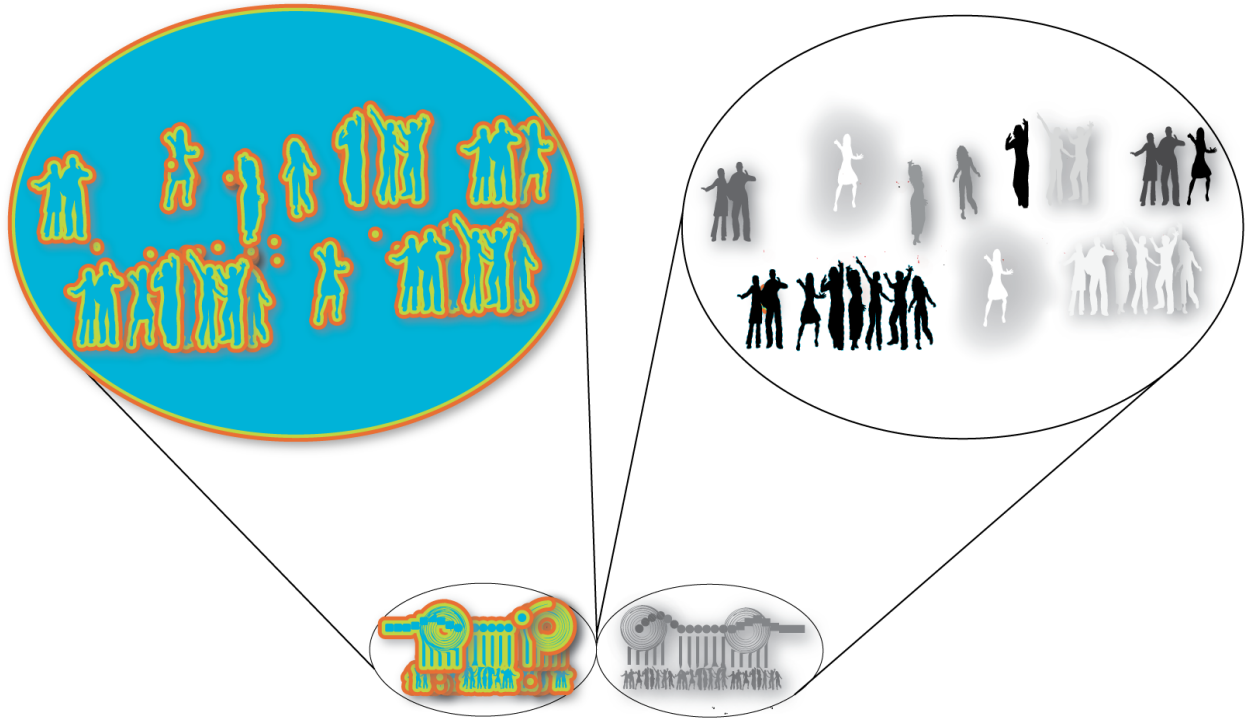
Theories of social fields<sup>1</sup> express the relational logic of social phenomena resulting from the interdependent nature of human actions and complex social relations situated within social environments (Martin 2003). Social fields are essentially social arenas in which social elements interact and events take place, "a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:17). These sites, spaces, or fields are conceived as 'snapshots' of social reality, differently structured and representing distinct worlds with specific features that are in constant relation with the actors located in them (Bourdieu, 2000; Martin, 2003), "much like an on-going conversation." (Emirbayer 1997: 294)

Drawing heavier attention to the centrality of the social actors as generators of the force and 'gravity' in the fields, Charles Tilly defines a social site (field) as "any contiguous zone of contrasting density, rapid transition, or separation between internally connected clusters of population and/or activity" (Tilly, 2004: 214); spaces that contain social 'elements' such as: "persons, but they also include aspects of persons (e.g., their jobs), recurrent actions of persons (e.g., their recreations), transactions among persons (e.g., Internet communications between colleagues), and configurations of interaction among persons (e.g., shifting networks of friendship)." (Tilly, 2004: 217) Further support to this important point about the human influence in a social space comes from Mead (1967), who finds that "the peculiar character possessed by our human social environment belongs to it by virtue of the peculiar character of human social activity; and that character, as we have seen, is to be found in the process of communication" (145). Here we find similarities with the arguments made by Marx about the role that people can have in transferring, enforcing, and normalizing the rules and regulations of a social fact within society. In sum, these particular definitions of social fields, sites, and spaces focuses not only on the distribution of active properties in social space, but also the activity among social beings, stressing the dynamics of relations, interactions, conflict, tensions, and forces among individuals within a social space. (See Figure 5 on the following page)

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity, I will be using the terms social fields, spaces, and sites interchangeably throughout the following sections. While there are arguments to be made about their substantive differences, for the purposes of the topic at hand, it suffices to say that each is representative of social environments within a heterogeneous society.

**Figure 5:** This provides a very basic visual representation of the different shades and flavours that the individuals, pairs, and groups can have within a social space. In the end, we are talking about the people and their relationships to one another and with their social space. It also visually represents how the people might differ across spaces, whereby we might say that the blue people on the left side might say that everyone in the right space are 'grey' people, and vice versa. But as the 'grey' space illustrates, the people can have different shades of black, white, and grey.



## 4.2 - From Past to Present Within A Field

Within a dynamic social space, time is built into its conceptualization, not as a metaphysical entity that exists outside of the consciousness of individuals, rather, as something that is produced by individuals through their actions (Bergson, 1910; Bourdieu, 2000). What is meant by this is that acting individuals are the dynamic bodies that embody the rhythms of the social space through their past experiences with the people and things that are familiar to their environment. This notion of embodying the habitual patterns and processes of society is one of the most commonly held assumptions in sociological theory, often taking the form of *habitus*, which has been implemented in the works of Mauss, Elias, and perhaps most notably by Pierre Bourdieu.

Generally speaking, *habitus* has a common definition as the primary, primitive dispositions that are formed in the context of a person's earliest upbringing. However, the subtle differences in the application of the concept emerge in the way it is used to explain the actions of the individuals. Mauss and Durkheim sought to examine how the societal level patterns are expressed in the social actions of collective beings with a focus on the habitual patterns of individuals as they relate to the external patterns found throughout the history of the society (Mauss, 1973: 85). Elias shares a similar foundational understanding of *habitus* as "personal patterns of feeling and behaviour [...] which the individual shares with others and which forms an integral part of the individual personality structure" (Elias, 1992: 19), as does Bourdieu who finds "the most vital interests and 'visceral' tastes and distastes are embedded, and amount to a system of thoughts, perceptions and actions that provide a person with the skills and dispositions

necessary to navigate within different fields." (Bourdieu, 1984:474) While these definitions speak in a similar way about the "presence of the past in the present" (Bourdieu, 2000: 210) and the transmission of social facts into the personalities of the individuals in society, Durkheim and Mauss, maintain a stricter "mechanical" lineage and parallel connection between external and internal social realities, finding that "the rhythm of collective life dominates and embraces the varied rhythms of all the elementary lives from which it results" (Durkheim, 1965: 442).

Considering further the notion of time in social space as the presence of the past in the present (Bourdieu, 2000), it is argued that over time, the day-to-day experiences one has with a social space emerges as a unique sense of the rhythms, regularities, and habits of the environments and the people within (Bourdieu, 2000; Goffman, 1959; Thompson, 1967). A hardened (yet malleable) sense of place that builds up over time (Bourdieu, 2000), what Bergson refers to as an outer 'crust' (sense of self) that builds up as people refract through space (1910: 167) and come into contact with the forces within. The internalized familiarity and sense of the pace and rhythm of experienced spaces, the understanding of things, people, ideas, relationships, and regularities of the spaces, a sense of the game as Bourdieu often calls it (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Sharing similarities with Goffman's principle of 'sense of one's place' (1959), Bourdieu argues that agents have a practical, bodily knowledge of their present and potential position and ability in familiar fields, an understanding of what is expected and commonplace within the social environments they have spent the most time in, whereby they develop an ability to understand the general attitudes and values of those around them – an ability and sense that would not be possessed by someone with less experience, a visitor to the space, if you will.

#### **4.3 - Past and Present as Future in Fields**

Beyond the sense of the present regularities that are informed by past experience, Bourdieu and Schutz speak to how the normalization of the regularities of a social space also translates to a sense of what is to come tomorrow, a sense of what the future might bring. While speaking to a broader context of general experiences of events (rather than in the context of social space), Schutz (1959) makes the argument that the experience of past events give an individual a level of comfort in familiar surroundings that facilitates the ability to act in familiar spaces, what he refers to as an ability to anticipate future events, an ability for future orientation, to perceive the unknown, "to meet or to avoid the anticipated events; he has to come to terms with them, either by enduring what is imposed upon him or, if it is within his power, by influencing their course. Thus his anticipations are determinative for his plans, projects, and motives. They are relevant to him, and he experiences these relevances in terms of his hopes and fears." (1959: 76)

Echoing this argument, Bourdieu uses the language of the ability to anticipate the 'forthcoming' of events, an anticipatory ability that arises "from experience of the regularities of existence, structure the contingencies of life in terms of previous experience and make it possible to anticipate in practice the probable futures." (Bourdieu, 2000: 211) Such principles speak to the fundamentally social nature of interdependent actors whose view of the social world, their position in it, and perceptions of how to act, arise through their social experiences with the people, relationships, objects, rules, and forces within social spaces. Thus, in the context of being socialized to the processes and patterns within social spaces, people learn to adjust their actions to fit with the tendencies of the field, in a sense, to shape their expectations and aspirations according to concrete and symbolic indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not 'for them' (Bourdieu, 1984; 1985; 2000; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Reflecting upon the importance of giving equal consideration to the influence of both the past and future upon the actions of social beings, Tarde poetically states that "a man who is

walking does not think to explain what he encounters at each step of the way by that which is behind him anymore than what is ahead of him." (1901: 124; my translation) In this sense, ability and potential within social spaces is believed to be tied to an intimate knowledge of a space, a level of confidence in how things will happen, whereby a level of "experience within categorically differentiated settings gives participants systematically different and unequal preparation for performance in new settings." (Tilly, 2001: 367) Using the language of past, present, and future, what can be said is that an ability to control (i.e. prepare and anticipate) one's ability to engage and communicate in different spaces is tied to the past experiences and their present grasp of the rules and regularities of the space, or simply put, "power to control the future requires having a grasp on the present." (Bourdieu, 2000: 221)

This same point is made in multiple variations by Simmel, Mead, Foucault, and perhaps most eloquently by Schutz, who, while more focused on the temporal processes, finds that "I have to visualize the state of affairs to be brought about by my future action before I can draft the single steps of my future acting from which this state of affairs will result. Metaphorically speaking I have to have some idea of the structure to be erected before I can draft the blueprints." (Schutz, 1951: 162) By considering the dynamics of past, present, and future within the context of a social space, we get a sense of the processes that inform a social actor's dispositions, abilities and potential within environments that they are suited to, which they know best, where they feel like a fish in water (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). However, this only considers a social actors placement in a familiar social space; since we aim to move beyond the thought of a homogeneous social world, we must also consider how the sense of one's place in familiar surroundings translates into an actor's capacity to act in foreign and unfamiliar environments (i.e. social spaces). Where we have described the emergence of a 'sense of one's place', we must also consider the notion of a sense of one's place in relation to others, and furthermore, a sense of one's place within a space that one has limited sense.

#### **4.4 - Past and Present in Fields and Capacity for Future in Other Fields**

Not only does a social agent develop a practical knowledge of what makes sense and is reasonable within experienced social spaces, Bourdieu argues that people also develop a sense of placement in the social order, whereby the social order that is progressively inscribed in people's minds over time form into social and spatial limits, a sense of limits that leads people to "define themselves as the established order defines them [...] and exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded." (Bourdieu, 1984: 471) Here, Bourdieu adapts the concept of *doxa* to capture the pre-verbal taken-for-granted understanding of the world that develops in practice between a habitus and the fields to which a person or persons are attuned (Bourdieu 1984, 2000). *Doxa* emerges from the relational intersection of structural constraints, dispositions of the habitus and experiences garnered within different fields, informing an embodied 'sense of one's place', described as "a sense of what one can or cannot 'permit oneself,' implies a tacit acceptance of one's place, a sense of limits ('that's not for the likes of us,' etc.), or, which amounts to the same thing, a sense of distances, to be marked and kept, respected or expected" (Bourdieu 1985: 728).

Sharing similarities with Marx's principle of false consciousness described earlier, *doxa* is essentially a practical knowledge that does not know itself, a learned ignorance and misrecognition whereby people mistakenly perceive and accept as 'natural' a social reality that is ultimately the product of human actions (Marx, 1978). As discussed earlier, the naturalization of one's sense of position in relation to other people and environments can lead to a overwhelmed sense of future in the unknown, "like the submission which it implies and which is sometimes

expressed in the imperative statements of resignation: 'That's not for us' (or 'not for the likes of us') or, more simply, 'It's too expensive' (for us)." (Bourdieu 2000: 185) As this illustrates, familiarity with the rules and regularities of familiar social spaces – where one's values and dispositions fit best – can also translate to a feeling of unrest in unfamiliar spaces. It is in the fields that are unknown and foreign, where one is less attuned to the customs and common sense beliefs, that the forces of exclusion and difference are more strongly felt, whereby "the emergent experience is found to be "strange" if it cannot be referred, at least as to its type, to pre-experiences at hand" (Schutz, 1959: 79).

While this reveals some insights into why people tend to stay within the fields that have a natural feel and refrain from entering particularly 'strange' spaces within which they do not possess the necessary 'stock of knowledge', it also opens up the question of why people might choose to frequently enter unfamiliar social spaces (fields) in which they do not know the 'rules of the game', and how they are able to gain entrance into these oppositional spaces, to break away from the doxa. Put another way, there has been much work done on how *past* experiences and the embodiment of social conditions (i.e., habitus), along with *present* circumstances and positioning within fields, inform the physical, social, and mental boundaries that keep people in their place, but what can be said about the *future* potential for people to transcend these boundaries and integrate within foreign/less-than-familiar spaces. Where Bourdieu and Schutz speak about a reasonable person's ability to draw upon experiences to anticipate events, drawing important insights about abilities to act based on experiences of past events (Schutz), or past experiences within dynamic social spaces (Bourdieu); the work of Simmel, Tarde, Tilly, Goffman and Mead provide complementary thoughts about *inter-spatial movement* and how past experiences in familiar spaces carry over into other familiar or unfamiliar social spaces, fields, or settings. The exploration of inter-spatial behaviour builds upon the notion that social spaces are dynamic settings with malleable boundaries that comprise acting and interacting individuals and groups who regularly enter social spaces that are entirely unfamiliar and foreign to them.

## **5 - Fields and Interspatial Movement: People in Unfamiliar Spaces**

The notion of interacting, linked, and/or overlapping social spaces, which have thus far been defined primarily as being relatively autonomous and interdependent, requires that we draw upon the work of Simmel, Mead, Elias, Bergson, Schutz and further incorporation of Bourdieu, Foucault, and Tilly, to further open up the notion that people inhabit and embody the social elements, laws, rules and/or facts of multiple social spaces and engage in interspatial movement within and between them. Specifically, the interspatial movement of social beings (i.e. carriers of norms, values, and rules of frequented spaces) speaks to the process of communication and adaptation of social facts, and brings us back to the Marxian notion that people have the capacity to change the social facts within familiar and/or foreign social spaces (i.e. people impressing force and change upon the 'unchangeable' norms and facts of social spaces, settings, or fields). In this sense we are interested in better understanding the social situations where differential social spaces come into contact through the inter-spatial movement of social actors.

### **5.1 - People as Carriers of Symbolic Experience**

While substantively different in many respects, Mead and Simmel, along with the abovementioned theorists, take seriously the process of social relations, interactions, and the experiences that shape the actions (and reactions) of individuals within and between different social and spatial contexts. Meadian and Simmelian approaches critically question the existence

of universal social norms and rules, and seek to better understand the process by which norms, values, and attitudes play out at a situational level, that is, at a level which considers the interdependent influence between social actors within the dynamics of social spaces. Both Mead and Simmel examine how the individual and collective agents, endowed with certain interests, attitudes, and dispositions, actually go about dealing with the problematic situations they confront in their day to day lives, focusing on the forms of practical reasoning they use; the habits, techniques, and attitudes they develop individually and collectively; and the feedback effects of these on the situations and spaces they are in (Mead, 1967; Simmel, 1950; 2007b).

## **5.2 - Interacting People in Social Spaces: Strangers, Outsiders, and Insiders**

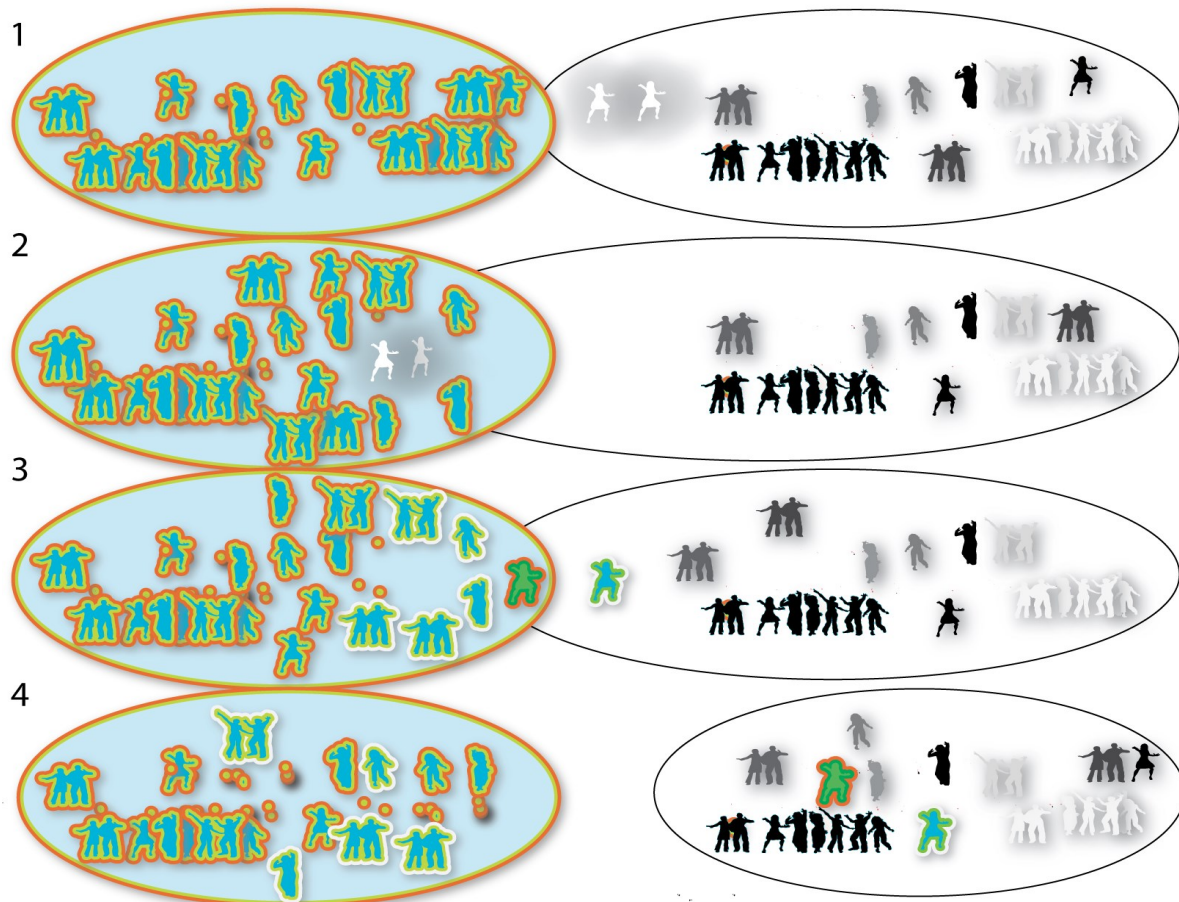
Drawing upon the notion that people carry their social experiences with them in their day-to-day activities, Simmel argues that people who enter unfamiliar social spaces come to be seen as strangers, whose presence within the occupant group "is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it [carrying foreign baggage], which do not and cannot stem from the group itself." (Simmel, 1950: 1) Individuals or a group of individuals who enter a foreign space or sphere that shares common interests, are looked upon and judged based on a shared understanding of who is and is not a member of the group – "from the common basis of life certain suppositions originate and people look upon one another through them as through a veil." (Simmel, 1910: 380) I have attempted to illustrate this idea in Figure 6 on the following page, by depicting the inter-spatial movement of white and grey people into the social space of the blue and green. In section 2 of the diagram, the blue and green people perceive the 'strangers' by their home colors, as grey and white people.

This notion of collective or collaborative opinion of insider and outsider within social spaces is echoed by Tarde who finds great power in the symbolic impression of a group, stating that "when a man acts strongly upon our thought, it is in collaboration with many other minds through which we see him, and whose cumulative opinion impresses ours commandingly." (Tarde, 1903: 83) Similar to Simmel, Tarde argues that people see one another through a social lens, in reference to the regularities from our own social spaces or spatial realities, and engage in what he terms 'inter-mental action' (Tarde, 1903). The inter-mental action is illustrated in section 3 and 4 of Figure 6 where extended interaction time between the groups leads to each embodying shades of the other; blue and green taking on shades of white, and the white and grey – who were immersed in the blue world – take on a stronger shade of green and blue.

## **5.3 - I am Aware, that You Are Aware, that I am Aware of You**

The idea of inter-mental action within a social space refers to "when the person whom we perceive, is perceived by us as perceiving us" (Tarde, 1903: 67), which translates to the experience that an outsider/stranger might have when entering an unknown social space where one feels scrutinized, looked at, judged, or a sense of otherness. Mead echoes this notion through his concept of the social self, which he describes as a sense of being part of a social group that emerges and is realized through its relationship with others, "it realizes itself in some sense through its superiority to others, as it recognizes its inferiorities in comparison with others." (Mead, 1967: 204). That is, it is possible for individuals to look at themselves from an outsider's perspective.

**Figure 6:** This figure illustrates the process of inter-spatial movement by two grey social actors who venture into the blue world. In section two, the image shows how the social space follows the grey people into the blue space –the boundaries overlap via the people – which is representative of the notion that the blue people will not just see grey people, but will see the grey people as a part of the grey space, and apply what they know about the 'other' grey space to the grey visitors. Section three represents the transfer of internalized social facts to other people through experience and intimate contact, where we see those who interacted with the grey people embody some of their shades of grey and take on a lighter color of blue. Similarly, being fully immersed in the blue world and among blue people, the grey individuals embody stronger shades, the first individual embodying shades of green, the second embodying shades of blue. Again, the notion that people can embody different forms of a social fact in the same space (take on blue instead of green values) further questions the regularity and linearity of a social fact.



This complex notion of inter-spatial and inter-mental action can be clarified to a degree with a useful example by Tarde:

"When I am passing through the streets in a large city, if all the people I meet and see should stop to look at me, I should find it exceedingly unpleasant. But if I meet an acquaintance, I do not like to have him pass without seeing me. Instinctively, in such a case, and quite apart from any special desire to see the person in question, one's impulse is to make some sign and try to draw his attention. And, even as regards the great mass of strangers that crowd against me on a Paris side walk, however little I may feel myself concerned with them, it is none the less on account of them that I bear myself erect, think of my dress, and do not allow myself the freedom which, in the country, I should prefer." (Tarde, 1903: 68)

This practical example illustrates the multiple levels of action and interaction that can take shape when entering foreign social spaces. In this case an individual can sense other people looking at

her/him, leading to a sense of otherness, as sense of discomfort that can lead one to concern their actions in reference to the spatial inhabitants, choosing our actions with reference to our position among unfamiliar people, norms, and rules within a foreign space. Furthermore, people see and interpret the symbolic baggage that is brought with a 'stranger' into their space, a perception of the past experiences and present position they hold in the wider social world. Here we find relevance to our earlier discussion of doxa, whereby people not only perceive their own position within their own social environments, but they are also capable of sensing the position of other people who do not fit in their 'world'. The force of the perceptions one has of you is difficult to resist, it is an invisible pressure in a social space, what Bourdieu refers to as a form of symbolic domination, "something you absorb like air, something you don't feel pressured by; it is everywhere and nowhere, and to escape from that is very difficult." (Eagleton and Bourdieu, 1992: 115)

#### **5.4 - People Represent the Space They Come from (Or What I Think I Know About Where They Come from)**

The notion of acting in relation to perceptions of otherness within foreign spaces is further developed with Simmel's concept of classified type, which essentially refers to an outsider (i.e. someone with particular differences from the group), that is "compared with an imagined completeness of his own peculiarity, when he is credited with the characteristics of the social generality to which he belongs." (Simmel, 1910: 381) Similarly, Mead's concept of the generalized other refers to the choice of action taken by individuals in relation to the perceived expectations of others situated in foreign or familiar social environment (Mead, 1967). The point here is that one's ability to act freely within a foreign space is partly subject to the interdependent influence from people within a space and dependent on the 'generalized' information that the 'insiders' draws upon to develop an understanding (Goffman, 1959: 101). In reference to Figure 6 above, it could be said that the blue and green already have a preconceived idea of what the grey and white 'strangers' represent.

Speaking at the level of groups, Tilly argues that this 'sizing up' process (my words) that takes place when members of two previously separate or indirectly linked networks enter and interact in the same social space, commonly leads to the formation of social boundaries at their point of contact, whereby "newcomers to a neighborhood whose social backgrounds resemble those of older [established] residents nevertheless find themselves, at least temporarily, on the other side of an insider-outsider boundary." (Tilly, 2004: 218) When on the 'other side of the boundary', the outsider in an insider's space, the individuals or groups find it increasingly difficult to cross-identify with a general human commonness, which Simmel argues gives rise to a specific tension that stresses that which is not common, a non-common element that is "nothing individual, but merely the strangeness of origin" (Simmel, 1950: 3), meaning that the individuals themselves are not the outsiders, rather, the 'otherness' comes from a general perception of the social spaces they represent.

#### **5.5 - Differentiation and Opposition Within Spaces**

This is a particularly important point to consider in the sense that differentiation and opposition can emerge at the level of space, that is, communication and activity is based on the social characteristics that accompany social actors when entering the variety of spaces within a society. As Mead explains, "you cannot start to communicate with people on Mars and set up a society where you have no antecedent relationship. Of course, if there is an already existing community on Mars of the same character as your own, then you can possibly carry on communication with

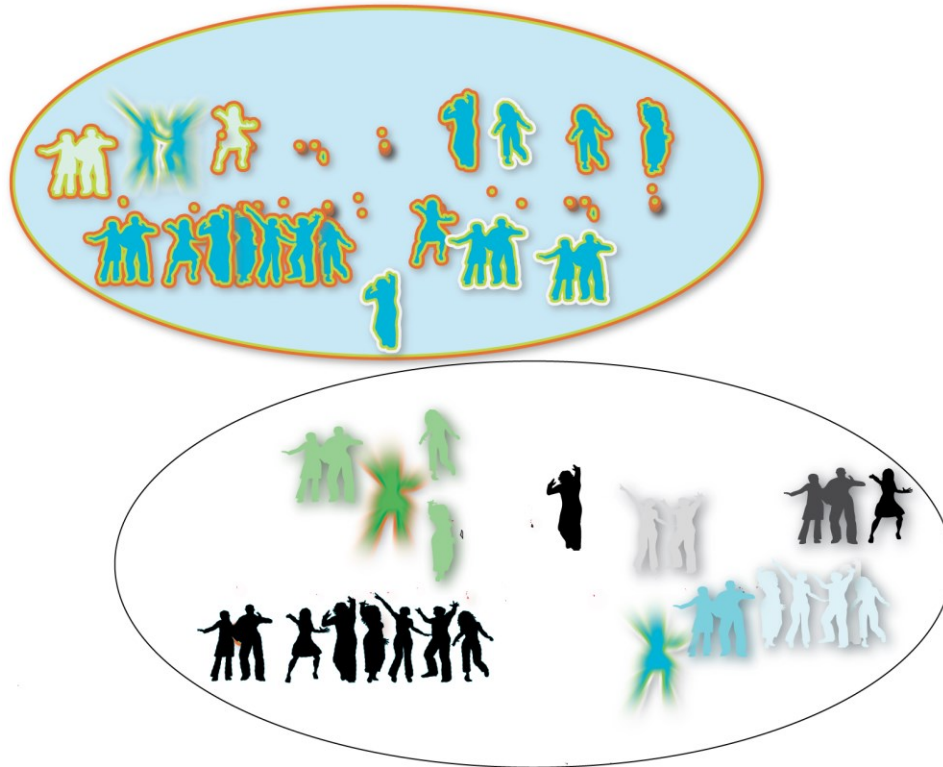
it; but a community that lies entirely outside of your own community, that has no common interest, no co-operative activity, is one with which you could not communicate." (Mead, 1967: 257) As this example illustrates, one's ability to communicate and act within familiar and unfamiliar social spaces is rooted in something more than simply being part of a wider social community, it speaks to our past experiences and the values, interests, and characteristics that we carry with us from place to place, or space to space, and how this translates into a present comfort and familiarity that facilitates or hinders the abilities to fore-see (i.e. foresight) what is expected and 'normal'. The ability to have a sense of what is to come in a social space also means an ability resist the dominating forces that are felt by a social actor who has less experience with the environment.

Referring one last time to Figure 6, it can be said that the white and grey people who embodied aspects of the blue and green world have a better sense of the space, have a better ability to foresee and anticipate what might come about when entering the field, and would be better able to resist the dominating force that would otherwise be felt by a white and grey person(s) who have never entered the blue and green world. Furthermore, the same can be said about the blue and green people who embodied some of the shades of white through their interactions with the grey and white 'visitors', who likely have a better sense of what to expect than the blue and green people who did not come into contact with them, even though they have never physically entered the black and grey world. The complexities of interactions within and between social spaces are endless; we could further state that the white and grey individuals who return from the blue world with new shades of green and blue might not be as easily accepted back into the white and grey world. Such is the case when I return to my home town of Winnipeg as a doctoral student in Sociology and try to carry on a conversation with my old friends, all of whom are auto mechanics. There is indeed a sense of discomfort that comes with re-integrating into a social space that time has turned less-than-familiar.

With that being said, as is illustrated in Figure 7 below, there remains the possibility that the experiences of other spaces and the rhythms and regularities can transcend the physical and sense boundaries, and become embodied by the people in one's 'home' environment. People are capable of learning from one another and learning from experiences with the forces and facts of different spatial dimensions in society. Experience with the rules and norms of other social spaces can lead one to embody these new principles and carry these social facts and introduce them into their native social space, which may or may not lead to the alteration of the common social facts, facts that if changed can no longer be considered to be eternal or timeless, but capable of being altered consciously or unconsciously by the actions and interactions of inter-spatially mobile individuals or groups.

In line with Marx's position that people are capable of changing social facts, consideration of inter-spatial movement offers alternatives to Marx's uni-dimensional belief that change can only happen through society wide revolution, and finds that change can happen at the level of social spaces, whereby experience with the regularities of the less-than-familiar social spaces can at the very least help someone realize that the regularities and rules of their home spaces are not eternal, that there are spaces in society where the rules are different and people walk by a different rhythm. Thus, experiences with people and places different from what they know can help people break from the common sense understanding (the false sense of a linear view of the social world) that they have of their place in the social world. As Bourdieu notes, it is important to recognize and understand the spaces in which we have the 'shades of color' that give us some autonomy, the spaces where we have a margin of freedom and increased possibilities.

**Figure 7:** This illustrates how social facts can be changed through the interactions of individuals within a social space. If grey individuals bring back blue and green values they learned from their time in a blue world, the potential is there for them to share what they have learned with the people in their world. This interaction can lead to the people embodying shades of blue without ever having stepped into the blue world. With enough time and influence, one could foresee the interactions of the green and blue shaded individuals in a grey world slowly transforming the social space into a blue(ish) world. Again, as Marx said, change can happen through the influence of the people.



Relating this back to time, Bourdieu writes that a "margin of freedom is the basis of the autonomy of struggles over the sense of the social world, its meaning and orientation, its present and its future, one of the major stakes in symbolic struggles. The belief that a particular future – either desired or feared – is possible, probable or inevitable can, in some historical conditions, mobilize a group around it and so help to favour or prevent the coming of that future." (Bourdieu, 2000: 235) The linear belief that 'the chips are down forever' closes off the range of possibilities for people, it presents a uniformity, endurance, essence, and absolute sense of time and space that is difficult to resist. Thus, the most difficult limits to transcend can be those which are set in people's minds. In a sense, the ability to break with the continuum of past, present and future that exist in people's minds comes from experience within unfamiliar and uncomfortable social spaces. There is a complex relationship between *past* experiences with social people and spaces, the *present* sense of one's place and space, and the dispositions to be and to do in the *future*, that is made entirely more complex when taken in the context of potential to be and to do in the spaces, sites, or fields where one is less capable of understanding what it means to 'be' and 'do'. In short, space is critically important to our understanding of the dynamics of time as it exists in space and through people.

## Conclusion

As I hope to have shown throughout this document, there are ways that we can think about time in general, and the future in particular, that are not limited to externality of the social universe or the confines of the human mind. There are important dimensions in sociological theory that have yet to be explored and/or fully realized. Where people disregard Durkheim for being too deterministic and mechanical; Marx for being too radical; Foucault for being too focused on history; Bourdieu for not saying enough about practical change; and Simmel because he is rarely introduced in pedagogical setting (a sad but true reality), I reply by saying that they all have something important to say about the ways we are able to think about the future of social action.

Durkheim provides valuable insights and evidence for the commonly held belief that people are social beings who share common interests, values and goals, that is, he contributes a great deal to the argument that sociality is transmitted into social actors (i.e. people become time). Sharing similar beliefs in the transmission of sociality into actors, Marx is able to complement some of the time oriented limitations of Durkheim by providing evidence for the counter argument that time is not 'absolute' and without origin; people have the capacity to create and change the facts and realities that may appear as being 'timeless' and 'enduring'. Building upon this view, thinkers like Foucault, Bourdieu, and Tilly (and Einstein to a certain degree) further contextualize things with a focus on social space, the 'other' sites, spaces, or fields in society that play a role in a person's ability to enact change, abilities that are intimately bound with the spaces that people know best and frequently inhabit. Mead, Simmel, Schutz, Tarde, and others, provide further insights into the way that embodied sense of time and space plays out when people cross spatial boundaries and enter the unfamiliar. They make the argument that time (i.e. regularity of social facts) is open to change when entering a social space with different forces, populated by people who live life by the beat of a different drum.

At the outset of this essay I was hoping that I could conclude with some thoughts on how a better understanding of time and space within sociological theory could facilitate entrance into the 'not yet', the 'not real', the unknown future. This was unrealistic at the very least. What I have done is present an alternative look at the fundamentals of sociological theory that in some way takes us beyond the tired old dichotomy of structure and agency. Rather than think about the top down (or bottom up) relationship between structure and agency and how it influences social action, I have proposed that we might benefit from thinking about the process of moving from left to right (or right to left); from past, to present, to future. While this is in no way an original idea – as I have shown, many have considered the process of time in sociological and philosophical theory – I believe that the context of multi-dimensional social space is often missing from discussions of time. While I struggled slightly with the work of Henri Bergson, there is much within the pages that speaks to the complex dynamics that play out between time and space, and how it relates to individual freedoms to act. Similarly, while it was painful at times to think through complex theories of space and time presented in the baffling context of quantum physics, the content in the texts offered important insights into the dynamics of space, and the connection with *social* space was not terribly difficult to make (with the dedication of enough (perhaps too much!) time and effort). By picking up on the common language around time and space that flows through sociological theories, I feel that I have provided sufficient evidence that further investigations and applications of time and space oriented social theories may be useful to sociological enquiry.

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