



# Social justice and spatial inequality: Toward a conceptual framework

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### Abstract

Justice has recently been deliberated in different spatial disciplines. Still, the question of its metrics remains unresolved. Accordingly, this article introduces a conceptual framework in which a metric notion of justice can be employed in different spatial contexts, drawing upon the theoretical conceptualization of Amartya Sen's 'capabilities' and Pierre Bourdieu's 'field', capital forms and 'habitus'. The main hypothesis assumes that capital resources, which are formed in an individual's living environment, determine their life chances, thus influencing spatial equality of opportunity (i.e. social justice).

### Keywords

capabilities, capital forms, habitus, living environments, social justice

## 1 Introduction

Justice has always fed fundamental societal deliberations that led many scholars to debate the very meaning of the term (Sandel, 2009). Still, the question of a proper metric by which to measure justice remains highly contentious (Elster, 1992; Robeyns and Brighouse, 2010). In the field of geography, justice is discussed occasionally with respect to spatial processes (e.g. globalization, urbanization, suburbanization, gentrification, immigration, environmental nuisances, and hazards), which can lead to social consequences, such as inequality, segregation, exclusion, and shunning. However, discussion of the metric by which we can measure justice with regard to its social consequences has been somewhat lacking. Current writings that discuss the relationship between space and

justice give little attention to what constitutes well-being in the first place, thus lacking normativity (Olson and Sayer, 2009).

One explanation for this limitation of inquiry is the elusiveness of the meaning of justice in its spatial intelligibility. The social sciences (and the discipline of geography within it) differ fundamentally in this regard from the normative argument of inequality that philosophers of justice contemplate, thus apparently making it more complicated for the former to set a metric of justice in space that can be measured or

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analyzed (qualitatively or quantitatively).<sup>1</sup> A metric of justice is therefore needed in order to explore social outcomes of diverse spatial phenomena, thus directing spatial policy that advances sustainability and equality.

As most social phenomena are complex and linked to multiple bodies of knowledge, a multi-disciplinary approach could provide a rich understanding of the relationship between (in)justice and spatiality. Different bodies of knowledge are woven into this dialogue here, drawing upon a theoretical conceptualization, developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986b), with regard to capital resources, personal habitus, and the concepts of justice discussed by the liberal philosopher Amartya Sen (1992). This dialogue shed light on socio-spatial processes that change the social, political, and economic conditions, determining the outcomes of justice in space at the levels of the individual and his or her peer groups.

The aim of this article is therefore to suggest a conceptual framework in which a metric of justice can be employed spatially (e.g. at the urban, metropolitan, regional, or even national scale, or in the context of other forms of socio-spatial structuration of scales, such as capitalist production, consumption and gender) in democratic societies.<sup>2</sup> This metric is defined in the present article as a person's capabilities and his liberties to be and to do (opportunities or life chances), according to the terminology discussed by Amartya Sen. The extent to which these capabilities are equally distributed in space will define whether a given spatial arrangement is (un)just.

The article is organized as follows: The main theories of justice are presented in the next section. The third section then discusses some contemporary attempts to define and measure justice in space. The fourth section introduces the notion of habitus and capital resources, elaborating on their potential to contribute to the spatial aspect of social justice. In the fifth section, a conceptual framework is

developed. The article sums up the arguments in the concluding section, along with presenting some concluding remarks.

## II What is social justice and its metric?

Social justice traditionally refers to the distribution of benefits and burdens in society (Elster, 1992). As such, the relevant metric of justice treats different sets of goods (e.g. utility and liberty) to be distributed, while determining some principles by which they should be regulated (Sandel, 2009). The present article concentrates on the liberal stream of thinking in regard to social justice.

Basically, the term 'liberal' refers in political philosophy to a philosophical tradition that values individual autonomy and freedom. Liberal theories of justice enable taking into account various conceptions of the right or the good, held by individuals or groups (Kymlicka, 2002). This is an important point, as the aim in this article is to link the political philosophy to the social science. A metric of justice in liberal democracies should be conceived within a particularistic perspective, which deals with the *ought to be* for individuals and communities rather than the universal perspective, which emphasizes, for example, structural or institutional paradigms, as social science often does. Moreover, choosing a metric of justice in diversified societies could benefit from such a particularistic thinking, as people and communities in them hold different ideas of what constitutes well-being and a good life. However, the liberal school of justice needs to be discussed carefully and critically.<sup>3</sup>

The most prominent philosopher of the liberal stream was John Rawls (1971), whose aim was to keep the democratic public sphere open with regard to definitions of what constituted 'human flourishing' and 'the good life' (Bret, 2008; Stein and Harper, 2005). Under Rawls' theory, the metrics of justice involved several

‘primary goods’ that needed to be distributed (2001: 58–61). Among these goods were income and wealth and basic freedoms – such as freedom of thought and consciousness, freedom of movement, and equality of opportunity.

However, Rawls’ theory drew considerable critique, stressing that primary goods were hypothetically a-historic, concentrating on self-liberty, and thereby overlooking community as constitutive of one’s self-conscience (Sandel, 1982; Williams, 2006). These shortcomings encouraged the abandonment of the distributive concept and, instead, concentrate on institutional contexts in which distributions occur. Young (1990), for example, stressed that justice is defined by concepts of oppression and domination, while Balibar (1997) defined ‘equality’ as non-discrimination and ‘freedom’ as non-constraint (non-repression). Oppression, domination, or discrimination seem to produce and reproduce themselves, thereby preserving unjust social relations (Dikec, 2001). Thus, in order to abolish injustice, one has to explore the social structures that create these relations (Young, 2006).

As will be discussed later in this article, the critical stance, which explores unjust forms of human relationships, gained much popularity in the spatial disciplines. However, one cannot escape the feeling that injustice, as defined for example by Young, is quite intuitive. Discrimination and oppression are rightly considered bad things. But it is still important, in relation to the theory of justice, to consider what is good or bad in them, because how would we know that people are suffering under oppression? How do we know that a person is being dominated or discriminated against? What should we evaluate here in respect to justice theory? These questions highlight the intricacies that the new paradigm of justice poses in regard to metrics. Here, we think that Sen’s theory (1992) can be productive.

Generally, Sen suggests a metric that distinguishes between ‘capabilities’ and ‘functionings’.

‘Capabilities’ refers to a person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another, while ‘functionings’ implies something a person already possesses (Sen, 1992). In this regard, capabilities ‘are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead’ (Sen, 1987: 36), thus reflecting a person’s liberty to materialize a combination of different functionings, to achieve well-being, and to perform desirable agency (Sen, 1987). Justice, under this perspective, will be measured, not hypothetically as Rawls suggested and not intuitively as Young or Balibar offered, but by understanding the effectiveness with which people properly actualize actions and activities in which they want to engage, having chosen them from a range of options (Abel and Frohlich, 2012).

The capability approach, however, may be thought to be misleading, as it can be understood to be individualistic (Stewart, 2005). In our opinion, though, this would be an incomplete interpretation, as capabilities emanate from the individual’s social environment, the physical environment in which he or she lives, and internal and external personal endowments, such as one’s mental and physical attributes (Anderson, 2010; Robeyns, 2005a). In this regard, economic exploitation, oppression, and discrimination are already taken into account in a possible conversion of capabilities to real functionings (Drèze and Sen, 2002).

### III Justice and space: Theorization and measurement

The issue of justice has been raised in the field of geography from time to time in regard to globalization, suburbanization, gentrification, and immigration processes. In this context, the question of fairness has spurred a growing literature that theorizes justice in space (Fainstein, 2010; Smith, 2000). This rise in interest, though, seems to skip the basic question of what we should seek in order to measure justice.

A review of non-spatial theories of justice (see above) reveals that they lack spatiality. Looking closely at liberal thinkers, such as Sen and Rawls, shows that their theories are 'invariably devoid of time and place' (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1997: 3). This is not surprising. Translating political philosophy into spatial principles of justice seems particularly challenging. To start, there is the question of scaling. Scale, in geography, is perceived as socially produced (Lefebvre, 1991), thus complicating normative selections needed to define a metric by which justice will be measured. Would a theory of justice in space encompass the city, the metropolis, the region, or the globe? Or could it function over other forms of scalar structuration, such as place-making, localization and network formation (Brenner, 2001)? Different scales shape and constitute different social practices (Howitt, 1998; Marston, 2000), and tend to produce different empirical results (Baden et al., 2007; Truelove, 1993). As such, each spatial scale has the potential to produce a different theorization of justice, as well as practical implications.

One should ask also what would be the theme of justice? Is it distributive in nature, or is it critical, emphasizing matters of discrimination, oppression, and political access? As was discussed earlier, these themes are not necessarily cognate. The question of perspective is third. Would a spatial theory of justice emphasize the outcomes of injustice processes or the process that leads to unjust situations? Or would it include both? Each of these perspectives might produce different theories. This complexity, however, seems to discourage social scientists – not to say geographers – from dealing with the issue of the metric of justice.

Contemplating justice in space, however, demonstrated different efforts of theorization and quantification. For example, Lucy (1981) and Truelove (1993) suggested some basic principles in order to measure spatial equity. Other scholars have focused on the meaning of justice

and produced three dominant streams of thought: the neo-Marxian, the critical, and the utopian. David Harvey (1973), for example, best represents the neo-Marxian. Unlike Rawls, Harvey emphasizes issues of production as structural dynamics that characterize the capitalist society and lead to unjust distribution of resources in space. Accordingly, leaving the production to market forces (as the liberal theory of Rawls presumably did) eventually produces an uneven spatial development. This inequality, associated with intrinsic features of the capitalist mode of production, leads to oppression as sources of injustice in space (Harvey, 1996a, 1996b).

Over time, critical geographers further developed Harvey's political economy by emphasizing the question of injustice, especially in the contemporary capitalist urban world. The notion of spatial justice, deliberated by Ed Soja (2008, 2010a, 2010b) and others (Dikec, 2001; Marcuse, 2010) is a noticeable example. The term 'spatial justice' refers to institutions, policies, discourse, and practices involved in formulating the organization of space, thus shaping human interactions that define (un)just geographies (Soja, 2010a, 2010b). From a critical perspective, the emphasis here is on the degree to which persons or communities suffer from different forms of systematic domination and oppression (e.g. Young, 1990). The notion of spatial justice is the antithesis of these systematic articulations of human suffering. Concretely unjust geographies are embedded within social arrangements that conceal the asymmetry of power relations in cultural, gender, race, and class cleavages. The outcome of such asymmetry relates to the forms of exclusion, subordination, and exploitation among and between individuals and groups (Soja, 2010a).

But as the theme of spatial justice is further elaborated, it seems to sidestep the question of the metric and whether it has been targeted to fight injustice. How? By making space a site of politics that is aimed at suppressing domination

and oppression resulting from relationships of uneven power (Dikec, 2001; Soja, 2010a).

Fighting injustice is noble. But what should we look for in trying to define the unjust? How should we define power in relation to justice and the process of spatialization? How do we know that persons or groups are dominated by power-spatial relationships? What is the meaning of domination or exploitation here? The questions of definition abound, but we do not really know the answers. Moreover, we cannot escape still another set of questions, those referring to allocation. What should be allocated in fighting injustice? Would it be resources, opportunities, happiness, or welfare? All these questions provoke tremendous debate within political philosophy, but they seem to be elegantly avoided in the latest theories that contemplate justice in space (Barnett, 2011; Olson and Sayer, 2009).

Marcuse (2010: 88), for example, suggested a path that could assist with this by defining two ‘cardinal forms of spatial injustice’: ‘involuntary confinement and unequal allocation of resources across space’. These forms can be articulated in spatial practices of segregated neighborhoods, the ghettoization of different minorities, derelict and inaccessible rural communities, and unemployment in areas of economic deprivation. But scrutinizing Marcuse’s suggestions reveals that it says very little on the question of metric. Although we can think of unequal allocation of resources (again, the question of what), what would a segregated situation mean to a particular person or group?<sup>4</sup> This ambiguity might be counterproductive. Does segregation confine a person’s life-chances, mental feeling, happiness, or self-confidence? Given the critical theories of space and justice, the answer would most likely be positive. However, this kind of possibility might not be sufficient here, as some normative outlooks may argue. For example, what one person might perceive as unjust exploitation another would deem as proper, if formulated under the liberties that people enjoy in democratic societies (as in

Robert Nozick’s [1974] entitlement theory). Moreover, if one would like to overcome undesired consequences of segregation, how would this endeavor look? For this, we will need to set a metric that defines well-being.

The third stream of thought seeks a just form of social-spatial relationship. This utopian writing is best represented by Susan Fainstein’s book, *The Just City* (2010), suggesting three indicators by which it could be identified: democracy, equity, and diversity. Like other spatial writings, Fainstein’s utopian stance connects with the tradition that was formed within the social sciences that avoids a normative definition of justice and its metrics. She does not totally clarify the meaning of her concepts for an individual’s actual life-chances, mental feeling, and so forth.

It seems then that spatial theories of justice lack normative thought, reflecting a historical divorce of the social sciences from moral philosophy (Sayer and Storper, 1997). The divorce, as Olson and Sayer noticed, is damaging for both sides, as it is

allowing the social sciences to become deskilled in understanding normativity, and philosophy to become overly abstracted from concrete social practices, presenting a generally individualistic analysis of the social good, ignoring the forms of social organization within which people act. This situation cries out for dialogue. (2009: 181)

The next sections try to address this challenge.

#### **IV Habitus, capital forms, and space**

A possible direction to rebind positive social science and normative political philosophy is to configure a metric that defines just/unjust outcomes. The present study uses principles of justice based on equality of liberties (i.e. capabilities or life-chances) to set a metric of justice in space. In this sense, Sen’s capabilities represent a broad concept of human well-being that

satisfies the demand of this metric. Nonetheless, this is only one part of the equation. A metric of justice that depicts only conditions of allegedly continuing injustice, without explaining the reasons for those conditions, would fail some of the normatives suggested, as most problems have a spatial aspect rooted in economic, social, or political arenas (Marcuse, 2009; Robeyns, 2005b; Soja, 2010b). Therefore, we need some descriptive, explanatory tools that depict the socio-spatial structures and personal characteristics that constrain one's choices and freedoms, whereas Pierre Bourdieu's theory could be used as a good solution, providing scientific depiction of the world (social and spatial).

Bourdieu's theory (1986b) is based on the class structure of liberal democracies, in which the production, accumulation, and transmission of economic, cultural, and social capital forms take place (Savage et al., 2005). *Economic capital* comprises wages and other forms of monetary assets, such as stocks or property (Becker and Woessmann, 2009). *Cultural capital* comprises not only educational qualifications and achievements but also tastes, preferences, and general 'know-how' and knowledge; it affects cognitive skills and the knowledge of normative codes through the socialization processes (Bourdieu, 1986b: 243–8). In this context, *social capital* is defined as the total extent and quality of social networks and connections that one uses to promote personal interests (Bourdieu, 1986b).

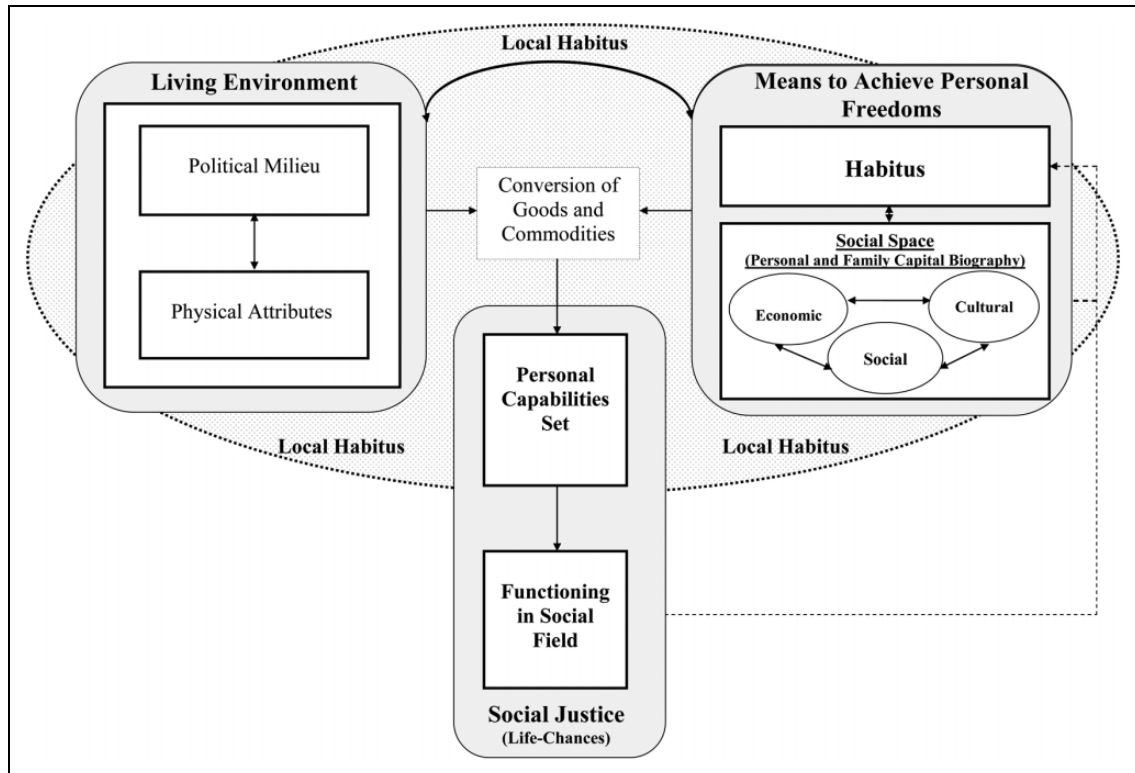
Bourdieu's theory implies that none of the three forms of capital alone can fully explain the reproduction of social inequalities. Rather, it takes all three forms.<sup>5</sup> The main argument here is that different combinations of capital reflect a social topography, or a social space, which is a subtle expression of class stratification (Bourdieu, 1985). Under Bourdieu's theorization, social space is a playground of violence, symbolic in its nature, a space of status groups characterized by different lifestyles and dispositions, producing a ring of continuous

divisions, classifications, and hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1989).

Within the social space, the effectiveness of different forms of capital emanates from the organization of the social world into fields (e.g. the economic field, the artistic field, the education field, and the housing field). All fields are internally structured in terms of (symbolic) power relationships, in which individuals and groups act in order to gain dominance and avoid subordination. The effectiveness of the application of the different forms of capital for different social benefits depends on contexts and people's abilities to 'play' their capital most effectively (i.e. applying symbolic capital). Every field, in this regard, has its own set of rules. Participating according to these rules assures the existing power relationships within the field (Bourdieu, 1986a).

The struggle for domination and privileges is joined when individuals bring to different fields sets of regulations (rules and techniques), which Bourdieu terms 'habitus'. This intangible concept is observable only through individual practices and practically assimilated in an individual from the day of birth. Through repeated practice, it becomes that person's conscious base of existence, representing his or her beliefs, values, tastes, and predispositions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986a). Although habitus is an individualistic concept, people who share common life experiences tend to have a similar habitus and therefore are expected to share a similar social status, belong to similar communities in terms of social stratification, and potentially have equal chances of gaining social positions (Abel and Frohlich, 2012; Bourdieu, 2004; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Bourdieu's analysis defines class structures that might erode personal liberties (Abel and Frohlich, 2012; Bowman, 2010; Hart, 2013) and, at the same time, departs from an exclusively distributional-liberal approach. It manifests a critical analysis that depicts various forms of potential injustices, relating to forms



**Figure 1.** Social justice as a function of living environments, habitus, and capital forms.

of domination and oppression that reproduce unequal opportunity structures (Bowman, 2010; Hart, 2013). It is not surprising that Bourdieu's suggestions were converted to an expression of moral criticism in reference to exploitation and the denial of an adequate material standard of living for many marginalized groups (Fraser, 1997).<sup>6</sup>

For our purposes, the significance of Bourdieu's work is that it allows analyzing inequality that is directly relevant to socio-spatial agencies and structures, manifesting potential (liberal) injustices. This idea is further elaborated in the next section. Although Bourdieu did not refer directly to spatial analysis (Cresswell, 2002; Painter, 2000), his theory enables us to analyze space from a historical viewpoint rather than providing a synchronic 'present tense' perspective, as many social studies subjects (e.g. segregation and exclusion) usually do (Marom, 2014).<sup>7</sup>

## V Conceptual framework for the measurement of justice in space

Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework entwining the normative sense of justice and the geographical-sociological explanation of inequality in a spatial context. It connects the scientific depiction of contemporary world with a normative *ought to be*, which is analogous to the distinction between the *form* of justice (or injustice) and the *socio-spatial* dynamics that cause it.

### I Living environments, habitus, and capital resources

An initial step to detect the constitution of social justice in space is to explore the spatial dynamics that produce spaces of human activities. In a conceptual framework, space derives

from broader processes that play a major role in the creation of the conditions of justice and in reproducing them. The production is relational in its nature, as it depicts structure-agency tensions existing within different spatial scales. In this Bourdieuan logic, every element in the framework receives its complete definition, only through its relation with the whole of elements (Schinkel and Tacq, 2004).

Within the suggested framework, a person's life-chances seem to be determined by two socio-spatial structures, as shown in Figure 1: one is the living environment; the other is the basic means through which individuals form their personal liberties. The latter are constituted from a person's bundles of capital (i.e. social space) and their internalization (habitus). Spatiality is produced in the interaction between these two structures (defined by different spatial scales).

The structure of the living environment connotes the ongoing contemplation of space versus place (Agnew, 2011; Saar and Palang, 2009). The living environment expresses both. It represents space's objective physical location and its natural qualities (i.e. space). At the same time, it also represents the place's multi-layered subjective dimensions of everyday life (i.e. place), expressed in varying spatial scales of land uses, interaction between people and groups, and political practices and representations.

The living environment feeds and at the same time is being fed by the second structural concept, which affects the creation of political organizations and the physical attributes of the natural and the built environment. The interaction between these conceptual structures creates power relationships that induce and shape an individual's liberties (i.e. capabilities), which is the metric by which justice could be evaluated under the suggested framework.

Capital forms (i.e. social space) have spatial substance, as they express human interactions that exist in a certain place and time. Their aim

is to produce advantages in a series of fields of life that could be transferred to other fields in a cumulative and reinforcing process (Savage et al., 2005). In order to shape one's personal choices – a topic to be deliberated later – the individual has to actively use capital forms. For instance, money (economic capital) is 'spent' on relevant spatial behaviors, such as attending a cultural activity or choosing a housing unit in a particular neighborhood. Conventionally, these personal activities would seem to be just a matter of taste and life style (see Frenkel et al., 2013); in the Bourdieuan perspective, however, it signifies a set of strategies aimed at establishing and maintaining social divisions, classification, and distinction (Savage, 2010; Marom, 2014). The visibility of these strategies eventually becomes physical as it organizes space into communities (i.e. spaces and places depending on scale).<sup>8</sup> In order to exemplify this organizing pattern, one can assume a polarized social space in which individuals and groups at the dominating pole (those who enjoy a wealth of economic, social, and cultural capital) exclude (and stigmatize) individuals and groups located at the opposite pole of the social space.<sup>9</sup> This process, which is self-reinforcing, is expressed at two levels of conceptual analysis: macro and micro levels of scaling.

The *macro perspective* relates to the formation of different human clusters at different spatial scales, such as of the national scale (e.g. core and periphery), the regional (e.g. cities and suburbs), the metropolitan (e.g. core and concentric rings), the urban (e.g. neighborhoods), and even within particular neighborhoods (gentrified and renovated versus old and deteriorated buildings).<sup>10</sup> Under the macro perspective human clusters are all places of reference, being formed and changed by human agency that experiences space, thus giving the place's familiarity and social meaning, as a result of political or economic processes (Agnew, 2011; Saar and Palang, 2009; Sack, 1997). Under agency, people gather into different spatial



configurations as they realize their capital compound and their habitus. Those located at the dominant pole of the social space can use their economic, cultural, and social forms of capital in order to constitute communities that are spatially distinct (Savage, 2010). Such an act places them in a shared physical space with those closer to them in a given social space, all of whom physically distance themselves from those further apart socially (Bridge, 2006; Marom, 2014; Podmore, 1998).

However, places are not fixed. They are dynamic articulations of subjective experiences (Massey, 1994). The living environment is an arena of struggle, directed both to strengthen and intensify or to challenge it (depending on the individual's location at the polarized continuum of the social space). Clusters (i.e. spaces and places, depending on scale), in that manner, manifest political agendas that conceal power relationships of capital compounds that can reinforce divisions of class and denial. The micro perspective relates to this dynamic.

The *micro perspective* (i.e. the place habitus, see discussions below) reflects the human and social relationships that are formed within the clusters of the macro level. The content of a cluster depends on whether it comprises dominated or dominant groups. The first group includes persons who do not benefit from the liberty to choose their living conditions, as in the case of urban ghettos or any other impoverished region or neighborhood. The second group is composed of those who enjoy the liberty to choose their community in order to further secure their domination. Noticeable examples of the latter are gated urban communities, gentrified city sections, exclusive urban neighborhoods, and distinctive suburbs.

The macro and micro dynamics convert spaces into places of identity attachment and struggle, which determine patterns of privilege and denial in regard to a person's liberties. The next sub-sections explore these dynamics.

## 2 Personal habitus and local habitus

The extent and quality of local interactions that are spatially defined are a function, among others, of the formation of one's personal habitus and the degree to which individuals and their families manipulate their capital forms in order to achieve advantages within particular social fields. In that sense, a given community (whether it is national, regional, metropolitan, or even a neighborhood) acts as a laboratory in which the individual accumulates capital while internalizing it, affecting his or her consciousness of being and doing. That is his or her habitus. Given this approach, a place would be a manifestation of its inhabitants' cognitive perception of their existence. In this regard, the literature implies that places might carry their own habitus, and that place habitus exists within different spatial scales (Easthope, 2004; Hillier and Rooksby, 2002; Pain, 2008; Webber, 2007).

In the suggested theoretical elaboration here, the place habitus is reflected through the political milieu of the built environment, expressing the values of a given community in a specific space and, at the same time, manifesting a cognitive distinction from surrounding spaces. In that way, a place habitus is a manifestation of a space that acts as an incubator for class reproduction, as cultural, economic, and social forms of capital are accumulated within different socio-spatial levels: buildings, streets, neighborhoods, cities, metropolises, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

A place's habitus reflects the communal spirit (however defined: ethnicity, class, gender, and so forth), reflected in its residents' shared dispositions and social practices, which are a function of occupational membership and cultural identity (Easthope, 2004; Hillier and Rooksby, 2002; Pain, 2008). Habitus, then, is a classifying system of functional distinctions rooted within aesthetic values of 'us and them' that enable the creation of perceptual boundaries between groups and their respective habitus. It creates politics of exclusion and place

attachment, determining who belongs to a given place and who does not (Malone, 1999; Manzo, 2003).

In a bipolar social space that carries the dominating and the dominated social groups, different spatial configurations can be determined to reflect diverse compounds of capital forms and place habitus. Each configuration along the continuum of the social space is characterized by a particular degree of spatial accessibility, segregation, integration, and material affluence (this continuum contains different possible spatial scales, including areal ones like the urban, the metropolitan, or the regional). As the continuum approaches the dominating pole, the place habitus will increasingly articulate distinctive socio-spatial patterns and exhibit increasing degrees of self-exclusion. At the other end, approaching the dominated pole will produce growing degrees of subordination and spatial differentiation.

### *3 Capital forms, socialization, and local political milieu*

Economic wealth, knowledge, skills, and social relationships are the outcomes of an individual's life-long socialization (Abel and Frohlich, 2012; Swartz, 1997). The process of spatialization is deeply affected by each person's socialization characteristics. Spatial proximity is important in this creation, as it assists in developing a reciprocal social network of mutual dividends (Holt, 2008; Roscigno et al., 2006). The living environment, as a physical-material-perceptual entity, acts as a platform for enhancing a person's social capital by creating social networks and developing trust and reciprocity. The living environment provides the individual with a sense of belonging and place attachment (Bebbington, 1999; Roscigno et al., 2006; Saar and Palang, 2009; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). The place's living conditions characterizing a given locus (over different spatial scales) – whether physically, socially, economically, or

culturally – forge a community whose members share both a similar life experience and a similar understanding of their position in the social space (Easthope, 2004). Given this evolution, local geographic networks bear an abundance of more intimate ties, as they require their members to share similar values, communication styles, behavioral skills, and cognitive understanding of their being and doing (Bridge, 2006; Carpenter, 2013; Riger and Lavrakas, 1981).

As such, the policy that relates to the allocation of local resources depends on the relative location of a given community within the continuum of the social space. A place's investment policy expresses the political atmosphere of its community (or its local habitus). Its formation is, among others things, a function of the inhabitants' expectations regarding their living environment (Fischel, 2001; Ford, 1994, 1999). The more homogeneous a given community and the greater its members' affinity to a particular dominating pole of the social space, the easier it is to execute a policy that reflects people's ambitions and aspirations. A community whose constitution mainly comprises such inhabitants will strive to create a political milieu that will generate new and additional capital resources or, alternatively, will preserve and cultivate those resources that already exist.

### *4 Power and the emergence of physical space*

Deploying different forms of capital creates and shapes the characteristics of the material landscape. Tastes and preferences have a critical role in this creation as symbolic capital being activated (Watt, 2009; Wynne and O'Connor, 1998). Symbolic capital, the forth form of capital, which is economic, social, or cultural capital when it is known and recognized, creates symbolic relations of power that tend to reproduce and to reinforce the structure of social space (Bourdieu, 1989). Those who accumulate

greater amounts of symbolic capital gain a social power that enables monopolization of ways of seeing and classifying objects according to their criteria of (good) taste (Bridge, 2006; Podmore, 1998). It enables them, for example, to pronounce symbolic domination by activating economic capital to objectify their cultural capital (such as knowledge and skills), thus securing their spatial distinction (Bridge, 2006; Podmore, 1998).<sup>12</sup> In this way, both cultural and economic capital are manifested in physical attributes of a living environment, whether physical infrastructures, the natural richness of a place, or even its architectural design (Freidmann, 2002; Kitson et al., 2004).

The built environment affects human actions, reactions, and interpretations, as well as personal and collective symbolic memories (Bourdieu, 1977). As such, the physical attributes of the environment facilitate access, both by the individual and by his/her peer group, to opportunities and services in space. Urban design, social capital (Semenza and March, 2009), and health (Altschuler et al., 2004) are all involved in creating spaces in which there is trust and cooperation, thus contributing to the knitting of local networks, which eventually forge the formation of a collective local habitus.

To sum up, the production of space, by means of the macro and micro spatial mechanisms depicted above, creates what may be seen as bridges that facilitate or fences that affect a person's opportunities, either by enabling individuals and groups to be self-distinct or by excluding others from being part of the community. Bridges and fences create distinct communities and places (living environments of different spatial scales, nationally, regionally, and locally) from each side of the continuum: affluent communities, on the one hand, and excluded areas characterized by extreme concentrations of poverty, on the other hand. Each living environment on the continuum produces a different habitus for its members, to be equipped with different dosage of symbolic

domination within social fields so as to ensure control over it or subordination and disadvantage within it.

The spatial arrangement of locations at the macro level masks, then, the real nature of social relations that produce the micro level of scaling. The symbolic struggles that characterize the social space over the physical material space (i.e. space and place) organize the struggles for different resources, whether they are spatial, political, or social. Symbolic capital produces symbolic relations of power that tend to be reproduced and reinforced under the structure of the social space (Bourdieu, 1989). Social relations act as a manifestation of 'relational power', forcing the exclusion of unwanted populations (Lefebvre, 1991; Marom, 2014; Young, 2000) and the coalescence of social groups that benefit from cultural, economic, and social affinities. The ultimate outcome is to deny or enhance people's choices.

### *5 Life chances, capabilities, and personal functionings*

The second dimension of the proposed framework explores the normative *ought-to-be* aspect in regard to accessing life chances in different fields. Justice is established from relationships among people and from the way spatial patterns of living (which manifest these relations) are placed in the service of what might be conceived as just or unjust arrangements (Williamson, 2010). The metric to which justice can be measured under these arrangements is assessing personal capabilities and, eventually, functionings, as they may define whether a socio-spatial living pattern is just or unjust.

With the capability approach, the idea of fairness or justice does not apply to the availability of resources alone (i.e. forms of capital), whether they relate to qualities or quantities (i.e. symbolic domination). Nor does it apply to the realized doings and beings on the agency side (i.e. functionings). Rather, justice relates to

the range of options for agency – that is, capabilities (Abel and Frohlich, 2012). This range of options, and one's ability to choose and actualize them, creates conditions for relevant agency, from which, in turn, well-being, happiness, and health may result (Sen, 1993). Therefore, enhancing personal capabilities aims at improving desirable functionings in order to facilitate obtaining respected social positions. In this sense, 'capabilities' constitute a person's opportunity set or life-chances (as discussed above in Section 2). Thus, according to this conceptual framework, justice in democracies ensues from a citizenry that claims a sufficient set of capabilities to function as equals in society (Anderson, 2010).

But what if space's different articulations (i.e. social space and the living environment) raise major barriers against achieving better social positions or any other desirable functionings? Or, on the contrary, what if space acts as a facilitator in significantly enhancing the ability to realize personal conceptions of well-being and the good life?<sup>13</sup> Under the conceptual framework suggested, any individual's pack of capabilities<sup>14</sup> is influenced by the amount of different forms of capital available to him or her. This amount is reflected in the person's habitus, creating a certain way of thinking and being (Abel and Frohlich, 2012; Cresswell, 2002; Hart, 2013). For example, habitus, as Cresswell (2002) noted, could lead to the internalization of the social order that reproduces that social order. As discussed above (Section IV), habitus, under such a theoretical conception, becomes the person's conscious base of existence in such a way that people would define themselves just as the established order defines them (being dominating or dominated at a certain social field). This internalization, as will be further discussed, forges a person's capabilities.

The production of space, as depicted above, affects the social fields in which the individual dominates or is dominated. Fields of education,

employment, housing, and real estate are noticeable examples (Bebbington, 1999; Bridge, 2006; Hart, 2013). Being dominated within such social fields may result in an unconscious acceptance of domination, thus oppressing personal aspirations and shaping individual preferences, or what people find as appropriate for which to aspire (Bourdieu, 1998; Hart, 2013; Swartz, 1997). Being dominated concedes larger ambitions and the ability to flourish beyond a relative position in a given social field (Abel and Frohlich, 2012; Bourdieu, 1998). Being dominated, as such, within a particular social field pronounces a priori a constrained liberties pack, which reinforces deprivation and social classification (Bowman, 2010; Sayer, 2011). Thus, taking as an example the point of view of many of the worst-off, it is understandable why, as Bourdieu observed (1986a: 471), they would 'refuse what they are refused' ('that's not for the likes of us'). Pursuing upgraded positions and functionings from the state of inferiority would then very challengeable.

Domination, then, reinforces existing inequalities related to social classification of different traditional divisions (e.g. ethnicity and sexuality). The dynamics of gender in a patriarchal society, or belonging to a minority group, may be an example of relational dynamics in which social interaction takes places in the context of power structures governing relevant social fields (e.g. education, employment and housing) in particular living environments (e.g. cities, suburbs, gentrified neighborhoods). Belonging to a patriarchal community or to a racist society, may make it difficult for some individuals to accumulate a critical mass of cultural capital (for instance through reduced access to education, especially at elite universities which open doors to financial success). As a consequence, racism and patriarchal social structures can harm the ability of people in certain groups to achieve economic capital as well as social networking, preventing them from

realizing their potential and leading to further oppression and discrimination.<sup>15</sup> In the theoretical framework suggested, local habitus would be a direct reflection of this cross-social dynamic.

Segregated communities in ghettos, impoverished neighborhoods, and national peripheral regions all contain populations that, to a greater or lesser extent, probably did not consciously choose to live there. However, their possibilities to relocate are probably diminished, as their liberties are constrained. On the other side of the continuum, people who have ample capital forms would probably benefit (and would themselves expect to benefit) from symbolic domination that produces a larger range of liberties in order to perform in different social fields. They may actively use their relative position in the social space to gain advantages, such as enjoying a better degree of liberties, to choose their own community and their own social networks and eventually be able to control their job opportunities, educational qualifications, and the school performance of their children.

Obviously, inter-generational effects are expected to evolve within each of the possible locations along the continuum. In this regard, capital, field, and habitus – acting together – effectively permit social inequalities to endure over time (Swartz, 1997). Constrained and denied liberties shape the context in which the next generation is raised. Children inherit understandings of what it means to occupy a particular social space, thereby legitimizing the same divisions as those marking their parents' capabilities and, hence, their functionings, as well (Sayer, 2011; Skeggs, 1997).

In the iterative process depicted in Figure 1, it is obvious that better exposure to life-chances opens more opportunities to benefit from the social order that capitalism produces at a democratic-liberal society, thereby dialectically shaping habitus and a person's symbolic capital (i.e. mix and volume of different forms of

capital). This obviously raises a question of cause and effect: Does the possession of various forms of capital (and, hence, personal and local habitus) drive the spatial configuration? Or does a particular spatial location lead to the acquisition or creation of various forms of capital (and, hence, habitus)? There is no clear-cut answer here, as it seems to be an iterative process, but without a defined starting point. However, being able to choose a (distinct) community would be probably difficult without gaining a sufficient amount of symbolic capital.

## VI Conclusions

The current research into social justice in space is acknowledged to lack a comprehensive notion of the metric of justice that could be used to explore the actual social outcomes of diverse spatial phenomena. The conceptual framework developed in this article introduces an integrated analytical framework for identifying a metric by which social justice with different spatial scales could be investigated. The proposed framework suggests converting the liberal notion of justice to a metric subject that can be implemented in future empirical examinations within the present context of liberal (capitalist) democratic countries. The liberal approach facilitates in this regard the illustration of how a 'metric' that can be used to reflect different, interconnected socio-spatial scales and their structuration, could be produced within contemporary capitalism regimes and their injustices.

The metric of justice in the current study is defined by a person's capabilities (Sen, 1992). As this notion of freedoms arises from the conditions people face, the theory here elaborates explanatory tools that depict socio-spatial structures and personal characteristics (i.e. living environment, habitus, and capital forms) that may impair equality of capabilities (i.e. social justice).<sup>16</sup> Under the propositions brought here, it is as though the forms of justice (or injustice)

and the process that sets (and normatively defines) them are combined. Embracing the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Amartya Sen fully articulates this intention. This combination describes how individual, embodied identities are shaped within a variety of intersecting spatial scales, thereby expressing broader social, economic, political, and cultural processes. As such, the framework connotes contemporary perspectives on justice within the established scholarship of human geography. By using a critical stance about space, we are bridging it to a liberal perspective on human well-being, exploring the dyadic inter-relationships and constructive tensions.

The framework developed in this article is assembled from a theory-building endeavor that integrates different disciplines and schools of thoughts. Admittedly, it requires the construction of logical theoretical formulations from which hypotheses may be derived. To take the issue of capital forms as an example, what is their role in reducing avoidable human suffering? Could its accumulation be used as a policy objective to obtain social justice? These are not simple questions to answer. Taking cultural capital as an example implies that maximizing cultural capital among the worst-off in the society might be a preferable policy goal to reduce inequality, except that the understanding and deciphering of what is considered to be more or less valuable cultural capital are traditionally controlled or dominated by elites. Does this mean, then, that everybody (i.e. from the fortunate to the worst-off) should have equal access to the forms of 'valuable' cultural capital?

Basically, Bourdieu's thought did not aim for everyone's gaining the possibility of accessing 'valuable' cultural capital or any other form of capital. Rather, his objective was to explore how different forms of capital facilitate the reproduction of social class. And this is precisely the objective to which his theory has been elaborated here: to expose the interconnections of different forms of capital and a person's

capabilities, emphasizing that flourishing and suffering are relational – that is, to expose how one person's flourishing results from his/her relationship with others within a given space. The question of what should be done in order to deal with the consequences of these relationships is a totally different issue, rooted deeply in normative judgments (such as the life-chances discussion in the conceptual framework) and eventually articulated in practical policies. However, the question of what would be the right policy to achieve justice is an issue that goes beyond the scope of this article.

Clearly the framework suggested here does not fully capture the complex social milieu in which space exists. However, as Jabareen (2009) noted, any conceptual framework has its own advantages, even though its flexibility, capacity for modification, and emphasis on understanding can be criticized and elaborated. Therefore, further discussion is welcome in the interest of fostering robust debate on the role of space, capital forms, and habitus in life-chances and inequalities.

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### **Notes**

1. Despite the differences between the social sciences and philosophy, the first discipline seems to be inherently 'valued', as critique is implicit in the scientific description of social life. Sayer (2011), for example, claims that values and critique are consistently used to describe 'facts' in the social sciences and in what philosophers call 'thick ethical concepts'.
2. Deliberation regarding the meaning of justice at the global scale does not fall within the scope of this

- article and, therefore, is not discussed as part of the conceptual framework suggested.
3. Embracing an individual perspective could provoke opposition, as structural and institutional explanations often suggested in geography, to explore social maladies. These suggestions carry their own shortcomings, as is discussed further.
  4. The theme of segregation is raised within the context of a phenomenon that often is conceived as unjust. Nevertheless, determining its fairness requires a normative selection, while defining metrics.
  5. Bourdieu adds a fourth form of capital, symbolic capital, 'which is the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate' (Bourdieu, 1989: 17). Symbolic capital is a credit. It is 'the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition' (Bourdieu, 1989: 23).
  6. Mention should be made that Bourdieu's theory has been criticized over the past few decades for being overly abstract, complex, and self-contradictory of its own concepts (e.g. Archer, 2007; Holt, 2008; King, 2000). Discussion of this criticism goes beyond the objectives of the present article.
  7. Bourdieu's theorization finds an echo in contemporary spatial studies. Noticeable examples are Açikalin (2011), Savage (2010), Watt (2009), Webber (2007), Bridge (2006), Roscigno et al. (2006), and Gatrell et al. (2004).
  8. The interplay between the spatial and the social is intriguingly complex here, as there are diverse combinations with different meanings to be assembled from the friction of an embraced spatial perspective and the constitution of a given social field. Taking the perspective of space, as an example, one can speak on the theme of uneven development between core and periphery, relating to the economic field or embracing the theme of scale, when relating to struggles against local environmental hazards, as it has been theorized under the field of global environment protection. Furthermore, the perspective of place could be taught in relation to the social effect of a communal church, being contemplated under the religious field.
  9. The paradigm of the polarized social space serves here as a platform for discussions and exemplification. Basically, a social space is a continuum that can provide different compounds of capital and mixtures between the two poles.
  10. The theorization in regard to human clusters and scale here is mostly described in areal terms, but only for the convenience of the argument. This theorization could be further developed to other multiple concepts of scale in which socio-spatial practices are enclosed, as, for example Brenner (2001) suggested in regard to networks, connectivity and different concepts of places.
  11. Or other scalar structuration processes, as, for example Brenner (2001) or Marston (2000) suggested.
  12. Gentrification, as an illustrative example, signifies the trade-off by elite groups in the urban fabric of developed countries between objectified aspects of cultural capital (the architectural aesthetic of the built fabric) and securing their class distinction (Bridge, 2006; Marom, 2014).
  13. As a liberal framework, individuals may hold, without any threat of social or institutional sanctioning, various conceptions of desirable functionings, like different ideas of the good life.
  14. That is, the real opportunities or liberties a person has in regard to the life he or she may lead in order to achieve well-being and to perform desirable agency.
  15. The relational dynamic depicted in the specific examples not only emphasizes that individuals are denied their liberties, but that the responsibility for discrimination and fighting for its abolishment lies on the same institutions and social structures that formed it.
  16. The operationalization of capabilities goes beyond the scope of the current article, as it requires a distinct discussion that sets exactly what would define a person's liberties, as Nussbaum does, for example, in her seminal book (2006: 76–8), or as is being done in empirical endeavors, such as those of Krishnakumar and Ballon (2008), Anand et al. (2005), and the United Nations (UNDP, 1990–2008).

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