

Unit 10 – Social Change

- How/why do things change?
- Different sociological perspectives on social change
- Into a new era (?)

- 
- What causes social change to happen?

Different Types of Change

- Intentional (within power structures vs. outside of them)
- Unintentional (paying attention the “side effects”)

The Founders on Social Change





Emile Durkheim

Trajectory : Increasing complexity

Effects : Adaptation and reorientation; shifts in function from one sphere to another



Education

Demographics
& Population

Economy

Politics

Norms

Roles

Tools &
Technology

Culture

Law & Rules

Family

Religion

Community



Max Weber

Trajectory : Rationalization, bureaucratization,
individualization

Effects : Disenchantment; unintended
consequences



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Karl Marx

Trajectory : Intensifying conflict

Effects : Exposure of contradictions; volatility;
revolution

Contemporary Perspectives

Why do some things change (sometimes) and some things stay the same?



Ingredients for Change

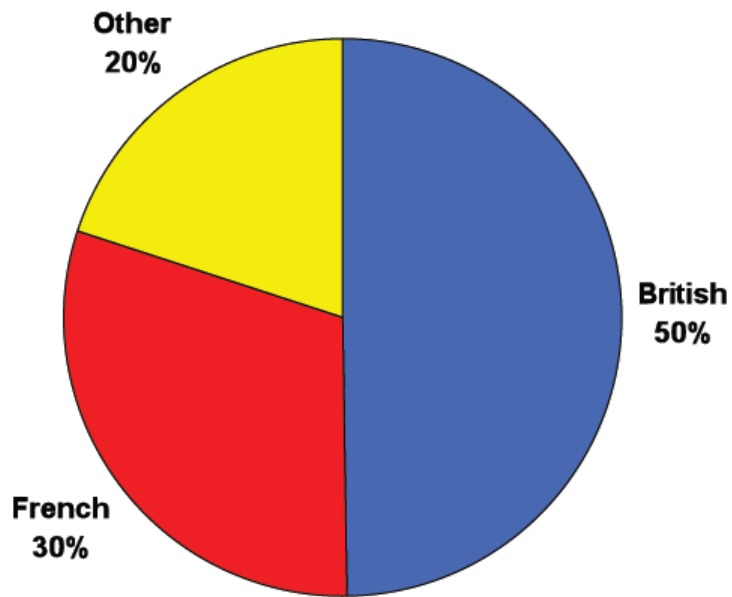
- Underlying conditions (inequality, demographics)
- Catalysts (technologies, events)
- Opportunity structure (public sentiment, institutions, elites)

Contemporary Perspectives on Change

The functionalist view

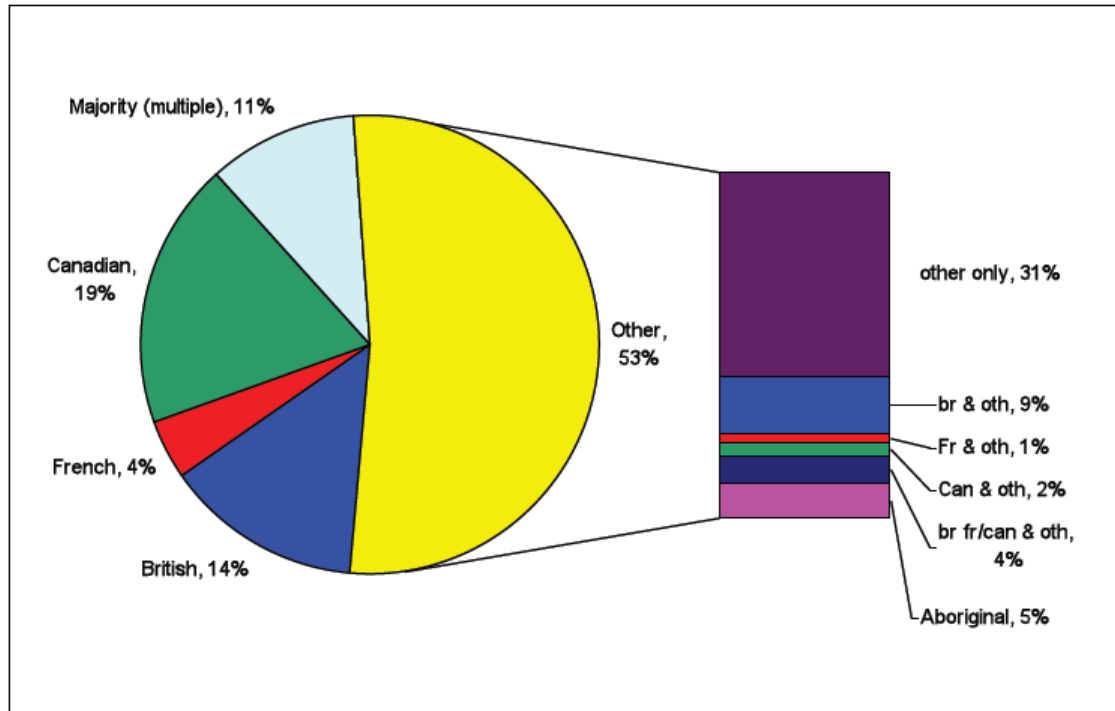
- Key issue is not change, but continuity
- Change is OK so long as institutions and norms can handle it (gradual, evolutionary)

Ethnic origin, Canada, 1941



Source: 1941 Census of Canada

Ethnic origin, Canada, 2006

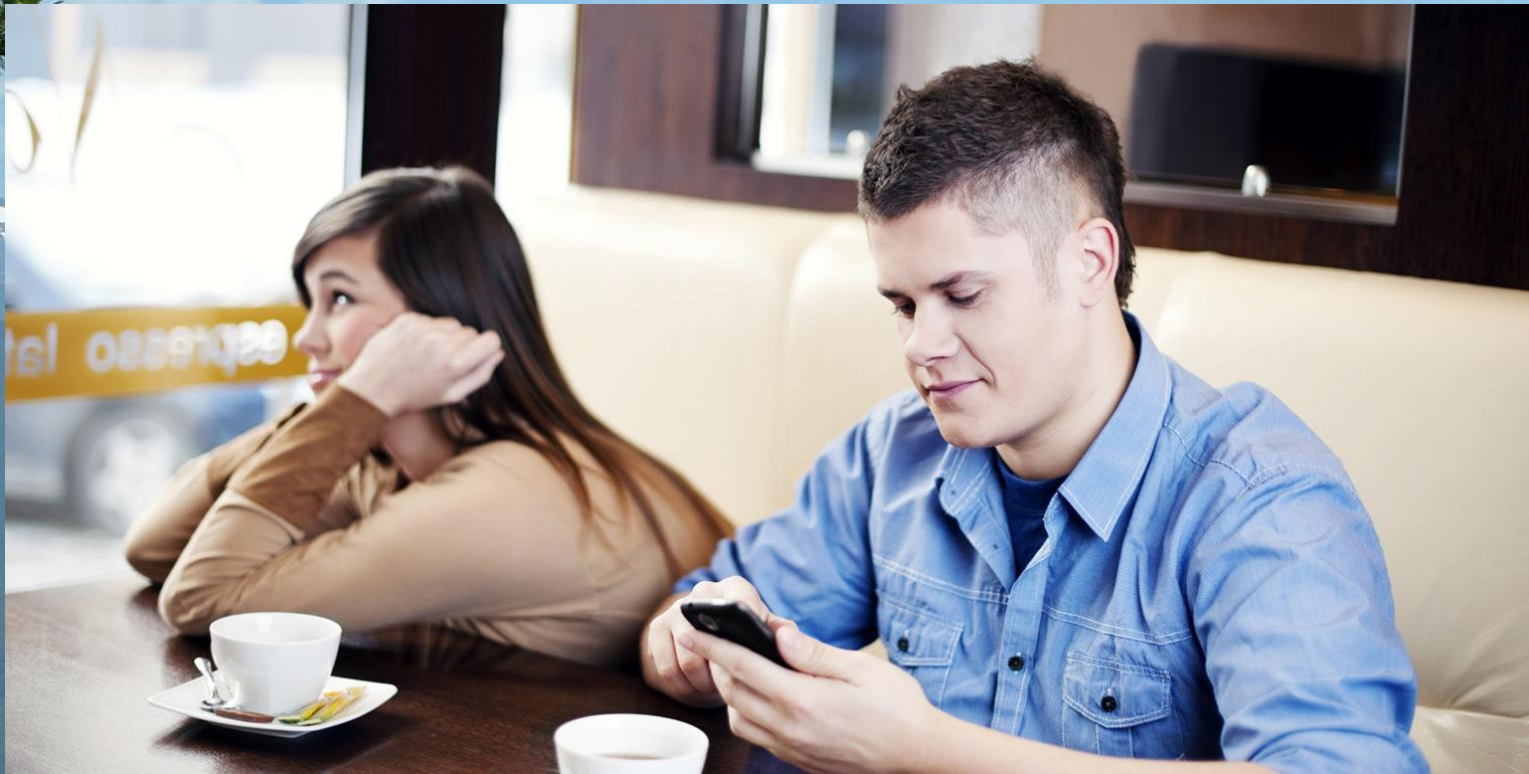


Source: 2006 Census of Canada

Contemporary Perspectives on Change

The functionalist view

- Key issue is not change, but continuity
- Change is OK so long as institutions and norms can handle it (gradual, evolutionary)
- Problem of “anomie”



Contemporary Perspectives on Change

The Interactionist view

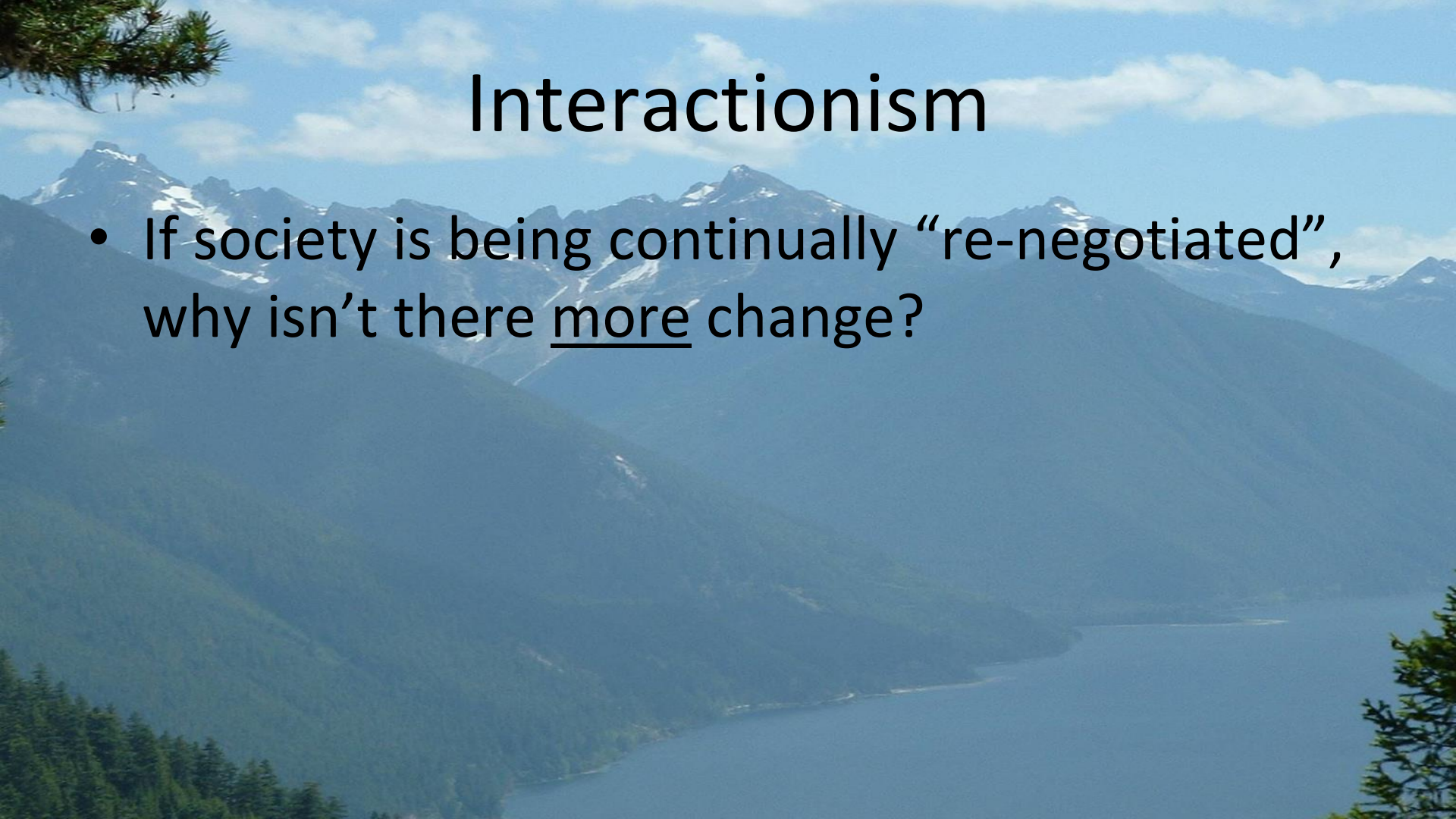
- Society is a product of interpersonal negotiation, so is constantly being “re-negotiated”
- The power of ideas and symbols (culture as vanguard)

“The Culture Wars”



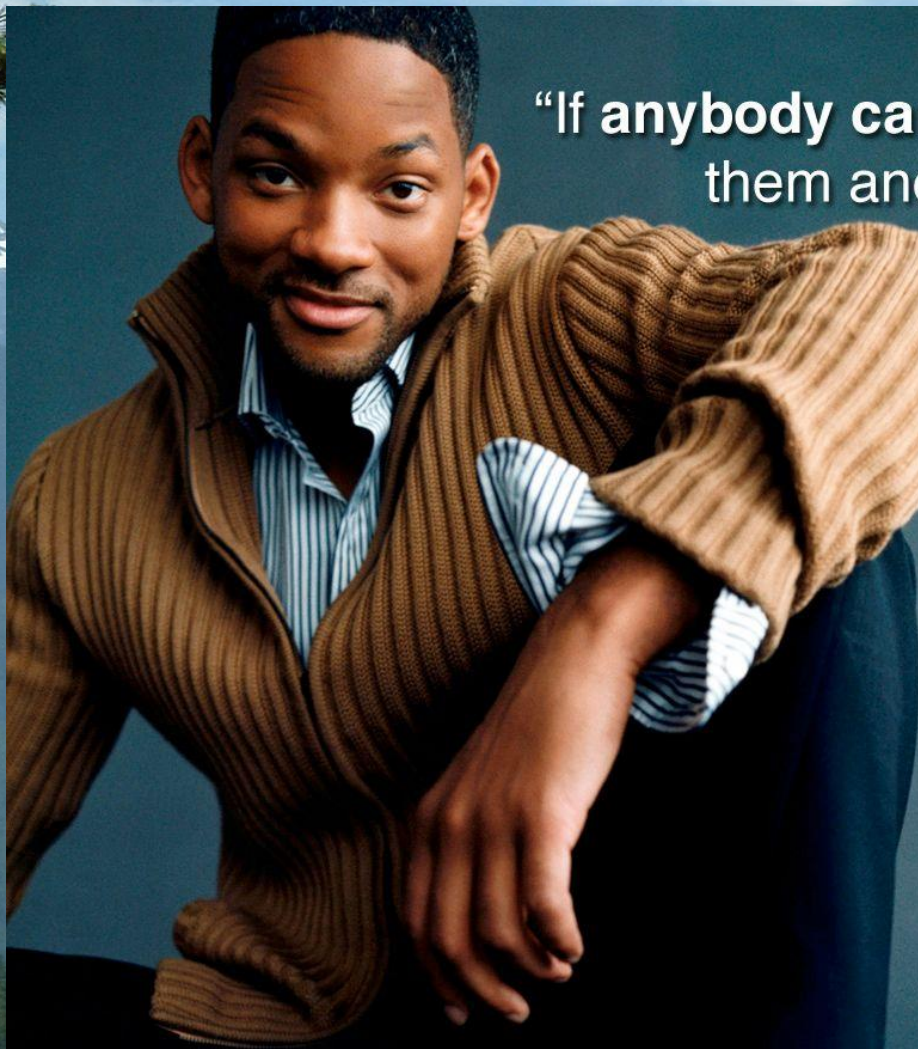
Interactionism

- If society is being continually “re-negotiated”, why isn’t there more change?



Interactionism

- The challenge of reaching across “social worlds”
 - Change is easier at the “sub-cultural” level than at the “master culture” level



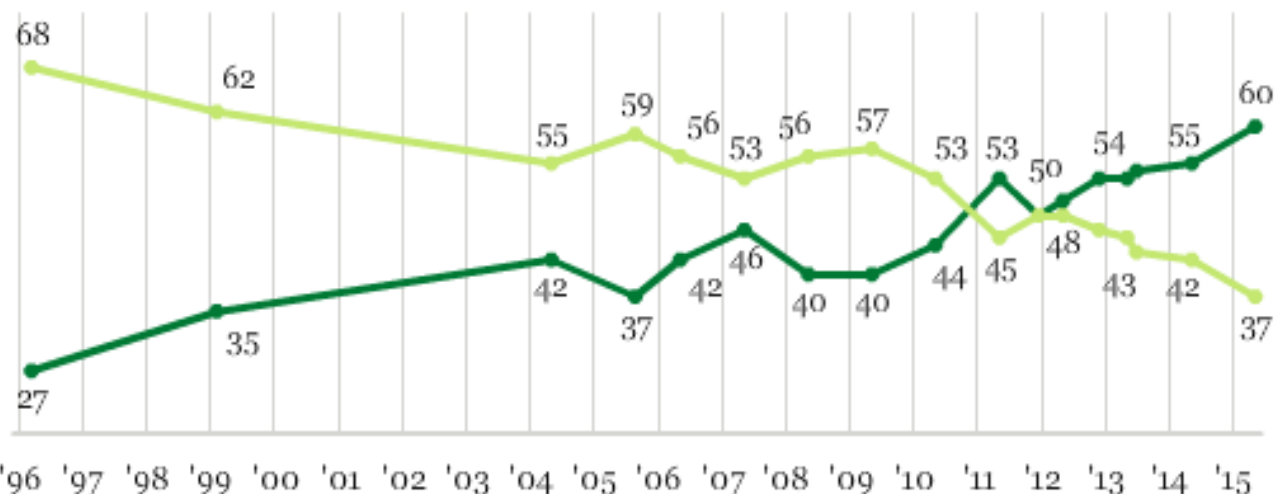
“If **anybody** can find someone to **love** them and to **help** them through this *difficult* thing that we call **life**, I **support** that in **any shape or form.**”

- *Will Smith*

Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?

■ % Should be valid

■ % Should not be valid



Note: Trend shown for polls in which same-sex marriage question followed questions on gay/lesbian rights and relations
1996-2005 wording: "Do you think marriages between homosexuals ..."

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Contemporary Perspectives on Change

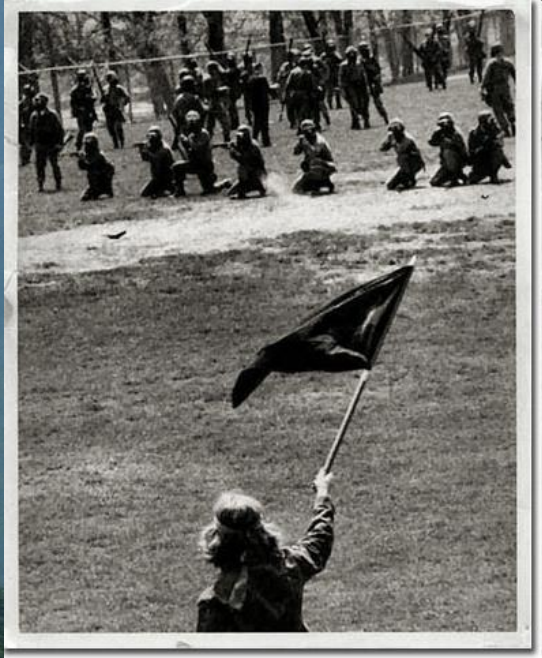
The conflict theory view

- Conflict between the advantaged and disadvantaged (perpetual but usually hidden)
- Grievances based on inequality and power imbalances build up
- Earthquake (sudden change)

Earthquake



Earthquake



Conflict Theory Views on Social Change

Outcomes

- Sudden radical change, or ...
- Compromise to protect the system

Into a New Era?

- Is social change accelerating?



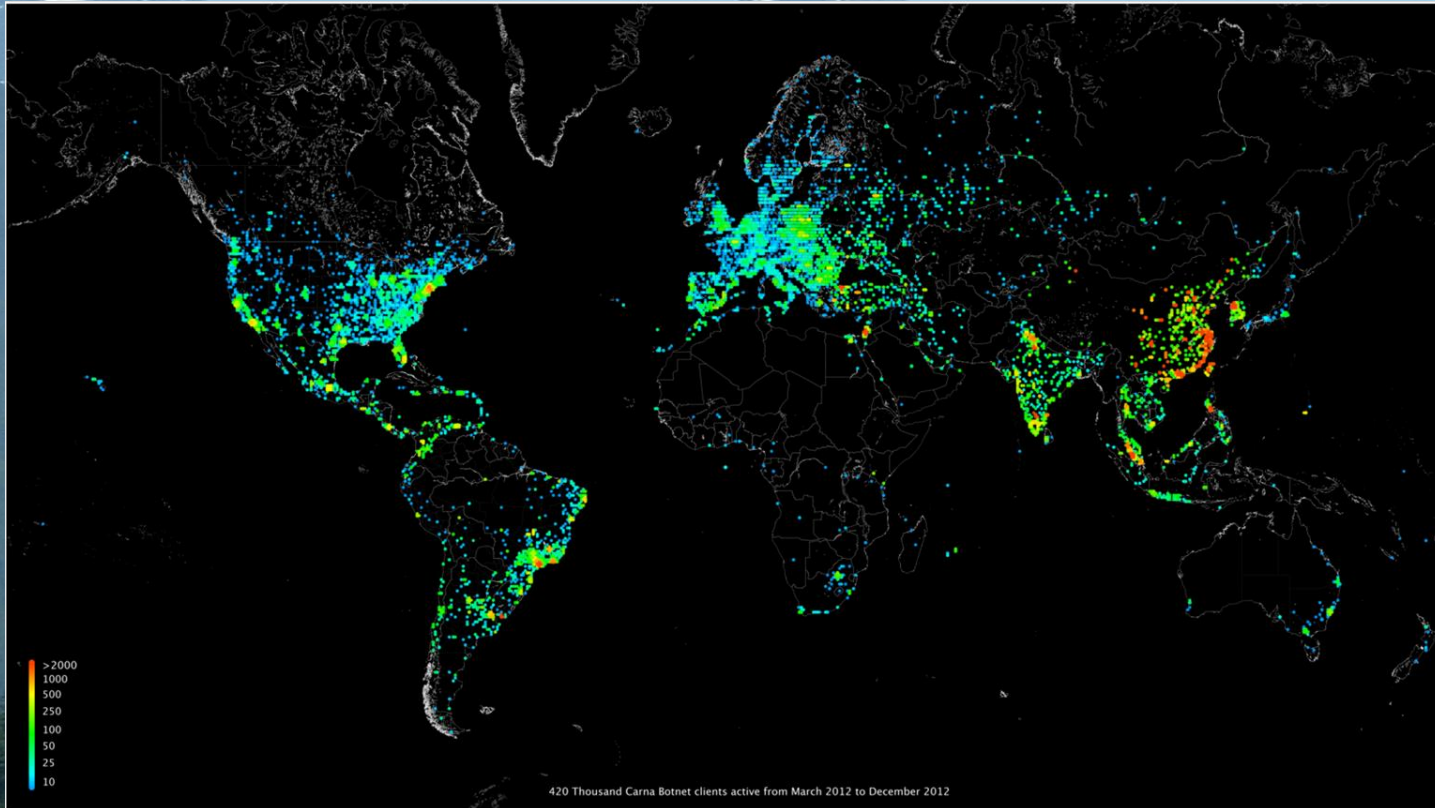
Into a New Era ?

- Globalization

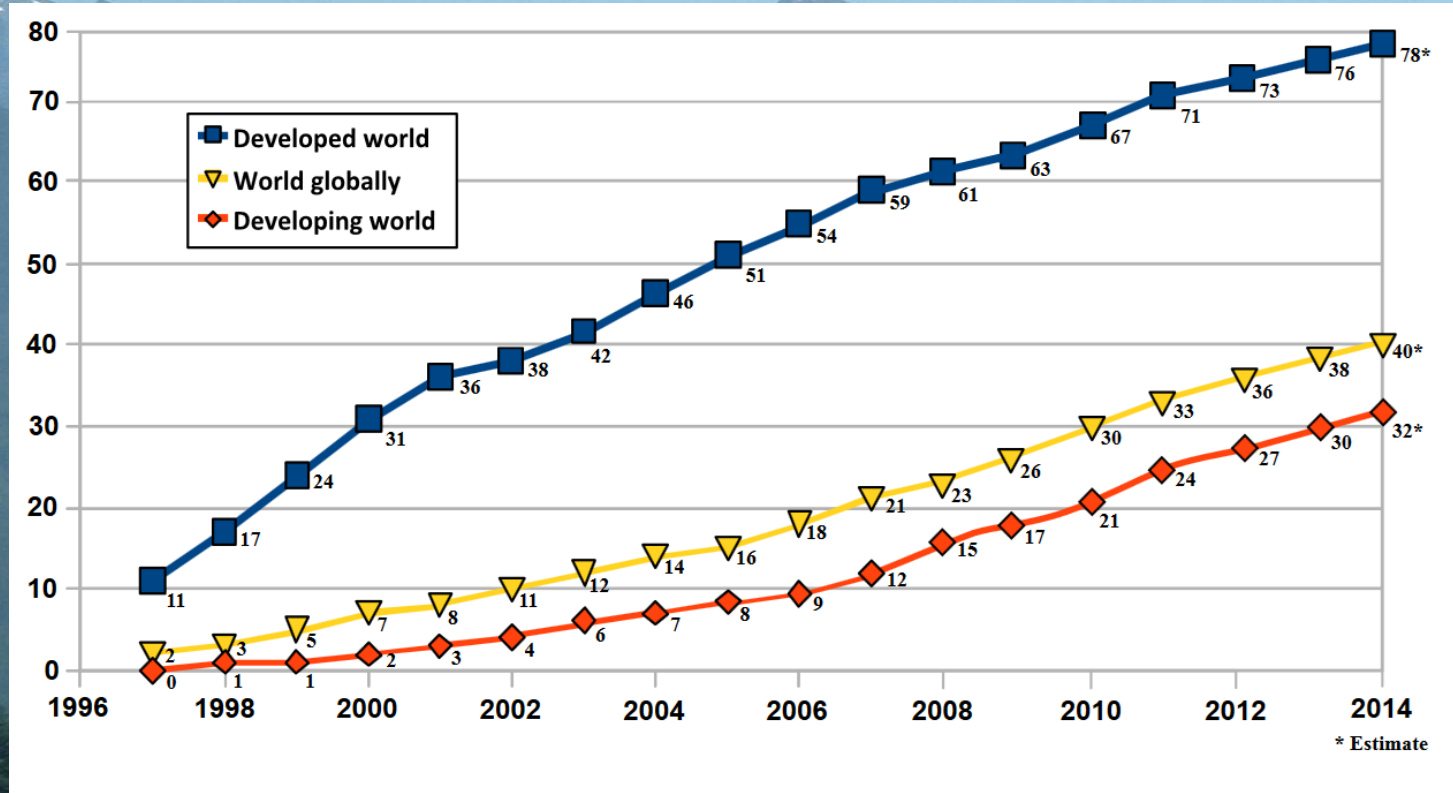


Photo credit: Irina Ovchinnikova / Shutterstock.com

Into a New Era ?



Into a New Era ?



New Challenges on the Horizon

- New “big” divisions
- New technologies are outpacing our ability to understand them
- The future of capitalism and democracy
- The limits of the Earth
- Individualism? Communitarianism? Tribalism?

Sociology and Social Change

- Understanding that the world is both complex and highly patterned
- Analysis, then activism

A personal plea



Be A Good Sociologist

1. Pay attention to the news.
1. Embrace the puzzles. Think deep. Look for evidence. Repeat.
3. Question everything.