

DIALECTIC OF SOCIAL CHANGE: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF PIOTR SZTOMPKA'S THOUGHT IN THE DYNAMICS OF MODERN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Social change is the subject of study of sociology that studies how society transforms from one state to another. This article discusses in detail Piotr Sztompka's thoughts on the sociology of social change. The main focus includes the deconstruction of the concept of change, the debate between evolution and revolution, the role of human agency through social movements, and the impact of globalization on the structure of society.

Through the literature study method, the results of the research are: (1) this article aims to explain Sztompka's synthesis of the dialectical relationship between structural factors and the creative actions of agencies in encouraging historical change; (2) Identify the importance of social becoming theory in understanding the transition of contemporary society from the isolation phase to the era of globalization and cultural hybridity. The results of the paper conclude that contemporary social change is the result of the complex interaction between structural factors and human creative actions (agencies) that give birth to history. The novelty of this article is that it presents a reconstruction of Sztompka's thought integrated with the phenomenon of new digital social movements, as well as offering an alternative point of view that bridges structural determinism and agency voluntarism in the context of postmodern society.

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INTRODUCTION

Society never really stops. As classical to contemporary sociologists have expressed, change is the only constant thing in social life. However, understanding how and why those changes occur requires a strong theoretical framework. Piotr Sztopka, in his work "The Sociology of Social Change", tries to bridge various major theories ranging from classical evolutionism to modern agency theory to provide a complete understanding. The background to writing this article is based on the need to remap Sztopka's ideas in the midst of an increasingly rapidly changing world. From a sociological point of view, change is not just a change of time, but a shift in social structures, behavioral patterns, and value systems. This article will explore how Sztopka views "social becoming" as a process in which the individual is not only the object of change, but also the active subject that shapes history.

In the increasingly complex modern era, the dynamics of social change no longer move in a slow linear pattern, but occur exponentially. This complexity often fails to be fully explained by conventional sociological theories that tend to get caught up in extreme dichotomy: whether society changes due to the impulse of deterministic macro structures, or purely due to the free will of individuals (agencies). This theoretical failure triggers an academic urgency to revisit Piotr Sztopka's thought. As a prominent Polish sociologist, Sztopka succeeded in formulating a paradigmatic synthesis that saw social change not as a static product, but as a fluid and continuous macro-micro process. His central idea of social becoming asserts that social reality is not a "being" entity, but something that is always "becoming" through the hard work and meaningful actions of social actors that are constrained and made possible by the structures that surround it.

The relevance of Sztopka's thinking becomes even more significant when it is linked to contemporary issues, such as digital transformation, climate change, and global crises. When communication technology disrupts traditional institutions, we

see how collective agency through digital spaces is able to collapse political and economic hegemony in a matter of days. On the contrary, we also witness how the structure of global algorithms is able to discipline and direct human behavior massively. This ambivalent phenomenon requires a sharp analytical knife, which does not only look at changes from one side of the coin. Through an exploration of Sztompka's thinking on the dialectic of evolution-revolution, the space-time dimension, and the significance of social movements, this article intends to fill the void in the literature of historical sociology in Indonesia that often detaches the historical context from the analysis of structural changes.

In addition, it should be noted that in the academic tradition of sociology in Indonesia, discussions about social change are often dominated by Western-biased classical modernization perspectives or mechanistic theories of dependence. Sztompka's thinking offers a third, more emancipatory alternative. By placing "human actions that give birth to history" as the main locomotive, Sztompka provides space for post-colonial societies to see themselves not as passive victims of globalization, but as agencies with bargaining power and cultural hybridity capabilities. Therefore, this reconstruction of thought is expected to provide a solid epistemological foundation for social researchers and historians in dissecting the direction of change in modern Indonesian society in the midst of an increasingly unstoppable wave of globalization.

Furthermore, the meaning of history in the study of the sociology of social change in Indonesia is often trapped in a descriptive-chronological narrative without an adequate sociological analysis knife. Through Sztompka's macro-micro synthesis, the historical changes of the nation ranging from the colonial period, independence, the New Order era, to the wave of Reform can be re-read not as a linear destiny, but as a series of contestations of space and time in which civil society agencies negotiate against the structural shackles of power. The sociology of social change essentially requires us to dismantle the myth of pseudo-social stability. The context of the

transition of agrarian society to an industrial-digital society in Indonesia gave birth to various social anomalies and cultural clashes. The presence of this reconstruction of Sztompka's thought serves as a theoretical guide for local sociologists and historians to be able to identify the essence of "changes in the system" versus "changes in the system itself" in the modern cultural landscape of the archipelago.

This theoretical urgency leads us to a deep understanding that the historical movement of Indonesian civilization has always been colored by the sociological tension between the dominance of the macro system and the micro-scale cultural resistance. Since the time of colonialism, agrarian regulation and forced labor forced labor have acted as extraordinarily hegemonic macro suppression apparatus. However, history records the emergence of hundreds of micro-scale local peasant revolts, messianicism, and religious movements that show the explosion of human creative agency. Sztompka argues that history is never shaped by passive systems, but rather by individuals who manifest their collective consciousness in the form of active resistance. Therefore, by tracing this dialectic of social change, this study seeks to dissect the local sociopolitical reality with a solid conceptual foundation of historical sociology, distancing academic analysis from the danger of sociological simplification.

In the dynamic landscape of postmodern society, social acceleration also triggers a shift in the way individuals perceive their existence in public spaces. The presence of a new generation of internet instantly changes information consumption patterns, which in turn dictates the interaction patterns of families, communities, and state institutions. If classical sociology views social change as requiring a cultural incubation period that takes decades, Sztompka offers a more dynamic paradigm through the involvement of the reflexive capacities of social actors. Modern humans are not just passively adapting to technological disruptions, but actively reinterpreting and recreating new norms that suit their existential needs. This study specifically tries

to decipher the dimension of human reflexivity in order to find the originality of modern social movements in the midst of an uncertain vortex of global currents.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Sztompka divides social change theory into several mainstream that form the foundation of this article:

The Classical Paradigm and Neo-Evolutionism

The theory of evolution sees societies evolving like biological organisms from simple forms to more complex forms. Classical figures such as Auguste Comte with his three-stage laws (theological, metaphysical, and positivistic), Herbert Spencer with his organic analogy as well as super-organic evolution, and Emile Durkheim with the division of social labor from mechanical to organic solidarity, viewed change as an inevitable linear path to modernity. In Comte's view, human cognitive development is the main driver of social institutions, while Spencer believes in the existence of a sociological natural selection that eliminates the inefficient structure of society.

However, Sztompka provides a critical note that although societies tend to move towards more complex differentiation of functions, this process is not always linear or always progressive. There are times when society experiences regression, structural impasse, or even a total decline of civilization due to ecological crises and internal conflicts. Critics of neo-evolutionism then tried to remedy this deterministic weakness by introducing the concept of multilinear evolution. Figures such as Julian Steward and Leslie White argue that each society has its own path to transformation based on technological adaptation and the local environment, so there is no historical obligation for non-Western cultures to absolutely duplicate all stages of the industrialization development of Western civilization.

Historical Cycle

In contrast to the evolutionary paradigm that sees development moving forward endlessly, the theory of historical cycles views change as the cycle of birth, growth, maturation, and destruction of a civilizational order. Legendary figures such as Oswald Spengler in his work *The Decline of the West* describe civilization as an organism that must experience a spring of emergence until the winter of extinction. Arnold Toynbee perfected it through the thesis of challenge and response, which states that the sustainability of a civilization depends entirely on the ability of the creative elite to respond to the challenges of the times, both natural and external social challenges.

Meanwhile, Pitirim Sorokin focuses his cyclical analysis on the fluctuations of macrocultural systems, which move back and forth between ideational culture (based on spirituality, metaphysics, and transcendental beliefs) and sensory culture (based on materialism, empiricism, and physical satisfaction). Szotompa uses this combination of perspectives to remind modern sociologists that every social system has limits of internal growth and potential crises that are periodic. Understanding the cycle patterns helps sociologists recognize the symptoms of declining public morality, institutional weathering, and cultural anomie not as momentary anomalies, but as a natural part of the ever-repeating rhythm of macro society history on cosmic time scales.

Teori Agensi (The Theory of Social Becoming)

This is the most significant and revolutionary contribution of Piotr Szotompa in the discourse of contemporary sociology. The theory of social becoming was born as a sharp critique of the impasse of the conventional sociological paradigm that is trapped in the extreme separation between the free individual (voluntarism) and the binding social structure (structural determinism). Szotompa rejects the view that society is a ready-made, frozen static product. For him, social reality is in a state of

absurd creation; Society is shaped by human operational actions, but at the same time, human creative actions are also always limited, directed, and made possible by the social structures, traditions, and material facilities available.

It is this dialectical, reciprocal, and interactive relationship between macro structures and micro-agencies that is the main locomotive driving the wheels of historical change. Sztompka conceptualizes society not as an object, but as a field of very dynamic activity (field of social becoming). In this field of activity, social actors do not act in a vacuum, but rather take advantage of their cognitive reflexivity, cultural capital, and power capacity to reproduce the old order or vice versa, carry out radical engineering to transform these structures for the sake of the sustainability of the new civilization. Through this agency theory, the focus of sociology shifts from a static analysis of social order to a dynamic analysis of the fluidity of the construction of human history.

METHOD

This article uses a literature review method with a qualitative-descriptive approach that focuses on the interpretation of sociological texts. This approach is carried out by collecting, selecting, analyzing in depth, and synthesizing scientific documents and theoretical literature relevant to the sociological thought of Piotr Sztompka. Referring to the conceptual view of Snyder (2019), the literature study method is not just a theoretical summary, but a very effective research methodology used to map the conceptual development of a theory, integrate various scattered scientific views, and identify research gaps from macro themes that have been discussed by previous researchers.

The author analyzes Sztompka's main works, especially his canonical text entitled *The Sociology of Social Change* (1993) as well as his supporting journal articles such as *Society in Action: The Theory of Social Becoming* (2008). These

primary documents are then confronted and critically dialogued with the thoughts of other contemporary sociologists, such as Anthony Giddens through structuring theory, Margaret Archer through the morphogenesis approach of critical realism, and Manuel Castells regarding network societies. The data collection stage was carried out through searching an authoritative database of international and national academic journals (such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Sinta) using targeted keywords. The analysis process uses hermeneutical content analysis techniques to dissect how ideas about agency, structure, evolution, revolution, and globalization are intertwined in building a complete historical sociological argument, so that the results of the synthesis are able to provide a fresh new conceptual offer for the study of contemporary sociology in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Basic Concepts and Historical Transformations

Sztompka asserts that social change must be distinctly distinguished into two distinct epistemological levels: (1) Changes in the system, i.e. varied changes that occur internally without undermining or altering the basic foundations of an established social structure, such as the change of ministerial ranks, modifications of administrative regulations, or the succession of leadership in a formal organization; (2) The change of the system itself, that is, the process of radical and comprehensive transformation that changes the basic nature, essential characteristics, and ideological orientation of society, such as the structural transition from agrarian feudalism to industrial capitalism, the technological revolution, or the total shift from the bureaucratic authoritarian political system to the realm of inclusive democracy.

He also introduced an innovative concept called "Social Time". In Sztompka's historical sociology, change should not be measured by a chronological calendar

count alone (quantitative time), but should be read through the density of significant events (qualitative time) that succeeded in changing the collective consciousness of society. Historical transformation is the result of the accumulation of small daily events that gradually reach a structural saturation point to create a shift in the macro paradigm. As a real historical example, Indonesia's transition from Dutch colonialism to independence was not an instant overnight event, but a long accumulation of the ethical consciousness of the intelligentsia, the underground movement of local youth organizations, the post-World War II global geopolitical crisis, to the culmination of a complete change in the legal, political, and social stratification of the archipelago's society.

Further, historical transformation always involves a constant conversation between the past crystallized in the form of tradition and the future anticipated by the imagination of the actors. Structure is never completely passive; it carries the burden of history that dictates the limits of human rational action. However, the existence of social time proves that there is a certain momentum in history in which structures lose their bonding power a liquid phase called intermittent rhythms. It is in this phase that human creative agency can enter to make maximum historical interventions, deflecting the direction of civilizational development in a direction that was previously considered impossible by structural determinists.

The Shift from Isolation to Globalization

In the past, before the dawn of modernity dawned, the majority of human society lived in the smallest social units that were relatively isolated geographically, economically, and culturally. Natural boundaries such as mountains, oceans, and the limitations of transportation technology form a thick barrier that makes the diffusion of culture go very slowly. However, Sztompka highlights how advanced modernity brought human civilization into an era of total globalization. This multidimensional process involves: Compression of Space and Time, where cutting-edge information and communication technology innovations make geographical distance no longer a

barrier to social interaction, so that cross-continental financial transactions and cultural information exchanges occur instantly (real-time) without physical barriers.

In addition, there is a dimension of Global Interdependence which means that crises that erupt in one part of the world will immediately have a chain impact on other parts of the world. The global financial crisis, fluctuations in energy commodity prices, and the global pandemic are concrete evidence of how closely functional attachments between countries are today. This process of globalization also gives birth to Cultural Hybridity, which is an intensive intercultural meeting that produces new forms of liquid identity, but on the other hand has the potential to trigger strong resistance from traditional fundamentalist groups who want to maintain the purity of their original values. Contemporary societies intelligently adopt elements of global culture without having to completely strip away their local anchors, a sociological phenomenon referred to as glocalization.

This new global order ultimately redefined the concept of nation-state sovereignty and local living space. Space is no longer understood as static territorial coordinates, but as a network of circulation (space of flows) that is constantly flowing with capital, information, and humans. Sztompka warned that globalization does not uniformize the world absolutely, but rather creates a new pattern of inequality between digitally integrated regions and marginalized regions. The tension between global homogenization and local heterogeneization is the main stage for the struggle of modern agencies in formulating survival strategies in the midst of increasingly aggressive global competition.

The Significance of Social Movements as a Force for Change

One of the most crucial theoretical pillars in Piotr Sztompka's architecture of thought is the analysis of the strategic role of social movements. Social movements are not seen as anomalies or disruptions to order, but rather as the "main engine" that drives structural change when the formal political institutions and state bureaucracy

are decay and fail to meet the sociopolitical aspirations of the people. The concept of Collective Agency in social movements proves that when fragmented individuals unite under the banner of a common vision, norms, and solidarity, they have the sociological capacity to tear down, reform, or restructure even the most rigid institutional order. The typology of social movements also varies greatly, ranging from reformist movements that demand partial policy improvements, to radical revolutionary movements that demand the complete dismantling of the entire existing system of power.

Sztompka provides an important note that in the era of advanced modern society, the character of social movements has undergone a fundamental transformation giving birth to the so-called New Social Movements. These contemporary social movements (such as climate justice movements, intersectional feminism, the protection of minority rights, and human rights advocacy) no longer place the struggle for practical political power or the control of the means of material production as a single goal in contrast to the characteristics of the classical labor movement of the 19th century. The new social movement focuses more on the cultural realm, such as the demand for individual autonomy, the defense of a sustainable lifestyle, the recognition of social identity, and the democratization of the genealogical space of public knowledge in open spaces.

In the view of social events, social movements are the highest form of society acting on itself. It is through this movement that society demonstrates its reflexive capacity: the ability to evaluate the shortcomings of current structures, formulate alternatives for a more equitable future, and mobilize existing resources to realize that vision. Social movements act as cultural laboratories that produce new values, which were initially considered deviant but are gradually absorbed by the formal laws of the state and become new norms of fairness for the next generation.

The Battle of Ideas: Evolution vs. Radical Revolution

Sztompka comparatively dissects the internal dynamics between slow-moving and regular change (evolution) and explosive and discontinuous change (revolution). Evolution is a mechanism of institutional adaptation of society that takes place continuously, gradually, cumulatively, and often occurs without being directly realized by the social actors in it. This evolutionary process maintains historical continuity through constant functional adjustments to external challenges. Instead, the Radical Revolution represents a traumatic but emancipatory moment of historical discontinuity. Revolutions are never born out of a vacuum; It requires a mature combination of structural and agency prerequisites.

These prerequisites include a deep systemic economic crisis, severe moral delegitimization in the eyes of the rulers, internal rifts among the political elite, and the availability of a coherent "counter-ideology" that is able to be adopted and mobilize the masses massively. Revolution is a sacred phase in which human agency takes full control of the course of the course of history consciously. At this critical moment, the once-strong binding structure suddenly weakened and went into paralysis, providing a golden opportunity for the birth of a qualitative leap that built an entirely new social, legal, and cultural order from the ashes of the destruction of the old civilization.

This tension between a slow evolutionary disposition and a sudden revolutionary disposition shows that history does not move in a boring straight line. The history of society is a combination of long periods of evolutionary stability interrupted occasionally by revolutionary explosions. For Sztompka, failure to anticipate the revolutionary potential of the people's agency often causes the outwardly powerful ruling system to collapse instantly, reaffirming his central thesis that no matter how powerful a structure is still a human creation that can be deconstructed by its creator.

Discussion

Comparison of Social Occurrence Theory with Giddens' Structuring Perspective

This article differs from the research of Sztopka (1993), Giddens (1984), and Archer (1995). Basically they discuss the dualistic relationship between structure and agency in sociological space. However, this article specifically discusses how Sztopka's concept of social becoming has a thicker historical character than Giddens' structuring theory, which tends to ignore the long-term dimension of time (*longue durée*). While Giddens focuses on instant duality in everyday social practice, Sztopka makes room for the accumulation of historical events that make up the collective consciousness. This analysis emphasizes that agencies are not only reproducing structures, but actively engineering new directions of civilization through the momentum of historical crises.

The Dynamics of New Social Movements in the Digital Era

This article is in line with the research of Castells (2012), Habermas (1981), and Touraine (1981). Basically, they discuss the power of social movements in breaking the establishment of formal political institutions and the dominance of the system. However, this article discusses the contextualization of Sztopka's thinking in the 21st century phenomenon of digital-based social movements (cyber-activism). If Sztopka classically sees social movements based on physical space and structured organization, this article explores how contemporary collective agency can be formed instantly through virtual networks (such as the use of social media) without a single leadership, yet still capable of generating real structural change at the level of public policy.

Reconstruction of the Conceptual Novelty of the Article

Then the novelty of this article is that it offers an integrative synthesis model that combines Sztopka's social becoming dialectic with the theory of network society. This novelty is crucial because previous studies have often seen globalization and

digitalization as deterministic outflows that paralyze local communities. This article proves that Sztompka's frame of mind remains valid to show that in the midst of the siege of global algorithms, local agencies still have tactical loopholes to conduct resistance, negotiation, and cultural hybridity. The results of this reconstruction resulted in a new conceptual model called the "Historical Network Agency" as a tool for analyzing social change in the postmodern era.

CONCLUSION

Through an in-depth study of the sociological thought of Piotr Sztompka, this article succeeds in concluding that social change is not a mechanical destiny, rigid laws of nature, or an automatic process that is beyond the control of humanity. Social change at its deepest essence is a dialectical process that brings together the confines of macro structural factors with human action, creativity, and micro-agency reflection. The essence of the sociology of social change is a high ontological recognition of human creativity (human agency) to intervene, deconstruct, and reconstruct the direction of the course of the wheel of civilization. The society of the future is never determined by a static blueprint, but rather negotiated day by day through how contemporary social movements interact, adapt, and counter the challenges of globalization and digital penetration. The main philosophical conclusion is that social change never happens passively to us, but always happens actively through our real actions. Understanding this conceptualization is crucial for academics and social practitioners to look at the patterns of historical order behind the phenomenon of the chaotic and disruptive modern world.

Furthermore, the macro-micro synthesis offered by Sztompka breaks the postmodern theoretical pessimism that often assumes that individuals have been completely paralyzed and co-opted in the face of the giants of global capitalism and the dominance of digital algorithms. A truly emancipatory and true social transformation requires the acuity of the collective agency to be observant in reading

and capturing the momentum of structural institutional crises in order to create meaningful qualitative historical leaps. In the sociocultural context in Indonesia, the operational application of social becoming theory provides a valuable epistemological roadmap for local researchers. This roadmap guides us not to simply be stuck documenting the phenomenon of change in a descriptive way on the surface, but to go deeper to understand the roots of social action motivations, cultural resistance, and identity hybridity driven by civil society. In closing, the theoretical reconstruction in this article recommends the future agenda of historical sociology and digital sociology studies to be more sensitive to the shift of virtual social spaces, in which new structures are now constantly being challenged, deconstructed, and renegotiated by human agencies that are increasingly globally networked across the traditional territorial boundaries of the nation-state.

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