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Meaning making in motion: Bodies and minds moving through institutional and semiotic structures

Alex Gillespie
London School of Economics, United Kingdom

Tania Zittoun
University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Abstract
What is meaning? And how does it arise? Werner and Kaplan's approach to symbol formation was prescient in understanding the importance of the body and activity. However, their embodied approach needs to be complemented by a broader conceptualization of social institutions and complex semiotic structures in the genesis and function of symbolic processes. Specifically, human bodies, which are the medium and locus of experience, are embedded in social situations and institutions. Thus embodied experience, the origin of meaning, must be understood as societally structured. Moreover, human experience is never unmediated; it is refracted through the complex semiotic artifacts that comprise human culture, such as discourses, social representations and symbolic resources. The present article focuses on the importance of bodies moving within institutions and minds moving within semiotic structures as a basis for meaning making. We argue that such movement has been neglected; yet, it has the potential to enhance our understanding of how experiences are differentiated and integrated within individuals to produce individuals who are products of society and who also have agency in relation to society.

Keywords
Symbol formation, meaning making, semiotic, embodied, society

Corresponding author:
Alex Gillespie, Social Psychology, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE, UK.
Email: a.t.gillespie@lse.ac.uk

What is meaning? And how does it arise? Werner and Kaplan (1963) chose to tackle these fundamental questions through informed theoretical discussion and a series of patient and original empirical studies. Their findings were prescient, demonstrating the grounding of symbolic representation in the human activity, specifically the body and its sense organs. They also insisted that symbol formation is a fundamentally social process; however, the social dimension was underdeveloped.

In the present article we build on Werner and Kaplan's conception of symbol formation, elaborating the underdeveloped social aspect. The article begins with an outline of Werner and Kaplan's basic theory, highlighting the focus on embodiment as a main strength, and advancing the critique that their conception of "the social" is relatively thin. The conceptualization of the social which we introduce stands in marked contrast to the usual emphasis on "the other" and social interaction. In contrast, we emphasize first social structures (both institutions and semiotic artifacts) and then show how the *movement* of bodies and minds within such social structures catalyzes meaning making.

An organismic-developmental approach to symbol formation

Werner and Kaplan (1963, p. iii) had the commendable aim of creating an "organismic-developmental" approach to language and "the expression of thought." The term "organismic" indicates a holistic and somewhat functional approach grounded in the body and practice of organisms. The term "developmental" indicates that any understanding of symbol formation needs to be grounded in the ontogenetic development of the organism. Their approach is clearly different from behaviorist accounts of "verbal behavior" (e.g. Ogden & Richards, 1930; Skinner, 1957) which, they argue (pp. 13–14), reduce meaning (i.e. symbols) to mere "signs" or "signals" in the environment which trigger a response.[1] Their approach is also clearly different from theories which search for the origins of meaning in cognitive universals (e.g. Chomsky, 1995), because their approach emphasizes the active organism in a social world (Glick, 2013, pp. 441–452). Their organismic approach is aligned with the work of von Uexküll (1992), being holistic as opposed to reductionist (Marková, 1982), and accordingly is paradigmatically aligned with the work of Vygotsky and Luria (1994/1932) and Mead (1922).

Numerous diverse and highly original empirical studies led Werner and Kaplan (1963, p. 41) to a model of symbol formation that has four components: the addressor (or the symbolizer), the addressee (or the audience), the referent being symbolized and the symbol vehicle (see Müller, Yeung, & Hutchison, 2013, pp. 463–483). These four components are, in the experience of the child, initially fused and un-differentiated. Symbol formation is the gradual differentiation and integration of these four components, such that the addressor becomes able to use the symbol vehicle to represent the referent for the addressee. In this model, the meaning of a symbol between an addressee and an addressor does not need to be "the same," but rather, "the only requirement is that the connotations evoked in both

addressor and addressee occupy a comparable position within each person's network of meaning'' (Werner & Kaplan, 1963, p. 50).

Werner and Kaplan (1963) were ahead of their time in recognizing the embodied nature of meaning. While James (1890), Dewey (1896), Mead (1912), and to a lesser extent Vygotsky (1997), had made general claims about the link between meaning and action (i.e. the meaning of a bicycle is to ride it), they had not backed these claims up with research. Werner and Kaplan (1963), on the other hand, provide detailed evidence of the way in which our senses, experiences, and even mood are constitutive of meaning, even complex conceptual meaning. For example, they report research by Krauss who asked 45 people to draw linear patterns for 18 words referring to moods, colors, natural happenings, actions, etc. The participants drew ''expressive'' motives – for instance a long line for ''longing'' and a curly line for ''gay'' (p. 340). One participant states, about their line for ''gay,'' that it ''is a leaping, bounding, joyousness; that's also the case for the line – leaps and then a bound'' (Werner & Kaplan, 1963, p. 339). Thus, they illustrate how there is a deeply embodied, even visceral, aspect to meaning which is maintained across modalities. In this way their work has foreshadowed the more recent work on embodied metaphors (Cornejo, Olivares, & Rojas, 2013; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), gesture (Levy & McNeill, 2013; McNeill, 2000), activity (Miettinen, Paavola, & Pohjola, 2012) and habitus (Lizardo, 2013).

Leaving aside the obvious strength of Werner and Kaplan's (1963) model for addressing the embodied aspects of meaning, let us focus on its weaker aspect, namely the social aspect. How does the social operate within their model? Their model, we suggest, is social in three ways: First, symbols are oriented to an addressee, being used to communicate with the addressee. Second, for symbols to be communicative the addressee and addressor need to partially share a field of normative meanings. Third, children learn symbols from others, imitating them at first, and only later becoming autonomous users of symbols. Thus, the social is primarily in the form of another person (the addressee) who is the target of communication, has a partially shared conception of what symbols mean, and from whom people learn what symbols mean. Thus, even when Werner and Kaplan (1963, p. 361) consider complex meanings, such as ''modesty,'' which subjects relate to being ''nun-like,'' or familiar lines such as ''the lady doth protest too much,'' there is a tendency to underplay the broader cultural context (but see Werner, 1957).

The aim of the present article is to augment Werner and Kaplan's (1963) conceptualization with a more fleshed out understanding of the role of social institutions (and people's trajectories through them) and more complex trans-individual meaning structures (such as discourses, representations, or symbolic resources) in meaning making. The following two sections elaborate on these two omissions in turn.

Bodies moving within social institutions

Werner and Kaplan's (1963, p. 41) model of symbol formation, specifically their addressee–addressor–symbol–referent rhombus, is depicted outside of any context

(i.e. situation, context, institution or society). The model ''hangs'' in unspecified ether. Where is this symbol use occurring? Who are the actors? What were their previous experiences? What institutional structures are shaping the interaction? What are the partially agreed norms and expectations? That these considerations are largely absent is not particularly important from Werner and Kaplan's standpoint, because their conceptualization of meaning begins with individual expression, and grows outward, towards social relationships and society. But this omission becomes significant if one gives the social a more constitutive role in symbol formation.

According to Mead (1922), meaning begins with the actions of one organism having consequences for a second organism, such that the action of the first organism ''creates an impression'' on the second organism. For example, the first organism might prepare an attack, and the second organism flees. The sight of the preparation to attack is a visual cue which comes to mean ''time to flee'' for the second organism (but it means nothing to the first organism). The developmental breakthrough is for the first organism to realize that its action is a cue, at which point, the action becomes symbolic (or significantly symbolic) in the sense that the first organism can use the action to cause the second organism to run away. This account of symbol formation, crucially, begins not with a ''will to express'' but rather with ''unintended impressions.'' It is the response of the second organism, the addressee, which constitutes the meaning of the symbol for the addressor. Interestingly, Werner and Kaplan (1963, p. 16) come close to recognizing this when they write: ''a gesture directly and unintentionally expressing an emotion such as joy or disgust is not symbolic; the so-called 'symbolism' of gestural and postural patterns may be symbolic for the interpreter, but they are not for the producing individual.'' However, Werner and Kaplan do not elaborate this point, failing to see it as an opening to a more profoundly social conception of meaning making.

If one accepts that symbolic meaning begins with unintended impressions, then the question becomes: How does a young infant become aware of the communicative significance of their own actions? First, we need a conception of social institutions; that is, a cultural–historical pattern of interaction, with differentiated social positions (each with role-expectations, and maybe also rights and responsibilities). Second, there needs to be bodies moving between these social positions, such that infants can cultivate and internalize both the unintended communicative activity and the communicative significance of that activity.

Let us take Werner and Kaplan's (1963, p. 41) addressor and addressee and situate them in a socio-historical pattern of interaction, such as, a family unit. Imagine parents and two children, an infant girl and a four-year-old boy. The infant is crying. The father, mother, and boy strive to comfort the infant with food, cuddles and attention. The family is enacting a small but widespread social practice. The crying infant does not know the impression that its crying creates. At most the infant begins to associate crying with food and comfort, and those positive outcomes may even reinforce the crying – but this is not sufficient to make the

crying symbolic (in Werner & Kaplan's sense or significant symbolic in Mead's sense) for the infant. The infant does not "intend" to "mean" anything by crying. But, now let us turn to the four-year-old boy. The boy participates in trying to feed and comfort the distressed infant. The boy is socialized into the social position of caring, and internalizes those practices and meanings. The boy learns to recognize the infant's crying as calling-out a care-giving response. This gets interesting when we expand our analysis beyond the isolated situation. Later it will be the boy who cries, and when he does, his cries have both internality and externality. He cries like the infant, but also responds to his own cries like the parents because he has internalized their care-giving response through his own actions towards the infant. Quite likely these care-giving responses have also been rehearsed through play with dolls and in the narrative structure of stories and books. In short, he begins to know the meaning for crying. He can intentionally "use" crying; for example, he might induce his own crying so as to obtain the caring response. Thus, the crying becomes meaningful. The four elements in Werner and Kaplan's model (the crying, the care-giving response, the crier and the responder) have become differentiated and integrated into a higher-level semantic structure.

Gillespie (2005a) and Martin and Gillespie (2010) have argued that the key mechanism which turns an action, such as crying, into a symbol is "position exchange". The non-intentional expression of spontaneous crying becomes an intentional expression through the boy's movement between social positions within a relatively stable institutional structure. The institution we are dealing with is the family, and specifically the micro-institution of caring. It is a culturally patterned joint activity, it is initiated by normatively accepted markers (such as crying), each party makes sense of the situation through resources such as role models, strategies, caring words, expected narratives and norms of response. The social positions are that of caregiver and care-receiver. These social positions are relatively stable, and the interaction repeats itself in similar, but never identical, ways. However, what does change is the social position that the participants occupy. The boy sometimes cries and sometimes responds to the crying of another (the infant or maybe even an adult). What becomes crucial is the boy's trajectory, or movement, between the social positions within the relatively stable institution, or social architecture, of care-giving. It is this trajectory through both roles within the social activity of care-giving which enables the boy to internalize the entire activity, becoming aware of the meaning of many aspects of the activity from both perspectives within the activity.

The emergence of meaning out of bodies moving between socially structured situations and roles also operates at the level of play. It is notable that children often role play the social positions that are of consequence for them, but which they don't get to occupy in practice – such as playing at being a parent or teacher (Edwards, 2000). One contender for a universal in children's play is the doll, and the doll is usually an infant. Arguably, children are using the infant doll as a cultural support to enable the child to explore the social position of being an adult. Playing which responds to the infant doll, the crying doll, the hungry doll,

the sleeping doll, enables children to explore the meaning of their own actions from the standpoint of their parents. Equally, at the level of fiction and narrative, the same movements between social positions occur. For example, in the story Hansel and Gretel, Hansel, the elder brother, comforts Gretel in the forest when she is crying because they have been abandoned. To understand the relationship, one needs to understand both sides of the interaction; namely, Gretel's urge to cry and Hansel's desire to comfort her. The narrative structure is like an institution; it is a sociocultural scaffold supporting the meanings of *both sides* of the interaction. The next section focuses upon complex semiotic artifacts, like narratives, demonstrating again how movement within these structures feeds into meaning making.

Minds moving within complex semiotic artifacts

Analyzing the construction of meaning of symbols, Werner and Kaplan (1963) identify the genesis of the meaning of words, first in the child and later in the adult. Drawing on Bühler, they acknowledge that the meaning of symbols have to be understood as these belong to *fields* or systems of relations, which refer to the structure of a given language as a whole (Chapter 4). Then Werner and Kaplan explore how we elaborate the meaning of unknown concepts in the context of their uses in sentences (Chapter 13), and how we attribute expressive or emotional qualities to the sonorous qualities of words (Chapter 20). Across these empirical studies the unit of analysis is usually a single or compound word. It is only towards the end of their book that they consider more complex constructions, such as "he opens a bottle" (p. 385), "he catches a criminal" (p. 396), and "I am sad if I lose" (p. 460). Thus, although they emphasize the role of semantic fields in constructing meaning, their own empirical work tends to sidestep this issue. Meaning, we suggest, needs to be understood in relation to a semantic field for three reasons.

First, all utterances have addressivity. They are replies to previous utterances and anticipations of forthcoming ones (Bakhtin, 1982, 1984, 1996). We can never escape the field of meanings. Consciousness flows, sometimes being externalized through one or the other semiotic mode, and one meaning only ever gives way to another meaning, like waves lapping one over the other (James, 1890). The sentences we produce are just one very partial surface aspect of this flow, and as such, they are, again, both responses and anticipations, marked by the undertones of older meanings, awaking the echoes of others, and carrying the harmonics of previous contexts of use (Bakhtin, 1982, 1996).

Second, most of the ideas and cultural artifacts we encounter are not reducible to simple sentences. The social representation of new migrants, *Die Hard III*, a newspaper article, or *Anna Karenina* are each a holistic field of meaning. Such artifacts are made out of chains of sentences or fields of semiotic units. Others, like a prayer or a legal article, take their meaning from their being part of a larger semiotic system (such as the legal system, or a religion). As consequence, we never deal with only *one* concept at a time. Most of the semiotic constructs we meet are complex, and understanding the whole is more than understanding each

component in turn. For example, making sense of a movie is more than understanding the sum of the words used in the film. Werner and Kaplan's (1963) study of people's understanding of words in context suggests that meaning is part of a more general *Gestalt*, or as Valsiner (2007) would say, as part of a field-like meaning. Yet what interests the authors is more how, and within that context, words participate in the elaboration or tonality of a sentence, which is demonstrated by experiences on word permutation (Werner & Kaplan, 1963, p. 455), not how the sentence itself contributes to making a narrative, a collective memory or an ideology.

Finally, we are exposed to a multiplicity of complex cultural discourses, whether these are foregrounded or in the background (Lyotard, 1984). Consider browsing a newspaper or watching TV in between a family discussion and concerns about work issues. Simply walking down a street entails navigating not only other people, but also the diverse meanings of shop displays, advertisements, and political posters. How can such a cacophony of meanings be understood? With their focus on single words or sentences, isolated from the semiosphere, Werner and Kaplan (1963) do not give us tools to understand meaning making in real life contexts. Accordingly, we suggest that it is important to move beyond the laboratory, and to examine how symbols are encountered in everyday life.

Taking account of the field of meanings leads us to focus upon how people, or specifically people's minds, move within these fields of meaning. Movements within fields of meaning are, perhaps, most evident in narratives. In a narrative, the person is guided through various positions and experiences. For example, Miller, Hoogstra, Mintz, Fung, and Williams (1993) show how Kurt (age 2) progressively appropriates the story of Peter the Rabbit by asking his parents to narrate it again and again, and regularly producing his own renditions. In his first re-telling, Kurt only mentioned one aspect of the story (a little rabbit is punished for eating forbidden vegetables). Later, he added more aspects (the angry gardener and the rabbit's appetite). Finally, he mastered the complexity of the narrative (a ''naughty'' rabbit who disobeys its mother, might be punished, but will still be loved by her). What does it mean to understand the narrative? It entails being able to take the perspective of the hungry rabbit Peter, of the angry gardener, and the worried mother. Each perspective has different emotions, and the narrative arises out of the holistic interaction of these perspectives. As Kurt understands the narrative, so he increasingly understands the word ''naughty,'' with its normative, conditional, and transient aspects. Kurt, like Peter the Rabbit, has enjoyed playing in a garden, and like him he has felt hungry and angry, and maybe even worried. These experiences, acquired in Kurt's trajectory through the social world, are now recombined, with the narrative providing a new trajectory through these experiences, in the production of a largely novel experience.

Cultural artifacts, such as books, films or even ideas and arguments, are multimodal (combining sound, image, words, etc.) semiotic structures which guide experience, creating trajectories of meaning. These artifacts, just like the institutions discussed in the preceding section, have an architecture which canalizes and

guides experiences along particular routes and trajectories. A film imposes a succession of moving images, kinetic impressions, and sounds. A painting guides the gaze of the viewer with faces, eye gazes, contrasts, and surprising elements (Berger, 1972, p. 26). In his psychology of art, Vygotsky (1971) analyzed the structure of literary or musical works to show how the organization of the characters, the progression of the plot, the rhythm of the unfolding events, etc., were actually guiding specific psychological and emotional responses. Thus "art is the social technique of emotion" (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 249) which "organizes future behavior" (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 253). Moving beyond art, teaching materials, advertisements, and political discourses are also complex semiotic structures which canalize trajectories of meaning. Using available techniques (rhetoric, research on colors, shapes, or sounds) for awakening specific embodied reaction, these semiotic structures guide people through ideas, images, representations or values, whether these are about the past, about alternative lives, or possible futures.

All cultural artifacts engage the personal memories and experiences of their users, mobilizing and reorganizing these in the creation of new meaning. In this sense, the meaning produced by cultural artifacts is not simply "derivative" of the everyday meanings which people have accumulated in their trajectories through institutional and social worlds. These cultural artifacts create new meanings and trajectories, which themselves leave traces, becoming open to reconfiguration in future cultural experiences, and also transforming people's daily experiences of the social and institutional world (Zittoun, 2006). In other words, many layers and echoes of symbols and their meanings are residues of people's exploration of the complex semiotic architectures offered by our cultural environment. The more we travel through semiotic architectures, the richer these meanings can become, as these are both anchored in personal experiences, and in the vast universe of cultural values, narratives, and human accumulated experience. Thus, despite drawing upon embodied and personal meanings originating in the social and institutional world, so-called fictional experiences can transform our direct experience of the social and institutional world. For example, tourists experience the Himalayas through narratives and films, with this field of fiction broadening the horizons of what tourists can experience (Gillespie, 2007).

Bodies and minds in movement: differentiating and integrating experiences

Bodies are the locus and medium of experience, but bodies are not floating mid-air. Specifically, human bodies are firmly situated within institutional practices and complex webs of cultural meaning which are often tacit (Turner, 2012). But, most importantly, we are emphasizing that bodies move through socially structured experiences, and, in a likewise manner, human minds move through experiences shaped by complex cultural artifacts. Such movement, we now argue, might underlie the differentiation and integration of experience.

Central to Werner and Kaplan's (1963, p. 7) conceptualization is "the orthogenetic principle;" namely, the tendency of organisms to move from a state of relative globality and undifferentiatedness towards states of increasing differentiation and hierarchic integration. This orthogenetic principle underlies the progressive differentiation of the four components (addressor, addressee, symbol vehicle and referent) of their model of symbol formation, with the increased integration creating the interrelationships which allow for intentional symbolic processes (see Müller et al., 2013, pp. 463–483). However, despite the descriptive insight of this principle, the mechanism accounting for this process of differentiation and integration remains under specified. What drives the orthogenetic principle?

We want to suggest that it is movement which drives this differentiation and integration. Specifically, bodies and minds moving through institutional and semiotic worlds (a) accumulate differentiated experiences and (b) have these experiences integrated, or linked, one to the other, through the guided sequencing of those differentiated experiences. This operates both at the level of bodies moving through the social world and minds moving through fictional, or entirely semiotic, worlds.

Moving within institutional structures differentiates experience: people get a chance to be care-giver and care-receiver, to be buyer and seller, to be child and parent and so on. Each new social position we take up constitutes a differentiated domain of experience. But the movement between these social positions might also help to integrate them, weaving together these otherwise disconnected domains of experience, such that the integration forms an intersubjective structure, enabling people to participate in differentiated but integrated perspectives within a social activity. The meaning of "caring" is both care-giving and care-receiving, the meaning of "buying" is both buying and selling, and so on (Gillespie, 2010b). Bodies, with their rudimentary and embodied memory and moving between inter-related social positions within institutional structures, are like threaded needles, stitching together the domains of experience into an integrated and meaningful, and thus intersubjective, whole.

Moving within semiotic structures, such as worlds of fiction or political discourses, also differentiates and integrates experience. A narrative is not a single action or experience, nor is it simply a sequence of actions or events as seen from one person's point of view. A narrative entails interacting points of view, and a structured sequence of events. The stream of consciousness (James, 1890) channeled through a narrative not only has a sequence of experiences cultivated, but also usually participates in a play of perspectives and experiences. Narratives have characters with differentiated interests, knowledge, values and emotions. To understand a narrative is to participate in this multiplicity of interacting experiences. For example, to understand a Japanese movie is to both participate in what the various protagonists feel, and also, to grasp the narrative structure they are part of. In addition, it is to feel moved by the colors and the shapes of the décor, and be transported by the melody of the music, or the rhythm of the words and actions (Zittoun, 2013). These differentiated experiences (embodied, emotional, linked to identification and reflection) are, here again, recombined and woven together in

new ways from the start of the film to the end in the production of a new experience.

Symbols arise at the points where internal, personal, embodied and emotional experiences meet an external social or semiotic structure. Meaning is where personal sense and shared meaning meet. The personal sense comes from our own unique embodied trajectories. Although our experiences are socially determined, that determination works on our own individual bodies, stirring individual emotions, creating personal sense. This personal sense finds expression, or resonance, in social settings and semiotic structures. Equally, these institutional settings and semiotic structures need to find the relevant personal sense, the relevant past experiences and embodied memories in their participants, to function.

We embark daily into multiple worlds (Schütz, 1945), moving through the institutions of family routine, to public transport, to daydreaming, to employment, to alternatives imagined in conversation, to emailing and maybe ending the day with a trip to the theatre or movies. This clash and play of situations and semiotic realms leads to a conceptualization of human experience as complex, multi-layered, reflective, partially integrated, and unresolved. Indeed, it is the incomplete integration, the disjunctions and tensions, which propel human meaning forward, just like the unresolved elements in a narrative keep the audience engaged.

Conclusion: meaning making in motion

Theory and research which emphasize "the social" in human development and meaning making have tended to focus upon "the other." Questions concern social interaction and the role of significant others in scaffolding the emergence of meaning. The present article has pointed to a different route for the social construction of meaning; namely, social institutions and complex semiotic artifacts. Specifically, our focus has been on bodies and minds *moving* within institutions and cultural artifacts. Thus, we build upon Werner and Kaplan's (1963) conceptualization of meaning as embodied, but expand upon this by putting the body in motion. Bodies move within society, accumulating societally patterned experiences, which in turn provide the resources for cultural and fictional experiences. These cultural and fictional experiences are also characterized by movement; the movement of the mind between differentiated experiences; and the narrative structure, just like the structure of an institution, also provides the mechanism for integrating these experiences and perspectives into a meaningful whole.

The importance of movement is most evident at the ideographic level of human life trajectories. Social psychologists have often been criticized for neglecting context (Jovchelovitch, 2007) and now it is common to emphasize the importance of context (Howarth et al., in press); however, people don't live in just one context (Dreier, 2009); rather, they move between contexts (both social and fictional). Such movement between domains, we argue, is crucial to meaning making.

Consider the trajectory of Malcolm X, which passed through a wide range of social positions. He was successful at school, became a gangster, was a prisoner,

and became a religious minister in the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X's peculiar variant of international human rights activism only becomes intelligible against this background. He combined meanings from school, the street, and religion into a unique and powerful complex of meanings (Gillespie, 2005b, 2010a). Similarly, young Turkish adolescents moving between the contexts of British school and Turkish home, internalize the tensions of multicultural London, producing novel and creative syntheses (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008). Or consider the case of June, a young woman living in England during World War II. During the course of the war she moved from the periphery to increasing involvement. Analysis of her diaries reveal how she accumulated experiences from diverse institutions (a local community, summer classes at University, life on the farm), relationships (family members, instructors and boyfriends) and fictional experiences (including propaganda and Walt Disney movies), and how she combines these to make her own reaction to events (Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling, & Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun, Cornish, Gillespie, & Aveling, 2008). At the end of the war, these multiplicities of representations and positions, themselves in dialogue with new possibilities opened up by fiction and new political programs, allowed her define her own original synthesis (Zittoun, Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2012). What is crucial in all these analyses of trajectories is how movement into a new experience in a situated or fictional domain provides a new vantage point on previous experiences, identities, and commitments. Distancing from everyday life begins, not with a psychological feat of reflection, but with the more mundane and explicable act of moving into a new experience (whether structured by institutions or complex semiotic artifacts).

The fact that humans can move is both elementary and profoundly constitutive. It problematizes any opposition between self and other (because self can become other; Gillespie, Howarth, & Cornish, 2012) and it enables us to reconceptualize the relation between individuals and society (Akram, 2013). Individuals experience society in a personal way (Zittoun, 2006), internalizing it as they move through it. Societally structured experiences, facilitated by institutions and cultural artifacts, progressively lead to an embodied internalization of society. The body is not only the locus and medium of experience; it is also the means for society to reproduce itself. Physical and semantic architectures channel and guide experience, leading us from one experience to the next, and scaffolding both the differentiation and integration of these experiences. Does this put too much emphasis on societal determination? Where is personal meaning and agency? How does agency emerge from this societal and cultural orchestration of experience?

Agency arises not because individuals are less determined by society, but rather because they are over-determined. Life trajectories move people from one social context to another, from one cultural experience to another, from one discourse to another; and in so doing, people accumulate heterogeneous discourses, norms, artifacts and symbolic resources. A person's trajectory through society and associated accumulation creates an internal semiotic landscape that mirrors (from the perspective of the individual) the overlapping and dissonant semiotic structures of society.

It is the overlap, the tensions, and contradictions between these internalizations which create agency, and the space for reflective thought (Zittoun, 2012). Thus, we maintain, beginning with the elementary movement of bodies in a social world we can step-up to the complexity of psychological movements within semiotic realms, and eventually the dynamics of distancing which enable human agency.

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Note

1. There is a lot of terminological confusion around the terms symbol, sign, signal and cue. Our understanding is that there is a broad equivalence between that what Werner and Kaplan (1963) term "symbol," what Mead (1922; see also Gillespie, 2005a) termed "significant symbol" and what Vygotsky and Luria (1994/1932) termed "sign" (see Wagoner, 2010). In each case these terms are used to refer to a higher-order form of meaning and representation. Cues and signals (and, for Mead, non-significant symbols), on the other hand, generally refer to the non-intended triggers in the environment (Gillespie, 2010b; Saleh, Scott, Bryning, & Chittka, 2007).

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Author biographies

Alex Gillespie is a Lecturer in Psychology at the London School of Economics, and Co-Editor of *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. He is fascinated by social

interaction; specifically, how it produces novelty, creates our sense of self, and enables society to reproduce itself. Recently he has become convinced that psychologists need to take movement, in the form of human trajectories through social worlds, as a central object of study.

Tania Zittoun is professor of psychology and education at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. A sociocultural psychologist, she is interested in people's lifelong development, and is currently examining the role of imagination in these dynamics. She is also interested in the collaborative elaboration of scientific work. She is one of the co-authors of *Human development in the lifecourse. Melodies of living* (Zittoun, Valsiner, Vedeler, Salgado, Gonçalves, & Ferring, Cambridge University Press, 2013).