



Theories and perspectives in sociology

Week 3

What are theory and perspective?

- ▶ **Theory** is abstract interpretation, which explain the variety of facts and evidence collected in research.
- ▶ **Perspective** (also approach, paradigm) a particular way of considering something, “corner of view”. Perspective is more wide than theory.

Instance from physics and geometry: Newton rules work in mechanical paradigm and don't in quantum physics; the rule of intersecting parallel lines works only in two-dimensional space.

Theoretical dilemmas in sociology

- ▶ Social structure and human actions. How we should relate human action to social structure. **Are we the creators of society, or created by it?** The choice between these alternatives is not as stark as it may initially appear, and the real problem is how to relate the two aspects of social life to one another.
- ▶ Consensus or conflict? **Does social order base on consensus or conflict?** Whether societies should be pictured as harmonious and orderly, or whether they should be seen as marked by persistent conflict? Again, the two views are not completely opposed, and we need to show how consensus and conflict interrelate.

Theoretical dilemma in sociology

- ▶ Gender issue. Is it necessary to build it as a general category into sociological thinking?
- ▶ Social changes. Are processes of change in the modern world mainly shaped by capitalist economic development or by other factors, including non-economic ones?

Levels of study society

- ▶ **Macro** - study people relations on structures level
- ▶ **Micro** - study people relations (interactions) on the level of small groups

Three main perspectives in sociology

- ▶ Theories and perspectives.
- ▶ Perspectives:
 1. **Functionalist:** What functions have people relations for social order? (macro level). Representatives: Durkheim, Parsons, Merton.
 2. **Conflict:** How people through relations construct social order which is useful for them? (macro level). Representatives:
 3. **Symbolic interactionism:** How people construct social order in every day life micro interactions? (micro level).

Representatives of perspectives

- ▶ Functionalism: E. Durkheim (The Suicide), T.Parsons (The Social system), R.Merton
- ▶ Conflict: Marx (measures of producing and labour), De Bouvuar (gender), Dubua (ethnicity).
- ▶ Symbolic interactionism: G.H.Mead, G.Bloomer, Goffman's dramaturgy approach (The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life), ethnomethodology of G.Garfinkel, Chicago school.