THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE LIFE-WORLD – SPATIALISING THE SOCIAL THEORY OF ALFRED SCHÜTZ

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Summary: The aim of this article is to highlight a frequently neglected aspect of Alfred Schütz' social theory by suggesting a new spatial and bodily reading of his phenomenology. This change in emphasis should allow disciplines exploring the interrelations of the social and the spatial, especially human geography, to address a relative blind spot in the research by allowing a bodily perspective to be better incorporated *methodologically* in explanations of socio-spatial phenomena. To this end, the phenomenological social sciences - along with their hermeneutic-reconstructive methods – should be emphasised in their potential for contributing to contemporary discussions on the *spatial turn*. The voids of contemporary approaches are addressed as we also continue existing phenomenological work in human geography to deepen an understanding of the concept of the *life-world (Lebenswelt)* - especially of its spatial dimensions. This also enables us to make a proposal for the further development of our methodology, formulating a specific 'Leib-based' approach to the social and physical world.

Zusammenfassung: Das Ziel des Artikels ist es, einen häufig vernachlässigten Aspekt der phänomenologischen Sozialtheorie von Alfred Schütz hervorzuheben, indem eine leib- und raumbasierte Lesart vorgeschlagen wird. Diese Schwerpunktverlagerung sollte es Disziplinen, die die Wechselbeziehungen des Sozialen und des Räumlichen untersuchen, insbesondere die der Humangeographie, ermöglichen, einen blinden Fleck in der Forschung zu erkennen, indem die leibliche Perspektive für das Verstehen und Erklären sozio-räumlicher Phänomene *methodisch* inkorporiert wird. Zu diesem Zweck sind die phänomenologischen Sozialwissenschaften – und mit ihr die hermeneutisch-rekonstruktiven Methoden – mit ihrem Potenzial zu betonen, einen Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den *spatial turn* zu leisten. Es werden die Leerstellen zeitgenössischer Ansätze thematisiert, ebenso wie wir bestehende phänomenologische Arbeiten in der Humangeographie fortsetzen, um ein Verständnis des *Lebenswelt*-Ansatzes (insbesondere seiner räumlichen Dimensionen) zu vertiefen. Dies ermöglicht es uns, einen Vorschlag für die Weiterentwicklung unserer Methodologie zu unterbreiten, die einen spezifischen leibbasierten Zugang zur sozialen und physischen Welt formuliert.

Keywords: Life-world, social space, human geography, sociology, phenomenology, Alfred Schütz, Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty

1 Human geography and the *life-world*

Although the influence and productivity of phenomenology could contribute significantly to enlighten spatial phenomena of the life-world, such as "place making" (Cresswell 1996), "place and placelessness" (Relph 1976), place experiences, "dwelling, place, and environment" (Seamon & Mugerauer 1985), and many others, it has never become a major strand of contemporary human geography, especially not in the German speaking human discipline.[1)] Hasse (2017) argued at some point even more critically that phenomenology has remained almost absent in geographical research there. This is even more surprising as hermeneutics and phenomenology are deeply rooted in German speaking philosophy and social sciences but found just few adopters in human geography (see Korf et al. 2022, Dörfler & Rothfuss 2023). Nevertheless, there have been some remarkable contributions, although it seems they remain isolated examples in their era and have not received enough follow-ups to form a paradigm (like the work of Pohl 1986, Werlen 1986, Sedlaczek 1989, Kahnwischer & Rohde-Jüchtern 1992, Zahnen 2005).[2)]

More positive is the history of phenomenological thought in Geography in the English-speaking parts of the discipline. Authors like Relph, Buttimer, Seamon, Tuan and others started an early impulse in the 1970s, when they laid ground for very fundamen-

[1)] In contrast to a quite rich debate in Anglo-American human geography where humanistic geography gained a phenomenological foundation in the 1970s and early 1980s (Buttimer 1976, Tuan 1971, Seamon 1979, Relph 1970, Ley 1977, Jackson 1981).

[2)] Especially Jürgen Pohl based his scientific approach on hermeneutics and phenomenology (see 1986 and 1993, both of which try to establish social geography in the subjective knowledge of regional and spatial phenomena).

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tal approaches to the dimensions of spatial experience for explaining social phenomena in human geography (early adoption in Relph 1970). But this discussion came to an impasse in the 1980s when (neo-)marxism and postmodern approaches gained influence and have become the dominant paradigms for more than two decades since.

Especially David Seamon's continual work and theory-building over the last three decades focusing considerably on architecture and the (built) environment has been remarkable. He has contributed extensively to some – again very actual – discussions around "healthy" or "liveable" cities, non-alienating life-world experiences and even topics like "awareness" and respect towards nature.[3] Also early on he made use of the situatedness and orientation of the human body in space (Seamon 1977), such as in some classic work of feminist political thought, like that of Iris Marion Young (1980), who opened up the phenomenological perspective on focussing on the lived *female* body and how perceptions of it relate to task performance and confidence.

Recently one can also note a rise in articles and books using phenomenological thought for their approaches to contribute to current discourses (e.g., on 'critical phenomenology' see Simonsen 2012[4] and Kinkaid 2020[5]; for 'post' or 'queer' phenomenological ones see Lea 2009, Spinney 2015, Ash & Simpson 2016, Ahmed 2006 and Hepach 2021).[6] Despite the sometimes fruitful discussions that these (post-) phenomenological interventions bring up, they are still single milestones not forming a school or a new paradigm. Moreover, they also do not – as we aim to point out with this paper – contribute to methods or especially phenomenologically based methodologies which we elaborate on the following sections relying on Alfred Schütz and his 'reconstructive approach'. A third point where we differ from other approaches is that we rely on Ilja Srubars (1988) reception of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology leading him to a pragmatic interpretation of Schütz' theory of the life-world. Drawing on Husserl and then providing with Schütz a language-based approach to societal knowledge (norms, roles, meanings etc.) *and their methodological reconstruction*, Srubar points at pre-language experiences which form the basic knowledge of every human being. This is relevant to us in particular considering the *spatial* aspects of the life-world, as these are also pre-language based, emanating from bodily ('Leib-based') interactions with the life-world. We draw on this stream shortly in the following chapter to recognise these fundamental approaches for a geography of the life-world as being constitutive of our argumentation based on Alfred Schütz and the pragmatic life-world approach of Ilja Srubar.

The insufficient preoccupation with phenomenology in contemporary human geography (at least in German speaking scholarships) was not even positively stimulated by the *spatial turn* in cultural and social sciences and it's (re-)discovery of space throughout the last two decades, which has piqued interest in both spatial aspects of socialisation and in society's spatial practices. Yet only few sociological[7] and socio-geographical[8] studies emphasise the phenomenological *Leib (lived body)* and the role social and bodily practices play in the formation of space. The underlying – and not entirely unreasonable – assumption of nearly all modern social scientists following Durkheim (1982 [1895]) is that social phenomena should be explained in social terms. A different perspective on society would only arise if one were to analytically include spatial aspects into theories on social structures (communication, inequality, etc.), in particular localities which are necessary linked to social interaction (origin, home, being foreigner, identity and location, etc.), or for the "locational effect" of social stratification in

[3] See Seamon's edited Journal *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology* (also iconic, see Seamon & Mugerauer (1985).

[4] In her paper, Simonsen (2012: 10) aims to explore how a practice-based re-reading of phenomenology is able to contribute to a 'new humanism' after anti-/posthumanism. According to her, three main issues revolve around the quest for a new humanism: "thinking the body as a phenomenal, the lived body; orientation and disorientation in the directions and possibilities of social life; and the phenomenological travel along the anti-/post-humanist lane."

[5] Kinkaid's (2020) "critical phenomenology" draws attention to the illumination of how bodies, objects, spaces, and intersubjective worlds are (unevenly and differentially) composed.

[6] In her book, "Queer Phenomenology" Ahmed (2006: 1) emphasises geographical writing in order to account for how different subjectives/subjects experience space in a different way. Hepach (2021: 1278) develops a spatial account of how subject and object cohere in "experience" and argues "that the very relation between/entanglement of the human and more-than-/non-human can best be accounted for phenomenologically".

[7] The most noteworthy exception to this is Henri Lefebvre (1974), whose central work fell into relative obscurity until the mid 2000 years. More contributions (and differing positions) are provided by Löw (2001, 2008) and Schroer (2006).

[8] Hasse (2014, 2017) and Dörfler & Rothfuss (2017, 2018).

the sense of Bourdieu et al. (1999: 135).[9] We want to try this in the following part.

From this perspective, a given spatiality could be seen as a typical or necessary facet of social practice(s), providing a further framework for understanding the complex and interconnected relationship between the social and the spatial. We would therefore like to take a different position on a fundamental aspect in this context: How can spatial and material aspects of the life-world be integrated *as social phenomena*[10] into the creation of theory in the social sciences – especially human geography? From this point of departure our central research question crystalizes: *How can the material dimensions of the social world be explained without sacrificing their own materiality, that is to say, without being understood merely as discourse effects or communicative constructs, nor as 'magic things' that have agency in it's own like Actor-network-theory suggests*?

A case is made here that phenomenology can serve as a proto-social science of space, capturing and adequately reconstructing these 'spatial' experiences of the life-world – embedded as they are in places, inter-subjectivities and (social) atmospheres (see Werlen 1996 as one of the first social geographers taking Alfred Schütz into conceptual considerations). And as these 'localisations' are rooted in bodily experiences, this implies an approach to such socio-social phenomena that follows a) an actor- or subject-oriented perspective as bearer of all these experiences and b) a *Leib*-centred conception of interactions with social and material environments. We think that Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (2012 [1945]) and Alfred Schütz' social hermeneutics (1967) provide the fundamental yet largely neglected theories for the subsequent debates.

2 The influence of phenomenology on human geography

One of the earliest and most important works of a *phenomenology of space* was that of Edward Relph (1970), which had a great influence on the critique on traditional (landscapes) and then contemporary geography (the quantitative bias). Relph claimed – quite revolutionarily – that all (spatial) knowledge that human beings can acquire is necessarily based on *experiences* of the world, not on measurement. Therefore, knowledge cannot be seen independent of the experiences of the world, as human beings exist in a dialectical and pragmatic relation to their social and material environment, as already thematised by other important approaches of the 20th century beyond phenomenology such as psychoanalysis, philosophical anthropology, pragmatism, ethnomethodology and critical theory.

According to this basic understanding, one cannot act, think, speak or have experiences of the world and others without leaving traces on the subject. The subject is the social product of these processed, dialectically acting experiences, bodily as well as mentally and cognitively.[11] Relph was the first to draw attention to this point when he argued against the dominant objectivist understanding of science at that time (also in the German-speaking world), saying that there was no objectively measurable image of space, since all spatial experiences are just 'feasible' through human beings. This, of course, does not preclude, or make obsolete, more abstract scientific theories of space and convey them as a cognitive rationalist understanding of the universe. They are in this sense subjective, thus only possible by subjective and sensual experiences, although also objectifiable.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1971) took up and continued thoughts of Relph by making clear that human geography should thematize man's *being-in-the-world*, not as abstract conceptions of space (physical-mathematical theories of space) or its measured quantitative objectivizations (the so-called *spatial science*, distance measures). The Heideggerian diction is no coincidence here, since Tuan similarly assumes a deeply felt being in spatial dimensions, which, although not always conscious, should nevertheless be at the core of a 'humanistic geography', as this represents the anthropologically founded, fundamental human relation to the world. Here, similar to Heidegger, there is no 'outside' of being, and this being is also to be thought spatial.

The most relevant and adaptable approach of this early phase was Ann Buttimer's essay on "grasping the dynamism of the lifeworld" (1974). Buttimer argued, borrowing profoundly from the 'Schütz tradition', that knowledge of the life-world can just be

[9] Indeed, it was this idea that, in the 19th century, led to the delineation of sociology from history and psychology as a social science: the body and the connection to space did not then count as sociological phenomena, rather the interaction, the dialectic, the division of labour as their own social spheres of reality with their own structural pressures (Durkheim 1982 [1895]).

[10] This is meant here explicitly, ontologically, not as an *actant*.

[11] Pierre Bourdieu (1984) later called this kind of conceptualisation the habitus, the *doxa* and the *hexis* of social forms of life.

gained by reflection, since its consummation is far too dense and intense to be able to relate to it in a rational and detached way. With regard to space or spatial experiences, which are similarly fundamental in the "attention to life" (Bergson 1990), it can be rarely experienced directly in the sense of a reflected 'knowledge of the environment'. Space or the spatial dimension therefore take on a fundamental dual role for social science: On the one hand, space can just be experienced through the body (there is no 'discursive' knowledge of space for the subject) and on the other hand, as a socially shared 'store of knowledge' about spatial experience(s) ('spatial knowledge' of planning, feng shui, etc.); it is only accessible upon reflection on these immediate dimensions of experience.

3 The 'spatial' as an eminent typification of the *life-world*

In contrast to some popular conceptions, socially relevant spatial structures and dimensions are not understood here as either semantic or symbolic forms of communication, or as ontological entities which derive their effect exclusively from their own essence (vulgarly: being things). On the contrary, they will be conceptualised as necessary life-world typifications attained through pre-lingual dimensions of social and material experience, in the sense Husserl has provided with his *eidetic method* leading to the "type" ("Typik") of things 'seen phenomenological' (Husserl 1982 [1913]). We here follow Srubars interpretation that this *Typik*, derived from the phenomenological experience of things and social others, is linked to genuine characteristics of the typified object, as otherwise no recognition at all is possible, because one wouldn't be able to know what a cat or a dog is: not to know their main characteristics would make it impossible to recognise them the next time you see them, neither to communicate about them, nor to differentiate them (Srubar 2012: 207f.) This counts for everything we experience (similar, the "object permanence" of Piaget 1954) as we would be "schizo-subjects" in the sense of Deleuze & Guattari (1983) travelling the world without any bindings that would make us human.

This is explicitly important regarding spatial experiences, as space (or objects which form space) is an eminent example of this process: without any recognition of the typical of a certain surrounding (and let it even be your own flat) no orientation at all would be possible, no 'saveness' of being as it is linked to known/familiar places, let alone the knowledge of others as the fundamental human experience. This typification of the socio-spatial is understood to be functioning as a *non-symbolic* communication because it does not resolve into mere *significance* – as has become commonplace in the social sciences since the *linguistic turn* – but is rather *a genuine experience of fundamental material aspects of the life-world*.[12] In addition to their (later) symbolic nature and meaning, these typifications have their own effect that can be traced back to their materiality, both in its physical-material as well as in its social symbolic and bodily attainment.[13]

In this paper, we attempt to draw on these fundamental insights of Husserl and Schütz on the typification of the material and resistant experience dimensions of the life-world – be they chairs, mountains, or other humans. We set out with the assumption that knowledge about such dimensions is attained through a typification of their general (usually constant) characteristics, making them into what they are: "This occurs through the inner horizon of the type, that is to say through a structure of material features that is not arbitrarily changeable. Features that belong to the central characteristics of the typified cannot be 'deleted' because the typified would otherwise transform into something else" (Srubar 2012: 209, own translation). This means that the above-outlined problem of the spatial dimension of life-world experiences must focus on the conditions of recognition, on the experienced internal horizon of its essence.[14] This is what founds the moment of intersubjective understanding and (potential) objectivity of individual experience. Hence, materiality cannot only be understood in terms of its significance, but rather of its typical *appresentation*:[15] "The identity of the typified is carried

[12] This is also true of those which are present, not only in their *durée* and their phenomenological features, but also in their form.

[13] Lindemann (2005: 114ff.), Srubar (2012), Stadelbacher (2016).

[14] This is where the symbolically significant type can arise and become shared knowledge, even if it cannot be observed independent of the experiencer (or can only be observed by way of considerable alteration or abstraction) because it is based directly on their own individual experiences. They are in this way objective, that is to say a generally understandable spatial term that relates to 'something' (e.g., 'narrowness', 'sunset'), as the meaning of which was experienced subjectively is shared through the comprehension of others (also based on experience).

[15] Srubar (2012: 207f.) details Husserl's own confrontation with this problem, as he sought to capture both aspects through the conception of the *type*.

through its material structure, through which its typical form is determined. The function of the interpreter is fulfilled here by the body" (Srubar 2012: 209, own translation). This means that knowledge about the typical structures of the life-world (things, spaces, other subjects) are not first formed in the mind or by cognition, but rather represented through a bodily-based experience, a "bodily recognition" or "bodily understanding" (see Schmitz 2003 and Gugutzer 2006, for psychology see Johnson 2015; decisive and early see Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]).

Similar to Piaget's (1954) concept of "object permanence", the classification of non-symbolic experiences functions as 'shaping' and 'significant', even if predominantly non-linguistically. But seeing that – from a sociological and anthropological perspective – knowledge on the interrelation between the social and the spatial ('non-places', atmospheres, habitats, others, etc.) is not primarily transferred through symbology or language, but in a pre-significant and bodily manner, "it seems sensible to inquire into a 'non-semiotic communication' in which the world and the others can become present" (Srubar 2012: 208).

Considering the impact of the *spatial turn* in many fields of social science, it is surprising that phenomenology and its lived body perspective continues to play such an insignificant role in this revival of social space.[16] Nevertheless, the primordial access provided by phenomenology makes it almost predestined for the task. This is evidenced by the focus placed on the *relatively natural world-view* in Max Scheler's sequel, in the mundane social sphere as a *paramount reality* by Schütz, or in the constitution of the subjective, such as of the societally typified arising from the foundation by Berger & Luckmann (1966) and Schütz & Luckmann (1973).[17]

Important works on the topic of space have therefore been around for decades, even if – as in the case of Schütz – space is not actually the central topic.[18] Although the spatial context of social actors is emphasised in Schütz & Luckmann (1973),[19] this did not subsequently become a focus of interest and has hardly been recognised or further developed since. This is also largely true for the 'non-spatial' reception of Berger & Luckmann's (1966) central work on the sociology of knowledge, which is even more surprising considering the fact, that they – as with Alfred Schütz – accepted spatio-temporality as a prerequisite for quotidian experiences (Berger & Luckmann 1966: 36, 40). To our knowledge this did not receive sufficient analytical consideration until Steets (2015) published the first systematic expansion of the sociology of knowledge to include further important aspects of the constructed environment and architecture.

The reason for this can be seen in the fact that, while Schütz already brought attention to spatial aspects of the life-world at the beginning of his theoretical work, he did not include them more explicitly or build on the idea in other works (Srubar 1981: 59). Starting from the phenomenological foundations made influential through Husserl's 'phenomenological revolution' Schütz assumes a bodily-connected subject who must orient itself by way of experience in the life-world. His primordial experience world is that of the experiencing "I", a being whose understanding is determined by its position as the bodily centre of its own universe. The "socialisation" of the "I" follows through "you-experience", revealing the first signs of the subsequent transfer to the 'mental' sphere of social recognition, as pointedly explained by Husserl in his "Krisis-Schrift": "the recognising subjectivity as the origin of all objective sensory formation and "validity of meaning" (Husserl 1954: 102, own translation). Although Husserl (1954) clearly delineates himself from Descartes, he still does not reveal this subjectivity as one of bodily recognition, seeing it rather as one of a recognising consciousness.

In order to depart from the experienced world of the subjective consciousness and develop a more comprehensive social theory, Schütz needed to find the medium through which the *you* – and object-experiences, as personal and 'irrational' as they may be – can be reaffirmed and shared socially and in the long-term (institutionalised). He discovers this medium in the *typification of experiences*, especially symbolic and speech-related experiences, which are made manageable for the subject and others through *retentions* and *protentions*. "From this perspective language is a symbolisation that carries externalism and thus – through apperception – enables the con-

[16] Some noteworthy exceptions exist, for example, Hasse (2007, 2014, 2017).

[17] See Schütz & Luckmann (1973), in particular vol. I., ch. I.; the first systematic English and still impressive and recommendable summarisation of Schütz's perspective can be found in Gurwitsch (1962).

[18] For example, Merleau-Ponty's (2012 [1945]: 127) space as bodily connection, the "residency", Bollnow's (2010 [1963]: 18ff.) phenomenological theory of space, where he builds on the "experienced space" from Minkowski (1933) and Bollnow (1960), equally Graf Dürckheim 1932, republished and commented by Hasse (2005).

[19] See Schütz & Luckmann (1973), vol. I., ch. II., Section B.

sciousness to capture the reality of others. In doing so, however, language also simultaneously conceals the qualitative aspects experienced in the durée […]" (Srubar 1981: 31).

Space and spatiality can be seen in this way as an example par excellence of how this process happens because scarcely a spatial term can comprehensively describe the nuances of individual spatial experience. This means that facets of lived experience are often concealed. It is in fact those practical studies aiming to create communication on individually-lived spheres of experience that provide the opportunity of a collectively-shared world with a specific object type. That is why we are making the case with Srubar for an approach to the spatial analysis of the life-world which seeks to get as close to the lived contents of the spatial dimension as possible, by first searching for the "non-semiotic processes of pragmatic sensory formation. Intentional action is connected to the material presence of things in this way to create a habitualised scheme of reality so that Merleau-Ponty (1966: 370) speaks of a transition from the communication to the 'communion' of body and world, emphasising the non-semiotic side-effects of this process" (Srubar 2012: 98).

The methodological problem that arises if one wants to study this 'spatial body-knowledge' from a social science standpoint is that the contents of the social and material world are mediated through the filter of language (each personally and socially) and cannot be directly transferred into words without some loss of 'substance' (the richness of experiences). There is, after all, a discrepancy between the content of the respective bodily and cognitive experiences and the result of the subsequent reflection and 'intellectualisation' through language. Hence, the problem remains as to how a generalisation of pre-lingual bodily experience is possible. This is especially true for scientific inquiry which must tackle this issue in both a routinely/pragmatic and a methodological/systematic sense: "[O]ur duration is a continuum of changing experiences of quality. We cannot force the stream of our experiencing into form without thereby abandoning the realm of duration. […] We transform being becoming into being-of-that-which has-been-formed. That which has been formed, however, belongs to the existing and delimited realm of concepts" (Schütz 2015 [1981]: 36). This plays a very central role for the spatial experience addressed here, in that it perhaps represents the most bodily experience of the subject, next to pain and emotion. If spatial life is to be scientifically objectified, the accompanying localisation must result in a loss of information about it: "The constant, intersubjective validity of words, being of social origin, thus implies a reduction of the lived experience of the subject with regard to its expressibility" (Srubar 1981: 31, own translation).

The notion that reduction may be a precondition for approaching the world of spatial experience has, however, not yet become accepted. In most cases bodily knowledge is explained as being methodologically inaccessible, and the focus of inquiry should accordingly be placed on the objectification alone – language and discourse. Contrary to this approach, we would like to establish a perspective that unites these direct spatial experiences for all spatially informed social sciences, if not representing the central basis for understanding the meaning of spatial-material dimensions of the social world. Part of this will also mean reassuring the importance of the subject, which has come under fire by many contemporary approaches and is no longer seen as a genuine source of such life-world experiences. Our position is thus in line with main perspectives on the sociology of knowledge, following that world access can only be carried out subjectively, never abstractly objectified in signs, discourses etc. Since there can be no abstract and objective world – only subjectively-attained and objectified pools of shared knowledge – the problem of space as a socio-scientific criterion can be approached as follows: Because only the subject (its body) can be the carrier of spatial experiences, only they can have the capacity to develop (spatial) experiences and their interpretation from personal bodily experience as an adequate sensory ascription in the sense of a reflective I: "[O]ur memory does not preserve our experiences unchanged. It absorbs the quality experience of a Now and Thus only insofar as it is transferred from this Now and Thus to a later Now and Thus" (Schütz 2015 [1981]: 49).

The 'art' of objectification and scientific reconstruction is to methodologically allow this spatial knowledge to 'talk', that is to say, to objectify it as a second order observation without sacrificing the subjective sensory content. This, again, follows Srubar's approach of interpretation working on the interface of bodily and semiotic experiences of life-world knowledge. It gains its importance not by reducing one sphere to their origin but by theorising its necessary permeation. The central methodological question regarding our access to social and material space is therefore: *How do subjects experience spaces and their 'contents' (buildings, structures, other people), in particular contemporary spatialities such as refugee camps, home and homelessness as well as in social alienation/place making by gentrification or networking?*

4 The reconstruction of spatial experiences

To further develop his theory and provide clarity on the possibility of sensory generalisation (classifications such as language and symbols derived from reflection and experience), Schütz devotes increasing attention to the question of how intersubjective understanding can exist and be conceptualised in social science. This will however shift the focus of analysis away from direct sensory content, a facet emphasised by Schütz during his "early philosophy of life" phase, especially at the time when Henri Bergson's "Matter and Memory" (1990) still played a central role.

It appears that this change in focus led Schütz to lose sight of the relation between the subject and the spatial in his subsequent work on theory, at least in terms of what could follow from his primordial, non-classified/generalised form.[20] But what could again be of great value to the reconstructive analysis of spatial experience is the social relation between symbol/classification and the bodily experience of materiality – exactly as Schütz conceptualised in his early works.[21] However, this content of spatial experience, as well as the typification based on non-semiotic experience, are not mere side or proto-effects of the social, but rather provide the fundamental experience content necessary for the social construction of society itself. "The non-semiotic constitution of meaning lies at the genesis of the cultural life-world" (Srubar 2012: 214, own translation). This is an aspect that is almost entirely ignored or rejected in current spatial debates and receives no attention in theoretical debates in social science.[22] We find it therefore even more necessary to further develop this and make it compatible for current debates on the relevance of space in social and cultural sciences.

In shifting his focus towards semiotic typification(s) of language and communication, Schütz did not follow-up on this promising path in his later work. His early position being that: "For us, that we attribute meaning to having created our experience in deep spheres, is not the logical validity, but rather the adequacy to our perpetual process the relevant manifestation of reality." (Schütz 1925, cited in: Srubar 1981: 53, own translation). If our assessment is correct, the later Schütz was still cognisant of the closeness of experience in relation to the then socialised terms, but he abandoned this conceptual effort. This may be because the intellectualisation of terms would necessarily produce a divide between the resulting term and the experience it was created to describe, and he would have seen something 'irrational' in the notion of a general relation to the experienced. After all, a personal sensory experience cannot easily be generalised apart from subjective impressions. And this would certainly have provided a difficult basis upon which to develop a general theory on the sensory construction of social worlds.

For Schütz, work in developing terms for the social sphere (society and its supplies of knowledge) should focus on their adequate classifications – terms subjectively meaningful for the subject should stand in as appropriate a relation to the 'experienced' as possible. People will often say things like 'that word doesn't mean anything to me' or 'that description doesn't make it any clearer' to emphasise the (in this case lacking) principle of adequacy. This is especially true for experiences of spatial character that are initially registered through the body but subsequently described through the use of generalised terms (e.g., 'scary place', 'unwelcoming environment'). Still all these attempts are inadequate symbolisations – they must be reduced to be understood, but they are not necessarily generally binding. This is because they are derived from subjective experience: what may appear as a scary underground parking garage to one person, is an inviting urban playground to another (Hasse 2007).

But these experiences are however neither arbitrary nor singular but are also strengthened and objectified in meaning when other subjects proceed similarly (or 'typical') to create you-experiences through the selection of specific terms and recall their durée, at least in retention. The result is the creation of a collectively shared being-in-the-world as a symbolically updated earlier spatial experience, for example an intersubjective agreement that underground parking garages are scary. At the same time, it is clear that people with different backgrounds (social, class, gender) can habitually reach different interpretations of spatial phenomena. These can however themselves be typified and summarised in-line

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[20] This is reflected in the above-cited passages from Schütz & Luckmann (1973) and in Berger & Luckmann (1966).

[21] See again his unpublished early works, comprised in Schütz 2015 [1981].

[22] Alluded to here is the often-encountered position that space or the spatial cannot serve as a causal explanation of social phenomena, or as previously remarked, the fixation on the linguistic-discursive discovery of the world.

with a Bourdieuian class-, respective milieu analysis. But both perspectives retain the problem of *non-semiotic experience of the spatial*.

After all, these interpretations are structured in relation to their materiality and are thus non-coincidental. This is also true with regard to the social other and their "body as a material interpreter" (Srubar 2012: 209). This represents the clearest contrast between our perspective of space and that of what we call 'naïve' constructivists, as well as from the meaning-of-places and sense-of-places approaches, especially those prevalent in English language discourses (Cresswell 1996, Malpas 1999, 2012, Massey 1991). For us it is neither about the constructions themselves, which subjects make based on their spatial experiences, nor a mere attribution of meaning to places, locations, etc. Our perspective follows the necessary non-semiotic experience of space that is founded in the type of the materially experienced, in other words, the primordial materiality which is the prerequisite of spatial experience itself – and it 'speaks' through its generalisations by individuals or groups as well as by societal knowledge founded on these. The methodological issue is then to 'listen' to this language, means to *reconstruct* by *hermeneutic methods* how these (spatial) experiences have produced their traces within the subjective (or collective) experiences.

5 *Attention á la vie* – The conceptual influence of Henri Bergson on Alfred Schütz

Because this aspect is not addressed by Schütz, or later by Berger & Luckmann (1966), the conception of spatial knowledge they provide is much narrower, defined as a degree of socio-spatial and socially-typified familiarity (exemplary Schütz & Luckmann 1973). This is in contrast to Schütz' earlier understanding of spatial knowledge as its own phenomenological mode of existence, namely as a derivative of (spatial) experience (Schütz 2015 [1981]: Part 2). Schütz' early work is heavily influenced by Bergson (2003) whose *philosophy of life* made a noticeable impression, especially on the concept of the *durée*, but also on his understanding of the primacy of experience as a pre-symbolic realm, the spoken representation of which can never reproduce for the subject the intensity of what was experienced. It is but a necessary abstraction – the experience brought to the term is a 'cold' but generalisable presentation of a 'hot' experienced phenomena. The Bergsonian philosophy of life is clearly reflected here which, in contrast to that of Kant and Descartes, places emphasis on the *attention á la vie* as the most relevant aspect of consciousness, far before any reflection or terminological abstraction (Schütz 2015 [1981], Bergson 1990). Bergson places the 'I experience' as a counterpart to Descartes' 'I think', emphasising the nature of experience as being inaccessible by way of direct consciousness or rational reflection, delineating his position clearly from the Kantian and Descartian philosophical traditions.[23)]

Schütz and Merleau-Ponty are, in their own way, reproducing the tension discovered by Bergson in regarding perception as both an active action – in terms of both intentionality and orientation – and a prior experience flowing directly into the consciousness. The later Schütz will eventually make the choice in favour of reflection by developing a sociology derived from a reflexive orientation towards experiences, pasts and the *world of contemporaries* or *surrounding world* because it is a prerequisite for the development of any sensory form of life based on shared knowledge (see Ahmed 2006). But this orientation correlates with a decisive consequence: that very neglect of the (socio-) spatial connection to the experiencing subjectivity in its non-symbolic form.

We do not wish to overtax the comparison with Descartes' deductive language of theory because the approach advocated here is dissenting on many points. Nevertheless, a careful formulation can be made in the spirit of a general theory of space: Without body, no space, without bodily connection in the theoretical and methodological language, no coverage of the spatiality of the world – understood as its own attribute, not as semantics, discourses or symbols of space.

That this connection between theory development and the spatial has not yet arisen in the Schütz tradition is due, in our opinion, largely to his own theoretical orientation. In line with Schütz, space is acquired as a *typification* of experiences of the bodily subject, the same as all other aspects of the life-world (time, other people, intersubjectivity; see Vargas 2020). In this way, the subject and their body are the core of all experience in its relation to space (Srubar 2012). The spatial is thus understood by Schütz as a dimensional, typified shell that experiences the subject around itself, with degrees of knowledge (range, effective range, etc.), that is to say, as a 'spatial ring' surrounding the acting subject-body ('zone of operation'). These correspond respectively to Schütz & Luckmann's (1973) "ranges" and essentially also to

[23)] See especially Bergson (2003 [1889]), as well as Merleau-Ponty 2007: 268).

George Herbert Mead's (1934) "zone of manipulation". But this leaves the spatial connection to society in the understanding sociology tradition strangely static and secondary, namely in not being understood as a fundamental, equally necessary localisation effort (Löw 2001), as other typifications are understood.

There are therefore not only things which are near and far, but also some people who are 'close to us' and others that we 'only vaguely recognise'. Social proximity means here to also have bodily knowledge from others, that is to say, a better understanding of someone with whom one has 'been through a lot' (irrespective of intimate relations like in a family), someone whose emotionality is familiar, whose bodily organisation has been experienced and typified by the individual themselves. Nevertheless, one feels this knowledge first, and it only later becomes a symbolic relationship. This is clear when one incidentally meets someone they haven't 'experienced' or 'sensed' – that is to say seen – in a long time. This fundamental dimension of experience is necessary for spatial experience to even be possible for the subject, as Merleau-Ponty (2012) explains. Since spatial experience relies on bodily organisation, it can be the only foundation for spatial experience and 'spatial knowledge'. Without the body we wouldn't even know what the abstract 'discursive attributes' could mean when referring to such things as 'stigmatised spaces' or 'spaces of exclusion'.

Without spatial connectivity, one might venture to say, there is no subject. As alluded to by Bollnow (2010 [1963]) and articulated by Merleau-Ponty (2012: 117): "And finally, far from my body's being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no body." If this is true, one must assume that the bodily does not only keep distant experiences in store, as assumed in the above-outlined theories, but in fact represents the *conditio sine qua non* for all spatial experience. Fundamentally understood in this way, the focus of spatial research in social science can in fact be founded only in the anthropologically derived objectification, namely in the non-functioning accesses that assume a dialectic between necessary subjective experience and societal objectification. This however means, as we have often argued, that the current climate does not bode well for the spatial being taken seriously as a materiality of the life-world, rather than being conceptualised as a mere discursive effect of an overarching social communication structure.

Schütz' theory in this way clearly conceptualises the body as a world-experiencing 'medium' that can and must make these experiences of (socio-) spatial proximity and distance. Nevertheless, apart from the degree of understanding the other, the potential for spatial experience and explanation goes largely unutilised by him. "For the body and its routine functionings [sic] is presupposed in each situation and experience, without necessarily belonging to the core of experience" (Schütz & Luckmann 1973: 101). It is exactly this detachment of the body – respectively in our theoretical language of the body – that makes it impossible for the late sociology of knowledge and applied hermeneutics to conceptualise the 'core of experience' of the subject as necessarily connected to the body and thus space. If it is seen merely as an isolated prerequisite, then it will hardly be understood as a necessary primordial facet of the experience dimension of the social world.

We believe on the contrary that the physical body belongs in every life situation to the necessary subjective experience core of any person. This is the same even during their participation in virtual worlds – to name a particularly abstract example – because the virtual experience is mediated through the body and can thus result in certain forms of sensory deprivation. The above-cited passage from Schütz & Luckmann (1973) is therefore symptomatic of the analytical neglect of physical bodily experience as a constitutive facet of society. Only when the classical relationship of semiotic explanation in social science is turned upside down will the central focus of our efforts come to light: There is no experience core of the life-world that is not bodily in nature and cannot be made spatial in some form or extent.

The *structures of the life-world* can serve as a good example of what is articulated here. On the one hand the relevance of spatial organisation of the life-world is clearly named and shaped (bodily-centred experience dimensions of the social world, subsequently typified in stages), on the other hand it was analytically ignored, as seen paradigmatically in this citation. "[T]he limited nature of the situation and the spatial, temporal, and social arrangements of subjective experience of the life-world are fundamental elements of the stock of knowledge." (Schütz & Luckmann 1973: 100). Due to the experiences accrued by the bodily subject, spatial knowledge is seen as a *typification*, the same as all other typified aspects of the life-world (time, other people, intersubjectivity, etc.). It is thus portrayed as a one-dimensional shell that the subject weaves around itself, with degrees of knowledge (range, effective range), and which is "'delineated' by the embedding of inner duration in a transcending world time and as a consequence of the insertability of the body into a structure of the

life-world which is imposed on the experiencing subject." (Schütz & Luckmann 1973: 100). Although the *body*[24] is clearly assumed to be the only 'medium' which can facilitate experiences of spatial proximity/distance (that can at the same time be social), the here criticised focus on the bodily-avert spatial concepts of the social remains.

The role of the subject and its body as the core of all experience and the basis of all questions – of explanation, understanding, or space – thus goes ignored (see Srubar 2012). Space and spatial experience belong therefore to the basic inventory of all subject knowledge (Piaget & Inhelder 1967). Social contexts can therefore also be considered under the primacy of the spatial: space can become a central explanatory category without necessarily becoming deterministically or substantially limited. That is, as long as one comprehends the necessary – and not randomly – occurring aspects of the non-semiotic world experience dimension as important supplies of societal knowledge outlined here.

6 Concluding remarks

We are working on the assumption that spatial experience must necessarily be based on bodily experience, and that these represent a fundamental part of each individual subjectivity. They are therefore not only anthropologically justifiable phenomena but are the prerequisite of any sociality. Without subjectivity there can be no sensory experience of space – no sense of space.[25] And there can equally be no socially-organised togetherness without the subjective experience of space, because that would need to be 'ordered' and recognised to create sociality (necessary holy, private, protected spaces in every culture). We see this as a blind-spot in the research and advocate for experiences of spatiality to be understood as instrumental in the formation of society – preluding all linguistic interaction. This spatial experience – this spatial sense – is however founded in non-semiotic communication, that is to say, in a bodily-recognised knowledge of the world that focuses on the type of the experienced and not on their significant symbolisms and forms of communication (discourses, symbols, etc.). If one should wish to capture the meaning of a spatiality experienced in this way, they must methodologically capture the sensory formation processes of the subject in their relation to space – to understand why, how, and in what form space is relevant for the subject in distinct forms of interaction. One learns something about the subject in this way, and also about the object, that is to say the space, because the subject's knowledge on types of non-semiotic communication logically always correlates with material object attributes.

The current article has shown that social space is neither causally dominant nor subordinate[26], but represents a habitual, self-organised body of knowledge, a central facet of the societal and thus a socio-spatial fact.[27] The spatial can therefore have a decisive and fundamental influence on the social. Although this was known by some classical authors of sociology, it has become a largely forgotten fact in a social science paradigm focusing on symbolically mediated communication and experience (Stadeldacher 2016, Abraham & Müller 2010).

Accompanying this far-reaching point, we sought to demonstrate the potential of an approach emphasising *social space* – and spatialities of the social – in empirically-based social research. Schütz' earlier work on the structures of the life-world was shown to be an insightful perspective in this regard. However, the question still remains as to how social science research could pursue an empirical inquiry of space founded in the inspiring theoretical work of Herrmann Schmitz' (1980) New Phenomenology, where bodily spatialities would later play a central role (Schmitz 1980, 2019), or in the established phenomenological body concept of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012). We view this as a methodological blind-spot in the spatially oriented social sciences. As argued above, a Schützian phenomenology may provide an appropriate framework for reconstructing spatial bodily experiences and inter-subjectively 'objectifying' them for academic discourse.

To revisit the Schützian approach to social space should facilitate – through deeper methodological effort – the creation of a methodologically sound approach to observing and analysing both routine and structural practices of localisation. These should form a foundation for the development of methodo-

[24] Here called *body*, bringing home the insensibility in respect to the here addressed field of inquiry.

[25] It is self-evident from our discussion that we do not mean those abstract conceptions of space used in physics and mathematics, but those lived and experienced spaces in line with Bollnow (1960, 2010) and Lefebvre (1974).

[26] Merely as the result of action or influence, depending on the level of knowledge, information, you-experiences, etc.

[27] Following Dürckheim (Hasse 2005), see also the different spheres of intimacy in a house or apartment, different atmospheres in cities, neighbourhoods, etc.

logical tools for further (socio-) spatial accesses to these complex topics – especially founded in phenomenology and sociology of knowledge.

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