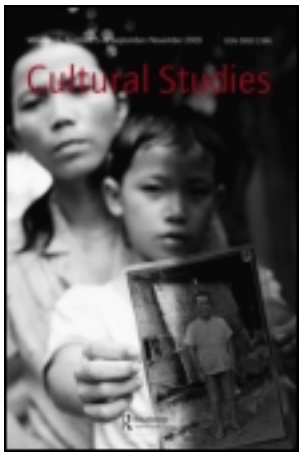


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# The time and space of everyday life

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**Ian Burkitt**

# THE TIME AND SPACE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

*This article argues that everyday life is related to all social relations and activities, including both the 'official' practices that are codified and normalized and the 'unofficial' practices and articulations of experience. Indeed, everyday day life is seen as the single plane of immanence in which these two forms of practice and articulation interrelate and affect one another. The lived experience of everyday life is multidimensional, composed of various social fields of practice that are articulated, codified and normalized to different degrees and in different ways (either officially or unofficially). Moving through these fields in daily life, we are aware of passing through different zones of time and space. There are aspects of everyday relations and practices more open to government, institutionalization, and official codification, while others are more resistant and provide the basis for opposition and social movements. Everyday life is a mixture of diverse and differentially produced and articulated forms, each combining time and space in a unique way. What we refer to as 'institutions' associated with the state or the economy are attempts to fix social practice in time and space – to contain it in specific geographical sites and codify it in official discourses. The relations and practices more often associated with everyday life – such as friendship, love, comradeship and relations of communication – are more fluid, open and dispersed across time and space. However, the two should not be uncoupled in social analysis, as they are necessarily interrelated in processes of social and political change. This is especially so in contemporary capitalism or, as Lefebvre called it, the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption'.*

**Keywords** everyday life; institutions; official; production; space; time; unofficial

Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond and their common ground. It is in everyday life that the sum total of relations that make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations that bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always

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> partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc.
>
> (Lefebvre 1991, p. 97)

It seems to me that this statement from Lefebvre is so important because it captures most of the things that everyday life is about. Everyday life must relate to *all* daily activities because it is here that our social relations are produced and reproduced. However, the term everyday life is often taken to mean the life we all lead when the official forms of relations and activities are taken away, leaving behind the residual relations of family and friendship – the more unofficial relations of social life. Yet, this definition cannot be correct for, as Lefebvre points out above, everyday life is related to all activities and is the sum total of relations that constitute the human – and every human being – in terms of our collective as well as our individual experience. In that sense, the everyday world is very much about the activity of production, of *praxis* and *poiesis* (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 31). These terms are taken from Aristotle, for whom *praxis* meant the attitude that involves doing, transaction, and practical activity in general, while *poiesis* is the productive, manipulative, and uncovering attitude of humans. For Lefebvre these two terms are important because they refer to the everyday world of production, which not only involves the making of products, but also

> the term signifies on the one hand 'spiritual' production, that is to say creations (including social time and space), and on the other material production or the making of things; it also signifies self-production of a 'human being' in the process of historical self-development, which involves the production of social relations.
>
> (Lefebvre 2000/1971, pp. 30–31)

Thus, in order to produce, humans enter into the relations of everyday life and bring into play the totality of the real, even though this is always incomplete and open to further production and reproduction. We produce social time and space, and we also produce the very basis of humanity, the processes of historical self-development, as in the various cultural forms. In this way, the production of daily reality does not occur somewhere beyond our reach in, say, the 'higher' echelons of the state, and is then imposed upon us. Rather, the reality of everyday life – the sum total of all our relations – is built on the ground, in daily activities and transactions. This happens in our working relations but also in friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate and to play.

The question of what constitutes everyday life, then, must be centrally concerned with how these relational fields of human experience are produced in time and space. However, to underline what I am saying here about the different dimensions of everyday life, Lefebvre points out that there is not one single system of the everyday; 'there are only sub-systems separated by

irreducible gaps, yet situated on one plane and related to it' (2000/1971, p. 86). Taking this idea further, what I want to argue here is *that the experience of everyday life is multidimensional,* even though it takes place on a single plane. It is multidimensional because it involves different social fields that are separated by irreducible gaps, yet which are permeable and, in their interaction, create a series of effects. These social fields are also produced in everyday life in ways that give them the appearance and feel – in our perceptions – of differentially materialized forms. Social time and space is combined in them in different ways to give some relations the feeling of more permanence and resistance to change than others. This gives the sense of a more fixed and stable 'structure' to these particular social fields. However, to develop this argument further, I need to first define more clearly what I mean by a social field.



## Social fields and relations of power

Pierre Bourdieu defines the social field in terms of power, in that the field is the space of the relations of force between different types of capital, or between agents who possess differential amounts of one of the types of capital (1998, p. 34): economic, cultural or informational, symbolic and military capital (1998, p. 41). The state is the holder of meta-capital in that it possesses a monopoly of some of these forms of capital (especially that of physical force) and possesses all the forms of capital in a unique combination. The state and its various institutions also carry out the work of normalization and codification: of setting laws or regulations that clearly outline the legitimacy or illegitimacy of certain practices and what the forms of these practices are. For Bourdieu, the production of social space and the field of power involve the production of difference – the positions of distinction of the differential holders of capital and the relations between them. These relations are a series of gaps or of differences and distinctions between social agents, be they institutions, corporations or individuals in everyday life. Bourdieu tends to define social space in this invisible sense, existing as gaps and differences in a network of relations.

However, I would claim that this also involves a concept of space in a geographical sense as social relations and the fields of power are often produced and reproduced at specific institutional sites. Many of these are specially built to organize a specific set of relations and the differential positions within them. Thus, social space – the differences between agents – and geographic space – the built environment in which certain practices and relations take place – coexist but are not identical. We can understand social space as the power relations and differences between agents, without this being made manifest in geographic space. Yet, at the same time, these relations of difference are instantiated in social practices that are located in certain times and actual spaces in their social production and reproduction.

However, Bourdieu makes the point that although power works through a network of relations, nevertheless it is the most real reality (1998, p. 31). That is, because a field of power is the relational space of force between different types of capital, it acts as the principle of behaviour of the individuals and groups (the holders of capital) within it. Because social space as a relational field is invisible, it does not mean that its influence upon us is only imaginary – in fact, it is one of the most real determinate forces that we experience. Having said this, I feel that we must carefully define the different social fields that converge on the single plane of everyday life because, as I will explain throughout this piece, we experience them in diverse ways. Because we produce and reproduce social fields differently, whereby time and space is uniquely combined within them, some social fields feel to be more open to change and influence than others, although all are interrelated on the single plane of everyday life and change over time at different paces.

All of this, however, is fairly abstract until we begin to examine these definitions in more detail and ask how they work in practice. I want to begin to do this by looking at the different ways in which time and space is produced in various social fields, with specific reference to how the practices within them are officially or unofficially codified.



## The official and the unofficial in everyday life

As Bourdieu pointed out, the state and its institutions carry out the work of normalization and codification of social practices, outlining the legitimacy or illegitimacy of certain forms of behaviour. However, the state and its institutions are not the only agents involved in this, for the explicit codification or articulation of social practices and ideas can occur in any social field. Following the ideas of the Russian linguist Voloshinov (1986), we can begin to understand how the process of official and unofficial forms of codification and articulation work. There are established or official systems of ideas to be found in the social fields of science, art, religion or ethics, some aspects of which may have the backing of the state in terms of funding or support. Ideas from these social fields may also influence state policy and legislation. In contrast, unofficial forms of social practice and articulation could be seen as the living tissue of everyday relations and activities that are less systematized and explicitly codified. The relations of love, intimacy and friendship, for example, are social practices of a less codified, explicitly rule bound nature. The social rules that bind such relations are more implicit and, as such, these daily activities feel as though they have a less fixed quality to them: rather, they feel to be more open, fluid, and emergent.

However, the official and the unofficial are not two separate realms: rather, they are open, permeable and necessarily interdependent. The unofficial realm is the living tissue of social life upon which official social life rests and, indeed,

official ideas and ethics are often a crystallization of unofficial ideas and practices. In turn, official codification exerts a powerful influence on the unofficial aspects of daily life, setting the tone and the parameters of activity. Take, for example, the family, perhaps one of the most private and intimate spheres of everyday life, which rests on the emotional bonds between its members. Even here, in the private realm, we are subject to official ideas of what the family should be and how family life should be lived. State policy and legislation shape the types of families we live in and, along with religious authorities, seek to define exactly what families are. The recent debates over whether gay couples should be allowed to marry or to adopt children is an illustration of this. However, much of the social pressure that has led to such debates comes from the unofficial spheres of everyday life, where more gay couples are living together more openly and wanting social, legal and, in some cases, religious recognition of their union. There are also many more single parent families. All of this is calling into question and leading us to redefine what a family is. It is also a good example of the ways in which the official and the unofficial interact in everyday life to call established ideas into question and generate new ones.

It seems to me, though, that most social theory and philosophy overlooks this necessary relation between the official and the unofficial realms of everyday life. Instead, the focus is drawn towards *either* the official codification and normalization of practices and the institutional apparatuses of the state *or* to the emergent properties of daily life, as if these are two uncoupled realms (Shotter 1993, p. 80). An example of the former trend is to be found in some of Foucault's works, which have concentrated on disciplinary power and its employment in institutions such as asylums and prisons, or in the official discourses of science, medicine, and ethics. According to Foucault (1977, 1979), disciplinary power has as its focus two main entities – the body of the population and that of the individual – and it operates according to the discursive codification and regulation of practice through observation and description. Interestingly, in the quotation below, Foucault contrasts this to past forms of power where the everyday or ordinary individual and their practices were not so carefully scrutinized.

> [F]or a long time ordinary individuality – the everyday individuality of everybody – remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege . . . The disciplinary methods . . . lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made this description a means of control and a method of domination.
>
> (1977, p. 191)

It is interesting to note from the above that while Foucault believes that the threshold of describable individuality has lowered under disciplinary forms of

power, he does not say that he feels this has disappeared altogether. However, in other writings, Foucault suggests that 'the individual' is not just opened up to greater levels of description and codification by power, but that he or she is 'one of its prime effects' (1980, p. 98). Thus, the individual is no longer the subject of a form of power but is produced by that very power. The clash between these two contrasting positions is, I believe, a product of Foucault's concentration on institutions and their official discourses and the neglect of the unofficial aspects of everyday life. Surely, as individuals, we are the products of the way in which official and unofficial discourses and social practices interweave within the single plane of immanence that is everyday life?

This makes the lived experience of everyday life multidimensional, because it is related to all activities and to all the different social fields. Moving through these fields in daily life, we are aware of passing through different zones of time and space. As Harvey puts it, our lives are composed of 'a variety and heterogeneity of socio-ecological and political-economic conditions' (2000, p. 244) that make the very experience of life heterogeneous or multidimensional. Just as there are social fields in which practices and relationships are made more open to government and official codification, so too are there social fields that are constituted as spaces of hope and resistance. As de Certeau puts it, unofficial practices 'continue to flourish in the interstices of the institutional technologies' (1986, p. 189). Commenting on Certeau's position, Gardiner says:

> whereas the procedures and techniques (or what Certeau terms 'strategies') that Foucault describes are visible manifestations of power, and occupy an identifiable physical space (the academy, the clinic, the prison), unofficial or marginal practices ('tactics') operate without such a fixed locus.
>
> (2000, p. 168)

In such unofficial and marginal practices, the symbolic and material products of official institutions can be transformed into something quite different than that intended by official powers. Also, because the unofficial practices, or tactics, do not colonize a specific space, they are more dispersed and hidden as well as being 'improvised in response to the concrete demands of the situation at hand' (Gardiner 2000, p. 172). Rather than seeking a space to colonize they are more temporal in nature, relying 'on the art of collective memory, on a tradition of popular resistance and subversion passed on from generation to generation since time immemorial' (Gardiner 2000, p. 172). However, as we shall see shortly, I think such practices do have their spaces, as they must be instantiated in both time and space. It is the way that time and space is combined in such practices that is the key to their difference from official practices.

Officially and unofficially codified social practices can be further defined by arguing that the official is based on a 'game' form of association, while the unofficial is based on play. One could say that a game employs strategies, in that

the efforts of players have to be co-ordinated into an overall move or formation within the rules of the game. For Mead (1934), the role of games in childhood was that they allow us to master more formal, rule-like behaviours, and involve the internalization of collective rules as a generalized other – a kind of super-ego that is a psychic understanding of the laws within a social field. People also need to develop the necessary skills to be able to participate properly in the game. In contrast, play is less formal interaction in which people take the part of the other and empathize with their position and perspective. In play, we can be more experimental using our imagination to construct scenarios, stepping into many and varied roles, even changing such supposedly 'fixed' attributes as gender. Here people – especially children – develop all-round human capacities as opposed to skills: capacities such as empathy, understanding, and fellow feeling. These aspects of human relations – of leisure pursuits, hobbies, the sharing of pastimes, enthusiasms, intimacies, emotions and the morals and ethics of care and concern – are more related to play forms of interaction than games, which seem more synonymous with the rule-bound and the official. These different forms of activities, along with their times and places, are mixed in varied ways in everyday life. Play and games are not just stages in child development, as Mead thought; they are the basis for different forms of interactions throughout life.

However, this also means that they serve as bases for the formation of individual selves, so that the individual is not just constituted in the realms of official social practice and discourse. In fact, the root of modern forms of individuality is in play during the years of childhood and although this area of practice and the self may be curtailed in later years, it still remains a formative influence on the self. I therefore believe Foucault is wrong to suggest that the individual is only the effect of disciplinary power, for the source of what he referred to at one point as 'everyday individuality' is still to be found in those activities of daily life that are less officially codified.

The mixing of the official and unofficial, the game-like and the playful, can be seen in all aspects of everyday life and is also reflected in discourse. As Bourdieu illustrates, state institutions are often involved in the formal codification of 'proper' ways of speaking and in the teaching of correct grammar. However, one could look at an unofficial, yet popular, speech genre like rap as a more playful genre, evolving its own patois and playing with formal grammatical structure. Indeed, Saussure's distinction of language and speech follows the contours of official and unofficial discourse, with language being more of a codified structure, whereas speech is the more fluid and mobile use of language in everyday life. As Certeau says, speech is the unmarked, existing primarily in time, rather than being the codified and formal language of official discourse. Whereas the official is more monologic in form and is often explicitly codified as rules of grammar and correct usage, speech is not objectified in such a way. Unofficial speech is more dialogic and changes more quickly (Harvey 2000). It is reliant on oral traditions of public discussion, debate and storytelling.

However, the two are necessarily interrelated to such a degree that one would not survive without the other and, thus, there is constant transmutation between official and unofficial speech genres. For example, official texts are interpreted and works are consumed, including art and novels, by people reading their own meanings into texts. Voloshinov (1986, p. 91) has shown how official discourse needs unofficial discourse in order to stay a living language as opposed to a dead one, as it is in everyday speech that official discourse is interpreted and, in some cases, critiqued and opposed. In turn, aspects of unofficial speech styles, such as elements from rap or slang, enter the official language or change it in some subtle way.

However, this assumes the continuation of a living tissue of informal relations in everyday life to which speech refers and in which it is made significant. While I emphasize the importance of this aspect of everyday life, I also realize that less formalized and unofficial networks of practice and relationships are under threat. This comes not only from institutions that aim at the disciplinary governance of various social fields, but also from the current bureaucratized form of consumer capitalism that is colonizing everyday life. As Lefebvre remarks, in such a society the leisure time that was once a reward for labour, which was spent in celebration and in revitalizing social ties, now becomes a generalized display for the passive consumer. Advertising and consumerism dominate leisure time as signs for consumption and for the production of difference. As in Baudrillard's work, signs are seen to lose their referent and float free in an endlessly circulating sea of signs. Everyday life becomes an object of social organization, the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption' where the scope and limits of rationalization are set, and the object of its organization becomes consumption rather than production. Is the threshold of the description of everyday life and individuality lowering, as Foucault thought, opening this field up to rational control and new techniques of government? This could be taken as read in the shift from what Lefebvre refers to as signs to signals. The latter (which include codes, such as the Highway Code) are not just referential signs; they are systems of compulsion, 'practical systems for the *manipulation* of people and things' (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 62).

Yet it is the displays of reality in modern consumer capitalism that have the most notable implications for Lefebvre. This is because all referent, all substantiality fall away from the symbolic system, destroying the certainty human groups once had that signs possessed some referent external to the symbolic system. Now we have form without content. Taken together with the spread of signals, this means that the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption aims 'to cybernetize society by the indirect agency of everyday life' (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 64). Foreshadowing Baudrillard, Lefebvre writes,

> The 'cool' prevails. Everything is ostensibly de-dramatized; instead of tragedy there are objects, certainties, 'values,' roles, satisfactions, jobs,

> situations and functions. Yet there are powers, colossal and despicable, that swoop down on everyday life and pursue their prey in its evasions and departures, dreams and fantasies to crush it in their relentless grip.
>
> (2000/1971, p. 65)

Thus, there is an aim to create the perfect closed system of controlled consumption that encapsulates everyday life, systematizing thought and structuring action. However, unlike Baudrillard who, in my view, seems to say that this project is complete, so much so that his own understanding of contemporary society itself mirrors the cybernetics that attempts to enclose it, Lefebvre believes that something intervenes to prevent this occurring. This is not a certainty, however, for 'time alone will reveal whether it will be possible for those who are willing to recapture . . . the lost harmony of language and reality, of significant actions and learning' (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 73). As soon as people wish for something different, they short-circuit the system, no matter how temporarily. But why should we do this? Why dream of something beyond a society of controlled consumption that aims to satisfy our every need? I will argue that such wishes and dreams are the products of everyday individuals who still reside in the interstices of institutional technologies and in some of the more unofficial networks of everyday life. However, this will form the conclusion of the piece and, for now, I want to move on to discuss the time and space of everyday life.

## The production and articulation of everyday life in time and space

For Williams (1977), time was the most important aspect in our everyday experience of society. It is only when we look back in time that we experience the social world as an objective formation of fixed and stable institutions and ideologies that are somehow separate from subjective experience. Thus,

> relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes. Analysis is then centred on relations between these produced institutions, formations, and experiences, so that now . . . only the fixed explicit forms exist, and living presence is always, by definition, receding.
>
> (Williams 1977, p. 128)

Contrasted with this, the subjective sense of social life in the here and now, as we live it, has a more fluid and open feel: it seems like a reality still to be made rather than one that is already made. Everyday life as it is currently being lived often feels as though it is disordered and formless, while institutions appear to

stand over and against us as something already made, not even by our own hand. For Williams, then, society is clearly composed of time and this runs like a river through our everyday lives. The problem that social theorists have often referred to as the division of subject and object is not, then, one of two separate locations of experience composed, on the one hand, by the 'internal' mental and emotional experience of life and, on the other, the 'external' nature of social institutions. The subject–object split is an appearance that occurs through time rather than being an ontological reality. It is an appearance constituted in time because we always think of the social in the past tense as already formed 'structures', which seem divorced from the current 'subjective' moment of the everyday where we are engaged with social life as it is emerging around us. This emergence feels in part responsive to our actions, because it is yet to be fully formed and therefore open to shaping. It also engages us in its still-to-be openness in a way that the past does not (although, as Mead (1934) pointed out, the past is also open to reconstruction).

Williams is not trying to divorce present from past and to say that the conception of society and self as objective is a false idea. He wants to account for the influence of the past in terms of social formation and ideology and the pressures these exert on us in the present. Humans never act as a blank slate, even when we act impulsively, as our actions are always connected in some way to the past. The present moment, too, soon becomes the past, and we make sense of it by connecting it to what we already know, articulating it in relation to some already formed ideology. While that ideology may be changed in the process, past and present are linked in a continuity of practical consciousness and discursive or ideological articulation of present experience. Nevertheless, the feeling of an open and fluid present is an important moment in the social process.

It would be wrong, though, to suggest that the present moment of action is uniformly experienced as open and fluid, while the past is understood as composed of objective, already formed institutions. Everyday life is more complex and nuanced than this. In everyday life, our experience ranges daily from encounters with institutions that have more fixed and stable form and are located usually in an identifiable geographical space, to more unstable and fluid experiences of open and permeable relationships. Indeed, what are institutions if not an attempt to fix in geographical space and in codified language the relational forms and activities of the past? However, these institutions confront us in the present as actual realities that are hard to change, even though as produced realities they are open to change over time. Change happens in official institutions because they are open to the influence of unofficial practices and articulations of feeling, the difference being that, in official institutions, the social practices or ideas that compose them change more slowly. This is because institutions and customs are relations and activities that, although they have developed over time, are codified forms of practice that sediment in two ways: in geographical spaces and in human bodies.

Firstly, in a geographical sense, institutions are often associated with special buildings that are designed to regulate set practices according to codified rules. These rules are often written down as codes of practice or as more formal constitutions that outline peoples' rights and duties. We have already noted how Foucault studied various institutions in this light, such as the asylum, the clinic, the school and the prison. Secondly, in a bodily sense, the rules governing various institutions, and of social life more generally, are embodied in each of us as individual persons throughout our lives within particular social fields. These relations and activities sediment in, and expressed as, habitual practices or customs wherein the rules and codes disappear from consciousness and practices are produced unconsciously by each of us, who 'simply know' how to 'carry on' in social life. The aim of institutional practices is to make themselves official, accepted, and, ultimately, 'second nature'. Time and space are relatively solidified here, as these practices take on a more explicitly codified and enduring form. As Williams puts it, 'social forms are evidently more recognizable when they are articulate and explicit' (1977, p. 130).

Yet, Williams is surely right in that there is another side to everyday life, which is the experience of living presence in which things are not so formalized but are, at the extremes, emerging, indistinct, yet to be articulated experiences. The awareness of such experiences is described by Williams as 'practical consciousness', which is 'always more than a handling of fixed forms and units. There is frequent tension between the received interpretation and practical experience . . . Practical consciousness is almost always different from official consciousness' (1977, p. 130). In fact, the relations between practical consciousness and the already articulated official consciousness are always exceptionally complex. Changes in style or presence 'do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action' (1977, p. 132). These are what Williams refers to as changes in 'structures of feeling', in that they are sensed before being consciously articulated and reflected upon, combining thought as felt and feeling as thought in a living and interrelating continuity. Once these have fully formed, a new structure of feeling will have begun to appear. Forms of art and literature are prime examples of the emergence of structures of feeling, where the style and ideas expressed appear to be new and cannot be reduced to established belief systems or institutions. It also can include elements of social and material (physical or natural) experience that may lie beyond articulate systemic beliefs.

Those aspects of everyday life that could be described as more informal or unofficial relations and activities are produced in a very different way to the more official and fixed structures, being more dispersed across time and space. Because of this, they are less evident as they do not rely on institutional space and clearly codified rules, but materialize in the more informal spaces of the home, the streets, playgrounds, cafes, bars, restaurants and other such spaces in the modern urban landscape. These are the places where friends and comrades meet

and talk and laugh and think. It is no surprise that in the last 200 years or more, the place of revolutionary ferment has stereotypically been the drinking den and the cellar. However, in the less formal sphere, relations are constituted largely over time and are less reliant on space, although various spaces are needed in which they can materialize. What bind these relations into a formation are not institutionalized spaces and codified sets of rules, but human emotions such as loyalty, mutual needs, and interests. These relations are then produced temporally more than spatially and can exist in a number of domains, even those not specially designed for their purpose (if they have an explicit purpose). They rely on memory and feeling and the desire to constitute them again in a future time and place. In this sense, they are also registered in the human body, but not so much as fixed habit (although even informal relations can become that) as much as open possibilities fuelled by shared desire, need, and interest.

What this illustrates is that in the contemporary world the lived experience of everyday life is rich, complex and multidimensional: it is an experience of diverse and differentially produced and articulated forms, each combining time and space in a unique way. Although there are irreducible gaps and differences between these social fields, nevertheless they overlap with one another on the single plane of everyday life to create a series of effects. As such, the past and the present (or what we have traditionally thought of as objective and subjective experience) are not so clear cut in the lived moments of everyday life. In these lived moments, the various social fields feel as though they invite and guide our actions in different ways, some exerting power in a looser and less determinate form. This is because they are produced differently depending on the time and space combinations within them. As Melucci has said with respect to time:

> Everyday time is multiple and discontinuous, for it entails the never-ending wandering from one universe of experience to another: from one membership network to another, from the language and codes of one social sphere to those of another, semantically and affectively very different from it.
>
> (1996, p. 43)

We can, of course, say the same thing about space for, as both Melucci and Giddens (1991) have shown in their different ways, we now live in a globalized world where new information and communication technologies allow for the compression of space (and thus time also). One can now communicate instantaneously with people who live on the other side of the world and receive television images of events from the farthest flung places in a second. Global space is thus a routine datum of everyday life, alongside the more local aspects of relations, activities, and communications that were its traditional basis. Space as well as time is now multiple and discontinuous. Thus, as Melucci (1996) points out, today a well-adjusted person must be able to make flexible transitions between different planes of experience in living their everyday life.

This gives to subjective experience a highly variegated formation. In the early decades of the last century, Voloshinov began to unravel the complex relation between structures of feeling and fully articulated discursive forms of consciousness. For Voloshinov (1986), the 'higher' levels of social consciousness were formed from the official levels of institutionalized and codified social practices in which past social activities and ideas are crystallized. This forms a consciousness of 'reality', of what already exists, which is often hard to change as it is supported by institutions that attempt to structure the possible field of action in geographical space, and by dispositions and habits instilled in the body. However, below this strata of consciousness is another level of awareness of the structures of feeling, which are supported by the dimensions of behavioural emergence, responsiveness to change and innovation, and the articulation of new forms of living. This reflects the more unofficial and less systematized dimension of social and inner speech. In any one moment of subjective experience, our thoughts and feelings range from the lowest level where the social articulation of an experience may be indistinct, haphazard or ephemeral, to the upper strata that are more vividly and exactly articulated. The former thoughts, feelings and semi-articulated ideas are more fleeting and transitory, whereas the latter are more clear and vital. At the lower level, thoughts and feelings are also more mobile and sensitive, conveying social changes more quickly and vividly, as in popular culture. Here emerge the creative ideas that act to restructure and re-articulate official discourses and practices, although in the process they undergo the influence of official discourses (Voloshinov 1986, pp. 91–93).

In contemporary society, where people must cope with regularly crossing into new social fields of activity, and where the pace of change is more rapid, individuals must rely less upon fixed and habitual forms of practice and discourse to reflexively monitor their behaviour. Giddens (1991) has charted the growing importance of the reflexive monitoring of behaviour in late modernity. However, his work can be criticized for the view that reflexive consciousness is now freed from all cultural constraints and habits (Adams 2001). It is not so much that we are now living in a post-traditional society where all customs and habits that once controlled behaviour are called into question. Rather, it is more to do with the complex interweaving of social fields, in which occurs a clash of dispositions towards habitual behaviour (Dewey 1922/1983). It is where such dispositions clash that reflexive consciousness is drawn upon to assess the social contexts and the various dispositions towards action in order to decide upon the best course. Although Dewey outlined this process 80 years ago, one can say that this subjective experience is now more acute then ever. It is not that the habitual dispositions towards action, backed by official institutions, customs and discourses, are losing their power, more that there is in everyday life such a divergent yet overlapping array of social fields that reflexive consciousness is forced to play a greater role.

What we are talking about here, in terms of the constitution of subjective experience in modernity, is also interlinked with the complex interweaving of time and space through social life and through the self. There are the more slowly changing official aspects of social life and consciousness, the ones that seem more objectified and to stand as objects over and against us. Then there are the more quickly changing strata of unofficial experiences, which are fleeting or ephemeral in their constitution. In modernity there are perhaps more of these experiences, where not only time but also space feels to evaporate before our very eyes, as 'all that is solid melts into air' (Marx 1848/1977, p. 224). Within everyday life, some practices are fixed more in geographical space and relatively frozen in time, while other more fleeting experiences are quick to pass and do not have such a substantial materialization in geographical space.

Everyday life can then be viewed as a complex relation between fluid, open processes and relatively more permanent forms of belonging and association, both official and unofficial. In it, there is a heterotopia of spatial form just as there is a heteroglossia of linguistic forms (Harvey 2000, p. 240): a variety of official and unofficial spaces and the interaction of their different discourses and social practices. While the official and monologic are more formal and less easy to change, they are nevertheless in a necessary relation with the unofficial practices and discourses, which are playful and more fluid, dynamic, and rapidly changing.

Because of this, in the process of social change, the unofficial sphere of everyday life often forms the basis for political opposition. Melucci (1989) has stressed that it is in the unofficial networks of everyday social relations and activities that group meanings are formed which provide a basis for the politics of opposition. These informal networks become 'experimental laboratories' for alternative lifestyles and a free range for the more playful side of the self. Again, then, we find in Melucci's work, as in Certeau's and Lefebvre's, the idea that the official, institutional realm has its limits. Although its tentacles have extended into all aspects of everyday life, especially in the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption, it still cannot control every aspect of every social field. Of course, not everyone is living a daily life of political opposition and many are seduced into the world of bureaucratically controlled capitalist consumption. Yet, there still exists the time and the space in the everyday world for those who are willing to recapture the lost harmony of language and reality, of significant actions and learning, to work out some alternative lifestyles (Lefebvre 2000/1971). It is on the basis of such lifestyles that those social movements, which oppose capitalism and certain aspects of the bureaucratic state, rise up and draw their strength. In consumer societies where power works through seduction rather than repression (Bauman 1991), relations of power become more heterogeneous and less obvious. It is part of the work of those who practice alternative lifestyles, or hold alternative values, to occasionally manifest themselves as a social movement and, in so doing, make what they oppose also manifest as power.

However, in the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption, where individuals are seduced rather than repressed by power, what is it that makes people want to resist, to practice alternative lifestyles and generate alternative meanings? Lefebvre has claimed that, paradoxically, in order to keep selling new products to fulfil the promise of satisfying every need, consumer capitalism must produce dissatisfaction. If satiety of every need were achieved, people would no longer buy. To buy, people must want. In the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption, not only must satisfaction be produced and manipulated, so too must dissatisfaction. Thus, the satiety of needs

> cannot provide an end, is devoid of finality and of meaning. For a distinction must be made between satisfaction, pleasure and happiness. Pleasure was once the prerogative of the aristocracy who knew how to give it a meaningful place in their lives; but the bourgeoisie can, at best, only achieve satisfaction; and who will discover happiness?
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> (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 80)

The last comment above is extremely pertinent for in recent years many social surveys in Britain have shown that while, on the whole, many people feel themselves to be wealthier than they were twenty years ago, nevertheless they feel themselves to be less happy. This is largely because, in order to earn the money to participate in consumer capitalism, people are working longer hours and have less free time than they once had. The leisure time people are left with is often of such small duration that it has to be 'time managed' to get the most out of it. There is a loss of time for some of the more valuable things in human life – for meaningful work and hobbies, family and friends, love and play. Also at work, tighter management control of task and time adds to the feeling of a society under pressure and less happy. There is then an increase in the kind of leisure pursuits aimed at the 'prospect of departure' (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 85), which include things like tourism as well as the use of recreational drugs.

Indeed, a focus for the political activities of new social movements is often the control of time and space, as well as the control over the production of social meanings. For example, the squatters' movement is about the reclaiming of social spaces from private property owners and speculators, and the 'reclaiming the streets' campaigns are about taking back the streets as public spaces for celebration, protest and self-expression, as opposed to the current consumer capitalist function of the streets. It is no coincidence that during the recent anti-globalization protests in countries all over the world, the targets for vandalism during these protests are the large global corporations like McDonalds and Starbucks that are currently colonizing our city streets. Furthermore, those social groups whose lifestyles form the basis for new social movements – such as squatters, travellers, trade unionists or religious groups – are also involved in the issue of the control of time, either by dropping out of the world of work

altogether, or by resisting attempts to constantly rationalize the time and space of work and life. As Melucci has said, social movements have their roots in a dimension other than the managed time of work and consumption, 'in the everyday network of social relations, in the capacity and will to reappropriate space and time, and in the attempt to practice alternative lifestyles' (1989, p. 71). This makes collective conflicts increasingly personal as they revolve around the meanings through which certain social individuals organize their lives and mobilization rests on 'the capacity of individuals to initiate action and to control the space, time and interpersonal relations that define their social existence' (Melucci 1989, p. 71).

In this way, everyday life forms the time and the space in which some individuals address the issue of the loss of value in the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption. In this world of endlessly circulating signs that act primarily to sell the latest consumer goods, there are still referents that have a meaning for humans, which can be found in the relations of everyday life. Everyday life is the arena for an effort towards 'disalienation', making a contribution to the art of living and forming a critique of everyday life (Lefebvre 1991, p. 40, p. 66, p. 199). This is because the desire to escape everyday life, no matter how distorted this desire becomes as expressed in the needs of consumer capitalism, is still nevertheless a real desire to transcend the routine of the everyday. Alongside this desire, the attempt of the society of bureaucratically controlled consumption to colonize the space of everyday life ultimately fails. As Gardiner has said of Lefebvre's conclusion:

> [he] suggests that although modernity attempts to homogenize and commodify space, this state-sponsored project of 'normalization' ultimately provokes opposition and negativity. A plurality of what [Lefebvre] calls 'differentiated' spaces continues to persist under neo-capitalism, where difference is registered and 'linked to the clandestine or underground side of life'.
>
> (2000, p. 97)

A truly revolutionary social transformation, then, must express itself not only through language, in transformed meanings, but also in a transformed urban space that can sustain social activity as play (Lefebvre 2000/1971, p. 135). In the varied fragments of everyday life as it is currently lived, individuals have to play many and varied roles. In this, we communicate with one another and, in acting in the various fields of power, we are constantly affirming both similarity and difference with others. However, if resistance to the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption is to be successful then the urban spaces most of us inhabit will have to be reclaimed and transformed into spaces where the more playful aspects of social relations can thrive. Only in such a context can relations that rely on commonality as well as difference find in that difference the marks

of the social development of humanity as a whole as opposed to the signs of status marked out by consumer capitalism.

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