

Theory

Winter 2019/2020 Newsletter



Sociological
Theory

Co- chairs

Craig Browne
The University of Sydney, Australia
craig.browne@sydney.edu.au

Bradley West
University of South Australia, Australia
brad.west@unisa.edu.au

Secretary/ Treasurer

Eleanor Townsley
Mount Holyoke College, USA
etownsle@mtholyoke.edu

Newsletter Editors

Dmitry Kurakin
National Research University Higher School of
Economics, Russia
dmitry.kurakin@hse.ru

Dean Ray
York University, Canada
deanray@yorku.ca

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Editors' Introduction

Dmitry Kurakin and Dean Ray

This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to the most important forthcoming event of our research network – the mid-term conference, which is scheduled for 2–4 July 2020, at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. This much anticipated meeting of colleagues and friends will be prefaced with a one-day mini-conference on civil sphere theory, organized by Jeffrey Alexander, Csaba Szaló, and Brad West.

Of course, at this point there is a huge uncertainty concerning all academic events due to the spread of coronavirus, and there is a chance the conference will be re-scheduled. In fact, that is the reason why the registration has not yet opened. We hope that the virus will weaken and eventually vanish for the summer, but we have to be ready for less positive scenarios. While we all are awaiting news from the different parts of the world, and from Brno in particular, we believe that the materials we publish in this issue won't lose any of their interest even in the case of a rescheduled conference. We thus may have to suffer through a period that lacks one of the most attractive parts of academic life, which is travelling around and meeting fellow scholars.

In this issue, we wanted to share some knowledge about our hosts and the venue of the conference. Dmitry Kurakin used the opportunity to visit our colleagues in Masaryk University this January, and, following that visit, this issue includes an interview with Csaba Szaló and Werner Binder, the members of the organizing committee of the mid-term conference. In this interview, they talk about their department and research center, their own research and teaching, international network of scholars, forthcoming conference and pre-conference, Brno itself, and many other things. For instance, Werner and Csaba share with us some fascinating facts about sociology in Brno, which you would otherwise never get to know.

This issue also includes the first English translation of an important piece from Karl Mannheim on cultural sociology. In this excerpt he proposed that cultural sociology is one of the three basic types of sociology. This piece thus can make one reconsider some popular readings of Mannheim's heritage, which is generally associated with his major project of sociology of knowledge.

The translation was performed by Werner Binder and is prefaced by his comprehensive introduction. In that introduction, Werner gives a brief outline of Mannheim's take on cultural sociology, the project he might seem to have abandoned, its place in the wider structure of his theory, its connection to a more renown project of cultural sociology created by Alfred Weber, its parallels and tensions with new cultural sociology, including "the strong program", and some new studies which benefit from or might have been benefited by Mannheim's project of cultural sociology.

We also have calls for papers and many important announcements concerning published and forthcoming books. In particular, take a note on the announcement (with a discount code for the readers of the newsletter!) of Philip Smith's eagerly awaited book "Durkheim and After", which is going to be published very soon.

Please be careful and safe, read the newsletter, and hope to see you if not very soon then soon enough.

Interview

Csaba Szaló and Werner Binder, the organizers of RC16 mid-term conference

Dmitry: Hi Csaba, hi Werner, you are the hosts and organizers of the most important event that RC16 is going to have this year – the mid-term conference. You both represent the Center for Cultural Sociology at Masaryk University. I have enjoyed keeping in touch with the team at your center for a decade, attending your conferences, working and publishing together, and organizing joint events and initiatives, so I know firsthand that you are a truly vibrant academic community, one that is rich with ideas and thoughts, and also well-connected academically. Could you please tell a couple of words about the history of your research group?

Werner: Especially in a small country like the Czech Republic it is of crucial importance to be internationally connected. I think also our students benefit from it, being able to listen to guest speakers and teachers, and generally having the feeling of being connected to broader global discourses.

Csaba: I have to mention Radim Marada, who played a crucial role in the establishment of our Centre for Cultural Sociology and the Identities in Conflict - Conflicts in Identities conference. He served as a Head of Department for a long time with a deep interest in making sociology in Brno fully international. The first of our annual Identities conference was organised exactly twenty years ago, in October 2000. The format and atmosphere of the meeting can demonstrate the core practice of our academic tradition: intensive and theoretically sensitive discussions. We can easily recognise in this the traces of pre-1989 as well as Central European intellectual habits. We still enjoy engagement in a dialogue, although today it is often regarded as unproductive speculation and a waste of time. But seriously, a theoretical discourse has its mode of temporality, which is closer to the rhythmic patterns of coffees and pubs than that of the railway stations and airports.

Werner: Despite the fact that I had been already visiting Brno for the Identities conference in 2008, I only learned by chance of a job opening here in 2012, just after I had submitted my PhD thesis at the University of Konstanz. I started in Brno on a post-doc position that was funded by a special program of the European Union and since 2015 I have become a regular faculty member. I particularly enjoy the collegial atmosphere and academic freedom in Brno, which is very different from the feudal

system at German universities. While we are all pretty busy, of course, we created opportunities to discuss each other's works, in particular Nadya Jaworsky's Cultural Sociology of Migration workshop, the Supper Club which I am organizing but also the Identities conference in Fall.

Dmitry: During these years, the center performed programs of research on identity and migration, on the matters of historical imagination, on the problem of generations and of historical memory. As I see it, everything you do is very much theory-driven. What is your view on the role that theory plays in such an empirically-oriented discipline as sociology?

Werner: I personally don't like to juxtapose sociological theory and empirical research. I agree that most of our research is theory-driven but it is the friction generated by empirical research which prevents theories from becoming stale and ultimately sterile. I believe that the challenges and puzzles of empirical research are of crucial importance for theorizing and progress in sociological theory. At the same time, I think that the reductionism of many empirically-oriented approaches can be very dangerous. While we seemingly learn more about the social, we may end up understanding less, because it is theory that provides this understanding.

Csaba: As everywhere, also in Brno, we have been divided by the symbolic boundaries of quantitative, qualitative, and theoretical ways of doing sociology. At the same time, we cultivated an atmosphere of tolerance within our Department. I appreciate this mutual respect. Perhaps, there were several attempts to cooperate, to bridge this divide, nevertheless methodological concerns are usually stronger than ideals of theoretical coherence of interpretations or theoretical relevance of concepts. Nowadays, I acknowledge that it is the dominant mode of the academic division of labour which pushes theory into a servant position. What academic managers, administrators, and producers need is a set of useful conceptual frameworks that can be easily and quickly appropriated for research work. Thus, maybe we have to appeal more to the underlying value of autonomy because not only religious fanaticism but also a vehement commitment to the utility can erode our freedom of interpretation.

Dmitry: Your group has wide and long-standing academic networks. How do these networks influence what you do here at Masaryk University?

Csaba: Our recent affirmation of cosmopolitan and transnational academic culture is grounded on the experience of isolation during the communist regime. When I started to study sociology in the 1980's Czechoslovakia, not even our teachers had access to current Western sociological literature. However, one of them had spent two years in Frankfurt before 1968; thus he had incredible lectures about critical theory. When I entered the library of the New School for Social Research in 1990, I was shocked and amazed: I can now read everything I have just heard about! In this sense, narratives about the abnormality of academic isolation were playing a crucial role in various attempts to reform the university in the 1990's. The so-called "internationalisation" of

our university was an unquestioned priority, our aspirations were framed by the ideal of the cosmopolitan Western university. In this context, I have to mention the profound influence of the Yale's Center of Cultural Sociology on our Department.

Dmitry: I know that both the department of sociology, where your group is situated, and the Masaryk University itself, have an impressively rich history in the context of our discipline. Could you tell me a bit more about that?

Csaba: It was in 1921 when sociology arrived in Brno. Our founding father, Al Bláha, who studied with Durkheim during 1908-1909, started to lecture sociology at the university in that year. Sociology was fully institutionalised here by Bláha's full professorship a few years later in 1924. He was a representative of the classical positivist approach, thus from its beginnings, in contrast to Prague, for instance, sociology in Brno was dominantly empirical. It is not just a historical curiosity but also an important sign of the hopes sociology carried at those times, that both the first and second president of Czechoslovakia Tomas Garrigue Masaryk and Eduard Benes were sociologists. While Masaryk only taught sociology, Benes was a fully educated sociologist. Anyway, later, institutions of sociology were dissolved both by the Nazis in the late 1930's and Communists in the early 1950's. The revival of sociology in the years around 1968 was very significant for its full institutionalisation in the 1980's. Although the so-called normalisation in the 1970's pushed back academic sociology into a kind of grey zone, the utopian hopes of technoscience based economic reform in Czechoslovakia somehow brought back legitimacy at least to empirical sociology. It was this generation of 1968's and 1980's mainly empirical sociologists and psychologists who formed the core of the Faculty of Social Studies established in 1998.

Werner: When it comes to the intellectual history of Brno, it is also worth taking a look beyond our disciplinary boundaries. Gregor Mendel, the father of modern genetics, did his groundbreaking research in the monastery in Brno, where he is still commemorated with a museum. A lesser known fact is that Roman Jakobson, arguably one of the most influential scholars of the 20th century, held his first professorship in Brno – till he had to flee from the Nazi occupation in 1939. Currently, the Faculty of Social Studies is located in a former building of the old German technical university, at which Robert Musil, who can be considered a literary cultural sociologist, studied engineering. His father was a professor at the university, and a few meters behind the faculty you can still see the house where Musil used to live with his parents. Historically, Brno seemed to have suffered from brain-drain as the young German speakers gravitated towards Vienna, such as Musil himself, but also the mathematician Kurt Gödel and the economist Eugen Böhm-Bawerk, and the Czech speakers (such as Milan Kundera) towards Prague. Today, I believe, the situation has changed. Brno has become a very attractive city for students as well as scholars and is well-connected to Central European capitals such as Prague, Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest.

Dmitry: We discussed your wide academic network. I know that they embrace not only

research, but also important educational initiatives. Could you say a couple of words about your international master and PhD programs? Who do you think would be the most interested in studying at those programs?

Werner: We offer an English-language Sociology master and a Cultural Sociology master specifically. We have students from all over the world, some on scholarships, some of them paying our reasonably priced tuition. We are probably the best address in Central Europe for studying cultural sociology, furthermore our program seems to be very attractive for people without a sociological background but academic ambitions and aesthetic sensibilities.

Csaba: I have to mention our long-lasting cooperation with our colleagues in Trento, Graz, and Zadar. Our International Joint Master Degree in Cultural Sociology created a delicate opportunity to share courses, ideas, and students. Recently, because of administrative reasons, we are transforming this study program into a set of double degrees.

Werner: I would like to add that within this cultural sociological collaboration our department is still unique in being the only one that offers study program fully taught in English.

Dmitry: What are your expectations about the mid-term conference? Did you like the submissions you received? What do you think will be among the most promising themes of the conference?

Csaba: I remember our midterm conferences from Trento and Cambridge, as marked by an unceremonious atmosphere and intense discussions. We want to provide a place here for this kind of notable sessions and meetings. The original idea was to relate our midterm conference both to the historical changes that occurred in East-Central Europe as well as to the 1988 Cracow conference, which played a crucial role in the establishment of the Sociological Theory Research Committee. Perhaps, traditionally, the call was open also for other theoretical themes. After reviewing the proposals, it is clear that these “non-apocalyptic” themes will dominate. But we are not entitled to enforce unity in anything. To cultivate the tradition of the sociological theory requires responsiveness to a plurality of topics and perspectives.

Werner: I agree with Csaba. I hope we’ll have plenty room for discussion, within and outside of the official program, which is really something that distinguishes smaller conferences from big sociological congresses.

Dmitry: There will be also a pre-conference dedicated to the civil sphere theory, organized by Jeffrey Alexander and his colleagues. Could you say more about that?

Csaba: I have already mentioned the link between our Department and the CCS. We had a chance to debate here with Jeff Alexander and his colleagues several times,

Dominik Bartmanski spent his postdoc years here, and Nadya Jaworsky even decided to join us. Civil sphere theory gave rise to a global intellectual movement, and there are several books published and prepared on this theme. Nadya is directly involved in this collective inquiry. Thus, we were familiar with both the theme and the enthusiasm connected with it. Our involvement in sociological theory includes simultaneous normative, epistemological, and ontological concerns. Nowadays, we can observe a growing theoretical relevance of both utopias and dystopias. I understand the impact of civil sphere theory as somehow linked to the effort to offer a diagnosis of our times.

Werner: Considering the rise of populism and the even more recent wave of climate activism, I believe that civil sphere theory is more important than ever. I am curious to see what people are doing with it and therefore look very much forward to the pre-conference.

Dmitry: I am a big fan of Brno, so, I am happy the forthcoming mid-term conference will be held in this amazing city. In the summer that must be particularly nice. I know you have in mind some ideas for “extra-curricular activities”, which you probably want to keep a surprise for now, but do you possibly have general suggestions in terms of places to see or activities to consider while staying in Brno? Also: many people say that Czech beer is the best in the world. But Brno is a historical capital of the land of Moravia, which has a strong wine identity and reputation. Which heritage is more important? Should a person who is making their first visit to Brno rather focus on beer or wine?

Werner: Well, it really depends, if you are a wine or a beer person. We have excellent white wines from the region and the locals are very much into wine too. Still, I prefer the beer in Brno. I remember, at my first visit in Brno, for a conference in 2008, I had a discussion with Phil Smith about the best beers in the world, and he placed Czech beers third, after Belgium and English beers. I would challenge him on that today. Returning from paternity leave, I recently had a beer at Na Stojáka, which is not too far from the faculty, which was so insanely good, I wanted to cry. But also in other respects, Brno is worth a visit. It's a young and vibrant city with great architecture, cafés and parks. Great for spending a day strolling around, which I am afraid few visitors will have at their disposal. If nothing else, I would strongly recommend visiting the Villa Tugendhat, a UNESCO world heritage and to my knowledge the only family house built by Mies van der Rohe.

Csaba: I would focus on tea and coffee. Nevertheless there are friendly places to eat, drink, and discuss all around the downtown where the university and the preferable hotels are located. All this is in a walking distance. However, Brno has a very well organised public transport system. You can reach particular districts easily. I would encourage our participants with interest in specific urban phenomena. Just ask for our assistance. We are ready to organise short thematic tours with erudite guides. Perhaps, some of these activities will be on display already in the registration period on the webpage of the conference.

Introduction to Mannheim's Cultural Sociology

Introduction to Karl Mannheim's "Sociology as Study of the Interconnected Wholeness of the Social-Cultural Process – Cultural Sociology"

By Werner Binder

On February 28, 1932, Karl Mannheim delivered a talk concerning the teaching of sociology to an audience of German sociology professors, which was later published as a monograph titled *Gegenwartsaufgaben der Soziologie – Ihre Lehrgestalt* (contemporary tasks of sociology in its form of being taught, Mannheim 1932). In the following translated excerpt, a chapter originally titled "Soziologie als Lehre vom Gesamtzusammenhang des gesellschaftlich-geistigen Geschehens (Kultursoziologie)", Mannheim (1932: 22-27) outlines his vision of a cultural sociology, which he distinguishes from a general sociology on the one hand and more specialized sociologies on the other hand. This short piece not only provides some insights into the gestalt of Kultursoziologie as it emerged in Germany in the 1920s, but also questions the widespread assumption that Mannheim gave up the project of a cultural sociology in favor of his sociology of knowledge, usually associated with his work *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim 1979).

Mannheim distinguishes three types of sociology, which all should be taught as part of the sociological curriculum. The first type is sociology as a specialized discipline, which Mannheim (1932: 58) calls "general sociology" ("Allgemeine Soziologie") in his proposed syllabus. General sociology consists of an ahistorical-axiomatic sociology, reminiscent of Simmel's formal sociology, a comparative-typifying sociology and a historical-individualizing sociology. The second type assembles various sociological sub-disciplines (the so-called hyphenated sociologies or "Bindestrich-Soziologien",

1932:16), such as the sociology of economy, law, religion, literature, art and – yes – sociology of knowledge (“Wissens-Soziologie”). These specialized sub-disciplines not only need to take into account the general and concrete forms of social life, which are covered by general sociology, but also the specific cultural objectifications in their field, which they often share with other disciplines as objects of inquiry. Mannheim discusses in the detail the sociology of knowledge, which is an exemplary sub-discipline on the one hand but also occupies a privileged position on the other hand. The goal of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge is to reflect on the social determination of knowledge produced by the (social) sciences, thus thematizing and problematizing the ideological bias of judicial, political or even sociological knowledge. “Wissens-Soziologie” is a form of institutionalized intellectual self-reflexivity and as such different from “Kultursoziologie”, which Mannheim introduces as a third type of sociology. According to Mannheim, cultural sociology has the task of uniting the knowledge produced by sociological sub-disciplines and other specialized disciplines, such as economics, literary studies and art history.

This concept of a cultural sociology was popularized by Mannheim’s teacher in Heidelberg, Alfred Weber, who distinguished between society, civilization and culture (Loader & Weber 2015). Mannheim collapses this threefold distinction into to the more familiar opposition of material and ideal, respectively social and cultural factors, reminiscent of Marxism’s base and superstructure. While it is certainly true that Mannheim grew critical of Alfred Weber’s cultural sociology, one should not speak of “Mannheim’s transition to the sociology of knowledge” (Loader 2016: 53), suggesting that Mannheim abandoned the project and idea of a cultural sociology altogether. While there is a disagreement between the teacher and the students with regard to method and empirical rigour, Mannheim remains true to the ambitions and aims of cultural sociology, even in Alfred Weber’s sense. Already Mannheim early essay “On the interpretation of ‘Weltanschauung’ (1968/1923) should be read as a methodological critique of Alfred Weber, an attempt to systematize the “intuition” to which Weber appealed in his cultural sociology. In a similar vein, Mannheim proposes in the following excerpt the method of “interlockedness”, which envisions cultural sociology as an apex built on a solid empirical foundation.

While recognizing plurality and conflict in social life, Mannheim espouses – not unlike Alfred Weber – a unitary vision of culture, connecting the different spheres of social and cultural life. This unifying concept of culture, which is nevertheless particular and historically situated, does not only apply to societies as a whole but can also be used to characterize the culture of specific social groups. According to Mannheim, cultural sociology is in a privileged position for such an endeavor, because society and social interaction form the basis for any cultural production. Remaining agnostic about what is nowadays called the “autonomy of culture” (Alexander & Smith 2003/2001), Mannheim argues that cultural sociologists should approach cultural phenomena starting from society, and not the other way around. While social life forms the common basis of culture, culture provides internal coherence for social life. Mannheim’s threefold distinction of general sociology, special sociologies and cultural sociology

reflects this movement from the common social root into the spheres of social and cultural differentiation, which are again unified by as a meaning structure that permeates and connects different social spheres.

While Mannheim's (and Alfred Weber's) unitary conception of culture seems at first outdated, there are some surprising similarities to contemporary approaches in cultural sociology. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, an embodied cultural structure which transcends the boundaries of different social spheres, exemplifies Mannheim's unitary conception of culture – and not by chance: Mannheim's conception of cultural interpretation co-evolved with the writings of Erwin Panofsky (cf. Hart 1993), whose *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* was translated by Bourdieu into French and already features the concept of *habitus* as it was later used by Bourdieu himself. In the preface to his translation, recently translated into English, Bourdieu (2005/1967) addresses what Mannheim called the problem of interlockedness by pointing out how institutions like schools provide empirical links between the principles of gothic architecture and scholastic philosophy. Furthermore, the migration of cultural meanings from one social sphere to another has also been invoked by the strong program of cultural sociology, for example in the conception of a “gothic imagination”, first explored in literature, which shapes discourses of technological criticism (Alexander 2003; Smith 2003). The emphasis on the strong program on public discourses and popular culture also addresses the problem of interlockedness, focusing on social institutions and cultural objectifications that serve as intermediaries between different social fields. Despite the postmodern criticism of unitary concepts, I believe that Mannheim's concerns are still valid today and need to be addressed by contemporary (cultural) sociological theories (see Binder & Kurakin 2019, in which we justify and elaborate the use of the Wittgensteinian “form of life” as such a unitary concept of culture, encompassing dynamic contradictions).

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Mannheim's Cultural Sociology

Notes on the translation

I translated the German adjective *gesellschaftlich* as “social”, which follows a well-established pattern of translation (e.g. *The Social Construction of Reality* was published in German as *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit*). More controversial is probably my decision to translate *geistig* as “cultural” instead of “spiritual”. I believe that in this specific context “cultural” is the more adequate translation (Hegel is a different case, there are arguments to be made for “spirit” as well as “mind”) – and nobody would translate the term *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanities) as “spiritual sciences” anyway. My decision as a translator is further warranted by the fact that Mannheim uses “*geistig*” and “*kulturell*” throughout the book interchangeably, for example in the case of “*geistige Objektivationen*” and “*kulturelle Objektivationen*” (cultural objectifications). I used “spirit” in only one instance when Mannheim critically invokes the occult connotation of “*Geist*”. Last but not least, I had to find a balance between Mannheim’s often stiff and overly academic German, which would be barely understandable in literal translation, if translatable at all, and the more familiar tone and flow of modern academic English. I hope I was somewhat successful.

Mannheim's Cultural Sociology

Sociology as Study of the Interconnected Wholeness of the Social-Cultural Process (gesellschaftlich-geistigen Geschehens) – Cultural Sociology

By Karl Mannheim

Cultural sociology (Kultursoziologie) distinguishes itself from the sociologies of particular fields by not relating a specific field to the process of society but by observing the totality of cultural fields in connection to social life. Doing so, it either treats them as an expression of the life of the society in the background or it assumes a causal or interactive relation between society and the sphere of culture, or it presupposes a dialectical development, in which only the life of society and culture together constitute the whole process. Whatever the specific form of such a cultural sociology might be, it signifies the unitary task of a daring synthesis between series of events that were torn apart by the specialized historic-humanistic disciplines as well as economic and social history. While caution is advised toward all cultural-sociological constructions - they easily lure into the area of uncontrolled speculation -, the genuineness of the task is beyond doubt. As much as one might want to resist concrete historical systems and syntheses, one cannot dismiss the necessary task of synthesizing the partial results of historical-social research. It is not the fault of the insatiability and indulgence of the sociologist, if he transcends his well-defined area of expertise and occasionally perplexes the specialized disciplines. Reality itself is to blame. It didn't do the favour to specialized researchers by realizing itself only in well-demarcated spheres in such a way that one sphere doesn't know what happens in the other.

As much as we deem tackling those problems of synthesis to be eminent, we reject any approach which believes that in relying on some adventurous, over-sized, comprehensive aspects it has found in one principle, dialectical or gestalt-wise, the "open sesame" for an access to the (cultural) objectivations. Rather we opt for the method of approaching these synthetic principles, which is concerned with what I call "the problem of interlockedness" in socio-historical reality. The problem of interlockedness describes the task to investigate the socio-historical process in such a

way that the interconnected series of events itself leads us from one area of expertise to the next. The art historian should not only understand interlocking events and effects, which lead from one work of art to another, but should also investigate chains of effects, in which the development of art influences contemporary literature, religion or political and social history. The events have to be presented in their interconnectedness, in which they have been originally interlocked. They must not be dissected into abstract boxes such as art, science, literature, economy and society. This does not mean that the preceding specialized and sphere-differentiating method is unnecessary. It just means that that it isn't the last stage of research. It also means that it is possible to tackle the problem of interlockedness starting from any point or any discipline. One can attempt to construct a synthesis starting from art history as good as from the history of religion. And indeed, in the upcoming epoch of research there will be presentations of synthesis from diverse fields. The many-sidedness of the starting point is something to be welcomed. But if we, recognizing the legitimacy of attempts at synthesis from other approaches, credit cultural sociology with a specific obligation to tackle these problems, it is for the reason that in our opinion the interconnectedness of the different cultural spheres is in fact rooted in the life of society. If one asks: Why are the different cultural spheres in their differentiation connected, it is not because they are partial expressions of a free-floating spirit somewhere, but because they are expressions of the life and fate of specific human groups. When these human groups go out of existence, their cultural objectifications also cease to exist. A change of the fate of these groups also changes the content and form of the corresponding cultural life. Therefore, sociology is of foremost importance in tackling the problem of interlockedness of the historic-cultural process. It alone has from social history access to the level of inquiry, which we usually call spheres of cultural objectifications. The social history of a period allows us to grasp the fundamental interconnected process to which the history of cultural objectifications organically connects.

We now would like to address the problem of interlockedness, which has to be tackled from the perspective of social history, in an exemplary fashion in order to clarify what is meant by the problem, on the one hand, and to demonstrate how the social-historical approach is able to grasp the core of the historical process, on the other hand. In order to grasp the interconnected process of a group, it is possible to start with an analysis of their form of economy. From there, we are steadily driven to an analysis of the form of power and authority, which either connects to this form of economy, is inscribed in it or enables it. The form of power and authority will shape the form of the army as well as of the administration. At the same time, the form of economy is also heavily influenced from another side by the form of the family. The latter impacts directly education and socialization. The form of the family influences the shape of sexuality and eroticism, which is a very broad layer in the articulations of emotion. From there we can venture into the analysis of lyrics and poetry, and so forth. From here it is evident that the presentation of the problem of interlockedness does not presuppose a decision regarding the primacy within the historical process, it rather points into a direction for questions leading from the changes in the social conditions to the changes of cultural objectifications. The genuinely sociological lies in the emphasis on

the interdependence of the series of events, in the effort not to isolate and abstract but to sketch the basic structures of this symbiosis, in which these elements and spheres exist in reality and which abstract science only preliminarily sundered from the unity of the process for individual observation. The “sociological thinking” consists primarily in this “capacity to view coherent”, in this grasping of every seemingly isolated fact from the viewpoint of the connectedness of social life. The pedagogical achievement of cultural sociology does not lie in an ability to deliver to us the dogmatic key for an instantaneous reconstruction of the wholeness of the “dynamics of society” – though this could be potentially belong to its last ends – but in its technique to find neighboring phenomena of interlockedness, through which it is possible to approach the putative structure of the whole societal process gradually. However, if one has once attempted in many cases to grasp the interconnected whole from the concrete phenomena of the social process, one will encounter gradually the problems of the structured wholeness and the unique structure of specific historic-social units. These research problems regarding the entirety of the social process will not have dogmatic but hypothetical character. From this viewpoint, the Marxist approach as well as the approach of Alfred Weber, but also the positivistic theory of stages, have only a heuristic, hypothetical value. They will be valid only when they can be empirically validated. Still, we cannot do without them, as in order to discover anything we need a specific guiding question. Although the aforementioned approaches may be of historical-philosophical origin, they possess the virtue of aiming for the structural whole of the social-historical process. The danger of approaches too far ahead of empirical research should always be compensated for by repeatedly and parallelly extending the scope from individual phenomena aided by the problem of interlockedness. In this way, it is possible to move from the empirical approach and its facts to the totalizing approach with its systematic considerations. Only as long this double movement exists, we can expect fertile works from this direction of sociology. Left to itself, the totalizing approach turns into a speculative philosophy of history. Left to itself, empirical research without the ambition to grasp the totality disintegrates into an overwhelming multitude of individual observations, which have the additional drawback that even the empirical observations themselves are not untouchable. This atomistic empirical research, disassembling everything into abstract independently existing pieces, would only be more precise than the approach conserving interconnectedness, if there is no interlockedness of events in reality.

The main goal of this historical form of sociology is not an uncontrollable history of philosophy, which is only able to juxtapose general hypotheses – which happens to be the futile aspect of e.g. discussions about “dialectic” and “gestalt” in history –, but to increase our awareness and understanding of the interlockedness, i.e. interwovenness of events in the history of humanity.

Translated By Werner Binder

Member Publications

Recent Publications

Binder, Werner and Dmitry Kurakin. 2020. "Biography and Form of Life. Toward a Cultural Analysis of Narrative Interviews." *Sociología*. Vol. 51. No. 6. P. 563-583.

This paper introduces the concept of form of life, socially shaped and shared meaning structures of actors situated in material contexts, as a tool for the cultural-sociological analysis of biographies and life trajectories. Following the principles of structural hermeneutics, such an analysis of life-forms treats the interview text as manifestation of a deeper holistic meaning structure, embodied in narratives, binaries and metaphors, without suppressing the contradictions and tensions inherent in every form of life. Finally, the empirical applicability of our approach is illustrated with examples from the qualitative strand of a broader longitudinal panel study as well as an in-depth case study.

Boltanski, Luc, Juliette Rennes, and Simon Susen. 2018 [2010/2014]. "Die Zerbrechlichkeit der Realität – Luc Boltanski im Gespräch mit Juliette Rennes und Simon Susen". Translated by Christian Scheper. *Diskurs* 2: 1–20.

Luc Boltanski ist Soziologe und Directeur d'études am École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Er ist 1940 geboren und hat 15 Bücher geschrieben, die auf diversen Feldstudien basieren und disziplinäre Grenzen überschreiten: Pflege, Reproduktion, Abtreibung, die Arbeitswelt der Führungskräfte [cadres], humanitäre Fragen und Management – um nur einige seiner Themen zu nennen. Seine Soziologie konzentriert sich auf die Analyse normativer Ordnungen und die Ressourcen, die menschliche Akteure mobilisieren, um gesellschaftliche Übereinkünfte aufrechtzuerhalten oder herauszufordern. Die Debatten, die sein pragmatischer Wandel ausgelöst hat, haben einen tiefgreifenden Einfluss auf die gegenwärtige Soziologie – sowohl innerhalb als auch außerhalb Frankreichs. Seine intellektuelle Stoßrichtung ist geprägt von Zweifeln, methodologischen Korrekturen und theoretischen Verschiebungen. Sie zeigen, dass der Soziologe Luc Boltanski empfänglich für die Konstruktionsprozesse und Unsicherheiten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens ist.

Ghosh Apoorva. 2019. After coming out: Parental acceptance of young lesbian and gay people. *Sociology Compass*. Online first: <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12740>

This study examines extant scholarly knowledge on parental acceptance of young lesbian and gay people in traditional heteronormative families. Recent literature shows that parents generally accept their lesbian and gay children. However, parents do not always accept them immediately after they come out. Acceptance takes time, and transitioning to acceptance is often a complex process that depends on parents'

access to the necessary resources for coping with the stresses of knowing that their child identifies as lesbian or gay. These resources include counseling or therapy, supportive friends and extended family, and a network of other parents with lesbian and gay children. This study also highlights the need for further research on parental acceptance in non-traditional families and of children with other non-heterosexual identities, such as asexuality, gray ace, bisexuality, or pansexuality. It also calls for an exploration of the complexities of parental acceptance as an ongoing process rather than as a singular event.

Ghosh, A. 2019. From Moral Ambivalence to Differential Congruence: Understanding transnational sexuality using Institutional Schemas. *Sexualities*. Online First: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460719850022>.

Through in-depth interviews, this study aimed to show how lesbians and gay men in India may construct their sexuality as a result of being globally connected through accessing “transnational pathways,” such as the global mass media, diasporic experiences, and transnational workplaces. This study indicates that these pathways aid in the interaction between externally derived sexual schemas and pre-existing sexual schemas, which may in turn lead to a configuration of “differential congruence” whereby competing sexual schemas may coexist rather than fuse or replace each other in an individual’s life, albeit in different spheres.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2019. “Distributive Justice.” In George Ritzer (ed.), *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, Second Edition*. Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosd078.pub2>

Every day, and in all walks of life, the sense of justice is at work. Humans form ideas about what is just, and they make judgments about the justice or injustice of the things they see around them. Both the ideas of justice and the assessments of injustice set in motion a train of individual and social processes, touching virtually every area of the human experience. Thus, in the quest to understand human behavior, understanding the operation of the sense of justice is basic. And justice is central across the subfields of sociology. This entry summarizes the justice synthesis begun in the late twentieth century and the foundation for the coming synthesis of the 21st twenty-first century. The first synthesis looks inward, providing a parsimonious and coherent model for understanding and investigating every aspect of distributive justice. The coming second synthesis looks outward, forging the links between justice (generalized to all comparison processes) and the two other primordial sociobehavioral forces -- status and power -- and proposing a new unified theory.

Kurakin, Dmitry. 2020. "Culture and cognition: The Durkheimian principle of sui generis synthesis vs. cognitive-based models of culture." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*. Vol. 8. No. 1. P. 63-89.

Cultural sociology must catch up in taking seriously recent initiatives in the sociology of culture and cognition, represented by the works of Omar Lizardo, John Levi Martin, Stephen Vaisey, and others. However, aiming at progress in cultural analysis, these theories are partly driven by an epistemic logic alien to cultural theorizing, making the very concept of culture redundant. To identify this anti-cultural strain within the ongoing cognitive turn in sociology, I propose an ideal-typical model—‘the informational theory of communication,’ which reduces culture to information. Although many cognitive scientists and sociologists of culture and cognition are aware of the limitations and counter-productivity of this model, and it might not exist in a pure form, I argue that, first, it is still clearly traceable in many of their arguments, and, second, that it can be seen as a cultural logic underlying a substantial part of their arguments. I posit that replacing this logic of explanation with the Durkheimian model of *sui generis* synthesis, the concept of emergence, and the idea of ‘boundary conditions’ not only allows us to integrate the insights of cognitive science into sociology, but also opens a way for sociology to contribute to the cognitive sciences.

Kurakin, Dmitry. 2019. "The cultural mechanics of mystery: structures of emotional attraction in competing interpretations of the Dyatlov pass tragedy." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*. 2019. Vol. 7. No. 1. P. 101-127.

Mystery plays a fundamental though not fully acknowledged role in modernity, serving as an important means for the re-enchantment of social life. Thus, under certain conditions, seemingly unimportant events can attract enormous attention and emotional involvement. One of those cases is the Dyatlov Pass Tragedy that occurred in 1959 in the Northern Urals, where nine hikers died under mysterious and still unknown circumstances. Nowadays, a half-century later, there are thousands of lay researchers searching for the truth and constructing competing explanatory accounts. In this paper, I propose the ‘trigger-narrative model,’ explaining the relation between mystery, governing narratives, and forms of sacrality, and apply it to the Dyatlov case. I argue that mystery is a ‘complex emotional attractor’—a symbolic mechanism shaped by the configuration of ‘elementary attractors’—‘strange’ things, symbols, or events, challenging commonsense narratives, which eventually maintains uncertainty and emotional tension. Every pattern of perception concerning mystery can be characterized by the tie between a trigger and its corresponding narrative; this tie is based on the transgression of the narrative by a trigger event. This model allows us to understand the cultural construction of mystery, which is crucially important for explaining how deep cultural structures energize people’s urges, concerns, and fascinations.

Kurakin, Dmitry. 2019. "The Sacred, Profane, Pure, Impure, and Social Energization of Culture," in: *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Sociology*, ed. by Wayne H. Brekhus and Gabe Ignatow. NY : Oxford University Press. Ch. 26. P. 485-506.

In this chapter, I argue that the Durkheimian theory of the sacred is a crucial yet not fully recognized resource for cognitive sociology. It contains not only a theory of culture

(which is acknowledged in contemporary sociology), but also a vision of culture-cognition relations. Thus, Durkheimian cultural sociology allows us to understand the crucial role the sacred/profane opposition plays in structuring culture, perception and thought. Based on a number of theories, I also show how another opposition – between the pure and impure modes of the sacred, allows us to explain dynamic features of the sacred and eventually provides a basic model of social change. While explicating this vision and resultant opportunities for sociological analysis I also criticize ‘cognition apart from culture’ approaches established within cognitive sociology. I argue, thus, that culture not only participates in cognition but is an intrinsic ingredient of the human mind. Culture is not a chaotic and fragmented set of elements, as some sociologists imply to a greater or lesser degree, but a system; and as such it is an inner environment for human thought and social action. This system, however, is governed not by formal logic, as some critics of the autonomy of culture presuppose, but by concrete configurations of emotionally-charged categories, created and re-created in social interactions.

Roth, Steffen; Schwede, Peter; Valentinov, Vladislav; Zazar, Kresimir; and Kaivo-oja, Jari 2019. "Big data insights into social macro trends (1800-2000): A replication study", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* (12)149, 119759.

Seeking to advance a big data approach to social theory, Roth et al. (2017) applied the Google Ngram Viewer to explore the way the evolution of the function systems of the modern society is reflected in the Google Books corpus. The authors produced a highly counterintuitive finding that the modern Western societies cannot be adequately described as capitalist. In order to respond to the controversies raised by this finding, the present research note replicates Roth et al.'s (2017) study while using a superior plotting software that allows to control the risk that keyword strength can be biased due to the neglect of keyword quantity. Covering the English-, French-, and German-language corpora, the present replication effort has confirmed the existence of distinct trends exhibited by the individual function systems, such as secularization, the persistent dominance of the political system, and the relatively lesser role of the economic system. These results are largely consistent with those of Roth et al. (2017) and thus lend credence to the authors' sceptical assessment of the validity of the capitalist semantics. The research note concludes by pleading for the routinization of big data-driven checks of the modern social theories.

Roth, Steffen; Valentinov, Vladislav; Heidingsfelder, Markus; and Pérez-Valls, Miguel. 2018. "CSR beyond Economy and Society. A post-capitalist approach." *Journal of Business Ethics*, DOI: 10.1007/s10551-018-4068-y

In this article, we draw on established views of CSR dysfunctionalities to show how and why CSR is regularly observed to be both shaped by and supportive of capitalism. We proceed to show that these dysfunctionalities are maintained by both the pro- and

anticapitalist approaches to CSR, both of which imply an ill-defined separation of the economy and society as well as an overly strong problem or solution focus on political and economic issues. Finally, we present a post-capitalist approach to CSR that overcomes (1) the ill-defined separation of the economy and society, (2) the capitalist bias towards economic rationalities, and (3) the overidentification of society with its political system; this approach thus helps to manage the abovementioned CSR dysfunctions.

Susen, Simon. 2019. "No Escape from the Technosystem?". *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Online First: 1–49.

The main purpose of this article is to provide an in-depth review of Andrew Feenberg's 'Technosystem: The Social Life of Reason' (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). To this end, the analysis is divided into two parts. The first part gives an overview of its thematic structure and elucidates its key arguments. The second part discusses its most controversial aspects and grapples with its principal weaknesses and limitations. By way of conclusion, the article argues that Feenberg's book demonstrates the pivotal role that the technosystem plays in shaping contemporary society.

Susen, Simon. 2019. "The Resonance of Resonance: Critical Theory as a Sociology of World-Relations?". *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Online First: 1–36.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine Hartmut Rosa's account of 'resonance'. To this end, the analysis is divided into four parts. The first part elucidates the concept of resonance, including Rosa's differentiation between horizontal, diagonal, and vertical 'axes of resonance' and their role in the construction of different 'world-relations'. The second part centres on the concept of alienation, notably the degree to which it constitutes an integral element of modern life forms and, in a larger sense, of the human condition. The third part grapples with the dialectic of resonance and alienation, shedding light on the assumption that they are antithetical to each other, while contending that their in-depth study provides normative parameters to distinguish between 'the good life' and 'the bad life'. The final part scrutinizes Rosa's attempt to defend his outline of a sociological theory of resonance against objections raised by his critics and comprises a point-by-point assessment of his plea for a resonance-focused sociology of world-relations. The paper concludes by suggesting that, notwithstanding its limitations, Rosa's approach represents one of the most promising developments in twenty-first-century critical theory.

Susen, Simon. 2018. "The Economy of Enrichment: Towards a New Form of Capitalism?", *Berlin Journal of Critical Theory* 2(2): 5–98.

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a critical overview of the key contributions made by Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre in 'Enrichissement. Une critique de la

marchandise' (Paris: Gallimard, 2017). With the exception of one journal article, entitled 'The Economic Life of Things: Commodities, Collectibles, Assets' (New Left Review 98: 31–56, 2016), their collaborative work has received little attention in Anglophone circles. This paper aims to demonstrate that Boltanski and Esquerre's 'Enrichissement' contains valuable insights into the constitution of Western European capitalism in the early twenty-first century. In order to substantiate the validity of this claim, the subsequent inquiry focuses on central dimensions that, in Boltanski and Esquerre's view, need to be scrutinized to grasp the nature of major trends in contemporary society, notably those associated with the consolidation of the enrichment economy. As elucidated in this inquiry, Boltanski and Esquerre's 'pragmatics of value-setting' is based on four forms of valorization: (a) the 'standard form', (b) the 'collection form', (c) the 'trend form', and (d) the 'asset form'. Arguably, the interaction between these forms of valorization is crucial to the rise of a new socio-historical constellation, which Boltanski and Esquerre call 'integral capitalism'. In the final section, attention will be drawn to several noteworthy limitations of Boltanski and Esquerre's analysis.

Susen, Simon. 2018. "The Seductive Force of 'Noumenal Power': A New Path (or Impasse) for Critical Theory?", *Journal of Political Power* 11(1): 4–45.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine Rainer Forst's account of 'noumenal power'. Forst's proposal for a revised 'critical theory of power' is firmly embedded in his philosophical understanding of 'the right to justification'. Whereas the latter has been extensively discussed in the secondary literature, the former has – with the exception of various exchanges that have taken place between Forst and his critics at academic conferences – received little attention. This paper is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature. Given the increasing influence of Forst's scholarly writings on paradigmatic developments in contemporary critical theory, it is imperative to scrutinize the key assumptions underlying his conception of 'noumenal power' and to assess its usefulness for overcoming the shortcomings of alternative explanatory frameworks. In order to accomplish this, the analysis is divided into four parts. The first part provides some introductory definitional reflections on the concept of power. The second part focuses on several dichotomous meanings attached to the concept of power – notably, 'soft power' vs. 'hard power', 'power to' vs. 'power over', and 'power for' vs. 'power against'. The third part elucidates the principal features of Forst's interpretation of 'noumenal power', in addition to drawing attention to his typological distinction between 'power', 'rule', 'domination', and 'violence'. The final part offers an assessment of Forst's account of 'noumenal power', arguing that, although it succeeds in avoiding the drawbacks of rival approaches, it suffers from significant limitations. The paper concludes by giving a synopsis of the vital insights that can be obtained from the preceding inquiry.

Forthcoming Publications

Ghosh, A. in press. The Global LGBT Workplace Equality Movement. In N. Naples (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Sexuality Studies* (pp. xx-xx). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

This article examines the LGBT Workplace Equality Movement at a global and cross-national level. This movement is a niche sphere of activism within the larger LGBT movement that is focused on fighting for the equality and inclusion of LGBT employees in the workplace. A global review suggests that no one model for this sphere of activism can be replicated in all parts of the world. Cross-nationally, multiple models of the LGBT workplace equality movement exist on the basis of each location's unique goals, intersectionality, and movement participation. Globally, the movement has pursued location-specific goals using strategies tailored to each situation. The global character of the movement can be retained by continuing to address the range of unique challenges and issues faced by LGBT employees across the world.

Abstract for Proposed Future Work

Ghosh, A. The Politics of Alignment and the "Quiet Transgender Revolution" in Fortune 500 Corporations, 2008 to 2017

This paper examines how social movement organizations might seek outcomes from their target entities using the politics of alignment. It is argued that when movement organization(s) use their programs or practices to favor their target entities, they might introduce a "strategic intervention" in them to demand specific concessions or benefits from the target entities. The intervention may be designed and introduced in those programs or practices in such a manner that the target entities affected by the intervention would need to comply with the movement demand(s) to continue receiving the favors that they had been deriving from the movement organization(s). Using a hazard rate analysis of 456 fortune 500 corporations as targets entities for the LGBT workplace movement across the years 2009 to 2017, it was found that corporations affected by a strategic intervention introduced by the movement were more likely to adopt the gender transition-related health benefits for their employees than were those unaffected. A fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis of the adopters of these benefits examined the counterfactual cases. The analysis suggested that corporations unaffected by the strategic intervention, mainly the conservative ones, adopted the benefits later during the study period when the isomorphic forces of diffusion of these benefits among their industry peers had grown stronger.

This intervention does not present an integrated research project as much as it attempts to raise a set of questions paralleled by a group of approaches in order to search for a path for a research project framed in the context of an acclimatization project. This project seeks to search within the limits of knowledge between what is social and what is sociological in the context of forming theoretical scientific knowledge about Gulf societies. The idea of the approach is based on a general hypothesis that these societies are founded on a number of social categories: customs, traditions, systems of social management, patterns of social action and directives and determinants of discourse except what is Social (whether at the level of social interaction or at the level of social control). And all of the above are forms of social knowledge. These are not authorized by scientific method nor are they based on the formulation of theory to understand these societies from within according to their specificity and demonstration, without regurgitating sociological perspectives and sayings, drawn from other societies or from other circumstantial and temporal contexts. This is precisely what we mean in our statement on sociological knowledge.

In light of this, it is expected that our project will contribute to reducing the gap between the production of sociological knowledge and the nature of social knowledge and social reality in Gulf societies and thus pave the way for strengthening the recognition of sociology at the level of public discourse in general and the level of political demand for science in the second place. The production of a cognitive pattern that is close to the understandings of Gulf societies contributes to the processes of self-enlightenment and enhances social imagination as one of the characteristics of lost sociological knowledge in the Gulf. Rather than enhancing the entry points of developmental knowledge in the field of production, research and various knowledge activities.

The current project aims to evaluate the system of sociological knowledge production in the Arab Gulf in terms of 1. the position of sociology and sociology within society 2. the nature of the production of sociological knowledge 3. the conditions of the scientific community 4. the demand and political use of social science. Instead of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the system of producing sociological knowledge, we seek to examine the effective influences upon the knowledge production process and the role of the main parties in this process (political systems - academic and research institutions - independent researchers).

The project also aims to examine the limits of the relationship between social knowledge and sociological knowledge and the obstacles to converting social knowledge into sociological knowledge through a sample approach of Gulf sociological research production. One contributor to the project is expected to propose an integrative perspective of regionalization of sociology in the Gulf in terms of 1. sociological dictionary 2. approaches and proposed perspectives 3. sociological

research priorities and its main themes 4. methodologies most appropriate to the study of Gulf societies.

Forthcoming Book



Eyerman, Ronald, Giuseppe Sciortino, eds. 2020 *The Cultural Trauma of Decolonization. Returnees in the National Imagination*, Palgrave-MacMillan, ISBN 978-3-030-27025-4

This volume is first consistent effort to systematically analyze the features and consequences of colonial repatriation in comparative terms, examining the trajectories of returnees in six former colonial countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and Portugal). Each contributor examines these cases through a shared cultural sociology frame, unifying the historical and sociological analyses carried out in the collection. More particularly, the book strengthens and improves one of the most important and popular current streams of cultural sociology, that of collective trauma. Using a comparative perspective to study the trajectories of similarly traumatized groups in different countries allows for not only a thick description of the return processes, but also a thick explanation of the mechanisms and factors shaping them. Learning from these various cases of colonial returnees, the authors have been able to develop a new theoretical framework that may help cultural sociologists to explain why seemingly similar claims of collective trauma and victimhood garner respect and recognition in certain contexts, but fail in others.

Forthcoming Book



Digital transformation of social theory

Edited by Sandro Cattacin, Frank Welz, Harry Dahms, Steffen Roth
Last update 12 November 2019

Introduction

Steffen Roth, Harry F. Dahms, Frank Welz, and Sandro Cattacin: Print theories of computer societies. Introduction to the digital transformation of social theory

ICT and the increasing availability of digital data are dramatically changing the processes of research and knowledge production in the social sciences and humanities (SSH). Whereas the methodological momentum in digital humanities and computational social sciences is already immense, theory development in the SSH is much less dynamic and consists mainly of digital resurrections of the classics of our fields. The contributions to this virtual special issue of *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* do, therefore, not constitute efforts at presenting new social theories of the digital transformation, but rather, efforts at digitally transforming social theory. This introduction presents an overview of the topic and the contributions and outlines key elements of a research agenda on the digital transformation of social theory.

Articles

Marinus Ossewaarde: Digital transformation and the renewal of social theory: Unpacking the new fraudulent myths and misplaced metaphors

Emrah Karakilic: Rethinking intellectual property rights in the cognitive and digital age of capitalism: An autonomist Marxist reading

Karl Palmås: From hacking to simulation: Periodizing digitally-inspired social theory

José Javier Blanco Rivero: The fractal geometry of Luhmann's sociological theory for debugging systems theory Steffen Roth: Digital transformation of social theory. A research update

Jean-Sébastien Guy: Digital technology, digital culture and the metric/nonmetric distinction

Matthias Wenzel and Matthias Will: The communicative constitution of academic fields in the digital age: The case of CSR

Click here for abstracts and links to the individual contributions: <https://wp.me/pvO07-1oK>

Forthcoming Book



Smith, Philip. 2020. “Durkheim and After. The Durkheimian Tradition, 1893—2020.” Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Abstract. Émile Durkheim’s major works are among the founding texts of the discipline of sociology, but his importance lies also in his immense legacy and subsequent influence upon others.

In this book, Philip Smith examines not only Durkheim’s original ideas, but also reveals how he inspired more than a century of theoretical innovations, identifying the key paths, bridges, and dead ends – as well as the tensions and resolutions – in what has been a remarkably complex intellectual history. Beginning with an overview of the key elements of Durkheim’s mature masterpieces, Smith also examines his lesser known essays, commentaries and lectures. He goes on to analyse his immediate influence on the *Année Sociologique* group, before tracing the international impact of Durkheim upon modern anthropology, sociology, and social and cultural theory. Smith shows that many leading social thinkers, from Marcel Mauss to Mary Douglas and Randall Collins, have been carriers for the multiple pathways mapped out in Durkheim’s original thought.

This book will be essential reading for any student or scholar seeking to understand this fundamental impact on areas ranging from social theory and anthropology to religious studies and beyond.

DISCOUNT CODE for the readers of the newsletter: 20% discount code VBT43 (valid until 30 May 2020). More information about the book: <https://politybooks.com/bookdetail/?isbn=9781509518272>

Forthcoming Book

Susen, Simon. 2020. *Sociology in the Twenty-First Century: Key Trends, Debates, and Challenges*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

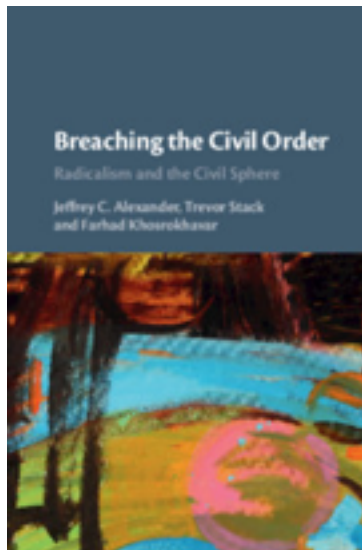
“A comprehensive and judicious account of the intellectual and material state of sociology, based on omnivorous reading and incisive analysis. The writing is beautifully clear and the book is a major contribution to the self-understanding of the discipline.” — William Outhwaite, Professor of Sociology at Newcastle University, UK

This book examines key trends, debates, and challenges in twenty-first-century sociology. To this end, it focuses on significant issues surrounding the nature of sociology (‘What is sociology?’), the history of sociology (‘How has sociology evolved?’), and the study of sociology (‘How can or should we make sense of sociology?’).

These issues have been, and will continue to be, essential to the creation of conceptually informed, methodologically rigorous, and empirically substantiated research programmes in the discipline. Over the past years, however, there have been numerous disputes and controversies concerning the future of sociology. Particularly important in this respect are recent and ongoing discussions on the possibilities of developing new – and, arguably, post-classical – forms of sociology. The central assumption underlying most of these projects is the contention that a comprehensive analysis of the principal challenges faced by global society requires the construction of a sociology capable of accounting for the interconnectedness of social actors and social structures across time and space.

This book provides a cutting-edge overview of crucial past, present, and possible future trends, debates, and challenges shaping the pursuit of sociological inquiry.

Published Book

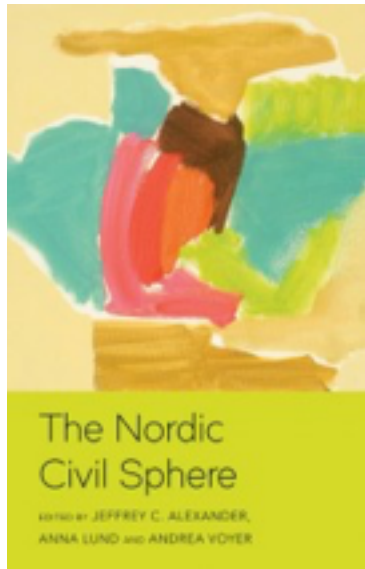


Alexander, Jeffrey C., Trevor Stack, and Farhad Khosrokhavar (eds). 2019 *Breaching the Civil Order: Radicalism and the Civil Sphere* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Abstract: It is not only a paradox but something of an intellectual scandal that, in an era so shaken by radical actions and ideologies, social science has had nothing theoretically new to say about radicalism since the middle of the last century. *Breaching the Civil Order* fills this void. It argues that, rather than seeing radicalism in substantive terms - as violent or militant, communist or fascist - radicalism should be seen more broadly as any organized effort to breach the civil order. The theory is brilliantly made flesh in a series of case studies by leading European and American social scientists, from the destruction of property in the London race riots to the public militancy of Black Lives Matter in the US, the performative violence of the Irish IRA and the Mexican Zapatistas to the democratic upheavals of the Arab Spring, and from Islamic terrorism in France to Germany's right-wing populist Pegida.

More information: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/breaching-the-civil-order/C522D6D921948243D67DD19485152F4F>

Published Book



Alexander, Jeffrey C., Anna Lund, and Andrea Voyer (eds). 2019. *“The Nordic Civil Sphere.”* Polity Press.

Abstract: The civil sphere is a distinctively democratic field in modern societies, one that sustains universalizing cultural aspirations and organizational structures and that has tense and uncertain boundaries with other spheres of social life, like the economy, religion, family, and state. Unlike the latter, which are more particularistic and hierarchical in character, the civil sphere defines itself in terms of solidarity – the feeling of being connected with every other person in the collectivity. The utopian ideals of democratic solidarity shape every modern society, even if they are often compromised by the messy realities of social life.

This volume uses the theory of the civil sphere to shed new light on Nordic societies, while at the same time drawing on the distinctive experiences of the Nordic nations to reflect on and advance the theory of the civil sphere. Nordic societies have long been admired for creating a distinctive form of social democracy, but this admirable achievement has not been well conceptualized theoretically. Most attempts to explain Nordic social democracy focus on material and organizational factors. This volume, by contrast, emphasizes the cultural foundations and characteristics of social democracy, demonstrating how civil sensibilities are necessary for the creation of an egalitarian and democratic state. Nordic civil spheres, however, are not only pro-civil but also white in color, European in ethnicity, secular in character and gender-equal in a subtly restrictive manner. Such primordialization of state civility is vividly on display in the sometime tense relationships that develop among natives and

“foreigners” in Nordic countries, relationships that expose the primordial undersides of the social democratic codes and civil values that constitute the Nordic civil sphere.

A major contribution to the theory of the civil sphere and to our understanding of the cultural and normative underpinnings of social and political life, this volume will be of particular interest to students and scholars of sociology and politics.

More information: https://politybooks.com/bookdetail/?isbn=9781509538836&subject_id=1&tag_id=24

Published Book



Alexander, Jeffrey C., David A. Palmer, Sunwoong Park, and Agnes Shuk-mei Ku, (eds). 2019. "*The Civil Sphere in East Asia.*" Cambridge University Press.

Abstract: Leading sociologists who live and work in East Asia examine their region's most dangerous and explosive social problems, and some of their most stunning success stories, from the viewpoint of Civil Sphere Theory. This new and increasingly influential sociological understanding of democracy aims to describe and explain the moral codes and institutional foundations of democratic solidarity, as it manifests itself within a distinct social sphere. Part of a multi-volume project, this collection includes cases from Japan, mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, bringing together efforts by sociologists based in East Asian academic institutions. Through an extraordinary blend of sophisticated social theory and path-breaking empirical research, *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* aims to advance civil sphere theory by globalizing and regionalizing it at the same time.

More information: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/civil-sphere-in-east-asia/D02FAE098024CFC58F0E035B70C9B380>

Published Book



Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Carlo Tognato (eds). 2018. *"The Civil Sphere in Latin America."* Cambridge University Press.

Abstract: Social thinkers have criticized Latin American development as incomplete, backward, and anti-modern. This volume demonstrates that, while often deeply compromised and fragmented, Latin American civil spheres have remained resilient, institutionally and culturally, generating new oppositional movements, independent journalism, rebellious intellectuals, electoral power, and critical political parties. In widely different arenas, dissidents have employed the coruscating language of the civil sphere to pollute their oppressors in the name of justice. In the 1970s and 1980s, political thinkers heralded the resurrection of Latin American civil society, envisioning a new world of freedom and stability. Corruption, inequality, racism, and exclusion become pressing and urgent 'social problems', not despite the promises of democracy, but because of them. The premise of this volume is that Latin American civil spheres are powerful, even as they are compromised, creating challenges to anti-civil culture and institutions that trigger social reform. It is the first of three volumes that place civil sphere theory in a global context.

More information: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/civil-sphere-in-latin-america/76622193AFD69F3EDC250B50E943BB2E>

Announcements

Call for Papers

The “Russian Sociological Review” journal announces a call for papers for the special issue:

Social Order and Art Sources of Imagination

Despite the fact that culture, aesthetics, and art were some of the main concerns of early classical sociology (e.g., Simmel’s essays are probably the most popular reference in this regard), later culture has become a matter of interest of a sub-discipline, that of the sociology of culture. Therefore, culture has been considered as a realm of ideas and values. To put it simply, sociology conventionally saw culture and art as mere reflections of social forces that enable its production. The end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries brought a radical transformation of sociological understanding of culture, and it was Jeffrey Alexander who revived the notion and proposed a new understanding of sociological theory drawn on this notion. According to Alexander, culture should be treated as an autonomous realm being able to act and contribute to the social order. In (re)turning to this understanding, Alexander draws upon a variety of now-classical theories, but mainly on Durkheim’s theory of religion as explicated in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Clifford Geertz and his idea of thick description is one of the sources for the renewed cultural sociology. In *Art as a Cultural System* (1976), he wrote that “to study an art form is to explore a sensibility” and “such a sensibility is essentially a collective formation, and that the foundations of such a formation are as wide as social existence and as deep”. Furthermore, he argued that the relation between art and society should be treated as *ideational*, not *mechanical*, meaning that art is a primary document (not a mere representation) since it does not illustrate the dominant ideas (the ideas of dominant class, as Bourdieu would put it). Instead, artworks are conceptions along with other conceptions (including philosophical, sociological, and political).

By suggesting the general topic *Social Order and Art Sources of Imagination*, we would like to invite scholars to contribute with research papers focusing on how artworks function as primary documents of how social order emerges and is maintained. Following the idea of a theoretical journal which is open to empirical studies (yet with significant contribution to theory), the RSR still maintains an emphasis on general issues of sociology and corresponding disciplines by using the sources of political philosophy, social history, and cultural studies in order to enrich

sociological explanations. By introducing the framework inspired by one of the aspects of contemporary cultural sociology, we would like to note that art can be seen as a reflection of society if we define 'reflection' as a means for contributing to the understanding of society itself. Therefore, understanding society is also possible via the understanding of specific pieces of art and mass culture that circulate within society. According to cultural sociological methodology, it may provide insights that otherwise would not be possible to gain. Additionally, we welcome contributions dedicated to the construction of social worlds that we often encounter in art and mass culture. In this regard, one more significant theoretical insight may be of use, that of the cultural theory of Adorno, who famously claimed that art tells the truth about society. This idea may bring a clear critical view on how art may contribute to the transformation of social order, and to the establishment of a new social order via constructing (anti)utopias and alternative futures.

The RSR editorial team welcomes contributions from a variety of social scientific disciplines and humanities, including sociology, political philosophy, social history, and others focusing on how particular pieces of contemporary art and culture (visual arts, music, cinema, TV series, etc.) enable a profound understanding of the current situation in society, politics, and culture in general. Methodological as well as theoretical pieces dedicated to the general topic of art as a primary document of social experience are also encouraged.

Schedule

June 1, 2020 — 500 words abstracts deadline

June 15, 2020 — Invitation to submit full papers

September 7, 2020 — Full papers deadline

October 5, 2020 — Notification of acceptance

November 2, 2020 — Revised papers deadline

December, 2020 — Publication

Contributions should be sent via e-mail to the editors-in-chief, Professor Alexander Filippov, and Dr. Nail Farkhatdinov (sociologica@hse.ru).

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Nail Farkhatdinov.

Papers should be no more than 10,000 words and written in English. See the website of the Review for detailed guidelines for authors (<http://sociologica.hse.ru/en/authors>).