Understanding Change in Political Science: On the Need to Bring Space into Theoretical Positions and Empirical Analyses

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In recent times, issues surrounding change have become increasingly important in the study of political analysis. This is especially true within strains of new institutionalism such as historical institutionalism and the 'Varieties of Capitalism' approach. However, although this has led to a sensitising towards the temporal dimension, the spatial dimension has been relatively ignored. This is arguably problematic, as a fuller understanding of space and the spatiality of social and political relations would lead to more coherent and accurate analyses of political phenomena that currently characterise historical institutionalism. Indeed at an ontological level, drawing on work within the natural sciences and geography, it is impossible to talk of time without reference to spatiality and of space without reference to temporality. This short article reviews some of the more prominent historical institutionalist literature that deals with change and renders explicit the problematic conceptualisation of space, and consequently time, which underpins their analyses. Drawing on Massey and Sayer, it proceeds to outline briefly a relational conception of space and the difference that space makes to political analyses.

Issues surrounding political and institutional change have become increasingly prominent within political analysis. Authors such as Peter Hall (1993), Colin Hay (1996b; 1999a; 1999b; 1999c; 2002; 2004), Peter Kerr (2001; 2002), Paul Pierson (1995; 2000; 2004), Peter John (1999) and others all spend a not inconsiderable amount of time within their work focusing, at both a theoretical and empirical level, on change. These authors can be compartmentalised, at least loosely, within two overlapping traditions: historical institutionalism and evolutionary theory. Although there are important differences between these approaches, both seek to treat issues of temporality and change as central to social and political analysis. In this article we welcome this desire to be more reflexive towards temporal issues. However, we believe that this focus is too narrow, as there is no similar theorisation or awareness of the role that space plays within social and political institutions and the changes that take place within them. This is not to suggest that issues concerning spatial relations have been ignored within mainstream political science. Within the study of British politics, for example, there are significant bodies of literature on Britain's relations to Europe, on its 'special relationship' with the United States, on the impact of globalisation, on the relationship between central and local government, on devolution and so on. Yet within this literature there is little philosophical and theoretical reflection on the nature of space and the difference that it makes. Moreover, space within political science is largely thought of in terms of physicality and place: that is, it is seen to denote

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locality and territoriality. There is little recognition of, or perhaps there is conflation with, the symbolic and institutional spaces which help form spatiality – the spatial configurations of social life. As Noel Castree notes, 'space is arguably not at all well understood by many of those who are currently so fond of talking about it' (Castree, 2002, p. 190). This article is an attempt both to highlight and improve understanding of the role of space within political science.

As such there are often shortcomings, or misunderstandings, in the way space is referred to and theorised in the literature, which has a negative influence on the efficacy and accuracy of empirical research. For example, the implicit conceptualisation of space that underpins much research is often one in which it is dichotomously opposed to time and in which it has little positive role to play in the analysis of the state and political change. Moreover it is common that spatial relations are re-conceptualised in terms of time and temporality. As is shown below, this is problematic from an ontological, analytical and, indeed, normative viewpoint. To minimise, if not eradicate, these problems, it is proposed that a four-dimensional notion of space-time should be adopted. This then allows the simultaneity, order and chaos of space to be recognised and the role spatial relations play in the ever-changing formation of society to be incorporated into analyses of political and institutional change.

Contemporary Approaches to Change

In recent times, substantial steps have been taken within political science towards incorporating change into theory and applying this to empirical instances. Rather than simply focusing upon the issue of whether 'history matters', authors have instead spent some considerable time examining issues of how and why this is so. For example, Pierson (1995; 2000; 2004), who is perhaps the most prominent contemporary author writing on these issues, challenges what he terms the 'snapshot' approach to change in conventional political analysis. Instead, he calls for a 'moving picture' approach in which issues of temporality (such as timing, sequence and duration) take centre stage. Exploring these issues with respect to welfare retrenchment, Pierson (1995) highlights the role of path dependence in which specific decisions and events literally 'lock in' particular policy trajectories, in turn constraining future alternatives (see also John, 1999). Hall (1993), by contrast, argues that while policy change is often incremental, it can also be rapid and decisive. Distinguishing between 'first-order change' (minor adjustments to existing policies), 'second-order change' (the development of new policy instruments within the context of pre-existing goals) and 'third-order change' (a radical shift in the hierarchy of goals), he argues that this accounts better for the shift from Keynesianism to monetarism in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s than does the concept of path dependence.

A particularly interesting and accessible account of political change is put forward by Hay. Hay's work, although prominent among the new institutionalist literature

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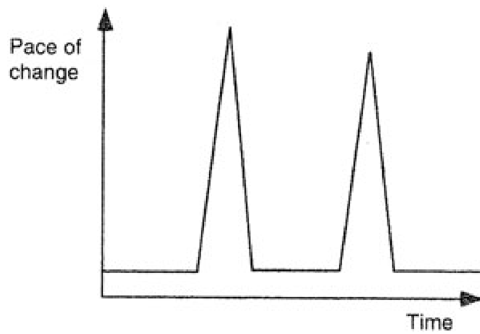
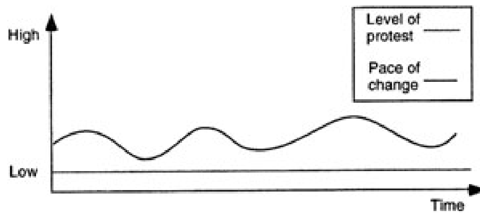
Figure 1: Hay's Characterisation of the Revolutionary Conception of Political Time



Source: Colin Hay, Political Analysis, *2002, p. 152: Palgrave. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.*

Figure 2: Hay's Characterisation of the Evolutionary Conception of Political Time



Source: Colin Hay, Political Analysis, *2002, p. 156: Palgrave. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.*

in its own right, is especially relevant in discussions about change, as he devotes considerable attention not only to unpacking the different ways in which change might be conceptualised but also to examining how such conceptualisations might be operationalised empirically (see for instance Hay, 1996a; 1996b; 1999a; 1999b; 1999c; 2000; 2002; 2004). Hay identifies three models of change.[1] The first model (Figure 1), which he classifies as 'revolutionary change', is characterised by 'discontinuity, in which, conventionally, periods of stability (or stasis) are punctuated by abrupt, intense and rapid moments of profound transformation' (Hay, 2002, p. 151). The second model (Figure 2), which he labels 'evolutionary change', is 'committed to the notion of incremental and cumulative change over time' (Hay, 2002, p. 159). For Hay, neither model is sufficiently able to capture the temporality of change. For as he quite rightly asks, 'is not the temporality of change an empirical rather than a theoretical question?'. Yet as he notes, both revolutionary and evolutionary approaches remain 'wedded' to particular temporalities (Hay, 2002, p. 160). In contrast, Hay seeks to provide a model that is

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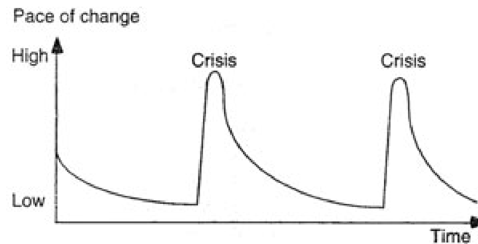
Figure 3: Hay's Characterisation of Punctuated Equilibrium



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able to transcend the 'either/or' logic often associated with evolutionary and revolutionary perspectives. This third model (Figure 3), which he labels 'punctuated equilibrium/evolution', refers to 'a discontinuous conception of political time in which periods of comparatively modest institutional change are interrupted by more rapid and intense moments of transformation' (Hay, 2002, p. 161). The advantage of such a model, he argues, is that it allows the political analyst to devote attention *both* to moments of crisis *and* to the periods of gradual change between such critical junctures.

Hay's emphasis upon a heightened reflexivity towards the temporal dimension in the analysis of change is certainly to be welcomed. His account, though beautifully elegant, is also thought-provoking, nuanced and rich. However, there are also some potential tensions in Hay's account of change. In particular, it seems odd that Hay explicitly argues that we should treat change as an open and empirical question and yet goes on to provide a rather neat theoretical model. He does not seem to say that this is what change might look like (as in 'this is one possible empirical world of many') but instead appears to imply that this is what change does look like. While Hay is certainly careful not to state explicitly that change can be theorised in such a way that his model can be transplanted from one case study to the next, this does appear to be the implicit logic behind his presentation of the model. This is where a tension lies, for to treat change as a genuinely open and empirical exercise suggests that a process of (empirical) mapping[2] is more appropriate than one of (theoretical) modelling. Naturally, this point raises questions as to whether 'ideal types' can ever be useful. We would not deny their utility as a means through which we might ask questions about change, but the danger lies in pre-empting empirical answers through theoretical models. This is of course a difficulty that bedevils political analysis more generally. While scholars may take pains to emphasise the complexity of particular concepts in theoretical terms, the temptation often is to downplay or discount empirical instances that do not 'fit' the conceptual model. Yet as we shall shortly discuss, this need not be the only way of undertaking empirical research – not least with respect to the analysis of change.

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A second potential tension in Hay's argument is related to the first: that the model he proposes appears to treat change as unidimensional (and, as we shall shortly argue, uni-spatial). It seems odd that, although the central thrust of Hay's argument is that change is highly complex and contingent, he presents this through a single line on the graph. This perhaps gets to the heart of the issue. Hay's model is not so much a departure from, or alternative to, the 'revolutionary' and 'evolutionary' perspectives but is instead a combination of the two. As such it can certainly be seen as a significant advance on the other two models, in that it acknowledges that change need not be *either* rapid *or* gradual but can instead be both. Yet Hay's model is still unable to capture the multidimensional (or, as we shall argue, multi-temporal and multi-spatial) nature of change. That is, in Hay's model change can be rapid or gradual but it cannot be both at the same moment; different temporalities can only occur at different times (that is, different places along the line). In order to explain this point more fully, it is now necessary to turn to the issue of space. For as we shall argue, change should be treated as multidimensional, fluid and dynamic – or, as we shall outline, it can and should be conceptualised as multi-spatial. This, we hope, might offer one way to resolve some of the tensions identified above. In so doing, we hope to build upon and contribute towards Hay's desire to capture the complexity and contingency of change.

Space and Historical Institutionalism

Before considering the issue of space, it is first important to note that spatial relations have not been ignored in the political science literature. As noted above, issues such as globalisation, regionalisation and multi-level governance have received considerable attention within political analysis, as well as beyond. Yet due to a lack of philosophical reflection and a deep engagement with geographical concerns, the issue of 'space' continues to be ignored in the analysis of change. Space within political science is often seen as synonymous with 'place': that is, it is seen to denote locality and territoriality. Yet for geographers, such an approach is akin to seeing politics as synonymous with government. In a similar way to the political concept of power, space can in fact be viewed in much broader terms – that is, policy space, ideological space, cultural space, discursive space, etc., all of which contribute to our understanding of space, the spatiality of society and change. Thus, while issues of 'place' are certainly examined in the political analysis literature, the place of space, and the difference that it makes, have been relatively ignored in the study of political change.

This lack of reflection certainly features in historical institutionalism. As its nomenclature suggests, historical institutionalism has been considerably successful in borrowing from the discipline of history, even if, as Pierson notes, 'those associated with historical institutionalism have generally been more explicit in discussing the "institutionalist" dimensions of their framework than the "historical" ones' (Pierson, 2004, p. 8).[3] However, historical institutionalism has failed to

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engage fully, if at all, with the discipline of geography. This is an oversight that, as will be shown below, results in a number of weaknesses at both a theoretical and, consequently, empirical level. Parenthetically, it also has consequences at the normative level in that a reflection on geographical concerns could strengthen the credibility of claims that offer alternatives to the current trajectories of institutional set-ups.

First, it is important to examine how historical institutionalists tend to overlook space. For example, in his work *Politics in Time*, Pierson declares, 'We turn to an examination of history because social life unfolds over time. Real social processes have distinctly temporal dimensions' (Pierson, 2004, p. 5). Similarly but more explicitly, drawing on Debray, Hay notes that time is 'to the process and practice of politics what space is to geometry' (Hay, 2002, p. 55, see also ch. 4; 1999b). Consequently, it can be seen that space is accorded little or no role to play within these analyses of the political. Indeed, all references to political change within Hay's work are couched in terms of temporality. Thus he talks of 'punctuated evolution', 'stasis', 'flux', 'gradual change', 'a dramatic quickening in the pace of change', etc. This is, of course, not to argue that the temporal dimension does not have an integral role in political change. Rather it is to argue that change is only possible because of time *and* space, or, more accurately, space-time.[4] It is the multiplicity, simultaneity, disruptions and dislocations of and within spatial relations that allow the possibility of change over time. This point, which is expanded upon below, is not integral to Pierson's work despite his references to actors, organisations and institutions being 'shaped in part by the spatial relationships to other aspects of the social setting' (Pierson, 2004, p. 171), nor is it acknowledged in Hay's work in spite of his reference to the possibility of disaggregating contexts either spatially or temporally (Hay, 2002, p. 142). Instead, space is implicitly conceptualised within their work as relative.

According to Castree, within a relative view of space, space is seen as 'a mutable social construction, not something passive *vis-à-vis* the processes it serves as an "arena" for ... space is therefore seen to be internally related to these processes not an optional or external "add-on" ' (Castree, 2002, p. 191). However, at the same time within this viewpoint space is a container, albeit malleable, which although not passive, expresses rather than modifies the processes which produce it. Space is conceptualised as something that is altered by the passing of time and the processes of change. Thus space, to a large extent, is defined in terms of what it is not: it is 'not time'. Moreover, in this account, it is only time that really matters. As Pierson argues, social life unfolds over time. The corollary of this is that it is time of which history, indeed History, is made. Space, on the other hand, operates as a kind of stasis, where nothing really happens (Massey, 1992, p. 4). In other words, within relative views of space, time is seen as dynamic but space as static: space is something that time happens to.

This lack of reflection on space and spatiality and the implicit relative conceptualisation results in two related weaknesses. First, from an analytical perspective,

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it prevents the recognition of other spaces and the production of tendencies and counter-tendencies within aggregated wholes. Second, from a normative perspective, it constricts the possibility of alternative trajectories to state forms.

Turning to the analytical concerns first, it can be seen in many, although not all, historical institutionalist analyses that there is no room accorded to space. In fact, what is occurring is that, as Doreen Massey notes, spatial differences are being invoked in temporal terms (Massey, 1999, p. 280). She goes on to argue that stories of progress, development and modernisation share 'a geographical imagination which rearranges spatial differences into temporal sequence' (Massey, 1999, p. 280). Thus, the Third World is backward and not as developed as the West. It is less far along the one (neoliberal) trajectory open to it. As such, difference is only found in the temporal notion of development.

This position can be found within Pierson's work. He believes that path dependency can lead to the consideration of 'contests over "political space" in which potential competitors seek first-mover advantages, while clarifying the likely long-term impact of initial defeats on the opportunities and constraints facing initial "losers" or groups that arrive at *a later point in time*' (Pierson, 2004, p. 12, emphasis added). Here there is only one space to be contested and the winners and losers are determined, in part, by the timing of their arrival on the political scene.

This tendency can also be seen in the 'Varieties of Capitalism' literature, within which a variety of authors have sought to challenge claims that heightened processes of economic integration and interdependence are forcing states to pursue neoliberal economic strategies (see, for instance, Garrett, 1998; Hall and Soskice, 2001; Weiss, 2003). Rather, such authors point to a process of 'dual convergence' in which globalisation encourages states to pursue coherent strategies, whether they are market liberal or social democratic corporatist. This, they argue, can help explain why both market liberal and social democratic countries have been able to thrive economically in recent decades (Garrett, 1998; Hall and Soskice, 2001). Again, to take Britain as an example, the implications of this type of account are clear: Britain must (continue to) pursue a single systemic trajectory of free-market capitalism if it is (to continue) to flourish.

Ironically, this is a position that Hay (2004) wishes to challenge not only at the analytical level, but also from a normative perspective. Criticising the convergence thesis and the dual convergence thesis alike, Hay writes of the contingent nature of the divergent or convergent paths which countries take as a result of, among other things, differential exposure to regional integration and financial liberalisation. This invokes notions of spatial relations, such as multiplicity, simultaneity, coexistence and interconnectedness, but they remain implicit within his work. Indeed while Hay explores how we should recognise differences both within and between institutional configurations (see, for instance, Hay, 1996a), he does not incorporate this into his theoretical model of change. Rather, as Figure 3

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(above) reveals, he presents change as one-dimensional, possessing single rather than multiple temporalities (Hay, 2002, p. 162). There is no notion of disaggregation and, thus, it can be argued that this leads to a position where there can only be single trajectories of, and within, particular state forms, even if this trajectory does not lead to systemic convergence. As will be argued below, work such as Hay's could be considerably strengthened by reflecting on space and rendering spatial relations explicit.

Making Time for Space in the Study of Political Change

If historical institutionalists and political scientists more broadly are to take space and its relationship with time seriously and incorporate it into their analyses, then much can be learned from human geography. Of particular import here is the work of Doreen Massey (1985; 1992; 1999; 2005) and Andrew Sayer (1985; 1992; 2000). Massey has been at the forefront of the attempt to incorporate the political into the sphere of the geographical and highlight the political nature of spatial relations. Within political science a similar process needs to be instigated. There ought to be an attempt to incorporate the geographical into the sphere of the political and highlight the spatial nature of political relations. In order to do such a thing, there is a need to adopt a conceptualisation of space which does not contain the same weaknesses as those found within the implicit conceptualisations of some historical institutionalists. Massey and others achieve such a conceptualisation through drawing on the natural, and particularly the physical, sciences and the notion of four-dimensional space-time.

First, it is crucial to note that four-dimensional space-time, and thus space, is not relative or absolute, but rather relational. John Urry (1985) argues that 'Space and time only exist when there are entities in some sense *in* space and time' (p. 24, emphasis in original). As such, there is no such thing as space, or indeed time, without the existence of objects which are in relation to each other. As noted by Massey, 'It is not the interrelations between objects which occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which *create/define* space and time' (Massey, 1992, p. 11, emphases in original). Consequently, the three dimensions of space and the one dimension of time, which together form four-dimensional space-time, come into existence together (Massey, 1999, p. 282).

This is not to argue that space and time are the same thing or do not have their own characteristics. Rather, they are inextricably interwoven and, therefore, any distinction we make 'needs to hold the two in tension, and to do so within an overall, and strong, concept of four-dimensionality' (Massey, 1992, p. 10). Thus there must be the recognition that spatial relations are constituted temporally and the temporal movement is also spatial. As such, space can no longer be conceptualised as an absence of time, as occurs within many absolutist definitions, or as a passive recipient of change as occurs with relative definitions, but must take on a positive definition in its own terms (Massey, 1992, p. 10).

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Space then should be seen to have a number of attributes. Very briefly, space allows simultaneity and interconnections; it is dislocated and ruptured; it is both ordered and chaotic; and, as such, it is dynamic and open. Massey argues that we can make the following propositions concerning space:

> *First*, that we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny ... *Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity ... *Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction (Massey, 2005, p. 9).

Space, therefore, can be seen as having a role to play in change.[5] As Massey argues, 'change must emerge from interrelations, and for there to be interrelations there must be multiplicity' (Massey, 1999, p. 282). In short, space matters. Space and spatial relations impact, in some form, on events and the outcomes of political and social processes and phenomena. Massey argues, 'Spatial form as "outcome" has emergent powers which can have effects on subsequent events. Spatial form can alter the future course of the very histories that have produced it' (Massey, 1992, p. 15). Consequently, as Sayer argues, 'concrete research must take spatial form into account even if it is not directly interested in it' (Sayer, 1985, p. 60).

Thus space makes a difference. Yet the question arises, what difference does it make? Here, the work of Sayer (1985; 1992; 2000) is useful. However, frustratingly perhaps, our answer to this question must remain vague because, as Sayer notes, the flexibility and contingency of space and spatial relations pose ontological limits to theorising.[6] Thus although space is certainly important:

> [T]o say what that importance consists in, we normally have to move to a more concrete kind of analysis where we identify particular kinds of objects, relations and processes constituting it in concrete spatial conjunctures (Sayer, 2000, p. 113).

Thus the difference that space makes can only be appreciated through empirical research (which is theoretically informed). To illustrate this point, Sayer uses the example of A B C being different to B A C (Sayer, 2000, p. 111).[7] Here, although the constituents are the same, the spatial relations are different and this may make a difference in particular conjunctures. For instance, if 'A' is a postman, 'B' is a wall and 'C' is a dog, then quite obviously the relationship between postman and dog changes depending on whether the wall is between them. However it is also important to note that these spatial relations do not determine outcomes. Whether the dog bites the postman is not only dependent on the placement of the wall. For example, the disposition of the dog and the familiarity between the postman and dog are also important. Changes within spatial relations provide, or

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close off, opportunities. To turn to a more political example, whether particular interest groups are inside or outside a particular policy network will provide or frustrate access to decision makers and influence over the direction of policy. So, as Sayer argues, space makes a difference '*but only in terms of the particular causal powers and liabilities constituting it*. Conversely, what kind of effects are produced by causal mechanisms depends *inter alia* on the *form* of the conditions in which they are situated' (Sayer, 1985, p. 52, emphases in original).

Consequently, in the context of historical institutionalism and, indeed, political science more broadly, space matters in that, firstly, its recognition allows researchers to map the interrelations and interconnections between and within different spatialities. Secondly, it allows for the recognition of different trajectories within (particular) social relations and the impact this has on broader policy, ideological, political, societal and economic movements. Thirdly, it allows for the recognition of the effects that (changes in the) spatial form of institutional configurations and social relations have on future trajectories and the possibility of altering those trajectories. Thus a reflection on space and spatial relations allows researchers a more sophisticated understanding and explanation of continuity and change. Fourthly and on a slightly different note, it allows for the recognition of difference and heterogeneity. As Massey argues, 'a genuine, thorough spatialisation of social theory and political thinking can force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell' (Massey, 2005, p. 11). Consequently in the academic context it provides room for researchers who challenge the mainstream. Fifthly and in relation, imagining space as always in process and as an open system allows a space for the political. It refutes the idea of there being no alternative and, thus, it allows alternative futures and the possibility of enacting them.

Analysing Multiple Processes of Change Empirically

Of course, if the cliché of 'space matters' is to mean anything to political analysts, we must not allow it to stagnate at the abstract level. Instead we must utilise the notion of space-time in meaningful empirical research. Rather than characterising change in terms of a shift between state forms, change should instead be conceptualised as essentially fluid and dynamic: that is, in terms of the ebb and flow of particular tendencies and counter-tendencies that may shift considerably – whether gradually or rapidly – over time and space (Smith 2005; 2006). Such an approach allows the analyst to make positive statements about the direction of change (for example, by claiming that certain tendencies are much stronger in certain spaces than in others, or that the broad trend is in one direction rather than another) and also its pace (for example, by noting that certain periods are broadly characterised by continuity, or that they are punctuated by decisive moments in which a state's overall trajectory rapidly shifts course). At the same time, however, the approach encourages the analyst to embrace explicitly the diverse (and

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sometimes contradictory) elements of change rather than downplay and/or discount those elements that might not otherwise seem to 'fit' (Smith 2006). This is achieved through the recognition of spatial disaggregation and of spaces which have their own temporalities that may diverge in pace and direction from other (more dominant) ones. As Sayer argues, what often happens in narratives of change is that 'a single account is given of a whole space ... in which certain local stories or external connections are suppressed, and in which the experience of a particular part is passed off as an adequate summary of the whole' (Sayer, 2000, p. 119). Above all, the approach advocated here seeks to provide a framework for *mapping* processes of change within a particular context without being committed to a particular *model* of change or making pre-emptive claims about its direction and pace.

Smith (2005; 2006) takes a tentative first step towards recognising this importance of space by tracing multiple policy trajectories within a specific country case study: that of the Irish Republic. Ireland's rapid economic growth since the mid-1990s has prompted considerable controversy both about the dynamics behind the 'Celtic tiger' phenomenon and about its consequences for Irish state and society. For some commentators, Ireland's economic success has been achieved because Ireland has been resituated into the model of a 'competition state' in which social justice is subordinated to the needs of the market (Kirby, 2002, pp. 143–4, p. 160). For others, the Irish state can be classified as essentially 'distributive' and 'developmental' in that it continues to play a central role in economic and social affairs (see for instance O'Riain and O'Connell, 2000, p. 334). Engaging with such debates, Smith charts the ebb and flow of a complex range of tendencies and counter-tendencies through the analysis of a variety of institutional and policy spaces (ranging from education policy to industrial policy). She argues that while strong tendencies towards prioritising economic competitiveness are indeed apparent in some institutional spaces, the Irish state also exhibits a number of 'distributive' and 'developmental' tendencies in others. In terms of industrial policy, for instance, Irish governments remain committed to low corporate taxation (in turn limiting the resources available to spend on social measures) and yet in other respects have shifted towards a more activist and interventionist approach to industry (including the adoption of a variety of measures to nurture indigenous industry such as the establishment of An Bord Trachtala in order to assist Irish firms). Similarly, although the Irish state has made less welfare effort in recent years (in that public expenditure has failed to keep pace with economic growth), the 1990s also saw a shift towards a more 'distributive' approach (including a number of initiatives designed to combat social exclusion and disadvantage such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Early Start Programme). Smith thus seeks to synthesise apparently polarised perspectives by explicitly embracing spatial disaggregation and multiple directions of change; indeed, debates as to whether Ireland is a 'competition' or 'distributive' state have arisen precisely because economic and social policy has entailed elements of both. Such an approach also allows for the possibility of comparative

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analysis (that is, through charting the ebb and flow of particular tendencies and counter-tendencies in different [disaggregated] territorial contexts) without implying that states are on common trajectories (that is, such tendencies may emerge in very different ways and for very different reasons in different contexts).

Conclusions

The aim of this short article has been to question some of the theoretical assumptions regarding change in contemporary historical institutionalism and to offer some initial thoughts on how space, and its relationship with time, could be fruitfully conceptualised and utilised within political inquiry. As such it can hopefully act as a springboard to further interrogation of the role that space has to play within political research. Indeed we would argue that these issues require a research agenda in which the geographical cliché 'space matters' also becomes a truism within political analysis. For this to be the case, a greater ontological reflection on what space-time is and the specific qualities of its temporal and spatial dimensions needs to take place within political science as a whole. Moreover, analysing change still requires an understanding and/or explanation of the mechanism, or set of mechanisms, which causes alterations in the direction, form and pace of institutional change. This task, we believe, would significantly benefit from an incorporation of geographic concerns surrounding the contingency, dislocations and ruptures of spatial relations.

In sum, this article has attempted to highlight the need not just to make space for the study of time in political science and the understanding and explanation of change, but also to make time for the study of space. It has done so on theoretical, empirical and normative grounds. Theoretically, the study of space (or, more specifically, space-time) provides new avenues through which researchers can move towards multidimensional or, more accurately, multi-temporal, conceptions of change, which recognise the influence that spatial relations have in these processes. This clearly has implications for empirical analysis, for it encourages researchers not only to examine geographical space, territory and spatial scales but also to explore institutional, ideological and cultural spaces. Finally, the concept of space-time has important normative implications, for it explicitly refutes the 'logic of no alternative' implicit in many accounts. Rather, by acknowledging that a multiplicity of alternative possibilities and futures exist, it opens up the space for change and alternative political visions.

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Notes

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1 These models are set out schematically in *Political Analysis* (2002) and are also employed theoretically in Hay's more substantive work (see for instance Hay, 1996a; 1999a; 1999c).

2 We use the term 'mapping' because, as when drawing a map, we believe that each case needs to be studied on its own terms. That is to say, one cannot draw a map of one locality and then transplant it on to others. Certainly there may be some common features (rivers, roads and so on) but this cannot be assumed. Each locality has at least the potential to be (vastly) different.

3 Indeed it can be argued that despite historical institutionalism's claims that history matters, there has not only been surprisingly little discussion of the historical aspects, but also of time's ontology. This lack of ontological reflection can perhaps be seen in Pierson's work itself. For example, referring to resistance to pressures for institutional reform, Pierson argues that 'Change and stability are two sides of the same coin' (Pierson, 2004, pp. 141–2). This claim leads to a number of ontological issues concerning change and, consequently, time and temporality akin to those issues arising from Giddens' claim of structure and agency being two sides of the same coin. Specifically, it raises questions surrounding the relationship between change and stability. For example, it is not made explicit in Pierson's work whether stability requires change, or whether change is only possible when there is a lack of stability and they are to be seen in opposition. If the latter, it can be argued that the analogy is founded upon an ontological dualism between repetition and transformation, or cyclical and linear temporalities, in which the flow of historical, as well as institutional, time alternates between stasis and flux. If this is the case, there is no logical mechanism of moving from one temporality to the other. Therefore it must be concluded that Pierson's strand of historical institutionalism is unable to explain the passing of events and institutional development in a fluent and persuasive manner (for a more detailed discussion of the ontological aspects of time and change, see Bates, 2006). If Pierson is in fact arguing that stability requires change, then the critique becomes dampened, although it still raises questions surrounding the relationship and movement between stability and instability. Either way, it remains the case that Pierson's analysis would be more robust if it was explicitly carried out within an ontological framework that systematically reflected on temporal concerns and allowed for the reconciliation of stability, or continuity, and change in the same moment.

4 As Sayer notes, 'Although our language can only denote it through three separate words, space-time-matter form a single whole; to talk of just one of these is to abstract – perhaps unknowingly – from the other two' (Sayer, 2000, p. 111).

5 This is not to reify space. Space does not have effects in and of itself. Rather, as Castree notes, the relational conceptualisation views space as '*both* medium and outcome, as consequence *and* cause' (Castree, 2002, p. 191, emphases in original).

6 In geographical literature, this position has been contrasted with other theorists, most notably Harvey (1989; 1996), who believe that much stronger theoretical claims about space can be made. However, see Castree (2002), who argues convincingly that these two positions of the 'contingent' and 'essential' difference that space makes are not necessarily antithetical.

7 In his discussion, Sayer is referring specifically to physical social space. However, we believe his general point also holds for other forms of social space, for example institutional or symbolic space.

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