

Temporary presence or temporary absence? A time-geographic approach to FCEs

Joachim Thiel

Presentation to the
4th meeting of the DFG Network „Field configuring events“

Bremen | 29 October, 2014



STARTING POINT: TWO GEOGRAPHIES OF FCEs

1) Temporary presence

- “temporary clusters”
 - “discursive spaces”
 - “buzz”
- Geographical concentration of field members within the boundaries of the event location



STARTING POINT: TWO GEOGRAPHIES OF FCEs

2) Temporary absence

- e.g. “transactional openness” cannot be explained by concentration
 - Alternative explanation: Escape from the time-space constraints of everyday routines
- Conceptual reminiscence: time-space constraints as key building blocks of “time-geography” (e.g. Hägerstrand 1970)



THE ESSENCE OF TIME-GEOGRAPHY

- Time and space: limited resources of social practice
 - Social practice conceptualized as „project“
„... cluster of activities, individuals and items which must participate in the reaching of some defined goals ...”
- *Key issue: “the ability to pack projects into the limited resources of time and space” (Thrift 1977).*
- The limitedness based on „conditions“ and „constraints“



Conditions of social practice („human conditions“), e.g.

- The indivisibility of the human body
- The limited length of human life
- The limited ability of human beings to take part in more than one task at a time
- The fact that every task has a duration
- The fact that every movement in space consumes time
- ...



Constraints of social practice

- Capability constraints (individual level, corporeality of human beings)
- Coupling constraints (interpersonal level, time-space coordination)
- Authority constraints (institutional level, e.g. availability, property rights)

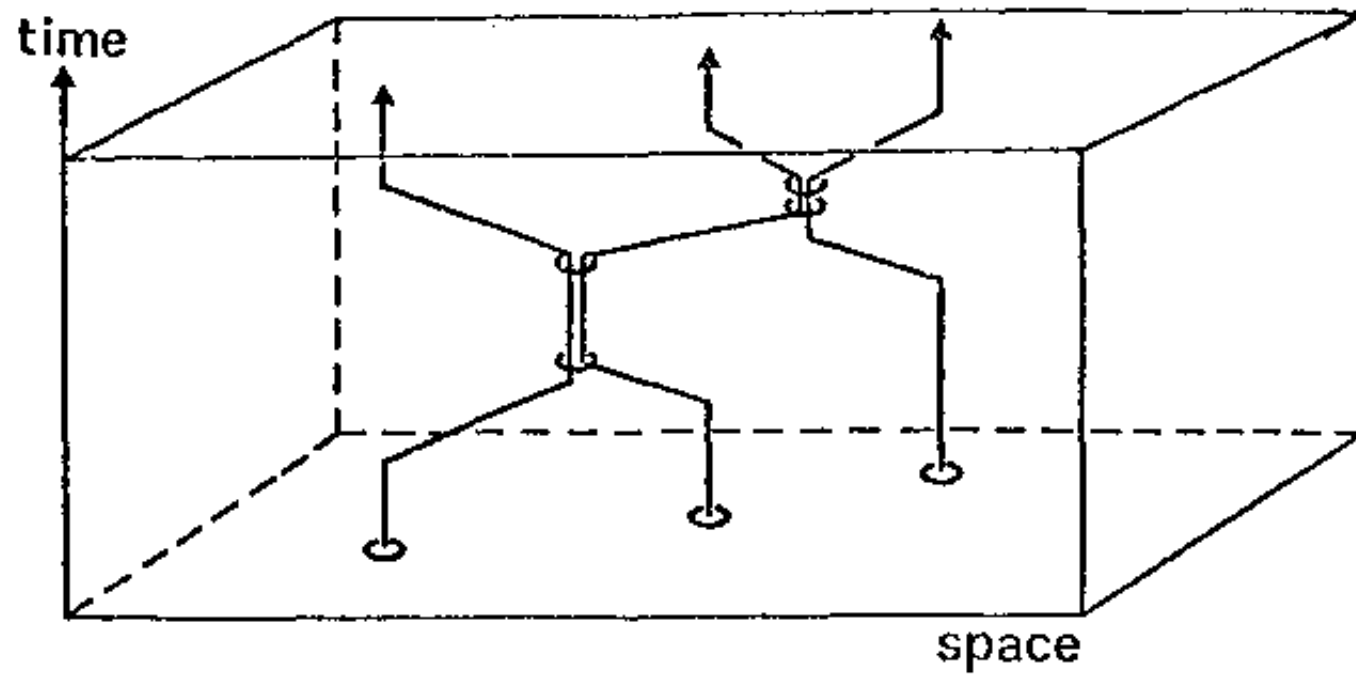


THE METHODOLOGICAL AMBITION OF TIME-GEOGRAPHY

- To create a language of social practice, more or less in analogy to how musical notation relates to music performance
- **Basic unit of this language: the path**
„In time-space the individual describes a path, starting at the point of birth and ending at the point of death.“

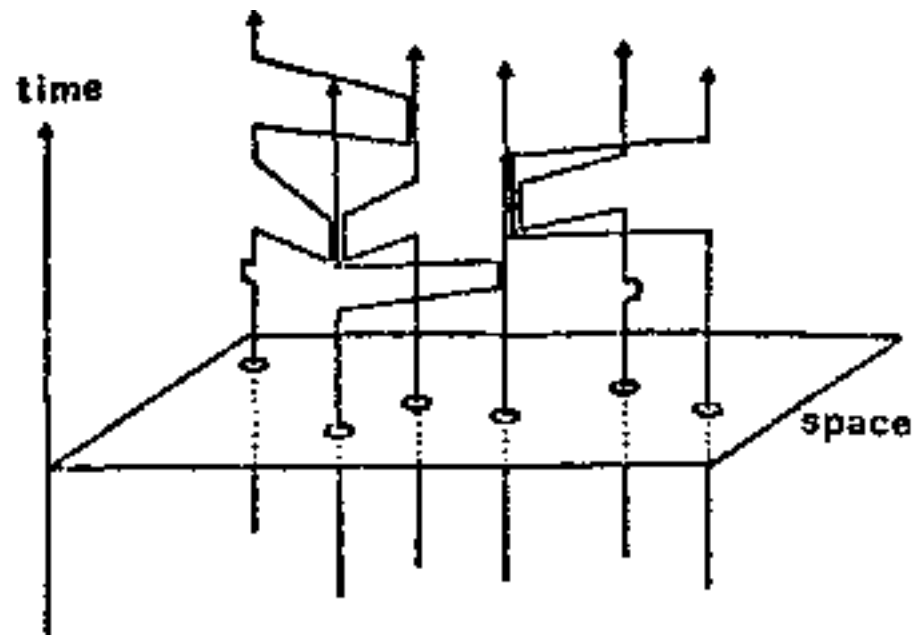
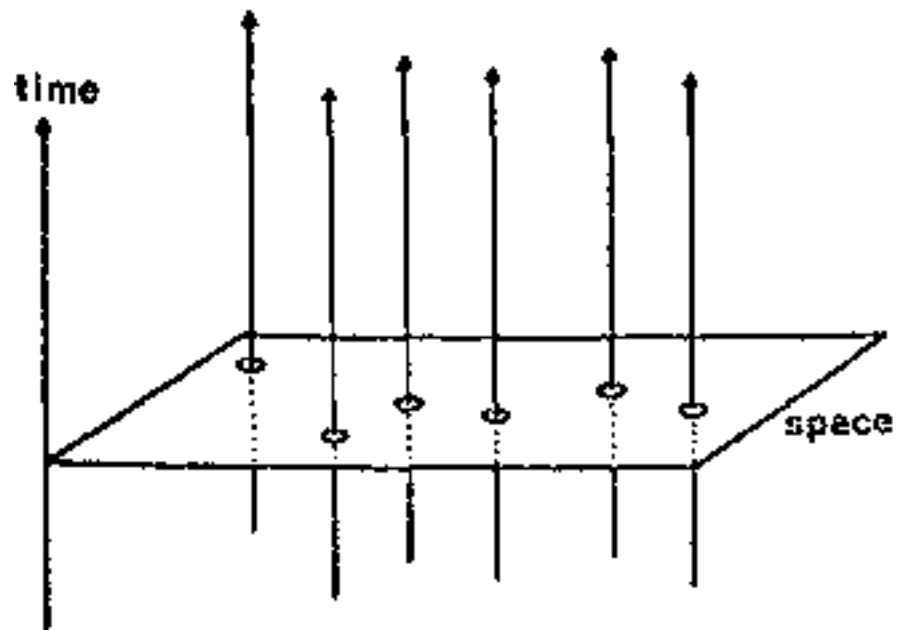


Paths in time-geography notation

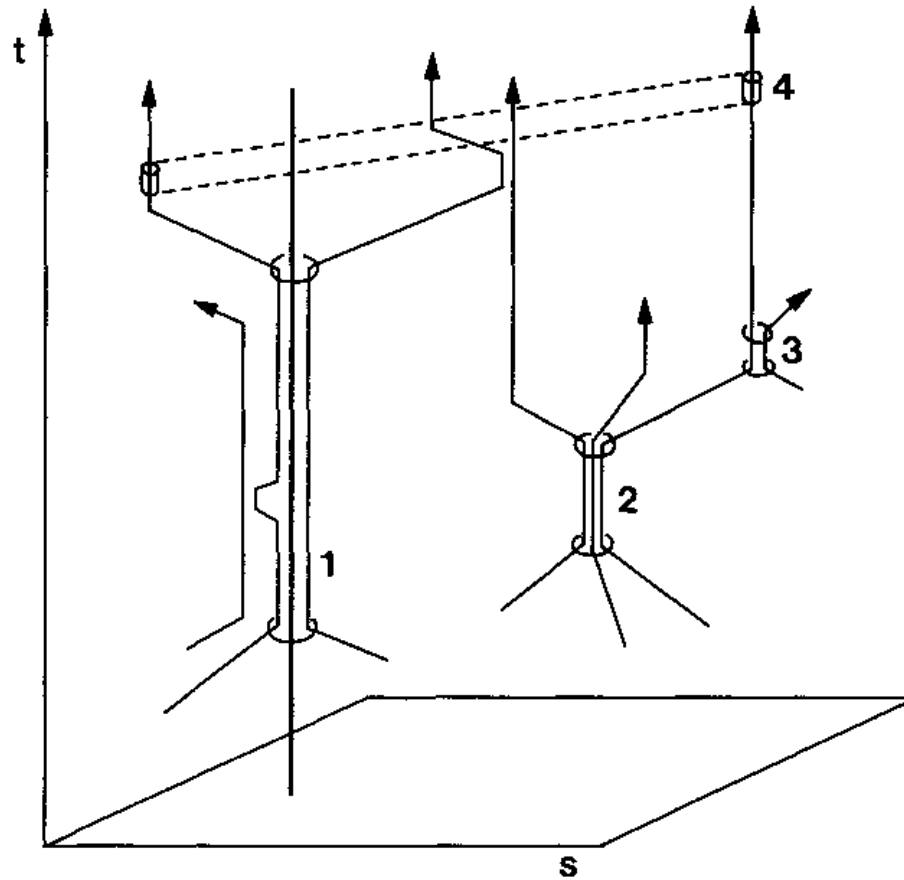


The „space-time aquarium“

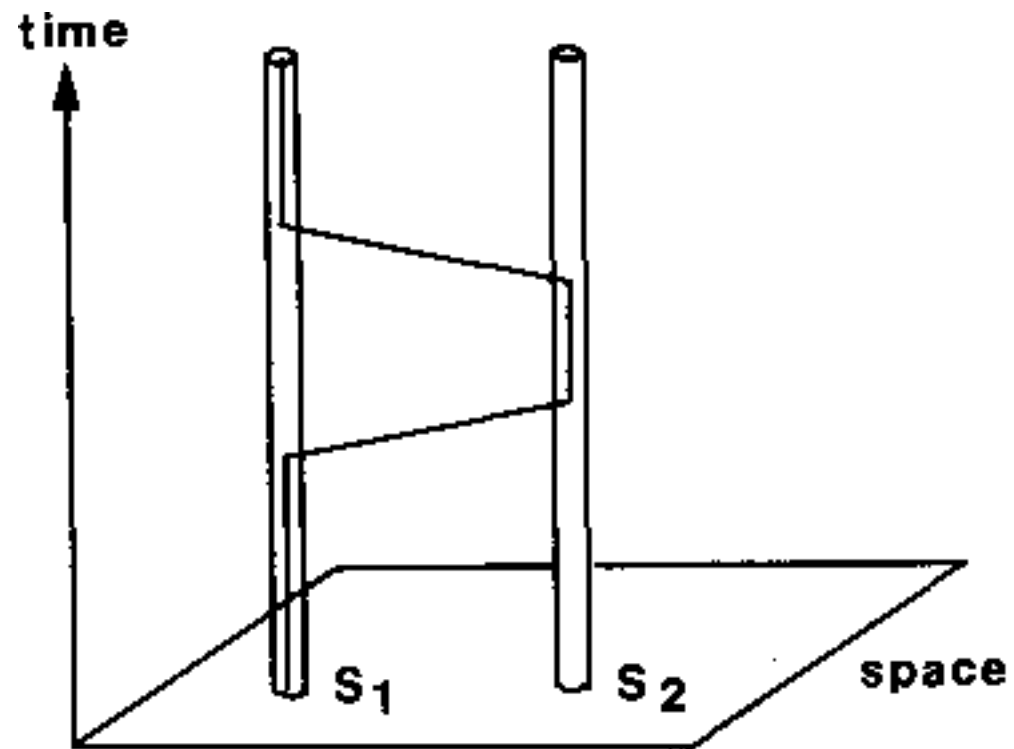
Paths without and with „constraints“



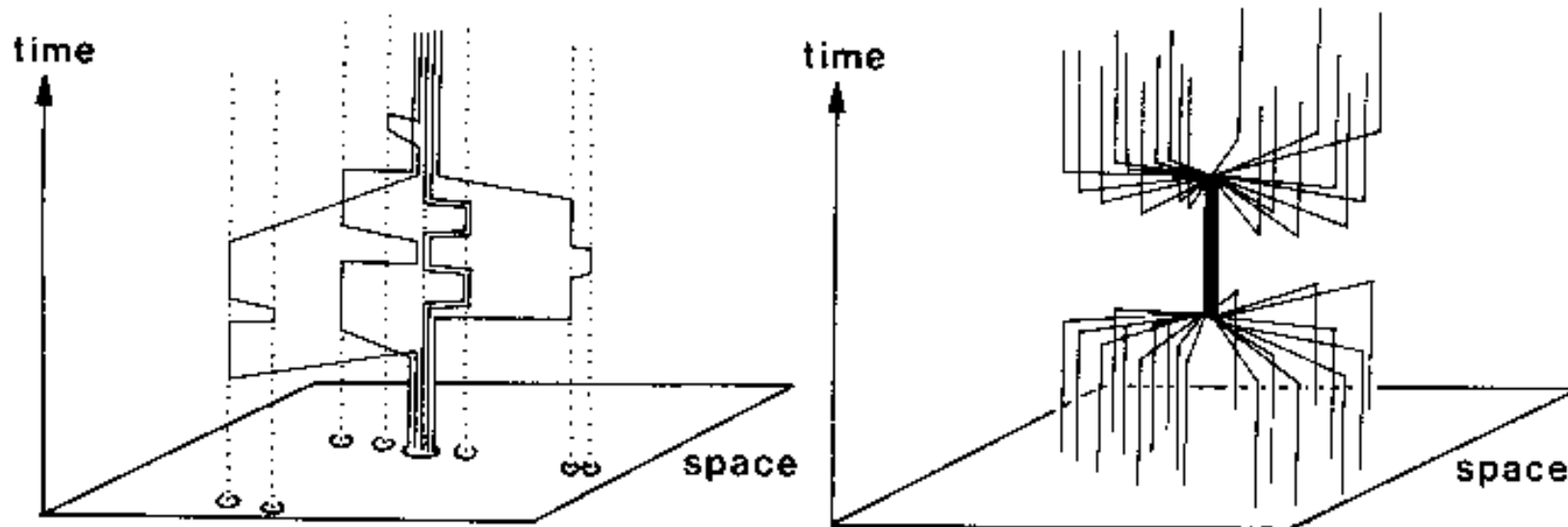
Paths, stations, bundles



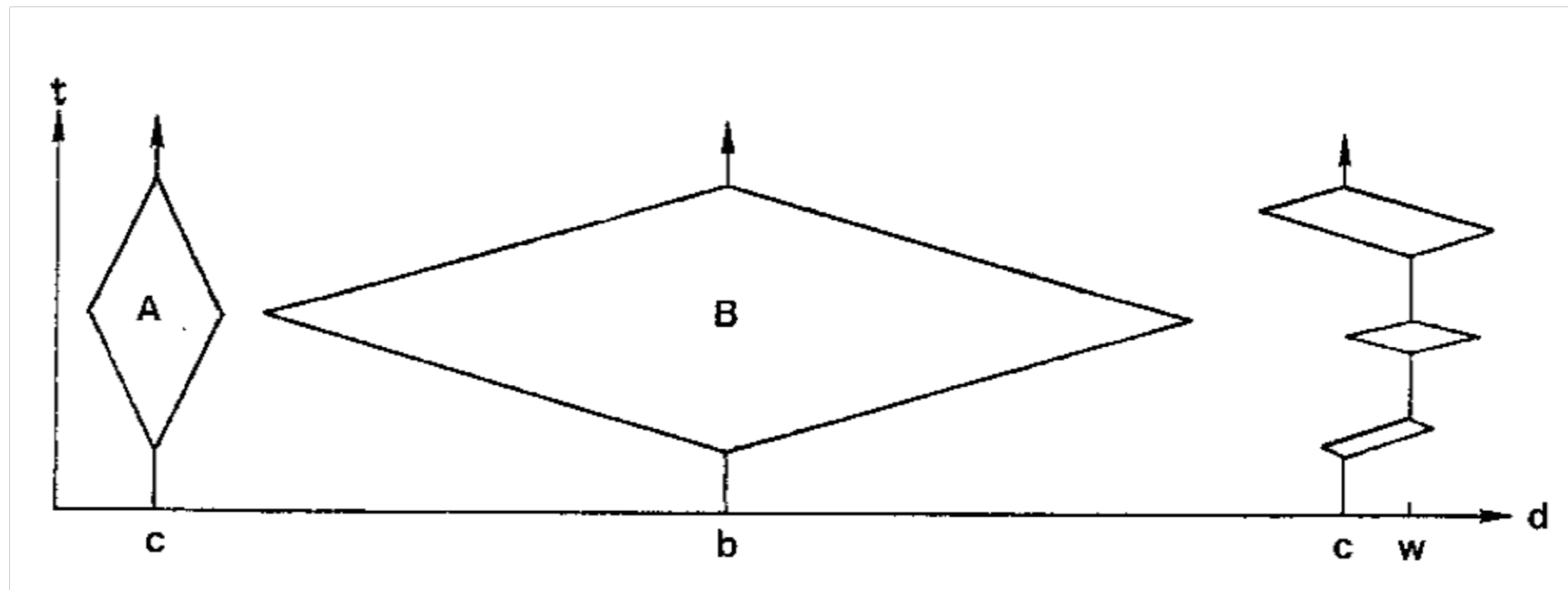
Different types of stations (S1: living place, S2: school or workplace)



Bundles at different stations



„The return principle“ - „Prisms“: the spatial manifestation of *capability constraints*

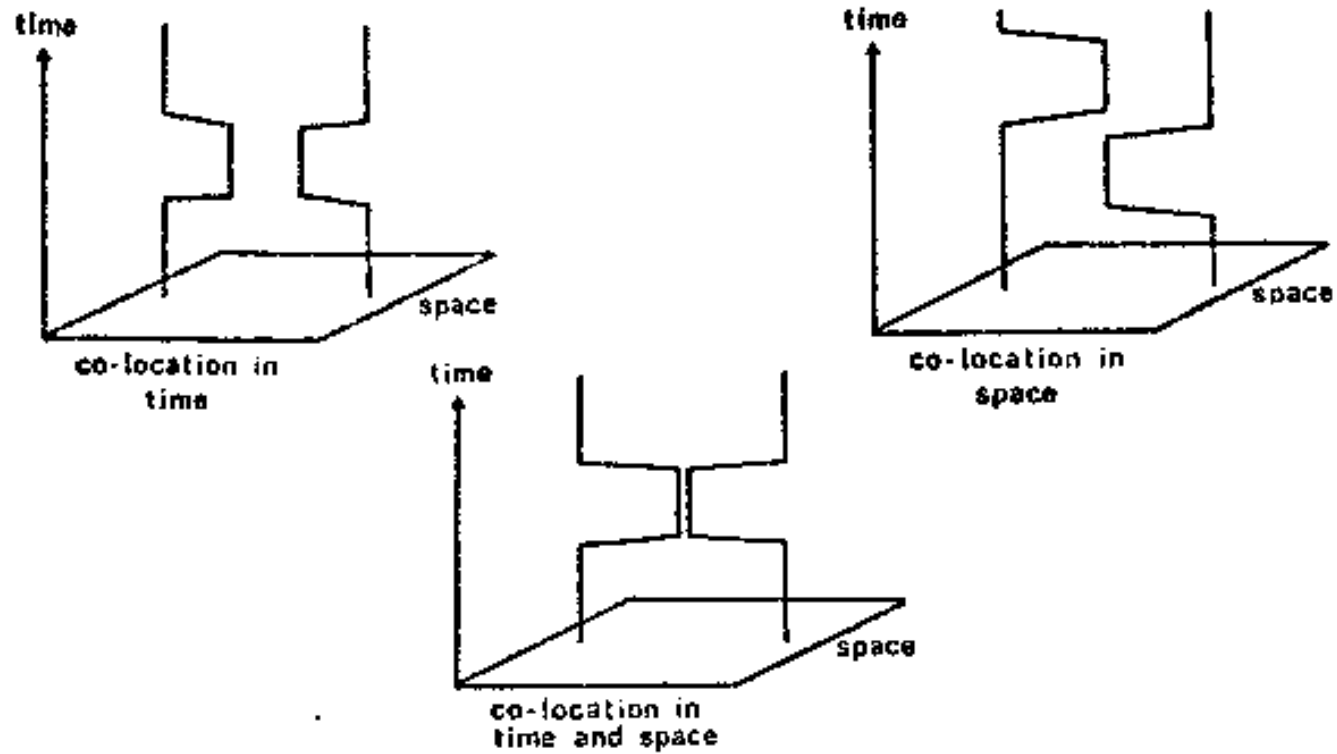


pedestrian

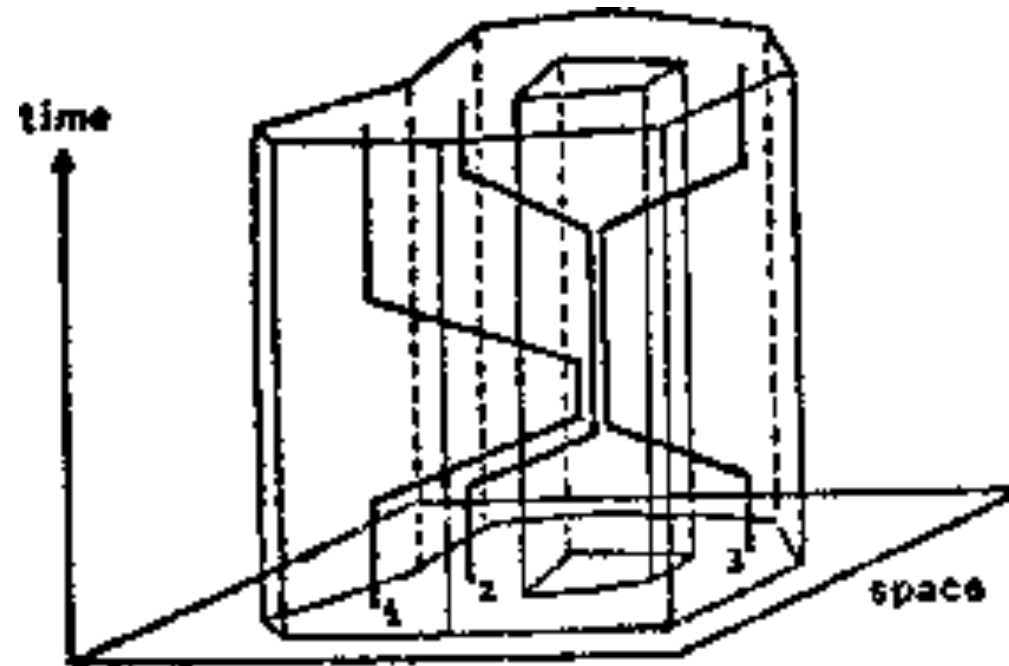
Car driver

Two work periods

„Co-location“: Dealing with *coupling constraints*



„Domains“: Geography of *authority constraints*



WHAT TO DO WITH THIS?

- A new geographical perspective
 - Focus on individuals
 - Focus on social practice
 - The path idea
 - Time geography failed with its methodological ambitions:
Complexity of 52 (!) concepts
 - Taken up by sociological theory - e.g. Giddens
 - Strong criticism about one-sided relation between structure and agency
- *Space-time constraints are drivers of everyday routines*



WHAT TO DO WITH THIS (2)?

- A more fluid perspective of time-space based e.g. on structuration
 - Social practice seeks to escape from constraints
 - From “temporal structuring“ (Orlikowski and Yates) to „time-space structuring“
- *FCEs as tools for time-space structuring of fields: removers of constraints*

