



YALE UNIVERSITY
CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY EAST & WEST

SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2023

EAST

Jongryul Choi ~ Keimyung University ~ Korea
Agnes Ku ~ Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ~ Hong Kong
Yeseul Lee ~ Keimyung University ~ Korea
Haoyue (Cecelia) Li ~ Zhejiang University ~ China
Xiao Mei ~ Fudan University ~ China
David Palmer ~ Hong Kong University ~ Hong Kong
Hiro Saito ~ University of Tokyo ~ Japan
Renxue Wan ~ Central China Normal University ~ China
Horng-luen Wang ~ Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University ~ Taiwan
Fei Yan ~ Tsinghua University ~ China
Yi Zhou ~ Fudan University ~ China

WEST

Jeffrey Alexander ~ Yale University ~ United States
Ates Altinordu ~ Sabanci University ~ Turkey
Nelson Arteaga Botello ~ Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales ~ Mexico
Werner Binder ~ Masaryk University ~ Czech Republic
Anna Durnova ~ University of Vienna ~ Austria
Akiko Hashimoto ~ Portland State University ~ United States
Mervyn Horgan ~ University of Guelph ~ Canada
Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky ~ Masaryk University ~ Czech Republic
Dmitry Kurakin ~ HSE University ~ Russia
Ming-Cheng Lo ~ University of California, Davis ~ United States
Anna Lund ~ Stockholm University ~ Sweden
Marcus Morgan ~ Bristol University ~ United Kingdom
Philip Smith ~ Yale University ~ United States
Celso Villegas ~ Kenyon College ~ United States
Bin Xu ~ Emory University ~ United States
Xiaohong Xu ~ University of Michigan ~ United States

HUMANITIES QUADRANGLE - HQ 136

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SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2023

Friday, September 15, 2023

8:30 - 9:00

Coffee/Tea

9:00 - 9:15

Opening Remarks: Jeffrey Alexander ~ Yale University

9:15 - 10:25

Session 1 ~ Meaningful Protest/ers

Chair: Sena Sahin ~ Yale University ~ United States

Celso Villegas ~ Kenyon College ~ United States

The Iconic Middle Class in the Philippines:

Linking Materiality with Morality through the Civil Sphere

Xiaohong Xu ~ University of Michigan ~ United States

The Social Power of Metaphor:

Making Family Metaphors in Hong Kong's 2019 Protests

Respondent: Johan Gøtzsche-Astrup ~ Yale University ~ United States

10:25 - 10:55

Coffee Break

10:55 - 12:25

Session 2 ~ Civil Sphere Theory as an Explanatory Tool

Chair: Jiwon Yun ~ Yale University ~ United States

Jongryul Choi ~ Keimyung University ~ Korea

Nursing Care as Public M/otherhood:

Why Is Nursing Legislation Not Enacted in South Korea?

Jeffrey Alexander ~ Yale University ~ United States

Office Obligation as Civil Virtue:

The Crisis of American Democracy, November 3, 2020 - January 6, 2021, and After

Hornng-luen Wang ~ Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University ~ Taiwan

"Society Must Be Defended":

Exploring the Interplay Between War and the Civil Sphere in Contemporary Taiwan

Respondent: Steven Arrigg Koh ~ Boston University School of Law ~ United States

12:25 - 1:45

Lunch

1:45 - 2:55

Session 3 ~ Making Sense of Covid

Chair: Zikun Liu ~ Tsinghua University ~ China

Bin Xu ~ Emory University ~ United States

Sacred Ordinarity:

Cultural Affordance and the Mourning for Dr. Li Wenliang

Ming-Cheng Lo ~ University of California, Davis ~ United States

Pandemic and Processes of Civil Repair:

Understanding Taiwan's Democratic Culture through COVID

Respondent: Yagmur Karakaya ~ Yale University ~ United States

2:55 - 3:25

Coffee Break

3:25 - 4:35

Session 4 ~ Everyday Life Culture Structures in China

Chair: Liu Zhao ~ Hong Kong University ~ Hong Kong

Yi Zhou ~ Fudan University ~ China

Bitterness Narrative:

The Moral Foundation of Petty Business Owners in Yiwu, China

David Palmer ~ Hong Kong University ~ Hong Kong

Dramatizing Local-Imperial Dynamics in a Chinese Village Ritual:

Theorizing Dual Sacrality in Cultural Sociology

Respondent: Dorothy Wu ~ Yale University ~ United States

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Session I ~ Meaningful Protest/ers

Celso Villegas ~ Kenyon College ~ United States

**The Iconic Middle Class in the Philippines:
Linking Materiality with Morality through the Civil Sphere**

In the midst of the Philippines' recent authoritarian turn, the middle class has appeared as an actor with ambiguous democratic preferences in the rise of Rodrigo Duterte and Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. (Webb 2017, Garrido 2022). Frustrated with corruption, economic stagnation, and the failure of democratic reforms, this once-heroic social class has apparently been willing to exchange "democracy" for "discipline." These realist accounts of middle-class politics miss the cultural centrality of the middle class as an icon of Philippine democracy. As a condensed symbol of development materiality and democratic morality, the Philippine middle class is better understood as a refraction of civil and non-civil discourses anchoring the very concept of "Philippine democracy" through interpretations of its (in)action in politics, the market, and in moral life. In searching for middle-class politics, Philippine public discourse transforms analysis and longing for the middle class into a contested icon of democracy itself.

This paper explores this thesis through an analysis of an earlier period of middle-class quiescence in Philippine politics: the period between the 1986 People Power Revolution and the People Power 2 protests in 2001. In the absence of visible street politics between 1986 and 2001, pundits, observers, and activists, lamented the decline of a protest-oriented, "revolutionary" middle class, leading to a plethora of opinions on where exactly the middle class went, what it was doing, and whether or not it would "come back" or disappear altogether. Analyzing the middle class' retreat from street politics served not only as a collective exercise in affirming its link to politics, but also protected the middle class from the impurities from the economic and political spheres, ensuring a reservoir of civil purity in Philippine democracy outside the market and the state. these representations allowed for careful reflection of the effects of consumer culture and political corruption on the state of democracy.

Xiaohong Xu ~ University of Michigan ~ United States

The Social Power of Metaphor: Making Family Metaphors in Hong Kong's 2019 Protests

Why were family metaphors so prevalent in Hong Kong's 2019 Anti-Extradition Protests, which had been insignificant in the long history of contentious politics in this "city of protest"? To address this puzzle, we advance a relational and emergentist theory of metaphor by engaging the literary and philosophical theories of metaphor, the historical scholarship on family metaphors, and the sociological literature on framing and resonance. We argue that three factors contributed to this phenomenon: the long-term background of the paradoxical role of family in Hong Kong's hybrid regime of neoliberal authoritarian capitalism; the medium-term trend of the intensification of a self-mobilization protest culture due to persistent civil liberties yet increasing political restrictions; and the short-term characteristic of the high risk and anonymity of the 2019 movement. We show that the collective metaphorizing of the movement identities for familial ties emerged as an *ad hoc* response to the government's invocation of authoritarian "tough love" family metaphors yet spawned a cascade of extension and proliferation that created an "as if" relational situation distinct from either from political connections or familial ties and furnished unprecedented movement solidarity. The study brings to light the entanglement of the political and the familial through metaphorizing and its consequences for political articulation and has crucial implications for understanding the indispensable and variable roles of metaphorizing in social life.

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Session 2 ~ Civil Sphere Theory as an Explanatory Tool

Jongryul Choi ~ Keimyung University ~ Korea

Nursing Care as Public M/otherhood: Why Is Nursing Legislation Not Enacted in South Korea?

South Korea does not have its own separate nursing law. Legal regulations for nursing practice are contained in the Medical Service Act of 1951, which defines doctors as 'autonomous' practitioners of medical treatment and healthcare in hospitals, and nurses as 'subordinate' assistants who help doctors in medical institutions. There have been three attempts in the past to enact nursing legislation in South Korea (in 2005, 2019, and 2021), only to be scrapped ostensibly due to political disagreements and opposition from medical organizations. This article aims to use Alexander's civil society theory to explain why nursing legislation cannot be enacted in South Korea through suggesting two fundamental reasons for the lack of nursing legislation. First, South Korean culture and institutions, which construct nurses as 'public m/otherhood,' prevent the enactment of nursing law. Second, nurses have failed to utilize civil discourse to legitimize 'caring' as a sacred value within the nursing domain itself. I first introduce the history of Medical Service Act, which has legally stipulated the subordinate status of nursing care to medical treatment. I then reformulate Alexander's civil society theory as an analytical framework for this study. Next, I utilize this analytical framework to reconstruct the cultural dynamics of why nursing legislation is not enacted. Lastly, I reflect on the findings of this study in relation to the cultural structure of civil society in South Korea.

Jeffrey Alexander ~ Yale University ~ United States

Office Obligation as Civil Virtue:

The Crisis of American Democracy, November 3, 2020 - January 6, 2021, and After

This presentation develops a new theoretical and empirical understanding of the contemporary crisis of American democracy. Between November 3, 2020, and January 7, 2021, President Donald Trump battled to overturn the results of the American presidential election, launching myriad lawsuits and pressuring hundreds of electoral officials. Confronting this anti-democratic assault was a resilient civil sphere that sustained "office," an institution that, in a democratic society, inspires faith in the Constitution and loyalty to "we, the people." After investigating how this civil institution empowered electoral and legal officials to fight off Trumpian pressures, I focus on Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence, examining how they emerged as widely admired icons of civil courage. After Trump's defeat, the televised hearings of the January 6th Commission created a "civic ritual" in the midst of which Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney became another icon, symbolizing the renewal of a "civil conservatism." A new, if still precarious, vital center emerged, allowing Democratic prosecutors finally to launch criminal proceedings against Trump. Yet, the Republican Party remains unreconstructed and, for this reason, the future of American democracy is still in doubt.

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Session 2 ~ Civil Sphere Theory as an Explanatory Tool

Horng-luen Wang ~ Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University ~ Taiwan

“Society Must Be Defended”:

Exploring the Interplay Between War and the Civil Sphere in Contemporary Taiwan

What are the relations between war and the civil sphere? Specifically, how do war-related issues—such as historical legacy, the anticipation of conflict, and the risk of war—influence the formation and the functioning of the civil sphere; reversely, how does the civil sphere influence and respond to such issues? Drawing on Taiwan as an illustrative case, this paper tries to develop an analytical framework to investigate the multifaceted interplay between war and the civil sphere. Indeed, Taiwan has been labeled "the most dangerous place on earth" by The Economist (May 1st, 2021) amid increasing military tensions between China and the US. Moreover, after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, it has been widely held that the Taiwan Strait might be the hotspot where the next major warfare is likely to erupt. In light of escalating national defense efforts by the state, how civil society in Taiwan responds to the looming war threat becomes an intriguing question yet to be fully understood. Following Alexander's Civil Sphere Theory (CTS), which conceptualizes the civil sphere as consisting of both regulative and communicative institutions, this paper probes how war-related issues interact with these institutions such as political parties, election campaigns, mass media and public polls. In so doing, this paper will draw theoretical implications that may shed new light on our understanding of the intricate dynamics between war and the civil sphere in a more systematic way.

Session 3 ~ Making Sense of Covid

Bin Xu ~ Emory University ~ United States

Sacred Ordinariness: Cultural Affordance and the Mourning for Dr. Li Wenliang

Public mourning is not a simple outpouring of grief but a complex social and political process. Li Wenliang, the Chinese doctor who warned about COVID and later died of the virus, became the first emblem of the pandemic after a massive wave of mourning. Mourning for Dr. Li, however, challenges the dominant Durkheimian functionalist theory by foregrounding the importance of qualities and features of the mourned. More specifically, a key feature of Dr. Li - his ordinariness - is at the center of multivocal, contradictory meanings attached to his symbol. He is mourned as an ordinary hero who spoke the truth, an ordinary victim of the State's censorship, an ordinary doctor who made extraordinary contributions to the State's agenda, and an ordinary person whose memory serves as a "tree hollow" for many ordinary people to express various, sometimes irrelevant meanings. Despite the contested meanings, his image does not contain infinite possibilities of interpretation. Rather, his ordinariness constrains and simultaneously allow multivocal interpretations. Drawing on the cultural affordance approach and a fine-grained analysis of the process of symbol-making, from Li's final days to the present, this article contributes to our understanding of mourning and memory by challenging both functionalism and constructivism for their neglect of cultural objects' "affordance" - that is, how certain qualities of cultural objects "afford" - limit, enable, constrain, inspire, etc. - particular meanings in relation to certain kinds of people in certain contexts.

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Session 3 ~ Making Sense of Covid

Ming-Cheng Lo ~ University of California, Davis ~ United States

Pandemic and Processes of Civil Repair: Understanding Taiwan's Democratic Culture through COVID

As observed by many, Taiwan's democratization has been accompanied by increasing political polarization, in large part due to the island's complicated relationships with China. How did these conflicting trends interact and intersect in the condensed social time of a crisis, as the COVID-19 pandemic both activated processes of what sociologists call "civil repair" and intensified populist mobilizations and political antagonism? And with what impacts? Engaging theories of the civil sphere, civic action, and political performances, and relying on qualitative analyses of newspaper articles, government publications, in-depth interviews, and pandemic novels and films, this book-length project examines four interrelated processes: the bottom-up "societalization" of pandemic unpreparedness, the top-down political performance of collective hope, the inter-sphere exchange, between the state, the civil sphere, and the medical community, about healthcare during the pandemic, and the collective reflections about personal losses brought on by COVID. Preliminary findings help answer a pressing question for Taiwan, namely, whether its civil society is robust enough to contain threats of populism and political polarization. By providing a local and contextualized understanding of its democratic cultural codes and styles of civic interactions, these discussions also serve to debunk the unhelpful assumptions about Taiwan's alleged "collectivist culture" often invoked to explain its COVID containment records. More broadly, by focusing on the lived experiences in this marginalized nation, this research accentuates how the processes of civil repair are both shaped by international power relationships and informed by local affective expressions.

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Session 4 ~ Everyday Life Culture Structures in China

Yi Zhou ~ Fudan University ~ China

Bitterness Narrative: The Moral Foundation of Petty Business Owners in Yiwu, China

Many petty business owners in China attribute their success to their “bitter experiences,” yet there has been limited research investigating the nature of this “bitterness narrative.” Similarly, the cultural sociology literature notices how individuals rationalize their actions by using particular cultural resources, but there has been scarce research examining the moralization or the sanctification process of these cultural resources. This study addresses these two scholarly limitations by presenting the entrepreneurial narratives of “exchanging feathers for sugar” held by Yiwu merchants, thereby shedding light on the moral foundation of their “bitterness narrative.” Based on oral history interviews with nearly 100 Yiwu merchants, this study reveals that (1) the nature of the small business owners’ “bitterness” is their detached or disembedded relationship with the structure. It includes the “bitterness” of leaving the collective economy and venturing alone as a peddler during the early stage of Opening-Up Reform, the “bitterness” of seeking structural support when setting up a business, and the “bitterness” of depending on the institutional platforms to break away from kinship ties. (2) The perceptions of these “bitterness narratives” are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese moral culture—habitual institutional dependence, the Chinese philosophy of enduring bitterness and enjoying sweetness, and alignment with dominant values. (3) The experience of “exchanging feathers for sugar” works as the symbolic starting point of their “bitterness narrative.” It is also utilized as their strategy to seek economic success and possess market value. However, this symbolic representation exhibits different meanings over different stages. In the initial stage, it represents a form of street-level bartering, linked to low social status. In the entrepreneurial stage, it symbolized a folk commercial spirit characterized by endurance, innovation, and boldness, aligning with dominant cultural values. In the present stage, it echoes the name “World Small Commodity Market” for Yiwu, associated with both characteristics of primal fluidity and globalization concurrently happening in Yiwu. This study points to the crucial roles of local governments, media, and these merchants in the moralization and sanctification process of the bitterness narrative of “exchanging feathers for sugar.”

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Session 4 ~ Everyday Life Culture Structures in China

David Palmer ~ Hong Kong University ~ Hong Kong

Co-Author: Martin Tse ~ Hong Kong University ~ Hong Kong

**Dramatizing Local-Imperial Dynamics in a Chinese Village Ritual:
Theorizing Dual Sacrality in Cultural Sociology**

Chinese religion appears as a paradigmatic case to illustrate the Durkheimian theory of religion: each social group, from local clans and villages to the imperial state, has its own ancestor or deity and cult that manifests the power and identity of a specific social organization. Folk theories even implicitly recognise that deities, their cult, and their spiritual power are socially constructed, while cosmology explicitly takes political organization as its model. However, the classical Durkheimian approach to Chinese religion leads to a theoretical dead end, obscuring the dynamic tensions within and between Chinese religion and society. In this paper, we will draw on Jeffrey Alexander's cultural sociology to re-invigorate the Durkheimian approach to address the inner tensions, contradictions, and dynamic processes in Chinese religion, drawing notably on his theories of moral codes, cultural pragmatics of social performance, social trauma, and iconic objects. We will use these concepts in an ethnographic study of a village ritual tradition in northern Guangdong province, China. This tradition highlights features common to folk religion in South China, in which there is not one, but two, poles of sacrality, identified by the *wen-wu* (civil-martial) binary in Chinese culture: the civil pole, focused on the imperial state and the salvation of the dead; and the martial pole, focused on the local community and the protection of the living. The civil and martial rites are based on completely different cosmologies, which reflect two different modes of social organization and power, and build on the remembrance and negotiation of two histories of social trauma. Major festivals and iconic forms perform the tensions between the two modalities, which run through the history of relations between the imperial hierarchy and local communities. This case opens two lines of inquiry: the application of cultural sociology in domains of traditional culture and society typically studied by anthropologists and scholars of religion; and the theorization of the relationships between dual or multiple poles of sacrality in complex modern societies.

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Saturday, September 16, 2023

8:45 - 9:15 *Coffee/Tea*

9:15 - 10:25 **Session 5 ~ The Meanings of Place**

Chair: Asma Rahimyar ~ Yale University ~ United States

Agnes Ku ~ Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ~ Hong Kong

Intersection between Cultural Sociology and Hong Kong Studies

Mervyn Horgan ~ University of Guelph ~ Canada

A Sacred Code of Civil Interaction in Public Space?

Observations from Canada and China

Respondent: Tracy Adams ~ Yale University ~ United States

10:25 - 10:55 *Coffee Break*

10:55 - 12:25 **Session 6 ~ Art, Protest and Inclusion**

Chair: Giovanni Zampieri ~ University of Padova ~ Italy

Fei Yan ~ Tsinghua University ~ China

Echoes of Empowerment:

Trans-local Framing and Cultural Resistance in the Soundscape of DIY Music

Anna Lund ~ Stockholm University ~ Sweden

Repairing Solidarity?: Emotions, Art, and Inequalities in the Civil Sphere

Haoyue Cecelia Li ~ Zhejiang University ~ China

Green Art and Environmental Engagement: Exploring Socially Engaged Art in China

Respondent: Anne Taylor ~ Yale University ~ United States

12:25 - 1:45 *Lunch*

1:45 - 2:55 **Session 7 ~ Inner Worlds**

Chair: Chenyang Xie ~ Fudan University ~ China

Hiro Saito ~ University of Tokyo ~ Japan

Mindfulness Practice, Sociological Imagination, and Social Change:

How to Transform Subjective and Objective Structures for Collective Well-Being

Marcus Morgan ~ University of Bristol ~ United Kingdom

Hidden Transcripts of the Powerful

Respondent: Marcel Knochelmann ~ Yale University ~ United States

2:55 - 3:25 *Coffee Break*

3:25 - 4:35 **Session 8 ~ Genre Analysis**

Chair: Shivani Choudhary ~ Yale University ~ United States

Ates Altinordu ~ Sabanci University ~ Turkey

'You Will Be Defeated by a Tripod and a Camera:'

Sedat Peker and the Anti-hero in Contemporary Politics

Philip Smith ~ Yale University ~ United States

The Changing Meanings of the British Heatwave: From Ice Cream to Armageddon

4:05 - 4:20 Respondent: Nicolas Rudas ~ Yale University ~ United States

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Session 5 ~ The Meanings of Place

Agnes Ku ~ Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ~ Hong Kong
Intersection between Cultural Sociology and Hong Kong Studies

Hong Kong presents a case of multiple and intersecting cultures and spaces. Its unique history—as once a British colony and being China’s window to the world—has contributed to a distinctly hybrid culture with varying degrees of Chinese influence, cosmopolitanism and localism. Such multiplicities, as well as their underlying tensions, have been manifested culturally and socially. Local scholarship has delineated the variegated context of the city with divergent theoretical ideas, approaches and paradigms. In sociology, in retrospect, the 1970s marked the dominant influence of modernization and development theories. The mid-1990s witnessed the rise of several new directions in the study of culture in response to the confluence of the “cultural turn” in sociology and the rise of cultural studies. Concomitant with these developments is a growing body of works on Hong Kong’s culture, society and history from across different disciplines in the context of political transition—the city’s anticipated return to China in 1997. Scholars have reckoned that there exists no single brand of Hong Kong-ness; rather, one finds a variety of identity claims based on a multiplicity of intersecting and competing discourses. ‘Local-ness’, ‘Chineseness’, ‘nationalism’ and ‘global-ness’, among others, have become highly contested categories of identity that are embedded in different narratives about the city. Moreover, more works have been devoted to exploring culture in multi-fold aspects including aesthetics, emotions, collective memories, place-making, and the dramaturgical forms of political conflict. These works have contributed to an increasingly enriched understanding of Hong Kong culture within and beyond sociology. This paper will critically examine some salient themes and issues in the study of Hong Kong culture through the lenses of cultural sociology, cultural studies, and cultural history.

Mervyn Horgan ~ University of Guelph ~ Canada
Co-Author: Meng Xu ~ University of Guelph ~ Canada

A Sacred Code of Civil Interaction in Public Space? Observations from Canada and China

In both democratic and non-democratic societies, public spaces have sacred qualities. They are staging grounds for both demonstrations of state power and democratic claims-making in political protest, and sites for both top-down transmission of state propaganda and displays of horizontal civic solidarity. More mundanely, public spaces are settings for ordinary everyday activities which are shared with strangers. In principle, public spaces harbour a generalized ethos of interactional equality, freely and equally accessible to all, where strangers’ everyday copresence ought to proceed without interference from others. The interaction ritual sustaining this ethos in public space is civil inattention (Goffman). The *right to civil inattention* is one that copresent strangers in both democratic and non-democratic societies intersubjectively uphold, independently of external intervening authorities. This suggests that the ‘urban interaction order’ (Horgan) has relative autonomy from broader socio-political contexts. Where the sacred quality of public space meets the sacred quality of individuals, interaction in public space appears to adhere to a *universal civil code*.

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Session 5 ~ The Meanings of Place

Mervyn Horgan ~ Guelph University ~ Canada

Co-Author: Meng Xu ~ Guelph University ~ Canada

**A Sacred Code of Civil Interaction in Public Space? Observations from Canada and China
(continued)**

Nonetheless, decades of research shows that when it comes to interactions between strangers in public, some are more equal than others, with scholars connecting failure to abide by the generalized ethos of interactional equality to threats to interracial and cross-gender solidarity, for example (Anderson; Gardner; Batomski & Smith). Here, infringements upon the right to civil inattention reflect, reproduce, and advance broader structural inequalities. Thus, civil interaction is a ground, but not a guarantor, of civic solidarity. Drawing on our ethnographic research and our interview data about interactions between strangers in both Canadian and Chinese public and semi-public spaces, we work through the puzzle of if/how democratic and non-democratic socio-political contexts connect to the universal sacred code of civil interaction.

Session 6 ~ Art, Protest and Inclusion

Fei Yan ~ Tsinghua University ~ China

Co-Author: Yubai Li, The University of Edinburgh ~ United Kingdom

Echoes of Empowerment: Trans-local Framing and Cultural Resistance in the Soundscape of DIY Music

This paper delves into the profound connection between “Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) music and its role as a catalyst for political and cultural agency among youth, enabling them to express themselves stylistically while subtly challenging political authorities. Through in-depth field interviews, cyber-ethnography, and musicological exploration, the study focuses on the case of *My Little Airport*, a Hong Kong-based indie music ensemble, and its impact on local and trans-local cultural and political practices. We identify three key mechanisms through which *My Little Airport* mobilizes non-local youth to engage in culturally resistant politics and protest in Hong Kong. Firstly, the ensemble skillfully contextualizes emotional narratives, intertwining sentiments with their music to deeply resonate with the audience. Secondly, their DIY music deftly generates multiple meanings while evading censorship, bridging the divide between local and trans-local elements and fostering a collective identity among listeners. Lastly, *My Little Airport* narrates the field of cultural resistance, giving rise to a dynamic and multifaceted form of resistance. By navigating the delicate balance between their artistic freedom and political commitments, the ensemble propagates a strategic discourse of emotion, local identity awakening, and resistance. Such discourse, in turn, supplies emotional, cultural, and legitimizing content for the participants undergoing their own framing process. The findings offer insights into the intricate relationship between music, politics, and identity formation, highlighting the transformative power of music and its potential to catalyze social change in contemporary society.

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Session 6 ~ Art, Protest and Inclusion

Anna Lund ~ Stockholm University ~ Sweden

Repairing Solidarity? Performance Art and Inequalities in the Civil Sphere

Can the dramatic arts become a site for civil repair and social inclusion of marginalized groups by activating symbolic structures of meaning and emotions? Communicative institutions within the civil sphere have taken the initiative to mend what is broken, to reconstruct dialogues and to create new realities. In Sweden, economic inequalities, residential segregation, and school segregation have widened the symbolic and social distances between individuals and groups. As a consequence, encounters that could create empathy and solidarity between perceived differences have become ever more uncertain. The figure of “the immigrant” has increasingly become the scapegoat for many shortcomings in Swedish society, and the civil sphere’s quest for solidarity and multicultural incorporation is challenged. But artistic initiatives countering anti-civil forces are present. This paper investigates the rationale and strategies of an artistic team and their work to pull society together through the creation of a new theater in a stigmatized neighborhood north of Stockholm. The paper focuses on theater and social inclusion by investigating three interconnected elements: meaning, communication and social change.

Haoyue (Cecelia) Li ~ Zhejiang University ~ China

Green Art and Environmental Engagement: Exploring Socially Engaged Art in China

Socially engaged art has gained significant recognition as a potent art form that addresses critical issues and drives social change through creative activities. While it has been instrumental in raising awareness and sparking dialogue on social and environmental matters in the Western context, the exploration of socially engaged art in the Chinese context remains relatively unexplored. This paper aims to bridge the gap by investigating how Chinese artists respond to environmental challenges through socially engaged art, shedding light on their innovative green projects and strategic approaches.

The study delves into the historical development of socially engaged art in China, tracing its roots and evolution in response to the country’s mounting environmental concerns. Contemporary practices are examined to highlight the unique ways in which Chinese artists employ socially engaged art to resonate with environmental issues. Additionally, this research addresses the challenges faced by the artists in China, considering factors such as censorship, limited resources, and a complex socio-political landscape. By unveiling these obstacles, the study provides a nuanced perspective on navigating socially engaged art in the Chinese context.

Through in-depth analysis of case studies of influential green projects undertaken by Chinese artists, this research offers valuable insights into the intersection between socially engaged art and environmental concerns. These case studies showcase the diverse approaches and creative strategies employed by Chinese artists, illustrating their ability to effect positive change in tackling environmental challenges through the power of art.

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Session 7 ~ Inner Worlds

Hiro Saito ~ University of Tokyo ~ Japan

**Mindfulness Practice, Sociological Imagination, and Social Change:
How to Transform Subjective and Objective Structures for Collective Well-Being**

In recent years, mindfulness practice has become popular in various parts of the world. This popularization, however, has also led to the “McDonaldization” of mindfulness practice in the sense of being commodified as part of the wellness industry and mobilized to unload systemic causes of suffering on individual coping strategies. Nevertheless, mindfulness practice in the tradition of engaged Buddhism is imbued with sociological imagination, seeking to transform systemic suffering into collective well-being. To articulate this emancipatory potential of engaged mindfulness, I illustrate the intersection of mindfulness practice and sociological imagination around the longstanding debate on agency and structure. While sociological imagination helps cultivate an empirically rigorous understanding of the structural causes of individual suffering, mindfulness practice helps expand agency not only to exit from the structures individually but also to take full responsibility for the structures collectively. Thus combined, mindfulness practice and sociological imagination enable a subjective movement from anger as a driver of critique toward understanding as a basis of love in action, to create new objective structures capable of better facilitating collective well-being. To theorize this simultaneously subjective and objective transformations, I draw on the Buddhist ontology and quantum physics vis-à-vis speech and writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thich Nhat Hanh.

Marcus Morgan ~ University of Bristol ~ United Kingdom

Hidden Transcripts of the Powerful

Whilst Strong Program cultural sociology has focussed on public social performance and its connections to power through the model of cultural pragmatics, this tradition has paid less attention to the role of ‘backstage’ social performances in securing or extending social power. James C. Scott’s work has paid attention to these backstage performances, yet it has focussed on what he describes as the ‘hidden transcripts’ of powerless, rather than powerful, social groups. This paper proposes a research agenda based upon studying the hidden transcripts of the powerful. First, we define our terms. Second, we map the existing literature observing that although plenty of research exists into the public transcripts of dominant and subordinate groups, and that Scott initiated a productive research agenda into the hidden transcripts of powerless groups, research into hidden transcripts of powerful actors is lacking. Third, we ask how social scientists might study hidden transcripts of the powerful, and what methodological challenges and opportunities such a research programme might present. Fourth and finally, we question the epistemological status of these hidden transcripts, focussing on whether they can be used by social researchers as a reliable indicator of the ‘true’ consciousness of the social group that expresses them.

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Session 8 ~ Genre Analysis

Ateş Altinordu ~ Sabanci University ~ Turkey

'You Will Be Defeated by a Tripod and a Camera:'

Sedat Peker and the Anti-hero in Contemporary Politics

In May 2021, a series of YouTube videos posted by Sedat Peker, an organized crime boss with links to political figures, shook Turkey's political scene. Videos released by Peker in the ensuing months revealed inside information implicating senior government officials in major corruption scandals and crimes. Peker quickly gained popularity and became for the opposition a symbol of the impending fall of Erdoğan's authoritarian regime. Based on a systematic analysis of his videos and the public responses they engendered, this article argues that the political efficacy of Peker's campaign depended as much on the cultural references and stylistic elements of his performances—his skilful self-fashioning as an anti-hero in particular—as on the grave nature of his allegations about public officials. Drawing on cultural performance theory and narrative genre analysis, I critique cultural sociologists' exclusive focus on romance and the hero as the narrative form and public character that afford social and political change. The article shows how the anti-heroic narrative—a genre ubiquitous in contemporary popular culture—is put to use in political performances.

Philip Smith ~ Yale University ~ United States

Co-author: Thijs van Dooremalen ~ KU Leuven ~ Belgium

The Changing Meanings of the British Heatwave: From Ice Cream to Armageddon

Climate change activists hope that extreme weather 'events' will jolt the public and politicians out of complacency. With intuitive rather than counter-intuitive connections to 'global warming' and its dangers the 'heatwave' is often touted as particularly efficacious. Yet in climates that are notoriously chilly or damp the 'heatwave' might be seen as signalling the benefits of climate change for everyday life. Put in terms of the genre model of risk evaluation developed in 'Why War?' we can expect to see competition between Romantic and Apocalyptic representations playing out. The paper explores this theme longitudinally using a 'big data' approach that topic models over 30,000 British newspaper articles from the past four decades. The results show a clear shift towards the Apocalyptic framing of news stories relating to heatwaves, with Romantic representations shifting from a dominant to residual status. Key Romantic signifiers in heatwave discourse such as 'beach', 'holiday' and 'ice cream' are reframed during this period as climate change moves from being an obscure scientific theory about a distant future to a shared, experienced reality.

YALE UNIVERSITY
CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY EAST & WEST

SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2023

Sunday, September 17, 2023

8:45 - 9:15 *Coffee/Tea*

9:15 - 10:25 **Session 9 ~ Cultural Trauma**

Chair: Yingyu Zang ~ Fudan University ~ China

Akiko Hashimoto ~ Portland State University ~ United States

Remembering Father's War:

Perpetrator Trauma of Japan's Postwar Generation in Comparative Perspective

Werner Binder ~ Masaryk University ~ Czech Republic

Artificial Intelligence and Cultural Trauma – AlphaGo in China

Respondent: Willa Sachs ~ Yale University ~ United States

10:25 - 10:55 *Coffee Break*

10:55 - 12:25 **Session 10 ~ The Body**

Chair: Siyi Huang ~ Tsinghua University ~ China

Xiao Mei ~ Fudan University ~ China

Capturing uncertainty: Commensuration and culture in cancer pain assessment

Dmitry Kurakin ~ HSE University ~ Russia

Meaning-Making, Emotions, and the Self in Cosmetic Surgery

Renxue Wan ~ Central China Normal University ~ China

Justifying the "objectified" body: Beyond the critical-constructionist approach

Respondent: Ronald Jacobs ~ State University of New York at Albany ~ United States

12:25 - 1:45 *Lunch*

1:45 - 2:55 **Session 11 ~ Pushing Theory Forward**

Chair: Santiago Vargas Acevedo ~ University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Nelson Arteaga Botello ~ Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales ~ Mexico

Mesoamerican societies in the age of Cultural Sociology:

relative stability and meaning-making processes

Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky ~ Masaryk University ~ Czech Republic

Decolonizing, decentering, and deracializing: A critical cultural sociology of migration

Respondents: Romulo Lelis ~ Yale University ~ United States

Josep Berriain ~ Public University of Navarra, Spain

2:55 - 3:25 *Coffee Break*

3:25 - 4:35 **Session 12 ~ The Intimate Self**

Chair: Carla Escobar Ortiz ~ Yale University ~ United States

Anna Durnová ~ University of Vienna ~ Austria

Loneliness, emotions and the politics of privacy

Yeseul Lee ~ Keimyung University ~ Korea

Erotic Love and Civil Sphere:

Focusing on the Debate over Abolition of Anti-Adultery Law in South Korea

Respondent: Jessie Dong ~ Yale University ~ United States

4:25 - 4:40

Closing Remarks - Philip Smith ~ Yale University

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CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY EAST & WEST

SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2023

Session 9 ~ Cultural Trauma

Akiko Hashimoto ~ Portland State University ~ United States

Remembering Father's War:

Perpetrator Trauma of Japan's Postwar Generation in Comparative Perspective.

The legacy of a perpetrator past has always occupied a troubling place in Japan's national culture. As in many post-conflict societies, remembering dark history has been shrouded in uneasy remorse, trepidation, and reticence. Almost eight decades after World War II ended, the task of remembering Japan's perpetrator past has now passed on to the postwar generations who have become the carrier groups of perpetrator trauma. This paper explores the cultural trauma of war inherited by the children of veterans who fought in the Sino-Japan War, whose lives were indelibly marked by their fathers' legacy of violence and guilt. I examine several recent memoirs by the second-generation that probe their fathers' broken lives and compare them with some of their German counterparts (known as *Väterliteratur*.) I also assess them in the context of persistent geopolitical tensions in Northeast Asia today.

Werner Binder ~ Masaryk University ~ Czech Republic

Artificial Intelligence and Cultural Trauma – AlphaGo in China

In my talk, I investigate a recent encounter between East and West in the game of Go, known in its birthplace China as *weiqi*. When AlphaGo, a Go program designed by the Google-owned and London-based AI company DeepMind, defeated in 2016 the Korean Grandmaster Lee Sedol, observers spoke of a "sputnik shock" for the Go-savvy high-tech countries of East Asia, including China. Later that year, the machine defeated countless professionals online, despite a desperate rallying cry of the Chinese grandmaster Gu Li to "protect the cultural treasure of our ancestors". In May 2017, a match against Ke Jie, a 19-year-old Chinese player leading the world ranking, took place being co-organized by the Chinese Go association, the regional government and Google – a company that is well-known for its strenuous relation to the Chinese government. How come the match, though heavily censored, was allowed to take place in the first place, despite the fact that Ke was expected to lose? What did the Chinese government hope to gain from the event and how was the defeat of a national champion framed for the Chinese public? In order to address these questions, I will – among other things – utilize cultural sociological trauma theory, arguing that the Chinese reception of AlphaGo has to be understood against the backdrop of the "century of humiliation" and the corresponding "catching-up" narrative. The match, I argue, served primarily as a springboard to propel China into the so-called 'space race' towards AI.

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Session 10 ~ The Body

Xiao Mei ~ Fudan University ~ China

Capturing uncertainty: Commensuration and culture in cancer pain assessment

Against the background of the patient rights movement in the West and the advancement of biomedicine, the treatment of cancer pain is now not only technically possible but also widely accepted as a standard procedure in cancer treatment and hospice care. Both the medical community and the public increasingly acknowledge pain as predominantly a subjective experience, thus self-report should be the golden standard in pain assessment. However, in order to capture the subjective feelings of pain, medical staff have to rely on objective tools such as the rating scales to obtain an objective number, based on which treatment can be carried out. How do we make sense of this tension between subjectivity and objectivity in pain assessment? A typical argument from critical theories may interpret this as the colonization of the subjective by the objective. This paper, however, suggests another approach to understanding the commensuration process behind pain assessment, that is, to see the production of numbers as the creation of thing-mediated meaning texts. Because a Latourian “translation” process is involved, the social consequence of commensuration is more open-ended than critical theories would envision. It depends on whether communication between the patient and the medical staff is enhanced or eliminated in the process.

Dmitry Kurakin ~ HSE University ~ Russia

Meaning-Making, Emotions, and the Self in Cosmetic Surgery

This study explores the meaning-making that accompanies invasive cosmetic surgery operations and the transformation of the self-such procedures precipitate. Cosmetic surgery changes the meanings of the self and one’s social image in prominent and complex ways, ways that far transcend mere changes of appearance. I argue that the most important dimension of this meaning-making is infused with emotions. Cosmetic operations and recovery involve intense emotions of suffering, anxiety, and excitement, emotions that are often concealed within the dominant ‘before/after’ framework. Drawing on open data available on Internet forums frequented by cosmetic surgery consumers, as well as other evidence from existing literature, I show that these emotions, which are usually neglected in the public discourse and the literature or dismissed as mere ‘side effects’ of surgery, strongly shape the surgical patients’ meaning-making processes, their meanings of the self, and bodily aesthetic conventions, more generally. I argue that this strategic research case allows us to obtain a better understanding of the emotional dimension of culture, which remains underdeveloped in cultural sociology. To move toward a cultural sociological theory of the emotional dimension of culture, I build on Victor Turner’s model of rituals of passage and Durkheim’s model of effervescence.

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SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2023

Session 10 ~ The Body

Renxue Wan ~ Central China Normal University ~ China

Justifying the “objectified” body: Beyond the critical-constructionist approach

The preservation, care, utilization, and beautification of the human body, once commonplace practices, have now become highly controversial topics. From academic circles to social media, discussions on body aesthetics and body modification inevitably attract polarized opinions, a phenomenon prevalent in both Western and Eastern academic and societal contexts. The objective of the article is to reflect on the consequences of the "politicization of the body" in theoretical and everyday discussions and highlights the need to invite an alternative theoretical framework to understand body objectification and its social significance. The research is divided into four parts. First, the article provides an overview of the theoretical dominance of the critical-constructivist paradigm in body studies in sociology, which include post-structural feminism, critiques of neoliberalism, and critiques of consumerism. Second, the paper analyzes the existing dichotomous discourses attached to the "subjectified" and the "objectified" body, demarcated by moral, gender, and emotional dimensions. The third part critically reflects on the implications of these dichotomous discourses. The **politicization** of the body has transformed normative studies of body work from "affirmation" to "negation," equating the objectification of the body with a process of depersonalization and disempowerment. The critical-constructivist paradigm educates people to portray individuals' active agency and self-awareness regarding their bodies as a curse of consumerism, and public discussions surrounding body objectification often implicitly presuppose an adversarial mind-body relationship, leading to a unidimensional understanding of the interplay between the mind and body. The final part proposes the incorporation of a phenomenological perspective in the discussion of "embodied intersubjectivity" to understand the interactive relationship between objectified and subjectified bodies.

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Session 11 ~ Pushing Theory Forward

Nelson Arteaga Botello ~ Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales ~ Mexico

**Mesoamerican societies in the age of Cultural Sociology:
relative stability and meaning-making processes**

Cultural sociology theory (CST) is interested in understanding the struggles for meaning to account for how some cultural structures succeed and others fail. To shed light on these struggles and their outcomes, CST analyzes how meanings are built upon other meanings leading to the creation of semantics underpinned by a deep cultural code structure. The challenge of CST is to provide complex but simultaneously simplified models that allow us to appreciate the moments of meaning-making. To meet this challenge, CST takes up Geertz's proposal that anthropological theories of ancient societies are relevant to understanding modern societies. Following this idea, this paper argues that the theory of Mesoamerican dualism provides significant elements for understanding the relative stability and meaning-making processes in contemporary societies. Mesoamerican dualism suggested that binary oppositions in cultural structures are composed of complementary opposites that establish asymmetrical (unequal) and inharmonious (hierarchical) relations that, in their struggle, generate games of oscillations and cycles characterized by instabilities and contingencies. The contributions of the theory of Mesoamerican dualism to CST result from its effort to simultaneously understand the unstable equilibrium of pre-Columbian societies and the meaning-making processes in their contact with the West. It is considered relevant to take advantage of these contributions to understand the struggles for meaning and the intertwining of cultural structures in present-day societies of the East and West.

Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky ~ Masaryk University ~ Czech Republic

Decolonizing, decentering, and deracializing: A critical cultural sociology of migration

Migration studies has, of late, become much more reflexive. A recent (2023) issue of the journal *Sociological Forum* has published a special issue on "decolonizing" the field. The authors variously suggest different forms of paradigm shifts, which, besides decolonizing, include decentering or adopting a Du Boisian approach that takes race seriously. My goal is to bring these perspectives into conversation with cultural sociology, to explore the ways in which studying meaning-making processes and hermeneutically reconstructing cultural structures can help understand migration-related phenomena. In particular, I argue that the analytical tool of symbolic boundaries represents a useful common language and a bridge of sorts. To illuminate the possibilities, I provide empirical examples from a research study on attitudes toward migration in Czechia, a country that presents a compelling analytical puzzle: there are few "migrants" yet the issue of migration looms large on political and public agendas.

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Session 12 ~ The Intimate Self

Anna Durnová ~ University of Vienna ~ Austria
Loneliness, emotions and the politics of privacy

Yeseul Lee ~ Keimyung University ~ Korea
Erotic Love and Civil Sphere:
Focusing on the Debate over Abolition of Anti-Adultery Law in South Korea

This article explores how the civil sphere in South Korea uses Alexander's civil sphere discourse to interpret erotic love. Erotic love is a secular order characterized by mysticism. This secular order can only be differentiated into autonomous value sphere that provides meaning to social life when interpreted through communicative and regulative institutions within the civil sphere. Exploring this process illuminates the cultural structure of erotic love in South Korean society from an intrinsic perspective. Empirical example is used to analyze the debate over the repeal of the anti-adultery law, which had been institutionally influenced by criminal law South Korea since the Japanese colonial period, but it has customarily also been intertwined with the cultural structure of fidelity to effectively governing everyday sexual life. The *anti-adultery law*, which had regulated extramarital sexual relations in South Korea for over 60 years, was constitutionally challenged in 1990, 1993, 2001, 2008, and 2015. In 2015, it was found unconstitutional and repealed. According to Alexander, the law can be executed only after interpret it within the civil sphere. Abolition of the *anti-adultery law* is a process of civil repair of erotic love represented by communicative and regulative institutions. The process of rationalizing erotic love, which was once considered irrational and mysterious, occurs through civil culture and civil institutions. This article will conclude by examining the possibility of erotic love differentiating into autonomous value sphere as the boundary relation between the civil sphere and the secular order of erotic love change.