

Social movements



Defining Social Movements

Collective behavior and social change

- Collective behavior
 - Very broad category
 - Groups coordinating action
(not necessarily deliberately or toward a goal)
 - Variety of causes and consequences
- Social change
 - Very broad category
 - Change in institutions, norms, culture, values
(not necessarily through deliberate action)
 - Wide range of causes
- Social movements incorporate both
- ***Deliberate*** push for social change through collective action (of non-elites)
Successful or unsuccessful

Social movements



Social movements

Broad(er) definition

- Any collective force working to change society
- Examples abound throughout history
 - Revolution
 - Mass violence
 - Coalitions forcing change

Narrow(er) definition

- Specific form of institutionalized political activity (Charles Tilly)
- “Social movements” are defined by organizations or groups of organizations—*campaigns*
- Repertoire of *actions*
 - Rallies; marches; petitions; public statements; vigils; ...
- Historically specific form
 - Emerged in 18th century
 - Specific to modern democratic ideals and “civil society”

Theories of Social Movements

Social movement theories

What is there to explain?

- **Emergence**
Why do social movements arise?
What conditions favor a concerted, collective effort to change the status quo?
- **Success**
How do social movements achieve their goals?
What increases a movement's chances of
- **Persistence**
Why do social movements last?
What helps certain social movements maintain relevance?

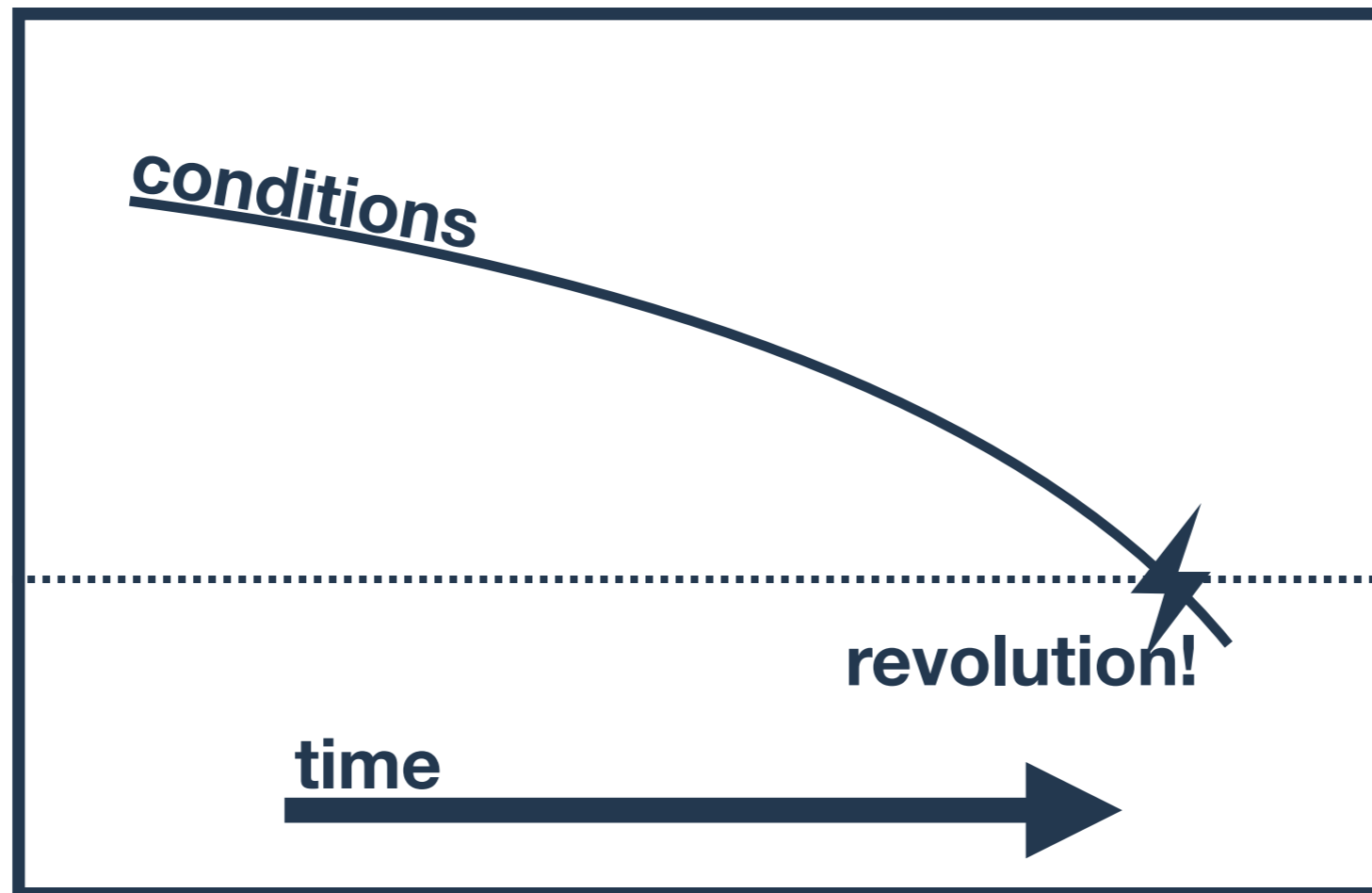
Explanatory theories

- Many, many theoretical approaches to the study of social movements
- We will discuss four prominent sociological perspectives

Social movement theories

1a. (*Absolute*) deprivation theory

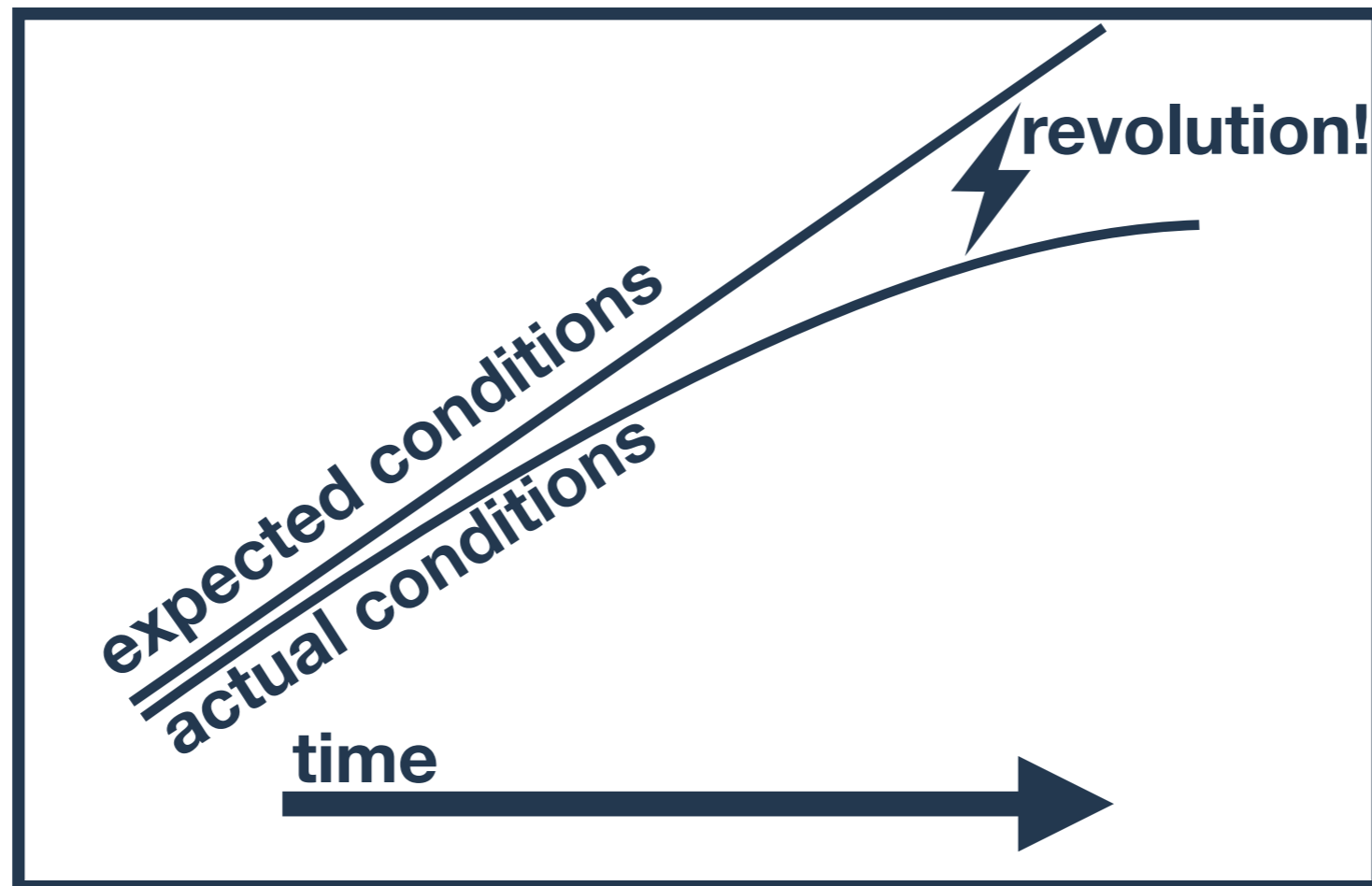
- Aims to explain the *emergence* of social movements
- People will organize against oppression if material conditions fall below breaking point
- Marx & Engels
Capital accumulation will lead to absolute deprivation of workers, resulting in revolution



Social movement theories

1b. *Relative deprivation theory*

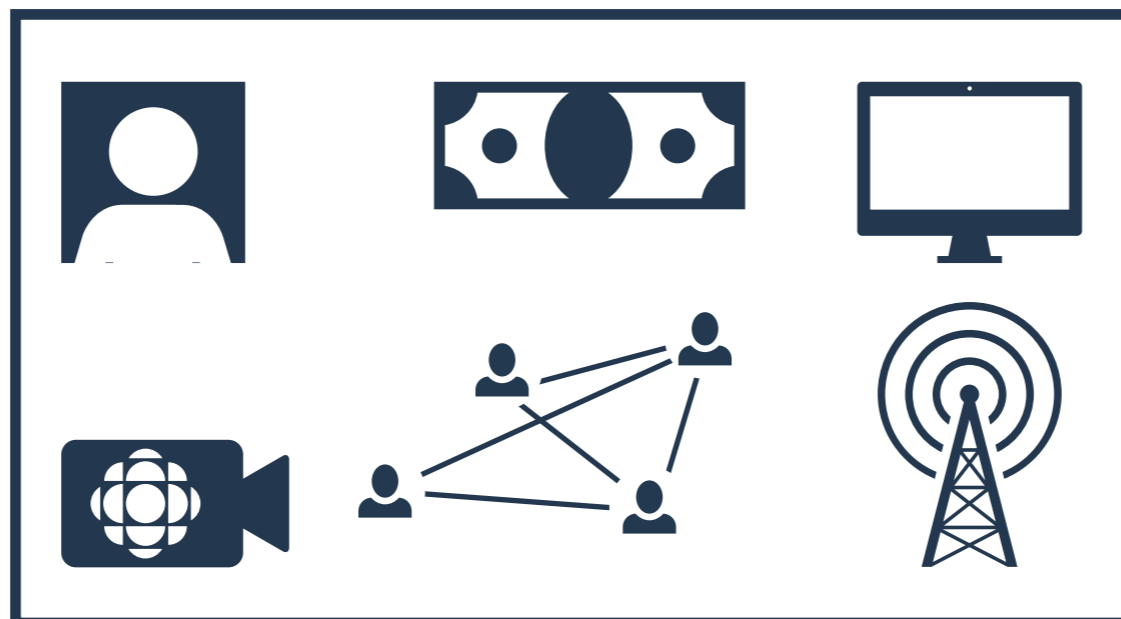
- Revolts occur even when people have the basic requirements for survival
- Important factor is the difference between actual conditions and expectations



Social movement theories

2. Resource mobilization theory

- To *emerge*, *succeed*, and *persist*, social movements need resources.
Money; leadership; people; networks; attention; ...
- Many causes have large numbers of supporters, but *not* all causes build successful movements.
- Movements exist because they are able to acquire resources *and* mobilize those resources actively and strategically.
- Approach focusses on *organizations* and their *administration*.



3. Political opportunity theory

- Emergence and success of social movements depends on the political context.
- Some dimensions of political opportunity:
 - **Access:**
(Perceived) ability to affect policy processes
 - **Instability:**
Disruptions of existing coalitions (party politics)
 - **Allies:**
Sympathetic and influential political actors
 - **Elite conflict:**
Schisms and discord among political actors
- Focus on *interplay* between state and movements.
- State action has sway over movement outcomes.
Changes in voting laws may change types of political allies
Changes in governance structure may lead to elite conflict

4. Frame theory

- Application of frame analysis (symbolic interactionism)
Frames are clusters of basic, contextual expectations about roles, behavior, responses, *relevant criteria of judgement*
- Frames provide legitimacy, encouraging participation in social movements.
- Movements are not just about resources, specific grievances, or political goals
- Value orientations, expectations of social structures, ideas about tactics, etc. can be at odds even if broad grievances are the same
E.g. liberal versus radical feminist movements
- Frame matters as much as content
Opposition to genetically modified food can be framed in terms of health, environmental justice, anti-capitalism, ...

Social movement theories

Some types of frames:

(David Snow et al.)

- **Diagnostic frame**
What is the problem that needs to be addressed?
- **Prognostic frame**
What should be done about it?
- **Motivational frame**
Why should I get involved?

Frame alignment

- Frames can explain alliances between movements and social movement organizations.
- “Compatibility” can exist outside of end goals .
- E.g. Why do alliances form between movements with drastically different ends?
American Zionists and Evangelical Christians may share a *prognostic* frame

Social movement theories

Types of frame alignment

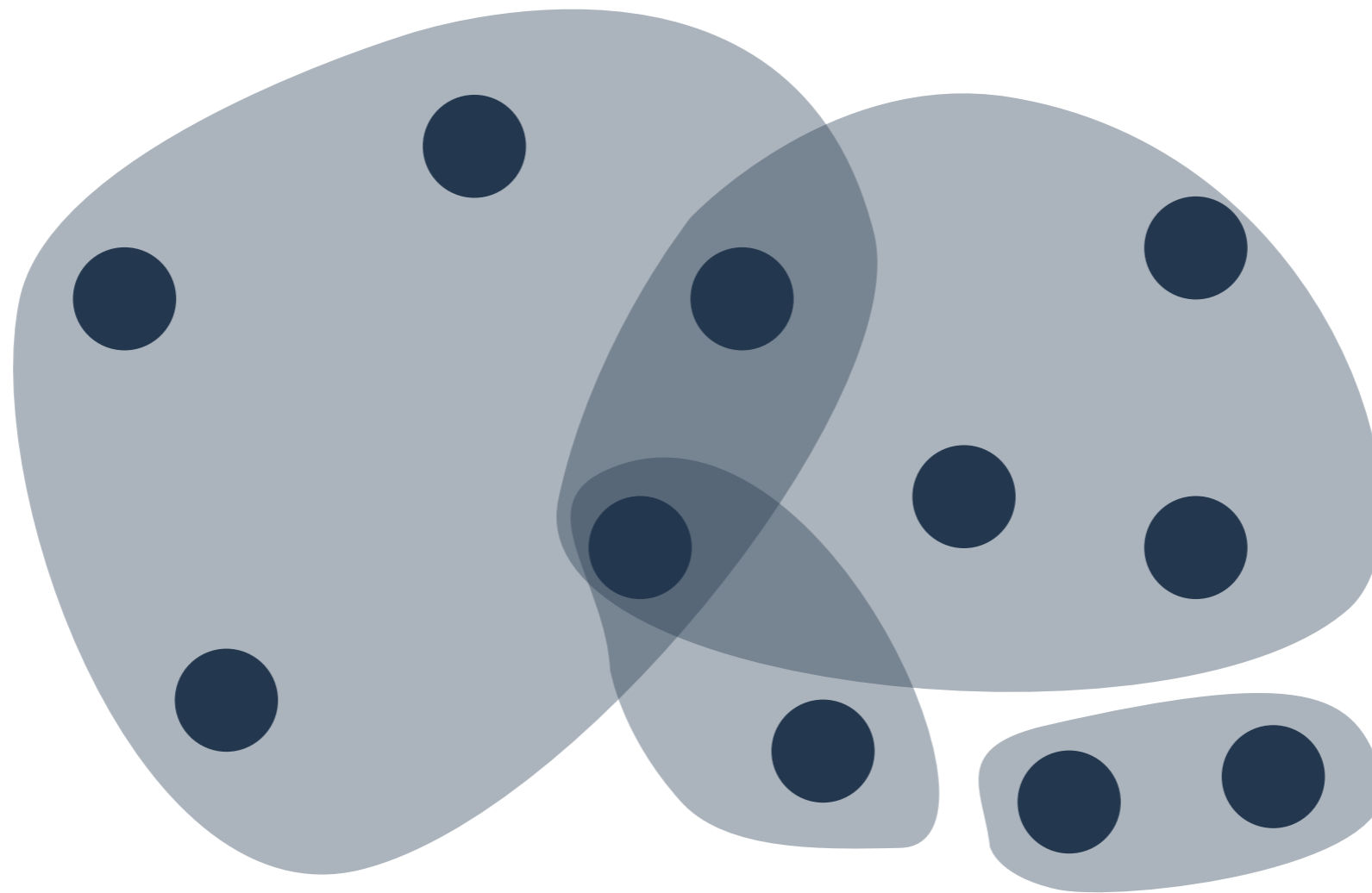
- **Bridging:**
Previously unconnected individuals or groups unite through common frame
Often involves groups being subsumed under umbrella group
E.g. small, local groups organizing under the national banner of Black Lives Matter
- **Amplification:**
Movements state goals in multiple frames to amplify appeal
E.g. animal rights activists utilizing environmental and health frames
- **Extension:**
Broaden frame to encompass other movements
E.g. Civil rights groups promoting feminist ideals as in alignment with their own
- **Transformation:**
Adopt new frame in place of existing frames
E.g. Mothers Against Drunk Driving shifting focus to other drugs and teen drinking

Social Movements and Social Relations

Movements and relations

Network perspective

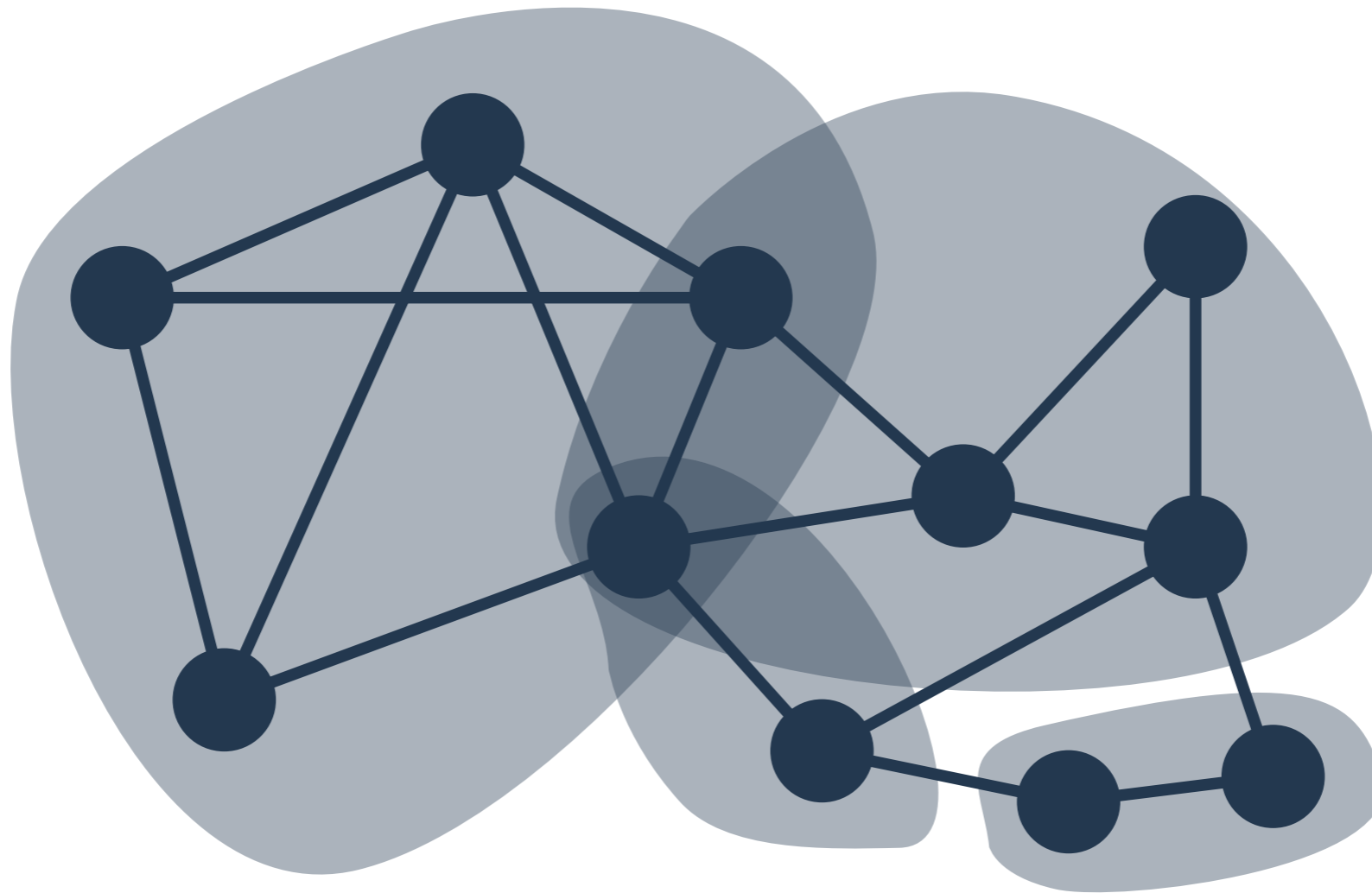
Individual movement participants and their relationships



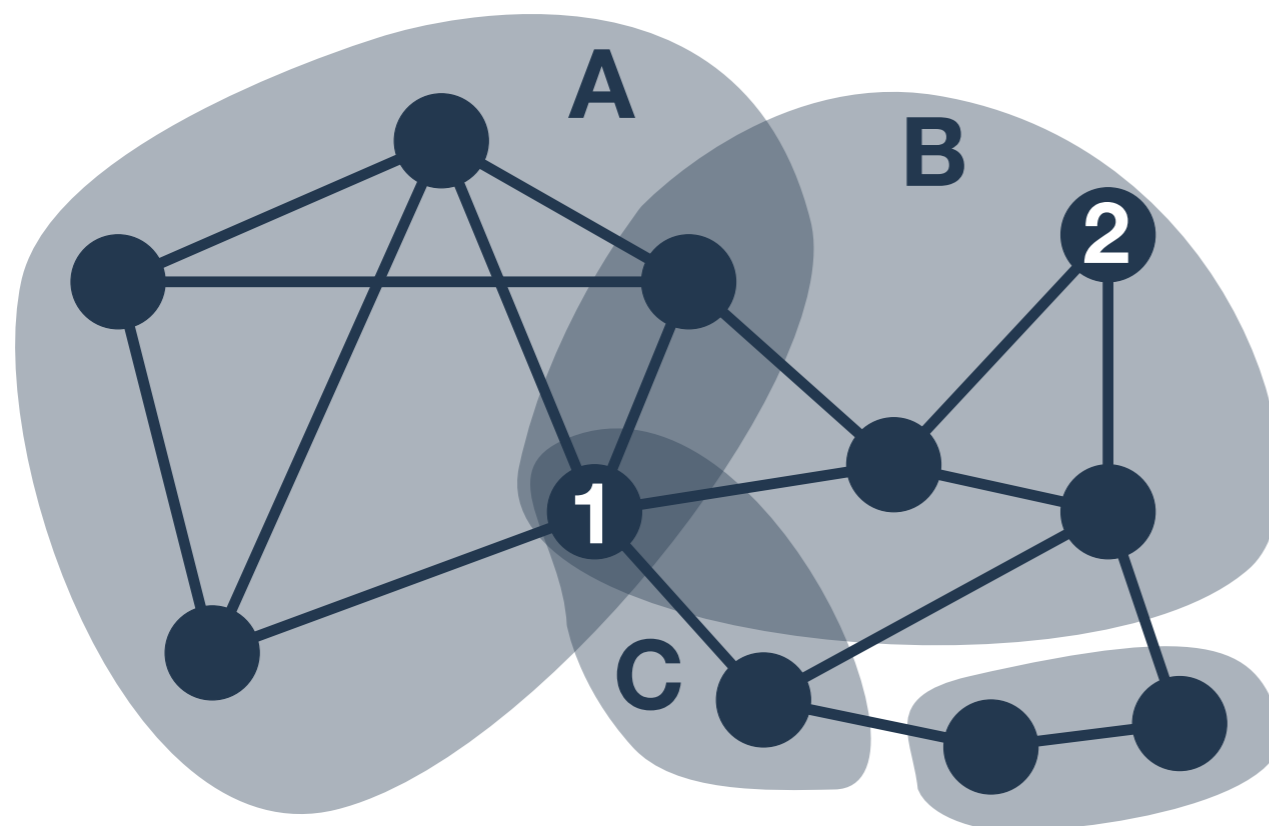
Movements and relations

Network perspective

Individual movement participants and their relationships



Movements and relations



Group cohesion

Group A may have a clearer sense of collective identity than group B

Transmission

Identities, repertoires, and frames can be spread through networks

Overlap

People like 1 can bridge groups through multiple membership, while people like 2 have a more unitary role

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