

# European Journal of Social Theory

<http://est.sagepub.com>

---

## **The Constitution of Space: The Structuration of Spaces Through the Simultaneity of Effect and Perception**

Martina Löw

*European Journal of Social Theory* 2008; 11; 25

DOI: 10.1177/1368431007085286

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://est.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/11/1/25>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

**Additional services and information for *European Journal of Social Theory* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://est.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://est.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations** <http://est.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/11/1/25>

# The Constitution of Space

## The Structuration of Spaces Through the Simultaneity of Effect and Perception

*Martina Löw*

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY DARMSTADT, GERMANY

### Abstract

It has become an academic self-evidence that space can only inadequately be conceptualized as a material or earth-bound base for social processes. This could commend a theoretical view of space as the outcome of action, which brings both social production practices and bodily deployment into focus. The action-theoretical perspective allows the constitution of space to be understood as taking place in perception. Not only are things alone perceived but also the relations between objects. This article develops a space-theoretical concept according to which space is constituted through acts as the outcome of synthesis and positioning practices. This opens up a theoretical perspective defining atmospheres as an external effect, instantiated in perception, of social goods and human beings in their situated spatial order/ing. Exclusion and inclusion are accordingly comprehended in terms of perception of the attunement of places. With reference to Anthony Giddens, this article discusses how space can be understood as a duality of structural ordering and action elements.

### Key words

■ atmosphere ■ everyday life ■ space ■ urban research

### Introduction

Space provides the social sciences with much food for thought. While a theoretical consideration of space permits reflection on the ordering logics of simultaneity, space is subjected to analysis in the social sciences as a 'product of social action' or as a 'product of social structures.' To begin with logics of ordering, the social sciences can be said to be primarily concerned with the potential of space as a juxtapositional ordering pattern for producing radical difference and plurality. Doreen Massey (1999, 2005) points out that the term space is better suited than any other to express the spheres of juxtaposition and coexistence. As the form of organization of the juxtaposed, spaces epitomize simultaneities. In this

sense spaces are, first, an expression of the possibility of pluralities; second, they point to the possibility of overlapping and reciprocal relations; and third, and for this very reason, they are always open and indefinite with respect to future formations (see also Featherstone and Lash, 2002). This applies no less to national territorial spaces than it does to the microspaces of everyday life. Gerd Held (2005), too, considers difference to be a constitutive element in thinking about space. Unlike Massey, however, he argues that the modern age has established the simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion as two complementary space logics. With reference to Fernand Braudel's observation that, in the modern age, the city and the territorial state are competing forms of spatial entity, he postulates that city and country are complementary spatial ordering patterns. The basic spatial concepts of society are constituted not by the city-country dichotomy but by the distinction between a spatial inclusion logic, the structural openness of the modern city, and a spatial exclusion logic, the closed container construct of the modern nation-state. The construction of the national territory requires borders, territorial boundaries that increase internal homogeneity; the construction of the modern city denies the unambiguity of borders and boundaries, hence increasing both density and heterogeneity. Considered in this light, the category of space does not in principle evince heterogeneity as Massey assumes. Heterogeneity and homogeneity are tied to competing space logics. The modern age has systematically entrenched a spatial differentiation between two forms of societalization: 'state/exclusion' and 'city/inclusion.'

The logic of inclusion and exclusion via institutionalized orderings is also followed by those who discuss space as a 'product' of societal interaction/structures, examining the production of social inequity through spatial relations in the empirical cases of virtual spaces (Featherstone and Burrows, 1995; Budke et al., 2004), global spaces (King, 1990; Chattopadhyay, 2005; Berking et al., 2006), and local spaces (Mayerfeld Bell, 1997). Space is accordingly a category with which the social sciences address inclusion/exclusion as a problem of simultaneous positioning, focusing not only on the symbolic dimension of the world but also on the material dimension. There is broad agreement in social-scientific spatial studies that space is a relational category; in other words, space arises from the activity of experiencing objects as relating to one another (Soja, 1989; Rose, 1999; Crang and Thrift, 2000; Sturm, 2000; Adams et al., 2001). Always keeping in mind the dangers of arguing in deterministic terms, discovering whether space constructed in this manner itself structures action remains a complicated problem for the social scientist. While it cannot be often enough stressed that no space imposes specific action (pedestrian tunnels need not necessarily engender fear, however empirically frequently this occurs), highly elaborated know-how has been developed about how deliberately to generate atmospheres in spaces (see also Thrift, 2004). This article attempts to show that structure-theoretical arguments tend to take account of the power of spaces to provoke social events, whereas action theory tends to conceptualize space more strongly as a result of or context for action. Materialist theory has always proceeded on the assumption that societal structures shape action in specific ways. To assume in analogy that

spatial structures affect bodies is theoretically plausible and seems unproblematic because the subject of analysis is usually very abstract, as when Lefèbvre (1991) and Harvey (1990) stress that the capitalist spatial order is conducive to fragmentation. The closer social-scientific studies of space come to 'micro-sociological' contexts, the more frequently space is 'immobilized' as context or locale (see Giddens, 1984; Werlen, 2000).

Exclusion effects in microsociological studies can consequently be treated at best as the outcome of boundary-setting, of access opportunities, and of prohibitions (summary in Kessl et al., 2005); but, especially in the Anglo-American discourse, there is hardly any discussion of exclusion resulting from the atmospheric potency of spaces. This article therefore begins by reconstructing the discussion on the structuring force of spaces. On this basis, I examine the biography of Josef Tal as an example for a spatial theory approach that systematically relates structure to action in the interest of gaining a non-deterministic perspective on the atmospheric quality of spaces and the resulting subtle form of inclusion and exclusion.

## A Structure Theoretical Perspective on Space

An important resource for analysis along spatial theory lines is provided by the works of Henri Lefèbvre (on the influence of Lefèbvre on American spatial studies see Shields, 1999: 143). In 'Production de l'espace,' which appeared in France in 1974 (quoted here from the 1991 English edition) Lefèbvre not only points the way to a relational concept of space but also ties it in with a critique of capitalism. Lefèbvre introduces his thoughts on spatial theory with the words: '(Social) space is a (social) product' (Lefèbvre, 1991: 30). Like Marx, who examines the products of industry not in their material form but as the outcome of a societal production process, Lefèbvre develops a critical approach permitting the investigation of space as a product of society. Lefèbvre develops his theory on the basis of a theory of everyday life. He claims that everyday life as the locus where people work and produce has changed under the conditions of capitalism into a state of everydayness. Everyday life has become a social locus of highly developed exploitation and carefully monitored passivity (Lefèbvre, 2003). Everydayness means the standardization of the lifestyles of individualization and particularization through societalization processes (Lefèbvre, 1995). An important characteristic is the colonization of space and time. Lefèbvre considers the measurement and control of space to be a specific expression of the capitalist mode of production. He sees the production and control of space as the capitalist means of appropriation. One of his key theses is that capital in conjunction with the state safeguards its positions of power through access to space, by dividing up and deploying space: 'Hence the space too is made up of "boxes for living in," of identical "plans" piled one on top of another or jammed next to one another in rows' (Lefèbvre, 1991: 384). He also refers to this capitalist space as 'abstract space' (1991: 229). It is characterized by simultaneous fragmentation and

homogenization. In this context, fragmentation refers to the described division of space into marketable lots, while homogenization stresses the levelling-down of the exchange value, which in capitalism prevails over the utility value of space.

As his starting point for reflection on space, Lefebvre formulates a conceptual triad (Lefebvre, 1991: 38) of spatial practice/perceived space, representations of space/conceived space, and spaces of representation/representational space/lived spaces. With the first two elements in the triad, Lefebvre primarily follows the Marxist tradition. By 'spatial practice' he means space-related modes of behaviour, that is to say everyday practices reinforced by routines and routes for the production and reproduction of spaces and for the bodily experience and suffering of spaces. Lefebvre's view of spatial practice, although it includes the aspect of action, is very much under the impression of capitalist structural constraints. It is non-reflexive, everyday practice, producing and reproducing its own pre-conditions in a circular process. Spatial practice is pervaded by representations of space. By representations of space, Lefebvre means conceived space, the space of planners, urbanists, scientists, and technicians. It is the ideological, cognitive aspect of space, its representation, mathematical and physical models and plans, which enable space to be read. As Edward Soja (1996: 60) remarks, it is the aspect of space to which the sciences generally refer. Representations of space pervade and prestructure spatial practice. This structuration does not mean that everyday users are conceptual experts. 'The user's space is lived – not represented (or conceived)' (Lefebvre, 1991: 362). However, this action (or rather behaviour under the conditions of capitalism) is marked by alienation and monotonous repetition. In lived practice, spatial order repeats itself.

Lefebvre adds a third aspect to this conception of structure and action/behaviour. Inspired by French structuralism, he stresses the importance of the symbolic level in determining space. For Lefebvre, 'spaces of representation' stand for spaces of expression, conveyed by images and symbols, which complement spatial practices and cognition. It is this aspect of space that can undermine prevailing orders and discourses and envision other spaces. It is often the refractory spaces of artists or mythical, premodern images of space that call given societal conditions into question. It is a matter of impulses and notions that give some idea of pre-capitalist, non-homogenized and fragmented space, often conveyed by bodily sensation and sensuous perception rather than by cognitive superimposition (on the triad see also Massey, 1996: 120; Soja, 1996; Shields, 1991, 1999). Over and above this triad, Lefebvre defines dualities that shape modern space. The most important of these is the simultaneity of actual given and potential locus: 'Is not social space always, and simultaneously, both a field of action (offering its extension to the deployment of projects and practical intentions) and a basis of action (a set of places whence energies derive and whither energies are directed)? Is it not at once actual (given) and potential (locus of possibilities?)' (Lefebvre, 1991: 191). Hence, space is simultaneously a collection of things and objects and of tools and the use of tools. Space makes action possible and is itself the field of action. Lefebvre thus proposes an idea of space that is both structuring form and structured form. But he sets these facets side by side without theoretical

interconnection. He emphasizes that space is both, without going into how space as the basis of action relates theoretically to space as the field of action.

Lefebvre develops a notion of space that encompasses a great deal of what, 25 years later, has become stock-in-trade in the social sciences, whether it be the 'embedding' of social relations associated with Giddens (1990) or Castells's 'space of flows' (1996). Above all, however, he seeks ways for sociology to think about space beyond the container image, while taking into account societal forming and endogenous potentiality. But this laudable enterprise has produced no positive concept. It is primarily the sole and absolute notion of capitalist constraint that makes it so difficult to conceive of spatial production beyond alienation. Lefebvre accordingly remains ambivalent in his assessment of actors. Although they create spaces through spatial practice, these spaces, subjugated to everydayness, are never more than a pale imitation of the state-capitalistic logic. The only line of flight to follow appears to be spaces of representation, imaginings, memories, or manipulated perceptions that point beyond the existing capitalist space, and which make space conceivable as 'something different.' Ultimately, however, Lefebvre sees the state as the agent that produces spaces and its citizens as reproductive forces. 'The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces – but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements' (Lefebvre, 1991: 85). The state is an actor in this: 'Only an act can hold – and hold together – such fragments in a homogeneous totality. . . Such is the action of political power, which creates fragmentation and so controls it – which creates it, indeed, in order to control it' (Lefebvre, 1991: 320).

Lefebvre has inspired many works on space in the dialectical tradition (for example, Soja, 1996; Massey, 2005). This inspiration is particularly explicit in David Harvey (1990). He takes up the thesis that the expansion of power is determined essentially by the ability to influence the production of space. The control of space is for him an aspect in the interaction between the inputs of space, time, and money. Property speculators, for example, must know when to sell (and have enough money to bide their time) if they are to maximize profits. Harvey accordingly assumes that time, space, and money are mutually convertible, with money playing a key role in capitalism (Harvey, 1990: 226). The possession of money enables space and time to be controlled, just as power over space and time brings financial gains: this is common knowledge, Harvey writes, among generals and supermarket managers (Harvey, 1991: 158). In historical retrospective, Harvey describes how space becomes a commodity in a capitalist economy (and generally in societies with a money economy). If goods can be sold more and more rapidly over greater and greater distances, more and more new markets can be opened up. 'The incentive to create the world market, to reduce spatial barriers, and to annihilate space through time is omnipresent, as is the incentive to rationalize spatial organization into efficient configurations of production' (Harvey, 1990: 232). The outcome of this development according to Harvey is the compression of space and time. He believes that 'time-space-compression' (Harvey, 1990: 240) has a major impact on cultural life. The feeling for the long term, for the future, for continuity is lost, just as the relationship

between proximity and distance is becoming more and more difficult to determine.

David Harvey has succeeded in launching a debate on the importance, or more precisely, on the loss of importance of space under the conditions of globalization. Although, like Lefebvre, he emphasizes the social production of spaces and the impossibility of comprehending space beyond actions (Harvey, 1990: 225), the idea of time-space compression depends on a notion of 'space' as a material substratum. In Harvey's concept, various spaces remain inconceivable as a product of social action. Indeed, he ascribes a certain endogenous dynamic to materiality comparable to a societal structure in the Marxist sense: 'I shall argue that space relations and geographical phenomena are fundamental material attributes that have to be present at the very beginning of the analysis and that the forms they assume are not neutral with respect to the possible paths of temporal development. They have to be construed, in short, as fundamental and "active moments" within the contradictory dynamics of capitalism' (Harvey, 1985: 33). Harvey understands residential segregation, for example, as a phenomenon that is not only produced socially but which also generates societal conditions. In its materialization, according to Harvey, space develops its own dynamics.

With Edward Soja, Harvey shares the Marxist foundations of a spatial theory that seeks to integrate time or historicization as an essential component. But Soja ties this thinking in more strongly with post-structuralist theories. With reference to Lefebvre, Soja, who elaborates a spatio-temporal perspective on society and social life (Soja, 1989: 73), suggests distinguishing between space as given and spatiality as socially produced (Soja, 1989: 79). His trialectic of spatiality, historicity, and sociality (Soja, 1996) allots spatiality/geography, historicity/history, and sociality/society to three interconnected fields. History, for instance, is always a spatialized product, geography is a formation that changes socially over time, and society is spatially and temporally structured. Soja distinguishes between 'firstspace,' 'secondspace,' and 'thirdspace.' Here, too, we find an echo of Lefebvre's tripartite division. Firstspace is materialized relations and practices, things in space. Secondspace is conceived space, images of space. Thirdspace, finally, is the lived space encompassing first and secondspace.

Soja, too, has repeatedly stressed the endogenous effect of space. Time and again in his publications he has taken issue with the idea that history takes place in passively-set space, and with the notion that spaces impose social processes. He pleads in favour of a geography 'which recognizes spatiality as simultaneously . . . a social product (or outcome) and a shaping force (or medium) in social life' (Soja, 1989: 7). Like Harvey and Lefebvre, he remains aloof from concrete, everyday action. All three place too much emphasis on the capitalist dimension of spatial structure to the exclusion of any experience of the emotional qualities of space. The atmospheric quality of space comes into focus only when structure-theoretical considerations are tied in with micro-sociological issues. Such a link between structures and action from the spatial theory point of view is attempted by Anthony Giddens.

## Action-Theoretical Sociology of Space

Action theory attempts to posit a mediating category between the materially perceptible aspects of spaces and the social consequences of spatial structures: namely, action. The concept of action makes it possible to link bodily positioning, perception, and the constructional performances of subjects with material artefacts and institutional frameworks. As the preceding section has shown, such a proceeding is an essential component of Marxist theory formation, too. But Lefebvre often interprets it more strongly in terms of the structural characteristics of action than in terms of its potentials.

In his theory of structuration, the English sociologist Anthony Giddens has developed an idea of societal structures that do not have a rigidly determinative effect but are rather the medium and outcome of repeated action (see Giddens, 1984; see also Bryant and Jary, 2001: 12). Giddens conceptualizes structures as rules and resources recursively embedded in institutions. Rules relate to the constitution of meaning or to the sanctioning of action. They imply negotiating procedures in social relations up to and including codification. As structural features they cannot be conceptualized without reference to resources. 'Resources are media through which power is exercised, as a routine element of the instantiation of conduct in social reproduction' (Giddens, 1984: 16). Giddens distinguishes between allocative resources, i.e. material resources, which derive from domination over nature, and authoritative resources, i.e. those relating to persons.

The recursive nature of structures can best be explained by the example of language. With few exceptions, all members of a language community use the same rules and linguistic practices. In talking they reproduce these rules which render speech possible in the first place (see Giddens, 1984: 76). It is no different with societal structures. Societal structures make action possible and are reproduced through active recourse to the rules of formation. Giddens distinguishes between structure and structures. Structures are isolable sets of rules and resources, e.g. legal, economic, political structures. Structure means the totality of different structures.

To give expression to the mutual conditionality of action and structure, Anthony Giddens also writes of the 'duality of structure and action,' which he also refers to as the duality of structure. The term duality denotes a twoness, not an opposition or dichotomy as implied by the term dualism. The duality of structure and action emphasizes that '... rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction ...' (Giddens, 1984: 19). For Anthony Giddens, routines are a key category in understanding social processes: 'Routine is integral both to the continuity of the personality of the agent, as he or she moves along the paths of daily activities, and to the institutions of society, which are such only through their continued reproduction' (Giddens, 1984: 60). As Giddens sees it, routines reproduce societal institutions and habitualize an agent's own action. He sees routines as the cause of the recursive nature of social life. In the habitual repetition of day-to-day activity, social structures are reproduced recursively. Routines



convey security and 'certainty of being' or, in Giddens's parlance, 'ontological security.' Whereas the concept of routine is developed in a micro-sociological context and is applied to structure-theoretical problems, the institution concept presupposes the reverse logic. According to Giddens, institutions are '... the more enduring features of social life' (Giddens, 1984: 24). Institutions are formations permanently reproduced in routines.

Giddens rejects the practice of many social scientists who comprehend space and time as mere boundary conditions of action. In his view, space and time must be conceptualized as key ordering dimensions. Space and time cannot be neglected or addressed at will; both categories are central to social theories. However, since, in analysing social reality, Giddens draws neither consistently or invariably on the space concept (see Werlen, 1997: 166), interpretations of the space-theoretical facets of his work differ considerably (see also Gregory, 1989; Saunders, 1989; Urry, 1991).

In response to his critics, Anthony Giddens stresses that space has to do with the contextuality of social interaction. He thus makes it clear that space becomes relevant as place-relatedness in action, not only as geographical place but also as 'locale,' in other words, as a place defined not in materiality terms but in social terms. As a theoretical tool, space is important in the architecture of Giddens's theory of structuration in the sense of place and regionalization at the systems level.

Giddens distinguishes between structures and systems. He conceives of structures as rules and resources across space and time. 'System' for him is the web of space-time, routinized, or institutionalized actions. Giddens relates the concept of action to space in only one dimension: actions appear to be localized as a matter of course. For example, he does not ask whether actions can produce space. On the other hand, he defines 'structure' in terms of exclusion from space. Unlike structure-theoretical concepts, Giddens's assumption that structures are rules and resources reproduced across space and time reduces space to 'locale'. Vice versa, Giddens does not address space as a product of action: he is interested in the resources of locales, in the modes of contextuality. Hannah and Strohmeyer therefore object that Giddens's analysis of space 'leaves structure "nowhere," a fiction . . . ultimately . . . put inside personality (memory traces, mutual knowledge) within practical consciousness' (Hannah and Strohmeyer, 1991: 321; Sewell Jr., 1992). Storper argues in similar vein in criticizing Giddens: 'the material foundations of structures are real and are to some extent autonomous from interaction' (Storper, 1985: 409). John B. Thompson (1989: 64) was one of the first to point out that although Giddens defines structures in terms of rules and resources, his later argumentation focuses much more markedly on rules than on (dominantly material) resources. Rob Stones (2005) takes up these arguments and, also with reference to the works of Margaret Archer (1995) and Nicos Mouzelis (1991), advocates taking greater account of external conditions of action in structuration theory. Apart from virtual structures (memory traces, perceptual activity, synthesis, and so on), which in the duality of structure can be convincingly explained by their storage in the individual, a theoretical locus is needed for structuring phenomena that, although produced through action,

are situated externally (see argument below that things can produce atmospheres). With regard to space, this points to the need to expand Giddens's theory to include the materiality of space at the structural level.

Benno Werlen (2000), by contrast, steps up Giddens's argument. He argues against conceptualizing space at the structural level. 'But an action-centred approach – in contrast to the spatial science perspective – does not aim to explain spatial patterns. The focus of interest is rather on the process of producing and, especially, reconstructing the regionalizing consequences for other agents' (Werlen, 2000: 617). Werlen seeks to understand structure(s) in Giddens consistently only in terms of the meaning they attain through action, and therefore focuses little on the power of structures to enable action. In not conceptualizing space at the structural level (also), Giddens (and subsequently Werlen) reproduces the dualism of structure and action instead of further developing the duality of the two aspects. John Urry remarks critically: 'By contrast, I shall argue that time and space should be seen as produced and producing, as contested and determined and as symbolically represented and structurally organized' (Urry, 1991: 160).

There is much to indicate that spaces are experienced not only bodily (action level) but also have an impact on bodies (structural level), that, in this sense, spaces are not only the point of reference for action or the product of action but, as institutions, also structure action. Renate Ruhne (2003) has shown this for the production of the insecure woman and the self-assured man through the construction of public space. This interaction has been investigated more closely with respect to ethnization. Andreas Eckert (1996), for instance, shows how colonial spatial policy in Africa produced an ethnization of bodies. By dealing with space only as a setting embedded in places, Giddens denies himself the option of making a distinction between 'space' and 'place.' For example, no distinction can be drawn between a unique place and an institutionalized space. The relationship between a specific place with its materiality and the generalizable modes of regionalization thus remains unresolved.

If the two main problems with Giddens's conception of space are, first, that he makes no productive use of the distinction between space and locale; and, second, that, although he posits structures beyond space and time and thus ultimately beyond materiality, he seeks to maintain the potential for mediating between action and structure, then it would be useful to integrate space at all levels of his theoretical edifice. My proposed conception of a duality of space treats spaces as products of action which at the same time have structuring power. I will explain this with the help of an example.

## Duality of Space

Josef Tal, pianist, composer and professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, left Berlin in 1934 to emigrate to Palestine. In his biography, 'Der Sohn des Rabbiners' ('The Son of the Rabbi') (1987) he describes his trajectory from a childhood in an orthodox Jewish family in Berlin at the beginning of the

twentieth century to become a major contemporary composer in Israel. Every self-description abounds in accounts of spaces, and Tal's autobiography is no exception. The following passage is outstanding only in so far as it has a before/after structure giving a particularly vivid portrayal of the temporal process leading from one spatial constitution to the next. Tal writes:

Still under the British mandate, before the outbreak of the Second World War, I was able to see the Wailing Wall in the heart of the Arab Old City, guided by two high government officials. One made one's way through a warren of narrow, winding streets and suddenly stood before a sheer wall of gigantic ashlar blocks. High above, a narrow ribbon of blue sky remained between the narrow walls of the alleyway. The narrowness of the space lent the ashlar blocks an even greater and mightier aspect before the small human being at their foot. In this place one could only pray to an Almighty hovering unattainable above the immeasurable stonework. After the Six Days' War of 1968, the labyrinth of narrow streets before the Wailing Wall was razed. Today one approaches the Wall across a broad, vast terrain that offers room for thousands of visitors to pray and celebrate religious feasts. Naturally the ashlar blocks are the same, but the new surroundings have changed their language. The broad space that has freed them from the narrow streets directs their mourning echo in the horizontal plane and not skywards, giving prayer a different meaning. Far be it from me to blaspheme in comparing the Wailing Wall to a museum exhibit, for these stones speak too living a language. But space and material interact in the formation of meaning. (Tal, 1987: 87)

Tal describes a space and how it changes in the course of time. The space in question was initially composed of narrow streets, the sheer wall of gigantic ashlar stones, and a narrow strip of blue sky. The modern space, in contrast, is constituted by the Wailing Wall and the terrain of the square, together with the many people that throng it. In spontaneously imagining a space, one often thinks of doors, walls, windows, shelves, tables, etc. the ordering of which creates spaces. Common to all these 'bodies' is that they are 'products of present and especially past material and symbolic action' (Kreckel, 1992: 77), in brief, social goods. Social goods can, as Reinhard Kreckel shows, be differentiated into primarily material goods and primarily symbolic goods. Primarily material goods are, for example, tables, chairs, and houses; primarily symbolic goods are songs, values, and regulations. The attributive 'primarily' indicates that social goods are never exclusively material or symbolic but exhibit both components. However, depending on the action being performed, one component predominates. The activity of ordering in the sense of situating implies that in this instance primarily material goods and not primarily symbolic goods are meant. Goods are thus ordered in their material aspect, but these orderings can be understood only if the symbolic properties of social goods are deciphered. This is particularly important when symbols are situated. Symbols in road transport, for instance, can be ordered only because they possess materiality, but the reason for ordering them is to display symbolism.

But people, too, are integrated into the constitution of spaces (see also Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005) – in Tal's account of the contemporary space of the Wailing Wall the tourists or visitors. The ordering of two people in relation to each other

is also space constitutive, depending on their social relationship. People who are socially more intimate leave less space between them than people who are social strangers. The boundaries of this space become highly visible if overstepped by one of the interlocutors. People are positioned by the actions of others, and they also actively position themselves. Other living beings, especially animals, differ from social goods in that they do not, or not always, allow themselves to be situated by people, nor do they make conscious decisions like people. Nonetheless, animals can constitute space, as does a dog guarding a property or in social conduct among animals. To bring it to a point, space can be seen as a *relational ordering of living entities and social goods*.

If space is regarded as the relational ordering of social goods and people, what is ordered and who orders it must be systematically distinguished. People are involved in constituting space not only as elements. In day-to-day activities, in planning, art, and science, ensembles of social goods are generally perceived or defined as elements or 'building blocks' and linked with other elements. Spaces come into being only by being actively connected by human beings. People connect not only things but also other people or groups of people (who themselves actively intervene in events). This means, secondly, that the constitution of spaces usually involves positionings. This happens under pre-structured conditions.

Two basic processes of space construction are to be distinguished. First, space is constituted by the situating of social goods and people and/or the positioning of primarily symbolic markings in order to render ensembles of goods and people recognizable as such (e.g. exit and entry signs to localities). *Spacing* means erection, building, or positioning. Examples are the display of wares in a supermarket, the self-positioning of people in relation to other people, the construction of buildings, the surveying of national borders, the networking of computers to form spaces. It is positioning in relation to other positionings. In the case of mobile goods or of people, spacing means both the moment of positioning and movement to the next positioning. Second, the constitution of space also requires *synthesis*, that is to say, goods and people are connected to form spaces through processes of perception, ideation, or recall.

In the day-to-day activity of constituting space, synthesis and spacing are concurrent, since action is always processual. Indeed, building, erecting, or situating, i.e. spacing, are not possible without synthesis, that is to say, without connection to surrounding social goods and people to form spaces. Although urban buildings, for instance, can be linked through movement, this linkage becomes a space only through the perceptual and/or analytical synthesis of the buildings. In micro-sociological dimensions, too, the constitution of space is based on these two processes. The space which global cities jointly form is based both on spacing processes, particularly digital networking with permanent information flow and data transfer, and on processes of synthesis between the actors involved (Sassen, 1994). The synthesis of New York, Tokyo, London, Paris, and Hong Kong into a global space shapes the activities of human agents in financial services, just as, vice versa, spacing in the sense of situating and transporting information provokes synthesis.

I return to my first example. I consciously ignore the fact that this example is an instance of space construction from memory, and, for the sake of reducing complexity, I choose to treat the passage as a workshop paper in the research process. While walking through the Old City of Jerusalem, in performing an action, Josef Tal synthesizes narrow streets, sheer walls, ashlar stones, and a narrow strip of blue sky into a space. His steps relate to the objects combined into a space. Finally, he situates himself before the Wailing Wall, the key element of the spatial construction, to pray. The ashlar stones of the Wailing Wall, although they symbolically form the most significant element of the spatial construction, do not have an effect per se but only in the given ordering. Tal relates how praying has changed in consequence of demolition. Since the demolition work, the space has been constituted by the interlinkage of Wailing Wall, the terrain of the square, and people.

This passage illustrates all the essential dimensions of the constitution of space: the routinized paths of action, the structural dimension of spatiality, and, finally, the constitution of places and the development of atmospheres. I now want to consider the derivation of each dimension, beginning with the repetitive constitution of spaces.

### **Repetitive Day-to-Day Life**

Tal leaves no room for doubt that others would constitute this space in the same way. He uses the generalized subject 'one' in his descriptions. He is saying both that he approached the Wailing Wall every time in the same way to pray or celebrate religious occasions and that he assumes every Jew would do so in the same way.

What he describes is true of most actions. People generally act repetitively. This means that they do not have to think long about what way they take, where they situate themselves, how they store goods, and how they connect things and people. They have developed a set of habit-determined activities that helps them organize their day-to-day life. Even when day-to-day practices are disrupted or when a situation is novel, it is possible to fall back on routines. Anthony Giddens (1984) makes a useful distinction between discursive consciousness, that is to say all the things that social actors are capable of expressing in words, and practical consciousness, which covers the knowledge (also in the physical and emotional sense) which agents actualize in everyday life without conscious reflection. The two forms of consciousness are supplemented in day-to-day activity by the unconscious, repressed motives for action.

As a rule, space is constituted through practical consciousness, evidenced by the fact that people seldom consult on how they create spaces. If a roadblock obstructs the route to the Wailing Wall or a demonstration prevents access to it, Tal has practical consciousness at his disposal that offers alternatives which, although deviating from day-to-day routines, also draw on repetitive action. But, in principle, he is also capable of expressing spatial constructions in words, and

does so in his autobiography. That is to say, on enquiry or in reflexive contexts, part of the knowledge about spaces that is monitored by practical consciousness in everyday life can be transferred to discursive consciousness. Following Giddens (1984), I understand reflexivity as both the monitoring influence that actors exert on their lives and their capacity to justify their actions. Thus people can, like Josef Tal, verbally express the constitution of spaces, reconsider it, discuss it, and exercise a monitoring influence on it. What is essential in empirical research, for example, is also true of the constitution of spaces: people are able to understand and explain how they create spaces.

What interests me at this point is the repetitive nature of spatial construction (Tal's routines) and the generalizability of spaces presupposed by Josef Tal, which I will refer to as the institutionalization of spaces. Anyone who wanders through different cities or through different neighbourhoods finds like structures over and over again. Throughout Germany railway stations resemble one another increasingly in the situating of brightly coloured figures serving as signposts, in the grouping of shops to form 'market places,' and in the situating of oversized television monitors. In pedestrian precincts, too, like orderings are repeated. Spaces inside and around churches, parliaments, cemeteries, and supermarkets always have a similar design regardless of place and time. In the supermarket, for example, the relational ordering of shelves, the situating of goods in relation to other goods, the passages for people around shelving, the ordering of cash desks, trolleys, and the obligatory barrier at the entrance are institutionalized.

The ordering of people can also be institutionalized. At a reception for a head of state all orderings are prescribed. Spaces between doctor and patient are regulated. On the basis of photographs, Marianne Wex (1979) has analysed the always similar orderings between men and women. He sits with his legs apart, holding his arms at a distance from his body, she keeps her legs firmly together and her arms close to her body.

In regularized social practices these institutionalized orderings are reproduced through action. Without having to think much, a person knows that the enclosed area next to the church is a churchyard and that it can therefore be synthesized into one space with the church and the forecourt. Shelving is routinely erected in the same way, and adult customers neither clamber over or under it but often walk long distances around the display of goods. The patient keeps his or her distance from the doctor, and in an aircraft a woman relinquishes the armrest to the man seated beside her.

If Josef Tal admits no doubts about his constitution of space, this is attributable both to the certainty of his own routines and the institutionalization of synthesis and spacing. Spaces are institutionalized if their ordering remains effective beyond the action of the agent and entails normative synthesizing and spacing. As an institutionalized ordering, space becomes objectivation: space, a product of human activity, is experienced objectively (see Berger and Luckmann, 1967, on the concept of objectivation). Spacing and synthesis are institutionalized, for example, in a court of law. There are clear rules on how judges, barristers, public prosecutors, defendants, and the public are to situate themselves, not only

for a specific court: the relational ordering is the same or similar in all comparable courts. The individual groups of people synthesize the space of the court in routines and take up their accepted positions.

It must be kept in mind that positioning involves the negotiation of power relations. Power in this context is to be understood as a relational category immanent in every relationship. The extent to which action opportunities can be realized depends on the means of power available in a relationship and situation (see Elias, 1978; Giddens, 1984: 227; Löw, 2001). The space of the court is constituted differently from the position of the defendant than from that of the judge. As a rule, however, both accept the institutionalized ordering.

I have so far been considering the constitution of space from the perspective of action as it shapes societal structure. But with the institutionalization of spatial orderings, the opposing perspective has also been taken. The existence of societal institutions depends on reproduction in day-to-day activities. However, institutions persist even if subgroups of society do not reproduce them. Space must therefore be seen as constituted through action in interaction with societal structures.

### Spatial Structures

I return to my point of departure. By spaces I mean relational orderings of people (living entities) and social goods. The term ordering denotes two aspects: both the stative order created by spaces and processual ordering, the action dimension. Immanent in a relational ordering is therefore both an action dimension and a structuring dimension. The spatial cannot be differentiated from the societal since it is a specific form of the societal. Spatial structures, like temporal structures, are forms of societal structures. Here one can adopt Giddens's definitions of structure and structures with a fundamental modification. Unlike Giddens, who comprehends structures as independent of time and space, I conceptualize them as unrelated to place and point in time (see Giddens, 1984: 77). I adopt Giddens's definition of structure because it takes account both of the potential for enabling action and constraining it, and also because the distinction drawn between structure and structures makes it possible to distinguish between general rule-resource complexes and isolable sets of rules and resources organized through institutions. I extend the definition of structures to cover not only legal, economic, political, etc. structures but also spatial and temporal structures. Interaction between different societal structures forms societal structure.

We can explain this by looking at the societal structure of separation between public and private. Civil society makes a structural distinction between public and private. However permeable and contradictory this distinction might be, it is a constitutive societal principle upheld by rules and resources. This structure manifests itself in a range of isolable and recursively reproduced structures. There are legal structures, which, for example, guarantee privacy; social structures which prescribe a different code of conduct in public and in private; economic

structures of unpaid housework as opposed to gainful employment, etc. But the separation of public and private is also articulated in spatial structures, in the design of buildings, in the lockability of buildings, in the conception of the living room as a space accessible to the public by arrangement, in the design of cafés in imitation of private spaces, etc.

These spatial structures enable action. In the thoughtful arrangement of the living room in preparation for a visit from the neighbours the hostess recursively reproduces spatial structures. But spatial structures also constrain action. It is deemed impossible to receive the neighbours in the bedroom. In this case failure to respect the structures would incur negative sanctions. Structures are anchored in institutions. Institutions are enduring regularities in social action. They can be social formations in organizational form like the building supervisory authority or the dance course as initiation into public conduct. But they can also be societally pre-arranged patterns of action, like the institutionalized combinations underlying living rooms.

The Design Science department at the University of the Arts in Berlin, for example, has examined the treatment of objects in everyday life. The authors investigate how the constitution of space as living space differs from class to class. Low-income people or families, they found, always arrange social goods in the same way:

Predominant is the combination of living-room suite, coffee table, and wall unit. The furniture is often voluminous and decorated or patterned. Ornamental objects are displayed in the wall unit, which often occupies one wall. Ceiling lamps are without exception older models (1950s to 1970s), and there are usually only one or two other larger objects in the room (TV, pot plant, etc.). (Fächergruppe Designwissenschaft, no date: 123)

Space is constituted through the selection and situating of social goods. The authors point out that the arrangements described resemble department store catalogues. The living room becomes a space through the recursive combination of living room suite, coffee table, and wall unit. They are accordingly institutionalized and reproduced in routines. In the always similar constitution of the space 'living room,' spatial structures, ordering rules are instantiated in accordance with available resources. In the middle-class household, in contrast, individual objects are not arranged in a wall unit but situated separately, thus being more strongly involved in spatial construction. In contrast to the proletarian stratum, the middle class constitutes living space through free walls, large pictures, large plants, etc.

If we therefore assume that spaces are constituted through action, it can be concluded that this action, organized in the routines of day-to-day life, reproduces societal structures, and does so in a recursive process. Hence, societal structures enable space constitutive action which reproduces the very structures that enable it (and constrain other action). This reproduction is organized societally via institutions. Societal structures are anchored in institutions.

Let us return to Josef Tal in Jerusalem. Tal, too, reproduces institutionalized orderings by synthesizing and spacing. In Israeli society, the majority of Jews



living in the country will reproduce his synthesis of Wailing Wall, narrow streets, and sky into a space, as well as his investment of the space with symbolic meaning through practical consciousness. This space is institutionalized, but owing to its high symbolic importance it is tied to the concrete place, in contrast to other institutionalized orderings such as those in railway stations or supermarkets, which are repeated in many different places. Embedded in the institutionalized space of the Wailing Wall are societal structures for which the Wailing Wall offers a good example for study. Here, Tal writes, '... one could only pray to an Almighty hovering unattainable above the immeasurable stonework' (Tal, 1987: 87). Interlaced with the institutionalized space is a spatial structure typical of orderings that turn the gaze skywards. It is a spatial structure to be found not only at the Wailing Wall but also before skyscrapers, in cathedrals, castles, etc. In such cases a power relationship constitutes itself in spaces which through specific orderings ascribes great power potential to persons or personifications, whom Tal, for example, experiences as the positively connotated Almighty.

The demolition of the surrounding narrow streets transformed the institutionalized space. The reproduction of the power of the One God, secured through spatial as well as economic, social, legal, and other structures, is transformed into the security-oriented, secular demonstration of power of an extensive space. Josef Tal, too, problematizes such a change. The broad space, he writes, directs the mourning echo in the horizontal plane (towards other people and away from a God who is symbolically situated in heaven), giving a new meaning to prayer.

These notions about spatial structures in relation to space-constitutive action can now be brought together in the concept of duality. To speak of a *duality of space* is to express the idea that spaces do not simply exist but are created in (generally repetitive) action, and that, as spatial structures embedded in institutions, they guide action. Together, the routines of day-to-day activities and the institutionalization of social processes ensure the reproduction of social (and thus of spatial) structures.

## Perception and place

The architectonics of sociological theory tend to neglect perception in favour of human reflexive capabilities. Synthesis can indeed be achieved through reflexivity, but in day-to-day activities it is always guided by perceptual processes, too. Things are seldom perceived in isolation, rather 'in their arrangement' (Böhme, 1995: 94). What is perceived, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1989: 35) puts it in the key work 'Phenomenology of perception' with reference to Köhler's Gestalt psychology, is things and the 'interstices between things.' This means that syntheses are formed through perception in day-to-day activities. The social goods and people the actor encounters are combined into spaces.

I stress the aspect of perception for the constitution of spaces because this alone accounts for the circumstance that people not only see but also smell, hear, and feel the social goods they connect or situate. Noises contribute to the formation

of spaces – for example, through the sound of music, the crying of wares, the throb of car engines. What is peculiar to perceptual processes is not only that the external effects of social goods and other people are discerned but that they can exert influence even if the objects themselves are not visible. The smell of plants, of freshly painted walls, or car exhaust gases affects perception and hence the constitution of space without the social goods having to be seen. Since all senses are affected, what is heard or smelt can also influence space constitution without being in view.

Perception concentrates impressions into a process, a sensing of the agent's surroundings, in which social goods are not merely situated objects: they also influence the actor's sensing of the environment through their external effects. This emanation issues not only from social goods but also from other people, and influences perception. Hence I understand perception to be a simultaneous process of emanation by social goods and people and the perceptual activity of bodily sensing. The day-to-day constitution of space is bound to perceptual processes. In practical consciousness social goods and people are interlinked through perception. These syntheses are, as we have seen, not only pre-arranged by societal structures, but also influenced by the external effects of social goods and people. Spacing is guided by these perceptually enacted syntheses. But this is true only of the day-to-day constitution of space.

In brief, the day-to-day constitution of spaces involves perceptions that are grounded in both the external effect of social goods and other people and in the perceptual activity of the constituting agent. This is not to say that perception is direct. Various investigators into perception, including Gestalt psychologists, neurophysiologists, philosophers like Wolfgang Iser (1977), and sociologists like Niklas Luhmann, have demonstrated that perception, too, is subject to selection.

In current perception as well as in the conception reactualized through imagination we are dealing with the outcome of the simultaneous processing of an abundance of impressions with the possibility of selecting focal points of attention without 'losing sight' of others. (Luhmann, 1998: 17)

It is rightly emphasized that a selection has to be made from among the profusion of the perceptible, and that perception is therefore not direct in nature. It merely conveys the impression of directness while being, in fact, a highly selective and constructive process. Perception of the surrounding world is hence not a process that unfolds in the same way for all people. In the course of socialization and education people learn to develop certain senses better than others or to rely on some more than on others. Relevance criteria, too, are pre-structured. Ideas about space and educational processes thus influence perception, but they do not condition it.

If we now take this process of constituting space a step further, we arrive at a phenomena that has so far attracted little attention in the literature: the creation of atmospheres. Since the constitution of places flows into the genesis of atmospheres, I will first consider the localization of spaces in places. If space

is conceptualized as a relational ordering of social goods and living entities, 'place' can be redefined and the veil of self-evidence raised. In order to situate oneself or to be situated there have to be places where this can be done. Places are marked through occupation by social goods or people, but do not disappear with the objects. They remain available for occupation by others. A place is hence the goal and result of situating and not – like people and social goods – itself an element situated in the process of spacing. Places come into being through situating, but they are not identical with situating, since places continue to exist for a certain time even without the situated, or merely through the symbolic effect of the situating. The constitution of space therefore systematically generates places, just as places are prerequisite to the coming into being of space. Situating may be a non-recurrent action, but it can also produce fixed formations like buildings or signposts. These formations display a symbolic effect.

The distinction between space and place is accordingly an essential conceptual determination. The term place denotes an area, a site, which can be specifically named, usually geographically marked. It was this distinctiveness that Albert Einstein had in mind when he defines the place as 'a (small) portion of the Earth's surface identified by a name' (Einstein, 1954: XIII). Places come into being through spacing, they can be specifically named and are unique. Naming intensifies the symbolic impact of places. Since perception is mostly directed towards social goods and living entities in their arrangement, they are perceived together with the places where they are situated. The place and the situated element are not kept distinct. It is the same with remembering. Objects and people blend with their localization in concrete places to become single elements that are then stored in the memory, and which, in this way, influence the everyday constitution of space. Maurice Halbwachs (1941) and Jan Assmann (1997) speak of memory being oriented to places.

The space of a person's 'own' neighbourhood can serve as an example. This space can be constituted by the street in which you live, the shops to the north of home where you do the shopping, and the river embankment where you seldom go but that in your experience belongs to your own space. Neither in perception nor in memory do you distinguish between the place where the house stands and the house as a social good. And yet these are two different aspects of a context; the house could, after all, have been built somewhere else. More important is the distinction in the case of flexible social goods or people. If you park your car on the same spot in front of the house every day, a place comes into being for 'your car.' Even without the parked car, all the neighbours know that this spot is not to be otherwise occupied. The situating of the car in this spot produces a unique place, and at the same time the place makes the situating possible. However, places generated by situating can also be transient. The constitution of the space, composed of home, shops, and embankment, produces a place that either bears a name or which a person calls his or her 'own neighbourhood.' This place can be recalled without marking off the individual aspects of the spatial construction. The embankment, too, is a space constituted by the synthesis of water, stones, park benches, ice-cream parlour, etc. This space, typical

of many river embankments, is a special place if it becomes unique, for example by being named (e.g. Rosa Luxemburg Embankment), or in memory.

Josef Tal, too, depicts space and place. The ashlar, remnants of the old temple, are laid in a special place and produce a place, the site of the Wailing Wall, and which is named as such. If the Wailing Wall were to be demolished, the place would continue to exist for a long time. Even if one has never seen this place, one is aware of the uniqueness of the localization. However, space is the combination of Wailing Wall, open square, and tourists. Each of these three elements and all three together produce places, different places – privileged and peripheral, fixed and flexible. The space is the combination of the elements. Owing to its high symbolic importance, this space is hardly separable from the place. The distinction is nevertheless indispensable, because, for example, Palestinians in the same place constitute different spaces and thus produce the place itself anew. Even if Tal's spatial construction is institutionalized and reproduced in the same way by all Jews, by all Christians, the space is nonetheless not universal, and it is always possible to create different spaces in the same place.

Places are therefore of fundamental importance for the constitution of space in general, including both spacing and synthesis. This is less because individually named places like New York or the Rosa Luxemburg Embankment are included in the construction than because all spatial constructions are directly or indirectly based on localizations through which places come into being. If no localization can be determined, the space concept is used only metaphorically.

### The Visibility of the Invisibility of Space

In short it can be said that the constitution of spaces takes place through (structured) orderings of social goods and people in places. Spaces are created in performative action by synthesizing and relationally ordering objects and people. This is enacted in pre-arranged spaces and happens in day-to-day activities with recourse to institutionalized orderings and spatial structures.

These formations, not visible *per se* – one sees the social goods and their siting but not the space as a whole – are nevertheless materially perceivable. The inclusive and exclusive nature of spaces and also the end of spaces can be sensed. The beginning of new spaces can be sensorily perceived. This materiality of the spatial which, in my view, develops from the external effect of social goods and the perceptual capabilities of the synthesizing human agents, needs to be considered in greater detail.

We know from Heidegger's existential philosophy (e.g. 1985) and work done by phenomenologists (e.g. Bollnow, 1989) that spaces are 'tuned.' If a pedestrian underpass appears frightening, a study sober, and a sunset over the sea romantic, this is attributable to their attunement. Now, it could be assumed that attunement is nothing more than the projection of feelings onto the surrounding spaces if it were not for the phenomenon of being 'retuned' by spaces. For example, you enter a small shop in feverish haste to make the necessary purchases before the

shop closes and are put in a mood of calm by restful music, pleasant aromas, etc. Spaces develop their own potentiality which can influence feelings. This potentiality of spaces I call 'atmosphere.'

In my reflections on perception I have already noted that social goods or people develop an external effect. The external effects of social goods or people do not remain discrete, they develop their own potentiality in joint arrangement. To bring it to a point, the concurrent perception of various external effects generates specific atmospheres, which – as in all perceptual processes – requires active attention. Atmospheres are accordingly the external effect of social goods and human beings realized perceptually in their spatial ordering. This means that atmospheres arise through the perception of interactions between people and/or from the external effect of social goods in their arrangement.

Such a unity of difference between subject and object is also proposed by the philosopher Gernot Böhme (1995) in defining the phenomenon of atmosphere. Böhme is interested in atmospheres with regard to art production, nature perception, and the commodity world. He suggests that social goods have a scenic function which serves to generate atmospheres. He refers to Wolfgang Fritz Haug's 'Critique of Commodity Aesthetics' (1986, orig. 1971) according to which the appearance of social goods predominates over their use value in late capitalism. Design lends commodities an appearance that makes them easy to sell, often almost in contradiction to their use value. Böhme follows Haug's thesis that design, advertising, and the arrangements in which commodities are presented infuse them with atmospheric function which improves sales. In contrast to Haug, however, he takes the view that the use value of things is precisely that they generate atmospheres.

Böhme defines atmosphere as 'the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived' (Böhme, 1995: 34). He thus rejects both an understanding of atmosphere as a projection of the agents' disposition onto social goods and a concept of atmosphere dissociated from human agents. What speaks against the projection thesis is that atmospheres become conspicuous precisely when they are at variance with one's own mood. With reference to Hermann Schmitz (1965, 1967, 1969), he stresses that the idea of projecting feelings onto the surrounding thing-world presupposes that emotions are located in the body. This assumption of a bodily container as the seat of emotions is, however, not an historical constant. Schmitz shows that, for example, emotions in the Homeric age were understood as something external that intervenes in human corporeality.

Schmitz follows this idea of the dissociation of emotions from the interior of the body, defining them as 'indeterminate and effused atmospheres in which the person affectively impacted by them is embedded through bodily perception' (Schmitz, 1969: 185). Schmitz thus dissociates not only emotions from people but also atmospheres from things. He stresses the affective impact of atmospheres but neglects, for example, the aesthetic function of social goods emphasized by Haug.

Gernot Böhme's aim, in contrast, is to take both aspects into theoretical account: the personal productivity of atmospheres, which can induce moods more

or less against a person's will, and the targeted generability of atmospheres, based on the knowledge of the scenic functions of social goods. He is accordingly concerned to understand the thing not only as a differentiating and enclosing entity – in the sense of a containing space – but as an object with extension and form, i.e. with external effect. It stands in relation to the subject, who recognizes and posits the thing. Taking Böhme as his point of departure, the geographer Jürgen Hasse (1997, 1998: 53) also refers to the specific quality of atmosphere as 'medial space,' thus pointing out what Böhme does not systematically address, that atmospheres are bound to the constitution of spaces.

The societal dimension in Gernot Böhme's work lies above all in his analysis of the generability of atmospheres. Much societal work is staging work. Commodities, politics, firms, and entire cities are staged. The self-staging of people is also an essential aspect of the everyday world. It is a question of giving people and things an appearance that achieves the desired aura. Designers work on it, as do cosmeticians, set designers, interior designers, advertising and fashion experts, etc.

If, for example, an interior designer papers a room in sea-green, his interest is not in producing walls in this colour but in generating a spatial atmosphere. If a salesman in a supermarket has a certain music playing, he is not presenting a work, he wants to create a mood conducive to sales. (Böhme, 1995: 87)

In this section Böhme stresses that not only do people constitute spaces or recognize institutionalized spaces by synthesizing but that these spaces are also deliberately prepared for recognition. It is apparent that spacing processes, i.e. the situating of one's self, other people, or goods includes the staging work to prepare the positioned for perception.

However, Böhme practically ignores the influence of culture and socialization on the sensing of atmospheres. The aspect of the socialization of perception that interests him is whether technological civilization has brought human beings to forget how to sense, which he finally denies. He construes the people of a given epoch as sexless subjects without social imprinting. Böhme considers atmospheres to be objectively perceivable. They are either repellent or inviting, authoritative or familiar, etc.

However, other findings speak against the universality of atmospheres. Luc Ciompi (1988: 253) has analysed a range of comparative cultural studies and comes to the conclusion that, for example, Italians feel comfortable in high, cool, and dark living rooms and bedrooms, whereas people from northern countries prefer low, bright, warm rooms decorated with wood and carpets. Such preferences have their origins in the climatic conditions of the given countries and are learned in childhood as familiar, pleasant atmospheres. A study by Bourdieu (1990) points in the same direction. He found that half his lower class respondents considered a sunset a beautiful photograph whereas only about one eighth of respondents from upper classes shared this opinion. Böhme places no importance on cultural difference, inferring generality from generability.

One enters an apartment and encounters a *petit bourgeois* atmosphere. One enters a church and finds oneself bathed in a holy twilight. One sees the ocean and feels

transported to distant parts. . . . The furniture huddles in petit bourgeois confinement, the blue of the sky seems to take flight, the empty pews in the church invite devotion. This, at least, is what the perceiver experiences. (Böhme, 1995: 95)

The petit bourgeois confinement that Böhme 'encounters' can be perceived as oppressive or cosy. The church that invites the Catholic to worship can infuriate someone of another denomination in its massed splendour. Atmospheres seem to be perceived in similar manner by groups of people, but that is far from making them universal.

Although Böhme stresses the staging of human bodies and social goods in order to prepare the perception of certain atmospheres, he neglects the degree to which cultures, classes, or genders are inscribed in the body of the perceiver. Böhme treats staging as outwardly directed, for he takes no account of bodily sensing in its social dimension. The workings of atmospheres are not, however, perceived in the same way by everyone. The perception of spaces is always socially pre-structured.

If atmospheres are defined as the external effect, instantiated in perception, of social goods and human beings in their situated spatial ordering, the perceiver must always be seen in his or her social context, and perception considered as a constructive process. As we have seen, perception is not merely an aspect of activity. As class and gender specific perception, it is a product of past encounters and an expression of the relation of forces in a society.

## Conclusion

I have sought to show that, although structure-theoretical approaches stress the potentiality of spaces, they fail (and often refuse) to address everyday spaces conceptually. Action-theoretical approaches, on the other hand, have a great deal to report about locales and acts of producing space while failing to provide an adequate theoretical treatment of the power of spaces to induce action. Reformulating Giddens's duality of structure thesis, a duality of space is proposed as a conceptual approach. One possible consequence that can be developed from the argument of the simultaneity of space-ordering structures and the immanence of action is to conceptualize the power of spaces as atmospheres, which can provoke moods in people, in extreme cases even against their will. Atmospheres, it should be said, can be deliberately deployed. Theoretically, however, they must be understood as simultaneous acts of interpretation/perception and external effects of objects in their spatial ordering. They are hence never equally perceptible for everyone. Little research has yet been done on what must be basic conceptual knowledge for spatial theory, namely, how inclusion and exclusion are organized through atmospheres. In contrast to the opportunities for access to spaces secured by resources, atmospheres veil the processes of access and exclusion. Atmospheres have to be sensed, and avoidance behaviour experienced as self-exclusion is the frequent consequence of a spatial atmosphere perceived as unpleasant. Atmospheres secure consent to inclusion and exclusion. The complexity lies in simultaneity:

neither the staging alone nor solely the preferences of the subject taking position and synthesizing produce inclusion and exclusion.

(Translated by Rhodes Barrett)

## References

- Adams, Paul C., Hoelscher, Steven, Till and Karen, E., eds (2001) *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Archer, Margaret (1995) *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Assmann, Jan (1997) *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 2, edn. München: Beck.
- Berger, Peter L. and Luckmann, Thomas (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Berking, Helmuth, Frank, Sybille, Frers, Lars and Low, Martina, eds (2006) *Negotiating Urban Conflicts. Interaction, Space and Control*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Bollnow, Otto F (1989 [1963]) *Mensch und Raum*, 6, edn. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Böhme, Gernot (1995) *Atmosphäre*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Bryant, Christopher G.A. and Jary, David, eds (2001) *The Contemporary Giddens: Social Theory in a Globalizing Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Castells, Manuel (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ciampi, Luc (1988) *Außenwelt – Innenwelt. Zur Entstehung von Zeit, Raum und psychischen Strukturen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rubrecht.
- Crang, Michael and Thrift, Nigel, eds (2000) *Thinking Space*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Eckert, Andreas (1996) ‘“Unordnung” in den Städten. Stadtplanung, Urbanisierung und koloniale Politik in Afrika’, in D. Rothermund (ed.) *Periplus: Jahrbuch für außereuropäische Geschichte*, pp. 1–20. Münster: Lit.
- Einstein, Albert (1954) ‘Foreword’, in M. Jammer *Concepts of Space. The History of Theories of Space in Physics*, pp. xii–xvii. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Elias, Norbert (1978) *What is Sociology?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fächerguppe Designwissenschaften (no date) *Objektag – Alltagsobjekte*. Berlin: Hochschule der Künste.
- Featherstone, Mike and Lash, Scott (2002) *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Giddens, Anthony (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- (1989) ‘A Reply to My Critics’, in D. Held and J.B. Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, pp. 249–302. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gregory, Derek (1989) ‘Presences and Absences: Time–Space Relations and Structuration Theory’, in D. Held and J.B. Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, pp. 185–214. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.



- Halbwachs, Maurice (1941) *La Topographie Légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte*. Paris: PUF.
- Hannah, Matthew and Strohmayer, Ulf (1991) 'Ornamentalism: Geography and the Labor of Language in Structuration Theory', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9(3): 309–27.
- Harvey, David (1985) *The Urbanization of Capital. Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell.
- (1991) 'Geld, Zeit, Raum und die Stadt', in M. Wentz (ed.) *Stadt-Räume. Die Zukunft des Städtischen*, pp. 149–68. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Hasse, Jürgen (1997) *Mediale Räume. Wahrnehmungsgeographische Studien zur Regionalentwicklung*. Oldenburg: Schriftenreihe der Carl von Ossietzky Universität.
- (1998) 'Zum Verhältnis von Raum und Körper in der Informationsgesellschaft', *Geographica Helvetica* 2: 51–9.
- Haug, Wolfgang Fritz (1986) *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heidegger, Martin (1985 [1954]) *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 5, edn. Pfullingen: Neske.
- Kessl, Fabian, Reutlinger, Christian, Maurer, Susanne and Frey, Oliver, eds (2005) *Handbuch Sozialraum*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Kreckel, Reinhard (1992) *Politische Soziologie der Sozialen Ungleichheit*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Lefebvre, Henri (1991) *The Production of Space*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell.
- (1995) *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes: September 1959-May 1961*. London and New York: Verso.
- (2003) *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Löw, Martina (2001) *Raumsoziologie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1998) *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, 2, edn. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Mayerfeld Bell, Michael (1997) 'The Ghosts of Place', *Theory and Society* 26(6): 813–36.
- Massey, Doreen (1996) 'Masculinity, Dualisms and High Technology', in N. Duncan (ed.) *BodySpace*, pp. 109–26. New York and London: Routledge.
- (1999) 'Spaces of Politics', in D. Massey et al. (eds) *Human Geography Today*, pp. 279–94. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- (2005) *For Space*. London: Sage.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1989) *Phenomenology of Perception*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mouzelis, Nicos (1991) *Back to Sociological Theory: The Construction of Social Orders*. London: Macmillan.
- Rose, Gillian (1999) 'Performing Space', in D. Massey et al. (eds) *Human Geography Today*, pp. 247–59. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ruhne, Renate (2003) *Raum Macht Geschlecht. Zur Soziologie eines Wirkungsgefüges am Beispiel von (Un)Sicherheiten im öffentlichen Raum*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Sassen, Saskia (1994) *Cities in a World Economy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Saunders, Peter (1989) 'Space, Urbanism and the Created Environment', in D. Held and J. Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, pp. 215–35. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitz, Hermann (1965) *System der Philosophie II: Der Leib*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- (1967) *System der Philosophie IIIa: Der leibliche Raum*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- (1969) *System der Philosophie IIIb: Der Gefühlsraum*. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Sewell Jr., William H. (1992) 'A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation', *American Journal of Sociology* 98(1): 1–29.

- Shields, Rob (1991) *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- (1999) *Lefebvre, Love & Struggle. Spatial Dialectics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Soja, Edward (1989) *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London and New York: Verso.
- (1996) *Thirdspace*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stones, Rob (2005) *Structuration Theory*. Houndmills and New York: Palgrave.
- Storper, Michael (1985) 'The Spatial and Temporal Constitution of Social Action', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 3(4): 407–24.
- Tal, Josef (1987) *Der Sohn des Rabbiners. Ein Weg von Berlin nach Jerusalem*. München: DTV.
- Thompson, John B. (1989) 'The Theory of Structuration', in D. Held and J. Thompson (eds) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and his Critics*, pp. 56–76. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thrift, Nigel (2004) 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Annaler* 86B: 57–78.
- Urry, John (1991) 'Time and Space in Giddens' Social Theory', in C. Bryant and D. Jary (eds) *Giddens' Theory of Structuration: A Critical Appreciation*, pp. 160–75. London and New York: Routledge.
- Welsch, Wolfgang (1997) *Undoing Aesthetics*. London: Sage.
- Werlen, Benno (1997) *Sozialgeographie alltäglicher Regionalisierung*. 2 vol. Franz Steiner: Stuttgart.
- (2000) 'Alltägliche Regionalisierungen unter räumlich-zeitlich entankerten Lebensbedingungen', *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung* 9(10): 611–22.
- Wex, Marianne (1979) *Weibliche und Männliche Körperdarstellungen*. Hamburg: Verlag Marianne Wex.

## Acknowledgement

Thanks to the anonymous reviewer for useful comments.

■ **Martina Löw** is Professor of Sociology at the Technical University Darmstadt and Head of the Urban Research Center of Research Excellence. She is a visiting fellow and visiting professor in Berlin, Vienna, St. Gallen and in Paris. In 2000 she received the Christian-Wolff-Prize for her past work, especially for the inaugural dissertation: *Sociology of Space*. Address: Martina Löw, Technical University Darmstadt, Residenzschloss, D-64283 Darmstadt, Germany. [email: loew@ifs.tu-darmstadt.de] ■