

What is Sociology of Space? Definition and Scope of Study

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Abstract: This paper discusses the sociology of space which is a part or extension of sociology that uses geographical theories, especially human geography, economic geography, and feminist geography. The scope of the study targets various social practices, the dynamics of the power of social institutions and spatial dialectics as a form of human interaction with space. This type of research is descriptive research using data obtained from studies of various literature both in scientific journal articles, popular scientific articles, books, and other types of written works. As a library research, data analysis is carried out by comparing it with other sources that study similar contexts. The results of the study show that for quite a long time, the sociology of space has played an important role and contributed positively in providing a new nuance to the study of social sciences and even space is considered an important part of the process of forming sociological theories. The interdisciplinary characteristics of the sociology of space, in its development, are greatly inspired by the theories of Marxism and Postcolonialism and in the scope of its study there is much overlap with geography and architecture.

Keywords: sociology, space, urban, geography, spatial

Abstrak: *Tulisan ini membahas tentang sosiologi ruang yang merupakan bagian atau perluasan dari sosiologi yang menggunakan teori-teori geografi, khususnya geografi manusia, geografi ekonomi, dan geografi feminisme. Lingkup kajiannya menyasar berbagai praktik sosial, dinamika kekuatan institusi sosial dan dialektika spasial sebagai bentuk interaksi manusia dengan ruang. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif menggunakan data yang diperoleh dari studi berbagai literatur baik pada artikel jurnal ilmiah, artikel ilmiah populer, buku, serta jenis karya tulis lainnya. Sebagai penelitian pustaka, analisis data dilakukan dengan cara membandingkannya dengan sumber lain yang mengkaji konteks serupa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam waktu yang cukup lama, sosiologi ruang telah memainkan peran penting serta berkontribusi positif dalam memberi nuansa baru bagi studi ilmu sosial dan bahkan ruang dianggap sebagai bagian penting dari proses pembentukan teori-teori sosiologi. Karakteristik sosiologi ruang yang interdisipliner itu, dalam perkembangannya sangat diilhami oleh teori Marxisme dan Poskolonialisme serta dalam lingkup kajiannya banyak beririsan dengan ilmu geografi dan arsitektur.*

Kata Kunci: sosiologi, ruang, perkotaan, geografi, ruang

Introduction

Sociology of space, both its position as a unit of study and its position as a terminology to represent various variables and narratives of the problem, is formed from two interrelated word elements, namely “sociology” and “space”. The most common understanding of sociology from the etymological aspect, formed from two elements of the word, namely “socius” (friend or comrade) and “logos” (science or mind). Sociology is simply explained as the science of how to make friends or friends in a broad sense, which departs from the basic assumption that human existence in its social condition cannot live without the help of others ([Soekanto, 2021](#)). The definition of sociology was then developed in many versions, as the scope of study in the discipline expanded.

An article published online by Case Western Reserve University entitled “What is Sociology?”, explains that sociology is a science that studies social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. The targets of sociological inquiry are explained to include the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, as well as the way people interact within these contexts. In addition to imagining that all human behavior is social which is the subject matter of sociology, it is also mentioned that this discipline of society always offers many different perspectives on the world as well as new ideas. Sociologists understand social inequality, behavior patterns, forces for social change and resistance, and how social systems work ([Anonymous, n.d.](#)).

Sociology as a term, began to be discovered and introduced by the French philosopher, Auguste Comte since 1839 through his monumental book entitled “Cours de Philosophie Positive” (Volume IV) ([Lenzer, 2017](#)) which refers to a science of society. Even earlier, Comte had used the term “Social Physics” (Maulana, 2022) to label a similar science. That is why Comte was given the title as the father of Sociology, where he used a natural science approach to study the development of society. In Comte's sociological thinking, sociology is divided into two categories, namely “social statics” and “social dynamic” ([Cruel, 2024](#)). Through a touch of positivism theory, he imagined that knowledge is considered correct if it is obtained through accurate observation and empirical verification. The scientific essence of the sociology concept building introduced by Comte is what is used as the basis for researchers in the future, including the natural sciences, in observing social symptoms.

At the beginning of its development, sociology in the hands of its advocate, the French philosopher Auguste Comte, was strongly influenced by philosophy and psychology. It was only then that the paradigm of sociology underwent a change, since Emile Durkheim changed it while placing it above the empirical world. There are two famous works from Durkheim which are used as scientific tools to release sociology from the strong “grip” of Comte and Spencer's political philosophy, namely “Suicide” (1951) which highlights the symptoms of suicide as a social phenomenon and “The Rule of Sociological Method” (1964) which presents the concept of empirical research on sociology. If Comte is considered the father of sociology with his positivism philosophy genre, then Durkheim is a figure laying the foundation of modern sociological theory that relies on social facts as an object of study ([Ritzer, 1985](#)).

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (literature review) ([Walsh, 2005](#)) to analyze the concept of spatial sociology theoretically and empirically using relevant academic writing sources. The type of data used is secondary data quoted from books, scientific journals, articles, and other types of publications. The literature sources used as reading materials are writings containing theories of spatial sociology. The systematic literature review process is

carried out through academic databases on several indexers, such as: Scopus, JSTOR, WoS, Google Scholar, Sinta, Portal Garuda, Aci-Hub, and others. Source criticism is carried out by sorting relevant sources by focusing on material about the definition, theory, and application of spatial sociology in urban research. Data analysis is carried out by identifying conceptual patterns, theoretical perspectives, and things that are debatable in spatial sociology. Meanwhile, content analysis is carried out by categorizing findings based on themes, especially spatial sociology, and comparing theoretical perspectives from various points of view of thinkers to formulate a synthesis of the concept of spatial sociology ([Ahmadin, 2025](#)). In addition, data validation was also carried out in the form of source triangulation to ensure data accuracy by comparing several literatures and the credibility of the sources, namely only using references published in reputable journals or books from credible publishers.

Result

Definition of Sociology of Space

Space as a concept that is juxtaposed in the link of integration of meaning in the study of social sciences, especially sociology and geography as a study approach, is important to define. The English Dictionary, Oxford (Dictionary, 2010), defines space as an existence that is continuously seen with or without reference to the existence of objects in it. Space can also be defined as the interval between points or objects that are seen as having one, two, or three dimensions.

Space, in terms of its form and designation, can be found in several types, namely private space, public space, and semi-public or semi-private space (Nissen, 2008). First, private space is a space that is privately owned or designated with very limited access for certain individuals, such as: houses, bedrooms, and private study rooms. Second, public space is a space open for general access for all people with various interests within certain boundaries, such as: city parks, squares, jogging areas). Third, semi-public or semi-private spaces are spaces whose access is limited according to certain rules, such as: schools, offices, and cafes.

Sociology of space is a part or derivative of sociology that uses theories of geography, especially human geography, economic geography, and feminist geography (Hendra, 2018). Its studies target various social practices (Gieryn, 2000), the power dynamics of social institutions (Armstrong, 2008) and spatial dialectics (Halvorsen, 2017) as a form of human interaction with space. For a long time, the sociology of space has played an important role and contributed positively in giving a new nuance to the study of social science and even space is considered an important part of the process of forming sociological theories. The inter-disciplinary characteristics of sociology of space, in its development, are strongly inspired by the theories of Marxism and Postcolonialism (Kifper, 2013) and in the scope of its study intersect with geography and architecture.

This sociological paradigm views space as not a passive natural entity, but instead dynamic and will always change with the dynamics of society. The dynamics of space are characterized by its nature that has and is given meaning based on the interests and purposes of its use ([Ahmadin, et.al., 2025](#)). The sociology of space, in certain contexts, also utilizes the tools of discourse analysis and cultural theory to articulate the dialectical relationship between the material and symbolic practices of social spaces and agents. One example is Edward Twitchell Hall, an American anthropologist who developed the concept of proxemics in exploring cultural and social cohesion to describe a person's behavior and reactions to various spaces including proximity, such as: intimate, private, social, and public which he defined culturally (Anacleto, 2015). From these spatial practices, it will create new spaces that are given and have new meanings as well.

Some concepts about sociology and space imply the definition of sociology of space as a branch of sociology that studies, examines, and analyzes the relationship between space both physical (spatial) and social (activities) that affect the process and forms of social interaction, social structure, and its dynamics. In this context, humans with various interests and the development of their thinking, will construct or shape a space. Simultaneously, the existence of space is also very important in influencing the pattern of community behavior and the form of social relations created.

Scope of Sociology of Space

The sociology of space is one of the topics of study in social science that is currently the concern of many researchers, especially because they realize that space has a strong influence on social life. In a research result, it is stated that the spatial awakening allows new exploration of the relationship between “space” and “society”. There are two important points regarding the causal relationship between space and society, namely: First, in some small but important ways natural space affects social life and collectivity. Second, in innumerable ways, collectivities can transform natural space into social space and shape its use. There are three main concepts mentioned in relation to space: use, users, and impact (Gans, 2002).

An edition of the monograph “Current Sociology”, states that the sociology of space is a study that has a very broad scope of coverage and uses, but is specific in the context of a relational approach to space. Positioned as a category of analysis, the sociology of space is a perspective for studying various sociological phenomena. Examples of its use include: exploration of bodies, boundaries, units, and mobility (Fuller & Löw, 2017). The scope of the study of sociology of space, according to this explanation, is very broad including in the aspect of its use, but specific in the aspect of a relational approach. The broad nature of the study of sociology of space is reflected in the context of its position as an analytical category tool that can be used as a perspective to study various social phenomena in society.

The sociology of space as an approach is also found in the study of work organization which focuses on the spatial aspects of its relationship to work life whose meaning is internalized through these spaces. This type of sociology of space study is still less attractive to researchers, especially in organizational sociology, but the analysis of space is considered to have an important role for the theory of the world of work and organizations. The unit of analysis of the study of the sociology of space in work organizations, namely: work processes, semiotics, and discourse, as well as the nature of workers' daily lives (Halford, 2008).

There is an interesting study that tries to explore how spatiality is constructed in spatial policy discourse and how the construction process can be conceptualized and analyzed. The approach used is discourse analysis of socio-spatial relations, focusing on the relationship between rationality and power. In addition, this study also utilizes discourse analysis and cultural theory to articulate cultural sociology and analyze the dialectical relationship between material practices and symbolic meanings attached to spatial environments by social agents. The point is that new spatial practices can create new spaces and meanings (Richardson & Jensen, 2003).

Conclusion

Sociology of space is an extension of sociology that uses theories of geography, especially human geography, economic geography, and feminist geography. The scope of the study of sociology of space is a variety of social practices, the dynamics of the power of social institutions and spatial dialectics as a form of human interaction with the space or environment in which he lives. The

existence of sociology of space in the study of social science is very important and has proven to give color to especially in the study of urban areas. The inter-disciplinary nature of sociology of space appears in its development to be strongly inspired by the theories of Marxism and Postcolonialism and in the scope of its study intersects with geography and architecture.

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