

## Summer 2017

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# Editors' Introduction

Greetings to the members of RC-16! We hope you are all having prosperous and pleasant summers. It is hard to believe, but we will be seeing many of you in one year's time in Toronto at the ISA World Congress. On that note, we would urge you all to consider submitting abstracts to our research committee's very exciting set of theory panels. The deadline for abstract submissions is September 30<sup>th</sup>—all information on how to submit can be found on the ISA website. This issue of *Theory* has three original thought pieces from our members. The first, by Shoji Kokichi of University of Tokyo, engages with the importance of theory in “countering the ‘new normalcy’” in society. The second essay, by Eduardo De La Fuente, helps illuminate how and why a “textural sociology” can be helpful in our theorizing. Finally, Michael Blain and Angeline Kearns Blaine offer commentary on West and Matthweman's previous *Theory* essay, with the goal of thinking through what causes war and military violence. We want to thank all the contributors for helping construct what we think is a very interesting edition of the newsletter. Enjoy!

**Erik Schneiderhan and Daniel Silver**

# A New Social Theory from Japan to the World for Countering the 'New Normalcy'

**SHOJI Kokichi, University of Tokyo**

A research Group, which I am leading, is trying to propose a new social theory of the world from Japan.

We live in the midst of a 'new normal.' This situation is marked by such phenomena as the outbreaks of massive refugees in the Middle East, the rapidly increasing number of immigrants all over the world, and the frequent occurrences of terrorist attacks in especially major European cities. However, as of yet we have no adequate social and historical theory to explain how and why these realities have come to be recognized as a new normal.

We consider these new normalcies as the effects of insufficient policies taken by European countries, the USA, and Japan. These nations maintained their colonialist rule of the world for five centuries. Yet they have no sufficient understanding of the post-colonial world that has been attained by other nations' liberation movements up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The colonialist rule was a form of world rule by Europe, USA, and Japan, justified formally on a civilizing project but actually on the basis of racism. This legitimated treating colonial subjects as slaves or actually as slaves. This is clearly opposed to Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the revolutionary democratic principles that Europe, the USA, and Japan have espoused.

Europe, USA, and Japan must realize this fact, sincerely apologize, and integrate this recognition into their domestic and foreign policies. This is actually the global development of Affirmative Action that was proposed and has been implemented, although still insufficiently yet, in the United States in order to consistently apologize and compensate the people who have long been discriminated against. As Europe, USA, and Japan firmly take these attitudes and policies, so their policies against terrorism and those for humanist immigration and effective refugee relief would be appreciated as right and legitimate.

Beginning its own modernization in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan joined Europe and the USA's modern world building. It colonized Taiwan and the Korean peninsula and tried to extend its colonial invasion to the Northeast part and the whole of China, and even to the Southeast Asian countries. This caused the wars against Europe and the USA, and Japan unconditionally surrendered after the miserable Okinawan ground warfare, the merciless carpet bombing of almost all its cities, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nevertheless, Japan has repeatedly been censured, especially by Korea and China nations, for insufficient recognition of its colonial history. On the other hand, Japan has not come to terms with the fact that it was itself colonized just after the war and even that it has been putting itself in a semi-colonial situation by accepting US army bases, 70% of which are in Okinawa, under the Japan-US security treaty.

Watching the new normalcies spreading into Japan towards the Tokyo Olympiad in 2020, we are trying to propose a new adequate historic and social theory which would supply an effective framework for not only Europe, USA, and Japan, but also newly developing nations who were once colonized or were made subordinate.

# Textural Sociologies

**Eduardo De La Fuente, James Cook University**

The 'cultural turn' brought a necessary correction to positivist and functionalist accounts of society; and also to 'reductionist' accounts of culture as mere 'epiphenomena'. In his book *Local Knowledge*, Clifford Geertz (1983: 23) characterized the reconfiguration of the social sciences associated with the cultural turn as an attempt to bring fields such as sociology, anthropology, politics and history closer to 'humanities' such as literature, philosophy, aesthetics and the study of culture. Geertz (1983: 23) boldly predicted that the following would recede in importance for the social sciences: 'isolating a cause, determining a variable, measuring a force, or defining a function'. He also suggested that of the three humanistic metaphors he thought were on the increase (i.e., social life as game, drama, text) the one that was most likely to prevail would be society-as-text:

The text analogy now taken up by social scientists is, in some ways, the broadest of the recent reconfigurations of social theory, the most venturesome... "text" is a dangerously unfocused term, and its application to social action... involves a through-going conceptual wrench, a particularly outlandish bit of "seeing-as"... The great virtue of the extension of the notion of text beyond things written on paper or carved into stone is that it trains attention on precisely this phenomenon: on how the inscription of action is brought about, what its vehicles are and how they work, and on what the fixation of meaning from the flow of events ... implies for sociological interpretation. To see social institutions, social customs, social changes as in some sense "readable" is to alter our whole sense of what such interpretation is and shift it toward modes of thought rather more familiar to the translator, the exegete, or the iconographer than to the test giver, the factor analyst, or the pollster. (Geertz, 1983: 30-31)

How things have changed since Geertz penned those words some three plus decades ago. Any prediction that the social sciences would simply move from a 'social physics' (as Geertz, following Comte, termed it) to a 'textualist' form of sociological analysis has proven incorrect. If anything, the social sciences are more rather than less differentiated with respect to whether they emphasize meanings or facts, interpretation or causality, or the extent to which they invest in something called 'theory' or in 'empirical' analysis. Furthermore, both 'positivistic' and 'interpretative' approaches have come to be seen by some as been equally 'performative' in nature. The old distinction that Critical Theorists drew between the positivist approaches of administered capitalism, and the critical-hermeneutic approaches necessary to offer resistance to capitalism, is no longer so clear-cut. Today, poststructuralism, deconstruction and complexity theory are featured on the

syllabi of many business schools; as are discussions of aesthetics and art theory, cultural studies and everyday life, gender studies and queer theory. Textuality is a type of knowledge, one potentially valuable in the study of markets, marketing, branding, organizations, the design of workplaces and other things necessary to keep the machinery of capitalism going.

In other words, an emphasis on textuality – from the vantage point of 2017 – is neither the disruptive force nor the substitute for positivistic techniques that Geertz, and many others, imagined it to be some thirty years ago. Indeed, it is interesting to see that scholars interested in fields of research that textualists were particularly renowned for have suddenly discovered an appetite for: the pre-discursive dimensions of social life; the senses, including the acoustic and the olfactory; how movement shapes our experience of space, place and landscape; the affective and embodied dimensions of social life; and sociocultural states that are hard to define such as the atmosphere or mood of a space. The anti-textual or anti-discursive bent of the type of sociocultural approaches I am alluding to is captured in the label that one of its leaders chose for this intellectual movement: namely, *Non-Representational Theory* (Thrift, 2008).

In a book published with that title, British cultural geographer Nigel Thrift (2008: 2) describes the purposes of non-representational theory as ‘supplement[ing] the ordinary’ and as providing ‘a sacrament for the everyday, a hymn to the superfluous’. The key term here is ‘supplementing’ compared to say ‘uncovering’ or ‘correcting’. Another follower of non-representational techniques put it more prosaically when he wrote that such approaches aimed to ‘escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that await our discovery’; adding that non-representationalism ‘seeks to better cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds’ (Lorimer, 2005: 83-84).

Phillip Vannini (2014) who has employed non-representational methods to study social processes as different as ‘island-ness’, ‘commuting’ and ‘off-grid living’ proposes that one of the central aims of non-representational methods is to counter the tendency towards seeing space, culture and social life as essentially ‘dead’ or ‘inanimate’. He writes of the Vitalist impulse underpinning non-representational ethnography: ‘Everyday life is a mix of taken-for-granted realities, habit, and routine, as well as impulse, novelty, and vivaciousness... non-representational ethnographies aim to be as full of vitality as the life-worlds they endeavour to enact’ (Vannini, 2014: 320). For Vannini (2014: 319), the contrast between a ‘representational’ and ‘non-representational’ approach lies in a shift from the ‘know and tell’ mode of analysis to one that does ‘not represent but instead “flirts” with reality’. We have come a long way from Geertz’s ‘exegete’.

Non-representational theory then might be seen as the most robust attempt to move away from the society-as-text metaphor. The approach has had major reverberations in fields such as geography, organization studies, mobility studies, studies of embodiment, design, landscape studies and science and technology studies. Running parallel to such developments is a body of interdisciplinary research that has chosen to describe itself as ‘surface studies’. Housed at Lancaster University, the ‘Surface Studies Network’ says on its homepage: ‘This website is the home of the surface studies network, aimed at bringing

together those working on and with surfaces... The network is interested in the study of all different kinds of surfaces, including but not limited to skin, screens, lines, interfaces, fabric, landscapes, the earth’.

The field of surface studies has produced various texts that, in a short period of time, have helped to define it. One such example is Joseph Amato’s (2013: 1) *Surfaces: A History*, a book that suggests surfaces provide important things like information about the ‘plethora of life’, suggested modes of engagement with external reality and also ‘hands on’ learning about how best to negotiate the qualities of the world. In addition to what the environmental psychologist James Jerome Gibson (1979: 127) has called the ‘affordances’ of the natural landscape, which allow us to walk on, sit on, be sheltered by, various aspects of the earth’s surfaces, Amato (2013: 4) emphasizes those surfaces that are ‘systematically built, scientifically and aesthetically designed, industrially manufactured, and commercially distributed across the world’ (Amato, 2013: 4). The surfaces of industrial modernity, he claims, are designed to keep differentiated functions separate and to replace the contingencies of natural processes with the artificiality of manufactured surfaces. By contrast, for surface studies scholars interested in contemporary media and technology, it is digital surfaces that have captured their attention.

If textural social science has a patron saint it would be turn-of-the-last-century sociologist and aesthetician, Georg Simmel (1965: 261), who in his essay, ‘The Ruin’, suggested ‘so long as we can speak of a ruin at all and not a mere heap of stones’ it is because the ‘crumbling power of nature’ has not yet sunk the products of culture ‘into the formlessness of mere matter’.<sup>1</sup> Simmel also wrote essays and books on inherently textural sociocultural phenomena such as: handles and picture frames; bridges and doors; the Alps; adornment; and money-exchange. He was amongst the first also to focus on spatiotemporal textures, his essay on the metropolis commenting on ‘the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions’ (Simmel, 1950: 410). Arguably, there is a recognition of texture in Marx’s analysis of commodity-fetishism which critiques the commodity- idolatry that emerges from exchange-value; and, within the purview of so-called ‘classical sociology’, Emile Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* has vivid descriptions of the textures of religious ceremonies and their difference with the textures of everyday life.

There is an explicit emphasis on textuality present in the thinking of anthropologist, psychiatrist, ecologist, cybernetician, and polymath, Gregory Bateson (1973: 103), who in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, writes the most important ‘psychic information’ that we can divine from aesthetic patterns is not what they ‘represent’ but rather the ‘rules of transformation’ that have determined that something is made of ‘wood or stone, symmetrically organized or under-stylized’. Bateson says of the importance of material

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<sup>1</sup> A side issue that I won’t be able to address in this short article is whether or not there is such a thing as ‘mere matter’. As Jane Bennett (2010) notes in her book, *Vibrant Matter*, the notion that there is matter completely divorced from culture or politics ‘misrecognizes that all matter has life or processes of growth, decay and transformation, and that such seemingly micro processes can embody major social and ethical relations.



surfaces in providing aesthetic communication:

The lions in Trafalgar Square could have been eagles or bulldogs and still have carried the same (or similar) messages about empire and about the premises of nineteenth century England. And, yet, how different their message have been had they been made of wood! ... The *code* whereby perceived objects or persons (or supernaturals) are transformed into wood or paint is a source of information about the artists and his culture... It is the very rules of transformation that are of interest to me – not the message. (Bateson, 1973: 103)

It is important to note here that ‘rules of transformation’ are not about the ‘essential’ differences we might perceive between materials such as wood or paint. Finding similarities between disconnected things can also draw attention to textuality. The kinds of things that interested Bateson – for example, the role that predictability, pattern, redundancy, and restraint play in aesthetic communication – could be elucidated by a comparison of otters playing and how schizophrenics frame reality. A recent volume draws attention to textuality precisely through a comparison of food and architecture and the way these two forms of cultural production mobilize values such as ‘authenticity’, ‘regionalism’, ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘repetition’ (Martin-MacAuliffe, 2016). Symmetry, analogy, pattern, style and metaphor are natural points of focus for a textural social science (on ‘analogy’ and ‘metaphor’ as valid forms of sociological explanation see Swedberg, 2014).

Arguably, the most important contemporary theorist of textures in the social sciences is the British anthropologist, Tim Ingold (2000; 2010; 2015). In theorizing textuality, Ingold draws on Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and Guattari, and Bruno Latour, alongside 19<sup>th</sup> century theorist of architecture and decoration, Gottfried Semper, and the aforementioned Bateson and Gibson. In *Life of Lines*, he offers the following account of how social reality is a series of interwoven patterns comparable to the art of textiles:

Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, in a treatise on the origins and evolution of architecture, Gottfried Semper asserted that the knotting of fibres in net-making and basketry was among the most ancient of human arts, from which all else was derived... in a world where things are continually coming into being through processes of growth and movement – that is, in a world of *life* – knotting is the fundamental principle of coherence. It is the way forms are held together and kept in place what would otherwise be a formless and inchoate flux. (Ingold, 2015: 14)

Ingold is here emphasizing the linguistic connection between the notion of texture and the art of textiles. Texture derives from the ‘Latin *texere*, meaning “to weave”, which came to mean the thing woven (textile) and the feel of the weave (texture)’ (Adams, Hoelscher and Till, 2001: xiii). The implication is that the social and material worlds we inhabit are like fabrics, carpets, and other woven things. Ingold (2010: 92) describes his ontology of woven textures thus: ‘It is about the way in which materials of all sorts, energized by cosmic forces and with variable properties, mix and meld with one another in the

generation of things'. I will return to the textility of textures shortly.

But what of so-called 'mainstream' contemporary sociology – has there been anything like a 'textural' move of the sort that we have seen in some of the other social sciences? Arguably, a textural gesture is discernible in the Yale Strong Program's recent interest in 'iconicity'. To some extent, the early work of the Yale School of Cultural Sociology replicated aspects of the society-as-text framework. For example, *Meanings of Social Life* had emphasized the relative autonomy of cultural texts and symbols in 'shaping actions and institutions, providing inputs every bit as vital as more material or instrumental forces'. That same text also argued for a 'Geertzian "thick description" of the codes, narratives, and symbols that create the textured webs of social meaning' (Alexander, 2003: 13). However, the edited collection *Iconic Power: Materiality and Meaning in Social Life* (Alexander, Bartmanski and Giesen, 2012) goes beyond the society-as-text framework by suggesting that processes of 'iconicity' occur at the interface between subject and object, meaning and sense-making: 'What we experience phenomenologically is a sensible material *surface* that generates its own aesthetic power' (Bartmanski and Alexander, 2012: 2).

This formulation builds on Alexander's (2008; 2010) earlier essays on Giacometti's *Standing Woman* and also on 'iconic consciousness'. The former, a meditation on a famous modernist sculpture and its sinewy textures, posits that the 'sensuous surface of things' is much more than 'a means to an end'; the sensuous surface of stuff 'allows us to see hear, and touch their narrative bindings' (Alexander, 2008: 784). Iconic consciousness is theorized as the movement that is afforded by objects through a dual process of 'subjectification' (where the object is drawn into the sphere of the self) and a concomitant 'objectification' or 'materialization' where the icon – and this is where the icon is different to other kinds of signs – reveals some deeper depth by virtue of the 'typification' or iconicity embedded in it (Alexander, 2010).

In the collection *Iconic Power*, which contains case studies as diverse as the 'Berlin Wall', the Woodstock Festival and the visualization of HIV infection statistics in the media, there is also a chapter by Ian Woodward and David Ellison (2012) on Australian Penfolds' Grange and how it became an iconic wine label. Woodward and Ellison say of the virtues of the iconic cultural sociological approach:

New approaches to iconicity in cultural sociology link the aesthetic surface of an object with the depths of its cultural meanings. Linking pragmatics and haptics with symbolism and mythology, such innovations offer a way of understanding how the aesthetic surface features of an object or image attract and enrol human interest by way of physical engagements... For wine – like any drink – the case for such a pragmatics of materiality is clear. We encounter a drink's odour or perfume in our nostrils, its texture is experienced, its colour is discerned, and we feel all of these aspects of the drink on our palates as it passes our lips. (Woodward and Ellison, 2012: 155; 162)

What becomes evident then is that the Yale School of Cultural Sociology's interest in aesthetic surfaces differs from non-representational theory in an important respect:

namely, it continues to employ a notion of culture as context, myth and narratives. Woodward and Ellison (2012: 162) continue one of the passages cited above by declaring that our drinking is 'conditioned' by the 'cultural context of drinking' and that what makes wine capable of becoming iconic is the object being 'overdetermined by mythical qualities of the type identified by Barthes'.

Their position is perfectly understandable from the vantage point of the Yale Strong Program's interest in cultural codes and the kind of sacred/profane distinction elaborated by Durkheim (1913). The underlying model of 'iconic consciousness' for such a cultural sociology is, not surprisingly, the sacred icon. As Bartmanski and Alexander suggest in the 'Introduction' to *Iconic Power*:

Icons are cultural constructions that provide believer-friendly epiphanies and consumer-friendly images... The icon has proven to be a powerful and resilient culture structure, and a container for sacred meanings, long after Friedrich Nietzsche announced the death of God... for a material substance to become iconic, its aesthetic surface must, at one and the same time, stand for an invisible discursive *depth*... Icons are aesthetic/material representations, yes, but they are also signifiers of the ideationally and affectively intuited signified. (Bartmanski and Alexander, 2012: 2)

I don't have any inherent objection to the notion that the sacred might provide a model for how we think about the kinds of enchantments, and other aesthetic-affective impacts, that surfaces might be able to generate in the world. However, it is the surface/depth duality that I am less sure about.

While we don't want to overstate the significance of etymology, over and above other considerations, if texture stems from *texere*, which is the Latin word for weaving and knitting, then it might also pay to mention that this very same Latin root is where we get other words – which we often unnecessarily separate and see in dichotomous terms – such as 'text' and 'context'. Texture implies many things that are at the heart of social and cultural life such as: connection; conjoining; simultaneity; patterning; the continuity of experience. It is interesting that Simmel (1997), whose analogical mode of thinking sometimes makes it difficult to extract clear hypotheses about social life, did put forward a very simple ontological formulation in the essay 'Bridge and Door'. There he says the 'human being is the connecting creature' (Simmel, 1997: 174). This could be the motto for a textural sociology.

In my own work, I have started thinking about the possibilities a textural sociology might bring to the study of things as different as aging concrete university campuses and, in a separate project, the role produce does and (to the extent it allows for a re-imagining of supply chains, community conviviality and cooking/eating habits) might play in processes of place-making, where I currently live, in Tropical North Queensland (de la Fuente, 2017a; 2017b). I have also recently penned an essay on whether we can deepen our notion of cosmopolitanism by looking at the social and cultural construction of the look and feel of cosmopolitan and noncosmopolitan spaces (de la Fuente, forthcoming). In pursuing such textural research questions, I take significant inspiration from an edited

collection that is decidedly non-representational: that is, a collection put together by 'humanist geographers' entitled, *Textures of Place*. The editors begin their introduction to the volume thus:

A name etched in the smooth, black stone of a war memorial, a crowd of peasants captured in oil paint, a ghost town arrested intentionally in its decay, the planet we call home seen from the vantage point of space – these are a few of the infinite textures of place... Although we may think of texture as a superficial layer, only “skin deep”, its distinctive qualities may be profound. A surface is, after all, where subject and object merge; the shape, feel and texture of a place each provides a glimpse into the processes, structures, spaces, and histories that went into its making. (Adams, Hoelscher and Till, 2001: xiii)

They go on to suggest that textures of place – like the ‘touch’ or feel of ‘fabric’ - can be ‘sturdy’ or ‘delicate’, ‘light’ or ‘heavy’ (Adams, Hoelscher and Till, 2001: xiv). Likewise, people’s sense of place is ‘variously attached to a movie theatre, a town, a tree, a planet’ and their emotional and symbolic invocation of such place qualities ‘highlights the weaving together of social relations and human-environment interactions’ (Adams, Hoelscher and Till, 2001: xiv).

Arguably, what textural sociology can provide is a way of theorizing the role of the *qualitative* in social and cultural life (de la Fuente, 2016). Textures interact with sociocultural processes via time or space, materials or substances. A building can look ‘new’ and ‘glossy’ or – as I recently heard a member of senior management say about some of the buildings on our campus – ‘old’ and ‘tired’. An activity can feel ‘fast’ or ‘slow’. Surfaces can be ‘rigid’ or ‘soft’; as can the way we think about and approach the world. So thinking and doing also have textural qualities. Textural qualities are able to form alliances with ideologies, worldviews, structures of feeling, sources of enchantment and forces of transgression. Textures are not fussy. They are happy to do their work at the micro, meso, macro or meta levels of society. In this and many other respects, textures – literal and metaphorical – are fascinating subject matter for sociologists.

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# Power, Knowledge, and Ethics in Theorizing War and the Military

**Michael Blain and Angeline Kearns Blain, Boise State University**

Re: Comments on West and Matthewman's, "Sociological Theory as Demilitarized Zone: Examining Disciplinary Inattention to War and the Military," RC16 Theory newsletter, Winter 2016).<sup>i</sup>

We organize our commentary around three interrelated issues: power, knowledge, and ethics. We applaud your efforts at articulating a program of research on war and the military. And we have no problem with the way the authors want to extend the so-called "strong program" of cultural sociology to the study of war and the military, as far as it goes. However, we do not think that, as the authors' articulate this program, it can provide an adequate sociological explanation of the cultural causes of modern war and mass military violence.

The authors' introduction asserts that war and the military "is a relatively neglected field within sociological theory." We wholeheartedly agree with that proposition. We agree that sociological theory and sociology in general is largely "a demilitarized zone." One searches in vain for a chapter on violence, warfare, and the military in introductory sociology. It does not appear in the list of chapters on social "Institutions." This seems odd given the societies that produce much of the most influential sociological theorizing in the world today are the same nations involved either directly or as enablers of much of the political violence in the world today. It does seem relevant to this discussion that the nations in the US led War on Terror contain in their borders the most influential sociological establishments in some of the most prestigious universities in the world. In the U.S., for example, military institutions are deeply embedded in our everyday cultural life, ROTC in schools and universities, and communities. The global reach of the US military also means that this is true of many other nation-states in the world. This seems odd given the US and its allies in the War on Terror directly participate in or enable much of the political violence, wars, and state-sponsored terrorism in the world today.

We would assert further that the lack of interest in war and military by sociological theorists seems obtuse; sometimes we think it might be a result of a deliberate decision. Warfare and violence could be brought up in many different contexts. As far as we know there is no theory of warfare presented in sociological theory texts. We have theories of political-economy, a whole list of social institutions and identities [i.e., gender, race, class [significantly, nation rarely gets into this list]]. As far as we can tell, war is not an institution in our culture. It has no list of functions. As far as introductory sociological textbooks are

concerned, it could be brought up in historical emergence of sociology following the French revolutionary 'terror', the theory section of sociology textbooks, particularly in relation to Marxism (class struggle and civil war) or power-conflict theory. The Chapter on "Deviance and Crime" does deals with criminal violence and homicide. There is no discussion of war crimes. The War on Terrorism and its globalizing "security" counterterrorism practices have problematized this old differentiation in a serious way.<sup>ii</sup> You do sometimes have chapters on "political" institutions that devote a few paragraphs to the topics relevant to war and the military. Discussions of military violence may also be a tangential aspect of the section on social movements. This is no accident. A whole generation of social movement theorists devoted themselves to delinking social movements from the spectre of 'terror,' fascist violence and revolutionary warfare to fashion a more "positive" view of this kind of democratic politics (Blain 1994).

Power / Knowledge Dynamic.

We would add some additional reasons to the author's explanation of why "sociological theorizing" is "a demilitarized zone." The reasons are more complicated than the authors allow and this can get us into the heart of our problem with any approach that evades the problematic linkages connecting power elites, political violence, the military and warfare.

First, the essay fails to address the most obvious reason why sociological theory avoids the problem of war and the military. The elites that rule American society and manage the DOD and its military institutions do not financially support this kind of research and in some cases will actively oppose and attack researchers who do (see Blain 2012, and 2015b, "Social Science Discourse and The Biopolitics of Terrorism"). Social scientists get blowback when they seek to know what is going on with the military and war, or when they link these practices to power and domination. Researchers can be stigmatized by their involvement in critical research that targets "Counter-terrorism" programs and research. They can be defamed by public authorities as threats to national security or anathematized as unpatriotic traitors to the cause. These researchers can be excluded from professional communities on grounds they constitute a threat to the legitimacy and authority of the discipline (Mills and Noam Chomsky are good examples).

The second reason is epistemological. It is no more reductive to link the war and the military to power relations than to link it to culture. War is a social power relation and a social mode of domination. We need to think history, culture, and power in the same theory. First we need to acknowledge that "sociological theorizing" is part and parcel of the "reflexive modernization" that constituted modernity. As a result of the overemphasis on political-economy and industrialism, the Classic theorists ignored the constitutive role of political violence in modernization (see Giddens 1985). Modernization involved the active destruction of traditional societies and in some cases the genocide of indigenous people. As such we need to be very skeptical of insider accounts of "Wartime Sociology" provided by insiders in the "sociological establishment," largely dominated by Americans in the post WWII period and deeply embedded in the power structure of the "warfare" state.

The authors were right to invoke Mills and his account of the role of the US military in global politics. They fail to mention his trenchant critique of popular culture, social



scientists and professors, and their role in the “Cold-War” (Mills 1959; also Horowitz 1965 and Chomsky 1969). The authors are also wrong to assume that research in this tradition stopped after Mills (see Domhoff 1990, 2014). It is true that most of this research focused on the power elite, defining the national interest, and the Cold-War. They are wrong to claim that research in this tradition came to an end. It is only when Mills’ power elite began to inform anti-war and peace movement activism, did it become anathema to theorize the military and war in sociological theorizing (Blain 1989, 1991). It is also untrue to assert that research on the War on Terror in this tradition is undeveloped and too programmatic (see Blain 2012).

In addition to Joas’ account of sociology’s troubled relationship to war and the military (cited in West and Matthewman) we add Saint-Amand’s (1996) critique.<sup>iii</sup> Amand is more trenchant than Joas on the agency involved in the suppression of the problematic of hostility in human social life. He argues that Enlightenment social theories were tailored to the interests of progressive movements and revolutionary liberalism, and that these theories functioned to legitimate the violence of the modern nation state as “progressive” mode of power and domination. The philosophes assumed things about “human nature” that entailed the “laws of hostility.” These theorists emphasized the positive and played down the negative. Some of theorists were revolutionaries who supported ‘terror’ as a legitimate means to achieve the democratic goal of building a liberal, egalitarian society. The assumptions they made (and many sociologists still make) were tailored to their utopian desires to engineer the good society—a laudable goal. The knowledge of the laws of society would serve to legitimate the use of political power and policing projects to insure domestic security and imperial sovereignty entailed by these projects. The active and willful suppression of the problem of violent conflict entailed by their theories of human nature and society were immediately and justly mocked by Diderot, Sade, and Nietzsche. This linkage to the terror generated a series of reactionary discourses linking the French revolution to “evil” and the social pathologies of modern “liberal” societies (Blain 2015a).

The emergence of the social sciences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their continued functioning right up to the present have to be approached in a much more complex way in a historical genealogy of “liberalism,” the social sciences, and “political violence” than we have time to address in this brief response (see Blain 2007; 2009; also Wallerstein 2011). Needless to say, we think sociological thought has been and continues to be in the verifiable history of the present deeply embedded in the power structures that shape the everyday life practices of modern society. We also think Domhoff’s (2017) power elite account of the “policy planning network” in the U.S., and its links to the elite universities is directly relevant to an analysis of social scientists’ involvements in the current wars. This line of research shows how social science knowledge functions in the history of the present and the War on Terror. The charge that this knowledge of the power elite does not relate to the everyday life, military and warfare in our societies is empirically false. It continues to inform political activism and resistance right now and in the present.

The authors organize their account of military sociology around the participation of sociologists in the World Wars and its enduring effects on sociological knowledge. We cannot go into an analysis of the power / knowledge dynamic of that history in any

detailed way at this time. Again, there is a problem with the authors' reliance on "insider" accounts of the history of sociological thought. These histories need to include research on the social and psychological sciences by historians who are not so interested in legitimating a theory campaign in the discipline in spite of the truth by spinning a yarn so tailored to the interests of the sociological elites at the time. We recommend Mills' or Giddens (cited by the authors), our own work (cited above) as well as the work of many others we reference in our own contributions. A good place to begin would be Simpson's (1994) monograph detailing the historical emergence of the social science field of "communications research" and a public opinion industry from WW II and its "psychological warfare" programs.

The authors' understanding of the war-military nexus is questionable at many levels, including the cultural sociology perspective they champion. Their understanding also illustrates one of the most enduring and vexing problems in sociological theorizing--the inability of theorists to face the problematic of violence and sadism in human social life, particularly massive military violence. We hoped that as champions of the "strong program" of sociological theorizing and research on war and the military that they would propose some kind of cultural analysis of military violence. In this perspective, how would they conceptualize the practices of warfare? Is it a cultural practice, political performance, spectacle of human sacrifice? We thought they might build on Alexander's (2004) account of 9/11 as a flawed political performance. Alexander concluded with the political point that the "terrorism" of 9/11 represented a failure of democratic politics, an act of despair and an end to politics. Why wouldn't they want to extend this critical judgement to the massive military violence of the War on Terror? The high-tech homicide bombings, the policy of kinetic aerial warfare, involving thousands of bombings and civilian deaths, flattening whole cities and destroying vital human infrastructures, destroying the lives of millions of people in the territories affected, requires some kind of cultural analysis. These massive power projects by the perpetrators of the War on Terror need to be understood against the background of Western culture. Warfare in this perspective is continuous with the long history of our imperial culture (i.e., Homer's Iliad, Virgil's Aeneid, Spenser's Fiery Queen, and ritual practices of Savage Warfare in the American Mythology of the Frontier, articulated in American literature and films).

### Ethic of Truth

Weber and Mills faced all of this fairly and squarely; the sociological establishment at the time marginalized and vilified Mills for doing so. Sociological theorists were shaken out of their dogmatic slumber by the shocking war crimes perpetrated by the US and its allies during the Viet Nam war, all in the name of liberal democracy. The mass violence perpetrated by the US led coalition fighting War on Terror is not broached in the article. The decentering you propose to advance your strong program of research runs away from the mass violence and repression legitimated by 9/11.

The main ethical as well as epistemological issue, as we see it, is the incapacity of sociologists to face directly the practices of violence in war and military. The authors seem to want to disengage from the problematic of agency in creating and maintaining a massive military establishment devoted to violence and homicide by retreating to the non-

violent everyday world of “peace” and civil society. On the contrary, cultural sociologists need to think the mass extermination programs perpetrated against indigenous people around the world in the name of Empire and Western civilization; they need to think the strategies of “chemical warfare” and “terror bombings” perpetrated by the belligerents involved in the Great wars as well as the holocaust; the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; think the terrible destruction of the Middle East wars, refugee crises, increased terrorist attacks in response to US lead coalition military interventions.

These histories and their articulations in art, poetry, and film constitute the cultural background influencing the agency of the political and military elites orchestrating these wars. We don't believe that ignoring this reality is justified or ethical in the name of promoting a decentered cultural analysis that merely focuses on civil society. As the authors suggest, civil society is certainly important in resistance to these activities. But civil society is not the whole story. They cite Phillip Smith's work on war narratives generated in a number of nations leading to the Gulf wars. We agree. Elites in interaction with civil society, publics and social movements, know very well that the management of narrative is a strategic problem. It is an old problem addressed by Machiavelli and many other tutors and advisors to monarchs, emperors, and presidents. Elite's already know about these problems. They have generated “insider” discourses cloaked in secrecy, employing the latest social science knowledge, to manage the narrative attacks of opponents of their war policies, pacifists and peace activists. These discourses constitute the decisive discourses leading to the decision to go to war—invade Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. In the midst of the Iraq war President George Bush countered a growing public narrative against that war by adopting a new “social science” informed counter-insurgency strategy and doubling down on the war (See Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency (COIN), Department of the Army, 2013; Foreword by General David H. Petraeus, Ph.D., Princeton University).

The authors accuse those working in the Weberian / Mills' tradition, those who think culture, power, and violence in the same perspective, of putting forward a reductive theorizing of the problem of war and the military in terms of power relations. Weberian verstehen sociology and Mills use of it placed “cultural” questions at the center of their analysis of military violence and warfare—the military metaphysic is one of those rhetorical discourses. The authors are correct. Commemorations of the war dead are deeply embedded in American culture and highly significant to the participants. We live it and see it everyday right in our immediate neighborhood. The DOD has colonized many of the most important national holidays, inserting the military and veterans into every aspect of our national cultural lives. Flag-waving is a very prevalent practice in the U.S. of A.

The authors' section on “Wartime Sociology” is illustrative of this ethical problem. Again, they seem more concerned with mounting their “strong program” agenda in sociological theorizing than theorizing the military and war in our society. We do not have any particular problem with the strong program in cultural sociology. We cite some of the same research that they recommend (in particular, Alexander's (2005) approach to “terrorism” as a political power performance and Philip Smith's work on the influence of narrative in the emergence of the War on Terror). We do believe that political violence and warfare are a profoundly cultural affair. As we asserted at the 2016 ISA Cambridge

conference on Theory last summer, imperial violence is part and parcel of modern culture. It is no longer acceptable to claim Empire, power and domination as the positive rationale for military violence. But it is clearly implicit in the “counterterror” practices of the War on Terror.

There is so much empirical evidence that the elites are “rationally” knowledgeable of the role of civil society and the non-rational aspects of war and organizing campaigns of military violence, and effectively use it to manipulate the public, that it seems naive to insist that these ideas can be mobilized to build a new cultural sociology of the military and war. Our research on social movements, particularly peace movements, indicates that activists are rationally and consciously aware of their involvement in cultural politics, and its strategical and tactical deployments in opposition to military violence (cited above).

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<sup>i</sup> The following response is grounded in 40 years of research on the problem of political violence and many years of active participation in the peace and anti-nuclear war movements (see Blain 2005, Pt. III: Counter-terror; Kearns Blain 1994, 2000, 2009).

<sup>ii</sup> The WoT and its globalizing "security" counterterrorism practices have problematized this old differentiation in a serious way. Social scientists and criminologists specifically are in fact directly involved in the National Security Agency (NSA) sponsored research in support of the WoT; see Blain 2015; e.g. Dugan & Chenoweth 2012, the latter funded by the NSA and enabled by data sets provided by Israeli intelligence.

<sup>iii</sup> We reject Saint-Amant's use of Rene Girard's functionalist explanation of ritual victimage as caused by social conflicts and tensions generated by disruptive and clashing mimetic desires. Again, the problem with Girard's is the same problem we have with some proponents of the "strong program" in neofunctionalism. He refuses to face the terrible truth that knowledgeable elites orchestrate victimage rituals as a calculated means of politics. Victimage ritual, we argue, is a rationalized and refined political strategy employed by power elites

# Announcements

Jasso, Guillermina. 2016. "Mathematical Sociology." In Janeen Baxter (ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mathematical sociology is sociology expressed in the language of mathematics. It has no special subject matter or special domain, for all of sociology is its domain and all human behavioral and social phenomena are its subject matter. What is distinctive about mathematical sociology is its language, its vocabulary. While articles on particular topical domains expressed in ordinary language have sentences as their main elements—with a subject, a verb, perhaps an object, perhaps embellished with adjectives and adverbs—articles on particular topical domains expressed mathematically have equations as their main elements—a term to the left of the equals sign, to the right a term or terms linked by plus and minus signs, perhaps embellished with subscripts and superscripts. In the same way that sentences are combined into paragraphs, equations are combined into multi-equation models. And in the same way that nouns and verbs are modified by adjectives and adverbs, the terms in equations are modified by transformations and parameters. The task of mathematical sociology is mathematical statement of the terms and relations in all of sociology—from the foundational ideas of the discipline to the starting ideas for its subfields to the predictions and possibilities for all topical domains. Importantly, the task is not embraced for its own sake, though it would be easy to do so based on notions of parsimony, precision, and beauty. Rather, the task is embraced because mathematics is the tool par excellence for advancing knowledge. Two of the ways that mathematics shows its power for advancing knowledge pertain to sociological theory, that is to the very foundations of sociology. First, mathematics is a power tool for deriving testable predictions, including novel predictions, from the foundational postulates in the discipline and the starting ideas in its subfields. Second, mathematics is a power tool for theoretical unification, helping the discipline to reach the goal of understanding more and more by less and less.

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## **Russian Sociological Review - Call for Papers** **Spontaneous Orders and New Forms of the Social: Between the Mundane and Institutions**

The Russian Sociological Review ([sociologica.hse.ru/en](http://sociologica.hse.ru/en)), an international peer-reviewed academic journal published by the National Research University – Higher School of Economics ([www.hse.ru](http://www.hse.ru)), invites contributions from philosophy, social sciences and cognate fields for the special issue entitled *Spontaneous Orders and New Forms of the Social: Between the Mundane and Institutions*.

For several decades, the notion of globalization has been essential for many social scholars. As evidence, one can refer to the influential plenary talks of the ISA presidents. For example, in

1990, the topic of the ISA congress “One Sociology for One World: Unity and Diversity” was introduced by Margaret Archer in a straightforward and unequivocal manner. In her presidential address, she declared that “‘Sociology for One World’ implies: firstly, a single Discipline; secondly, a single World; and thirdly, that the former does something for the latter” ([http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential\\_address\\_m\\_archer.pdf](http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential_address_m_archer.pdf)).

Consequently, it was important that the presidents of ISA kept saying that contemporary society was global, and that social facts should have been considered within the global society. In his 2002 presidential address in Brisbane, Alberto Martinelli said that “globalization requires a basic redefinition of major concepts of the sociological tradition. We all know that sociology has developed as a discipline together with the modern world and that the unit of analysis of most macrosociological research has been the national society” ([http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential\\_address\\_a\\_martinelli.pdf](http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential_address_a_martinelli.pdf)). He believed that the study of global flows was more important than what was taking place within “contested boundaries”.

In Durban in 2006, Piotr Sztompka continued to insist that globalization is of a high priority when he stated that “globalization turns out not to be an abstract condition of society somewhere out there, but the very real experience internal to and permeating everyday life of the people. To see globalization, one does not need to read aggregated statistics about financial flows, global division of labor, intensity of telecommunications, numbers of travelers, tourists, and refugees. It is enough just to look around” ([http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential\\_address\\_p\\_sztompka.pdf](http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential_address_p_sztompka.pdf)).

Additionally, in Gothenburg in 2010, Michel Wieviorka who was more interested in the global “as a way of thinking, a way of approaching problems which relate to sociology”, pointed out the significance of global phenomena and global connections, e.g., financial ones ([http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential\\_address\\_m\\_wieviorka\\_english%281%29.pdf](http://www.isa-sociology.org/uploads/files/presidential_address_m_wieviorka_english%281%29.pdf)).

Undoubtedly, we agree that today’s global phenomena such as flows and networks cover the world and horizontal connections continue to be omnipresent like any other new global social institution. Yet nowadays, radical changes are taking place that will become more sophisticated on the global scale, and will question and reduce the importance of what has been used to be a symptom of globalization. This is exemplified through the new reinforcement of the State, the reducing power of the international law institutions and the authority of the international organizations, the emergence of new forms of spontaneous order everywhere, and the growing avalanche of information on various episodes of social interaction.

Globalization is questioned with respect to the process of the blurring of political borders of states and other territories. Where social events take place, states gain their role as a main social unity anew. Still, they are permeated by global flows. The interaction of the global and the local takes a new shape. Furthermore, new forms of social interaction emerge, and it is not possible to definitely classify them as global or local. Neither traditional institutional nor newer network- and flow-inspired languages of description can be used to make sense of them. These interactions—often spontaneous, slightly formed, and embedded in the routine practices—may emerge and then quickly dissolve. However, they may become the origin of the yet-unknown future.

New forms of social order may reveal themselves in various configurations of order and disorder, in unprecedented or partially transformed situations, or in episodes of social life in time and space. The novelty may be traced in unexpected events or in issues of communication, in the distribution of sources and in the shifting of centers of activities, or in the composition of new types of inert communication. Spontaneous orders relate to the shop floor of the social where new forms of interaction emerge and are tested. The times and situations, when the dominant tendencies are not yet defined, and the future is still open, are the most favorable to these orders.

In 2017, here, in Russia, we are particularly sensitive to the emergence of the new in locations where no one expects it. Russia experienced two revolutions a hundred years ago. As a result of one of these revolutions, the monarchy disappeared, while the second led to the disintegration of the Russian empire and its way of life. This happened during the Great War which ended the existence of Old Europe, and had important consequences for the rest of the world. The Jubilee is a good occasion to reflect not only on the Revolution itself but also on the way the stability in both the national and global institutional order is suddenly transformed. In the situations of a forthcoming crisis and the change in the main social forms, we are interested in what the new loci of spontaneous order look like while the global mechanism of enforcement or legitimization remains weak or absent.

We welcome those papers that contribute original material to the theoretical and empirical studies of these phenomena. In particular, we are interested in those conceptual papers devoted to the questioning and the search for the ways of observation, descriptions, and explanations of the new forms of interaction and order, crises and revolutions, and other forms of the renewal of social life.

## **Schedule**

June 20, 2017 – 500 words abstracts deadline  
July 1, 2017 – Invitation to submit full papers  
September 15, 2017 – 6000 words full papers deadline  
October 1, 2017 – Notification of acceptance  
November 1, 2017 – Revised papers deadline  
December, 2017 – Publication

Contributions should be sent via e-mail to the editor-in-chief Professor Alexander Filippov ([afilippov@hse.ru](mailto:afilippov@hse.ru)) and Dr Nail Farkhatdinov ([sociologica@hse.ru](mailto:sociologica@hse.ru)).

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact Dr Nail Farkhatdinov ([nailfarkhatdinov@hse.ru](mailto:nailfarkhatdinov@hse.ru)).

Papers should be no more than 12,000 words and written in English. See website of the Review for the detailed guidelines for authors ([sociologica.hse.ru/en/authors](http://sociologica.hse.ru/en/authors)).

## **About the Russian Sociological Review**

The Russian Sociological Review is an academic peer-reviewed journal of theoretical, empirical and historical research in social sciences. It publishes four issues per year. Each issue includes original research papers, review articles and translations of contemporary and classical works



in sociology, political theory and social philosophy. The journal focuses on the fundamental issues of social sciences from various conceptual and methodological perspectives. Understood broadly the fundamental issues include but are not limited to: social action and agency, social order, narrative, space and time, mobilities, power, etc. The journal is indexed by Scopus, Web of Science—Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Ebsco, DOAJ, Ulrichsweb, IBZ (International Bibliography of Periodical Literature), IBR (International Bibliography of Book Reviews of Scholarly Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences), Citefactor and other databases.

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# New Articles and Books

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