BOTH-AND:
on the need for a 'textural' sociology of art

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One of the recurring dilemmas in the sociology of art has been how to balance "internalist" and "externalist" accounts of aesthetic phenomena (i.e., aesthetic and social explanations); or, what this paper terms the necessity of moving from an either-or model of art and society to adopting a both-and logic. In the last few years, the conceptual dilemmas have been further heightened by developments such as capitalism becoming more explicitly cultural; and knowledges about art and aesthetics moving from the realm of the 'grand' and the high cultural to the more prosaic and the everyday. This paper proposes that a solution to the ongoing dilemmas of the sociology of art, and the current challenge of the proliferation of arts/aesthetics-knowledge bases, is to adopt a textural rather than textual mode of thinking. The textural paradigm was first developed in thinking about place and is well-suited to thinking through problems in the sociology of architecture and urbanism – including the problem of how the urban fabric, at times, starts to unravel; or why some unlikely architectural styles stage comebacks (e.g., post-war Brutalism).

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Both-and rather than *either-or*. In "theory" it sounds easy enough; in "practice" it has proven elusive. Despite various theoretical and methodological innovations, despite the best of intentions, the sociology of art has struggled to completely overcome issues of relevance, reductionism and respectability. Every announcement of a 'new dawn' seems to be met with some sense of 'unfulfilled promise'. Thus, in *Reassembling the Social*, Bruno Latour (2005) feels the need to depict the sub-discipline in question as the very epitome of what is wrong with sociological approaches to the social: "Apart from religion, no other domain has been more bulldozed to death […] than the sociology of art" (Latour, 2005, p. 236). He adds that whether the phenomenon under investigation is "sculpture, painting, [a] *haute cuisine* dish, techno rave […] [or a] novel" the risk is the object or experience will be "explained to nothingness by the social factors 'hidden behind' them" (Latour, 2005, p.

236). Latour (2005, p. 236) contends that the figure of the sociologist of the arts embodies all the contradictions and shortcomings of the social scientist as detached observer – that is, of someone who craves objectivity, but in so doing, often fails to "[listen] to what people are actually saying" as they "explain how and why they are deeply *attached*, *moved*, *affected* by works of art which 'make them' feel things".

I want to clarify that, in taking sociologists of art to task for not paying sufficient attention to how actors are "*attached, moved, affected*", the doyen of post-humanist approaches to science and the social is not proposing the answer lies in restoring some essentialist conception of the properties of works of art. That would be a regressive step. Latour (2005, p. 236) comments that, "some people, infuriated by the barbarous irreverence of 'social explanations', come forth and defend the 'inner sanctity' of the work against the barbarians" [i.e., the sociological "reductionists"]. As a consequence, for the sociology of art, "the slope is steep […] we end up swinging gently between 'internalism' and 'externalism', [a] esthetic and social explanations, all the way

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back to kindergarten" (Latour, 2005, p. 236-237). Whether kindergarten is a bad place for the sociology of art to be remains an open question - especially, if kindergarten allows for the freedom to play around with different, as yet not set-in-stone, possibilities. However, with the dialectic of "internalism" and "externalism" (as well as their "new art historical" and "new musicological" variants),[1] we are back with *either-or* instead of *both-and*.

When I first became interested in the sociology of art, I remember hearing some established academics in the field suggest that scholars with a background in the performing, visual or literary arts tended to make better sociologists of arts as they had the right hermeneutic sensibilities (does anyone say comparable things about the sociology of crime – namely, that criminals have a privileged or more hermeneutically sensitive approach to the matter?). While there are some rather famous cases of creatives/performers turned sociologists, this narrative seems to involve, amongst other things, the hope that the social sciences may be able to capture some of the magical properties (and therefore some of the accumulated spiritual and cultural "capital") of art in the realm of sociological and cultural analysis. It also has a tinge of intellectual and aesthetic elitism about it: only those "gifted" enough – due to fate or training – possess the right skills or temperament to rise to the challenge of placing (sometimes difficult or "hard to read") works in their socio-historical context (i.e., a Theodor Adorno rising to the challenge posed by *dodecaphonic* music and trying to understand it in terms of developments in modern society/twentieth century culture). Unsurprisingly, the presupposition that creatives make for better sociologists of the arts leads to an emphasis being placed on the "individual style" of the sociologist-cum-analyst; and those who practice an alternative style feel the need to justify their

more prosaic *modus operandi*, lest they be seen as intellectually ill-equipped.

Hence, even a sociologist as famous as Howard Becker (1982, p. 9) feels the need to clarify, in the 'Preface' to *Art Worlds*, a book now widely accepted as "canonic" in the field, that he "has treated art as the work some people do" and in so doing "found it natural to use the style of analysis… used in analyzing other kinds of [non-artistic] work and work settings". With readers in mind who may have been more familiar with the Central European tradition of "grand" theorizing of art and society (i.e., Lukacs, Adorno and Goldmann), the author adds that the "principle of analysis" in *Art Worlds* "is social organizational, not aesthetic" (Becker, 1982, p. 11). As we will see the dividing line between the 'social organizational' and the 'aesthetic' is now not as clear as Becker presupposed back in 1982. His words are prescient, however, in that they indicate that, like many other fields of social science research, the sociology of art may be said to be have entered a less heroic or - to employ a Weberian phrase - a less charismatic stage.

There are cultural and economic as well as stylistic and intellectual reasons for such developments. Now, instead of the conflict between art and mass culture, with critique or avant-gardism on one side, and capitalist or commodified culture on the other, we are living through the era of new hybrids, such as "High-Pop" (Collins, 2002), the "creative class" (Florida, 2000) and the "new spirit of capitalism" (Boltanski; Chiapello, 2005). A consequence of this is that knowledges about the arts are – whether we like it or not – much more prosaic, relativistic, empirical and utilitarian.[2] Thus, if during its more heroic phase,

[1] For a sophisticated critique of musicological writings that appear to distance themselves from "formalist" or "internalist" accounts of musical meaning yet remain divorced from actual social practice and everyday life, see DeNora (2004).

[2] Needless to say the rise of 'populism', 'Trumpism', 'Bolsonaro-ism' and other forms of authoritarian, anti-elite sentiment (a better word would be 'resentment') seems to fly in the face of the claims being made here about capitalism merging with aesthetics, creativity, the experiential, etc. This is not the place to go into what is a very complex and multidimensional set of connections between the aestheticization of the economy/politics and the rise of anti-cosmopolitan populism, one that seems to target the symbols and lifestyles of urban knowledge workers/ creatives. However, two tentative lines of investigation

the sociology of art was competing with other "grand" forms of knowledge such as art history, the philosophy and psychology of art today the knowledge-competitors are a plethora of fields that stretch across the university and the wider ecology of policy and commercial research on the nature of "aesthetic capitalism" (Böhme, 2017; Murphy; de la Fuente, 2014). Today, aesthetic and cultural goods are routinely discussed within cultural studies, everyday aesthetics, urban and regional planning, tourism and leisure studies, art and cultural management, cultural and media policy, visitor studies, event and festival studies, the economics of arts, the geography of creativity, the discourse of creative cities and creative regions, and are much more central to fields such as management, marketing, the study of innovation and entrepreneurship studies. With respect to the latter, geographer and cultural theorist, Nigel Thrift (2005, p. 6) notes in *Knowing Capitalism*, has been the development of a "cultural circuit of capitalism" consisting of "business schools, management consultants, management gurus and the media" who are involved in producing a "continual critique of capitalism, a feedback loop which is intended to keep capitalism surfing along the edge of its own contradictions". Whatever one may think about the claims made on behalf of capitalism's

might be countenanced. Firstly, theorists of aestheticization, such as Böhme (2017), are explicit about the fact that neither progressives nor regressives have exclusive claim to the instruments of 'atmospheric setting' and experiential manipulation involved in the aestheticization of society. Thus, whatever one may think of his intellect or capabilities, with his training in 'reality TV', someone like Trump had the right background in how to stage politics in the age of the soundbite-cum-Twitter. Secondly, even the advocates of creative capitalism, such as Richard Florida (2017), have had to acknowledge the benefits of the transition to the post-industrial knowledge economy have not been shared equally and that in cities this manifests itself in terms of processes such as gentrification and a lack of housing affordability for large numbers of people. The asymmetries – economic and cultural – produced by these new geographies of inequality are potentially important when it comes to understanding why populism is on the rise; and why the aesthetic and lifestyle practices of urbanites (as well as highly mobile 'globalists') came to represent everything that populists resent. Whether or not this explanation translates across societies is a point also worth considering. A more spatially complex and globalist explanation would need to take into account the appeal of populist-authoritarianism in Eastern Europe and the varieties of populism that have emerged in South America.

"soft" side – as Thrift (2005) terms the processes associated with culture moving more fully into economy and things like "cultural theory" shifting into business schools – the presence of such a "circuit" of knowledge about capitalism and its culturalist imagination, is something that necessarily alters the nature of sociological reflection about art and the aesthetics of social life. In short, academic reflections on art and society compete with Harvard Business School airport bestsellers on the "experience economy" and "creative leadership" – there is just no getting around this.

The second point I would like to make about the problems besetting the sociology of art is more technical and has to do with how little reflection on the problems facing the sociology of art have involved the application of sociological reflection to these problems per se. Take for example, the desire to balance interpretivism with causality, or hermeneutics with structuralism, in sociological explanations of art, even if well-intentioned One can understand why scholars have wanted the best of all possible worlds but there is a degree of voluntarism implicit in such formulations that often goes unremarked (for a rare attempt to frame debates about the sociology of art in terms of a sociology of the sub-discipline see Inglis, 2005). Social science writing about art and aesthetic matters tends to duplicate other dichotomies:: that between mind versus matter; qualitative versus quantitative (Molotch, 2004). As with other areas of life, when it comes to symbolic constructs, what seems to matter is boundaries and how they are negotiated.

Arguably, one would be hard pressed to find a more convincing and elegant account of the role of boundaries, in the construction and maintenance of symbolic worlds, than the one offered by Eviatar Zerubavel (1991) in *The Fine Line*. Perception and attention are at the heart of the analysis. Zerubavel (1991, p. 1) claims that "to discern any 'thing', we must distinguish that which we attend from that which we ignore". Hence, the fundamental

paradox of boundaries: they create discrete "islands of meaning" but also necessarily cut the thing being perceived "out of the flux of human existence" (Zerubavel, 1991, p. 2).

Zerubavel's framework might be used to hypothesize that the reason why aesthetic and social factors have proven difficult to think in tandem has something to do with how we 'cut up' the world. The problem seems to be the analytical mind itself and how it splits things up into discrete categories. Zerubavel (1991, p. 6) claims that analytical thinking entails "isolating mental entities from the context in which they are experienced and treating them as if they were totally detached from their surroundings". The author borrows from the field of visual perception to explain how decontextualization does its work:

> Such discontinuous experiences of reality presuppose a fundamental distinction between 'figure' and 'ground' within which they are perceptually embedded […] The images of figure and ground, of course, are visual, and vision 'is our intellectual sense par excellence […] Sight gives us a world of discrete objects'[…] Like their visual prototype, all mental entities are experienced as insular 'figures' that are sharply differentiated from the ocean surrounding them (Zerubavel, 1991, p. 6).

As Simmel (1997) commented the senses themselves vary in the degree to which they are individuated or social – with vision being the more individualistic of the senses and hearing the more collectivist (de la Fuente; Walsh, 2013; Simmel, 1997). But the more general point is that the analytical move to slice up the world, in order to see some particular thing more clearly, decontextualizes the thing being observed. Of course, sociologists will protest this is precisely what they don't do: that is, rather than seeing art or any other phenomena as a separate mental entity – as Zerubavel (1991) asserts the analytical mind tends to do – sociologists see it as their duty to foreground social context. But social context is also an analytical entity, one that, can also lead to other things being removed from the flux of

life and the interconnections in which they are embedded.

The problem, then, in sociological reflection upon culture is not so much a lack of context but how we treat context. What does 'lifeless' context look like? Arguably, much of the social context that sociologists rely on is lifeless to the extent it relies on analytical categories rather than on process or processes per se. Analyses that "simply invoke class, race, organization, or any other commonly summoned 'social variables'", paradoxically (i.e., despite all their rhetorical rejection of "formalism" or of the "aesthetic autonomy" of the work), can end up setting "the artwork apart from, plac[ing it] outside of, the social process" (Becker; Faulkner; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006, p. 3). This criticism comes from the "Editors' Introduction" to a collection entitled *Art from Start to Finish*, a volume which makes it clear what sociologists do with the "social" is just as important as what they do with the "aesthetic". As Inglis (2005, p. 108) has noted of "the standard sociological views as to the ubiquity of power relations generally" the views of "professional sociologists of the arts seem to gravitate towards the 'natural' way of seeing things"; and, for some reason, sociologists seem to be little disposed to explaining their own practices and worldviews "in terms of socially generated and socially located dispositions and tastes". But – to employ a Bourdiuean term – the *doxa* of the field does matter; it had consequences for sociological theory and practice. Becker, Faulkner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006, p. 3) contend that those approaches which conceptualize the social as a pre-given set of structural "variables" render it "mysterious" and unexplainable when what "social process refers to" is simply "people doing things together". The editors of *Art From Start to Finish* suggest the sociality or socialness of art is to be found in process rather than because of the causal efficacy of some mysterious pre-existing entities: "Art is social not because social variables affect it but

because it is the product of collective work, the work that all these different people do" (Becker; Faulkner; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006, p. 3). To see the social otherwise is to treat it as a zombie category.

Why a zombie category? As I have argued elsewhere (de la Fuente, 2007, 2015), there has recently been a renewed emphasis on the 'affordances' of art (Acord; DeNora, 2008; Gibson, 1979). If I had to nominate one prevalent characteristic within these trends in socio-aesthetic thinking, it would be a desire to "reanimate" what we mean by "context". Context itself has become something that we can't take for granted or assume in some *a priori* manner. If I can borrow from recent literatures in geography on the dynamic and relational character of place and space, we need a type of thinking that re-awakens or brings back to life '*dead context*' (Thrift; Dewsbury, 2000). Context as a living organism is much more than the lived experience of the subject – that line of inquiry merely reinforces the assumption of an unbridgeable gap between materiality and sentience. A re-animated concept of context will need to be relational and dynamic, attentive to 'life' as well as to "form".

Many of the problems identified here are not discipline specific (i.e., sociology is no worse than any other social science). The wording of the vocational practices associated with being a social scientist focused on art/ the arts give us a clue as to what the more general problem is. The telling point is that we call ourselves a sociologist *of* art, just as there exists the vocation or office of being an anthropologist *of* art, a geographer *of* art, an economist *of* art, and so on. Why is this word *of,* especially when it masquerades as an organizing principle or description of a work role, so limiting and so constraining? As Latour explains, when an explanation is operating in the "*of* mode", you have the strange situation where everything involves a "zero-sum game": "everything lost by the work of art [i]s gained by the social, everything lost by the social [is] to be gained

by the inner quality of the work" (Latour, 2005, p. 93). In other words, the aesthetic and the social are essentially seen as cancelling each other out rather than as cross-fertilizing or proliferating in conjunction. But the reality couldn't be further from the truth. There are many things that occur in a given cultural space or at a given moment, either through serendipity or through concerted agency, that impact the 'messy' social processes unfolding. Latour (2005, p. 237) provides the following example:

> You watch a painting; a friend of yours points out a feature you had not noticed; you are thus *made to see* something. Who is seeing it? You, of course. And, yet, wouldn't you freely acknowledge that you would not have seen it *without* your friend. So who has seen the delicate feature? Is it you or your friend? […] Who would be silly enough to *deduct* from the total sum of action the influence of pointing something out? The more influence the better.

Better that is, for the explanation proffered – for with every mediation or "association" detected we become more empirical, in the full sense of the word. On this basis, Latour (2005, p. 237) advocates a "win-win" mode of explanation of social-aesthetic realities where "the more attachments the better". And, as befits a sociological theorist at the forefront of mixing human and nonhuman modes of agency, the formulation the "more influence the better" extends to the "influence of the varnish, the procedures of the art market, the puzzles of the narrative programs", as well as the more classically sociological phenomena of "the successive tastes of collectors making up the long retinue of mediators" (Latour, 2005, p. 237). There is also no desire to disentangle what comes from the subject and what comes from the object. Running counter to the last 50 years of debate about determinism/effects/reception/ the polysemy of cultural texts, Latour (2005, p. 237) deduces: "It is counterintuitive to try and distinguish 'what comes from the viewers' and 'what comes from the object' when the obvious response is to 'go with the flow'". Even

if objects and subjects have a kind of existence, "everything interesting happens upstream and downstream. Just follow the flow" (Latour, 2005, p. 237).

Following the "flow" is a formulation that would resonate with those strands of social science interested in pragmatism, Vitalism, phenomenology and process ontologies – a set of sensibilities which I think are characteristic of a *textural* rather than *textual* outlook (de la Fuente, 2019). Why texture and why now? As one recent commentator puts it, "while by no means new", texture is currently "very much in the air" and serves to "redirect attention to the complex ways in which the world is 'woven together'" (Paavolainen, 2015, p. 14). The word texture derives from the "Latin *texere*, meaning 'to weave'" and over time came to mean both "the thing woven (textile) and the feel of the weave (texture)" (Adams; Hoelscher; Till, 2001a, p. 13). *Texere* is also the Latin source of the word "context", which is an all-round synonym for the larger whole implied or indexed by the part.

For the texturalist, the world consists of interlaced strands; and so vital is each thread to the overall structure that to pull one out, as one might when there is a loose thread on a garment, risks undoing the whole fabric. Amongst the strongest proponents of a such a texturalist view in contemporary social science is Tim Ingold, Professor of Anthropology at the University Aberdeen. In *Perception of Environment*, he draws on J. J. Gibson who coined the notion of "affordances", the biologist Jacob Von Uexküll who thought that the "worlds" of the human and the parasitic tick were more coterminous than many appreciated, and the phenomenologies of Martin Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who highlighted the nature of "being-in-the-world" through *dwelling* and *embodied perception* respectively. The one anthropologist to make the Ingold pantheon was Gregory Bateson. Ingold (2000, p. 18) claims to have taken from Bateson the important insight that "If we ask where the mind is, the

answer would not be in the 'head but rather in the world out there'"; or, rather in the "whole system of relations constituted by the multi--sensory involvement of the perceiver in his or her environment". Bateson posed an important challenge to the conception of social science as the study of social texts. In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, he also challenges the sociology of art by suggesting: 'I am concerned with what important psychic information is in the art object quite apart from what it may "represent"' (Bateson, 1973, p. 103). He adds:

> The lions in Trafalgar Square could have been eagles or bulldogs and still carried the same (or similar) messages […] And yet how different might their message have been had they been made of wood [...] It is the very rules of transformation [whereby perceived objects or persons (or supernaturals) are transformed into wood or paint] that are of interest to me – not the message (Bateson, 1973, p. 103).

I will leave to one side the issue of whether texture necessarily involves – as seems to be suggested by Bateson – a complete denial of the textual or representational (on how the debate about the 'representational' and the non-representational' has played out in geography see Lorimer, 2005; Thrift, 2008a). It is interesting that in more recent books, such as *Being Alive*, Ingold (2011, p. 14) has shifted from being what we might term "Anti-Geertzian" (i.e., highly critical of "interpretative anthropology" and its attendant nature-culture dualisms) to aiming for a more positive and distinctive theoretical agenda that aspires "to bring anthropology back to life" by focusing on what he terms the *knotting* and *weaving* that comprise the "textures of the world". When discussing why we need an anthropology or social science of how the world is threaded together, he lays out the following meta-theoretical position: "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" (Ingold, 2015, p. 14). Ingold (2011, p. 18) asks with respect to a

theory of social life: "What, then, would a world be like that is knotted rather than assembled, enchained or contained?" Ingold (2011, p. 18) asks us "to commence" our tracing of social life "with the verb 'to knot' and [to] view knotting as an activity of which 'knots' are the emergent outcomes" and advises social scientists "not to explain any one" dimension of life- i.e., the social and the aesthetic, the natural or the cultural – "in terms of another, nor should we treat knotting in any one as literal and in any other as metaphorical".

Aligned with the *both-and* logic I am emphasizing here, the anthropologist suggests that the central "question is one of how to translate from domain to domain" of social life and how to then render the "corresponding" interweavings of the symbolic and the material in thought (Ingold, 2011, p. 18). Weaving as an act of correspondence? A note of explanation is required here. For Ingold, contra the notion that "[c]ulture mirrors social reality" – what is often referred to as the "reflection theory" of culture (Griswold, 2008, p. 25), correspondence alludes to a meaningful and creative exchange whereby the different elements involved preserve their own identity. As such, rather than suggest some kind of "mirroring", Ingold's notion of "correspondence" is closer to the old-fashioned notion of "correspondence" as a type of letter writing or of the journalist as "correspondent". There is a to-ing and fro-ing, as well as an element of collaboration involved, and the processual dimensions of such exchanges need not be concealed or made invisible. In a recent 5-year European Research Council funded project, *Knowing from the Inside*, Ingold has collaborated with not only other social scientists and humanists, but also with architects and designers, visual and plastic artists to explore, amongst other things, materials and their built-in capacities for change, novelty and creativity. The "preface" to a volume produced by this project, entitled *Correspondences*, begins on a very texturalist note: "Sometimes one's best

ideas come not from following the main lines of an investigation but from veering off course, in brief encounters with things, artworks and people that trigger reflections on quite unfamiliar and unexpected topics" (Ingold, 2017, p. 4). For the texturalist, veering off is no bad thing; especially, if it involves the opportunity to follow new and (potentially) rich strands of socio-cultural life. It may lead to the occasional dead-end; but even dead-ends teach us about the thing under consideration (for e.g., they tell us what may not be so relevant) and they also teach us a great deal about the disciplines and opportunities "afforded" by thinking itself.

We may well ask: are there sociological topics or subject matter, conceptual or research problems, better suited to the textural theoretical and methodological gaze? Arguably, the advantages of a textural approach to social and cultural reality are most evident in cases where time or space, the materiality or medium of a given cultural or aesthetic form (or some combination of such elements) is at play. Thus, we see the word texture being evoked in a book about the politics and aesthetics of Holocaust memorials, entitled: *Textures of Memory* (Young, 1999); as well as in a volume celebrating the work of Chinese-American "humanist" geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, entitled *Textures of Place* (Adams; Hoelscher; Till, 2001b). The latter sets out its textural themes thus:

> A place's 'texture' [...] calls direct attention to the paradoxical nature 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 [...] people's sense of place – attached variously to a movie theatre, a town, a tree, a planet – reveals a great deal about the structure of each of these places in its various contexts. Place [...] highlights the weaving together of social relations and human-environment interactions (Adams; Hoelscher; Till, 2001a, p. 13-14).

In short, capturing a place's texture entails reproducing the *shape*, *feel* or *sense of place* present there and not elsewhere/nowhere else. Note that the editors of the volume also make a metaphorical connection between "texture" and how place is "woven" together. The link being made is widespread in literatures about place, space and the built environment. Arguably, the field of social science and cultural/aesthetic research where texture and textural approaches are having the most significant impact is architecture, urbanism, place and the study of space.

Arguably these were also fields where the need to embrace a *both-and* logic were first felt; and with good reason. Architecture is one of the most public or collective of aesthetic forms, so any attempt to reduce it to a single or narrow set of sociological "causal variables" is bound to do an injustice to the complex life of buildings, their design, their intended and unintended usages or the processes that impact the materials employed. Interestingly, a recent book on *Research Methods for Architecture* argues for the pursuit of "[a]rchitectural social sciences (not social science of architecture)" (Lucas, 2016, p. 5). Many of the authors who were at the forefront of recognizing the problem of sociological reductionism, and in addressing such shortcomings, were social scientists interested in architecture and material culture more generally. For example, a significant voice in such fields, Chandra Mukerji (1994, p. 145) wrote some time ago, material entities such as "Bridges, canals, railroad lines, road systems, and even paths in the woods […] all contribute to the formation (or not) of social linkages". A social constructionist approach to the built form (is the metaphor itself not architectural?) might emphasize that society involves the "production of […] artificial environment[s] for sustaining, organizing and enhancing human life" and the spatial environment thus constitutes an ontological realm where the "distinction between the physical and the symbolic […] often breaks down" (Mukerji, 1994, p. 145).

Another example is provided by the writings of David Brain, another significant figure in the sociology of architecture during the 1980s and 90s. Brain (1994, p. 205) suggests that cultural forms are "society in the making" and that the social processes are embedded within it could be said to belong to realm of the *art of artefacts*: "What we recognize in both technical artefacts and works of art is a pattern of intention that refers to a domain of possible intentions, and our interpretative (as well as practical grasp) of this pattern depends on the way the artefact makes its intentional quality manifest". In eschewing a "history of architectural ideas which focus on their immanent logic" and one which emphasizes "their determination by broader social and historical forces" (Brain, 1994, p. 206), architectural sociologists could do worse than turn to the field of science and technology studies which employs terms such as *translation* and *enrolment* to describe the complex assemblages that are produced when artefacts and agents (human and otherwise) collide with each other. In his own account of the "practical logic of modernism" whereby US architects moved away from the historicist Beaux-Arts style and embraced a modified version of European modernism, Brain (1994, p. 206) locates a sociologically significant act of translation in "the way architects responded to the task of translating the social problem of housing into an *architectural* problem in the context of the federally subsidized housing programs of the New Deal". The processes of enrolment, on the other hand, might be seen in the way that professional architects of the period "enlisted government agencies, housing reformers, academics, planners, political constituencies, the prevailing winds, the angle of sunlight on building sites, construction techniques, and European formal paradigms in the actor network that enabled them to give form to these projects" (Brain, 1994, p. 207).

However, whether networks are successful in enlisting actors, depends in part on whe-

ther the right kind of attitude, emotional and aesthetic, can be generated. And, this is where textures – material, technological and ambient – play a crucial role. It is well known that in his magnum opus, *Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1991, p. 38-39) felt the need to divide his theory of space between *spatial practice, representations of space* and *representational space* – where the last two, despite sounding similar, differ insomuch as the "space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" can be contrasted with that "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols […] the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and […] a few writers and philosophers". What is much less well known is that the same author is a strong advocate for theorizing the urban and the spatial in general in terms of texture. Indeed, Lefebvre (1991, p. 132) goes as far as to suggest in *Production of Space* that the "theory of space describes and analyses textures" where a texture implies a meaning not for some "reader" or decoder – as hypothesized in textual and semiotic theories – but rather "for someone who lives and acts in the space under consideration, a 'subject' with a body".

A particularly poignant example of textural logic is provided by Lefebvre (1991) when he discusses the paths created by animals or humans in forests outside villages. He suggests "more important" than the "traffic" such paths bore, or the motivations humans or animals had for creating them, is the material-symbolic traces or textural patterns they evince:

> Paths are more important than the traffic they bear, because they are what endure […] Always distinct and clearly indicated, such tracks embody […] danger, safety, waiting, promise. This graphic aspect, which was obviously not apparent to the original 'actors' […] has more in common with a spider's web than a drawing or a plan. Could it be called a text or a message? Possibly, but the analogy would serve no particularly useful purpose, and it would make more sense to speak of texture rather than texts in this connection (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 118).

Lefebvre (1991, p. 118, 222, emphasis in the original) also proposes "it is helpful to think of architectures as 'architextures'" due to the fact that they are interwoven with the fabric of their surroundings; and has a long section of *Production of Space* on 'monuments' which he claims attain "a complexity fundamentally different from the complexity of a text, whether prose or poetry" in that they embody not discrete meanings but an entire "*horizon of meaning*". The monumentality of monumental space comes from a type of meaning which is practical, embodied, temporal, atmospheric, as well as representational and ideological. Lefebvre (1991, p. 221) gives the example of entering a cathedral's monumental space where "visitors are bound to become aware of their own footsteps […] breathe the incense-laden air, and plunge into a particular world, of sin and redemption". The "codifying approach of semiology […] is quite unable to cover all facets of the monumental", including the evocation of immortatility, splendour, and other "supercoded" states, monumental space and architecture mobilizes. On occasion, Lefebvre (1991, p. 223) relies on the texturalist mode of reasoning par excellence (i.e., analogical thought): "Buildings are to monuments as everyday life is to festival, products to works, lived experience to the merely perceived, concrete to stone, and so on".

Analogy is not at odds with powerful explanatory formulations. *Production of Space* formulates a powerful hypothesis regarding what happens when a city's "sites, forms and functions are no longer focused and appropriated by monuments" – namely, that the "city's contexture or fabric – its streets, its underground levels, its frontiers – start to unravel". The unravelling of cities is an interesting topic and one that brings the symbolic and the material into synergistic play. In her book, *Fin de Millénaire Budapest*, Bodnár (2000, p. 182) invokes such a Lefebvrean theme when she writes: "The city whose texture unravels is not a city anymore in the sense of being a collective en-

terprise of its citizens". Bodnár's formulation, made in the context of a book about end-of--millennium Budapest, is indicative of what in recent decades has been a vibrant area of textural socio-cultural research: namely, the urban-material culture studies to do with Central and Eastern European societies in the wake of the collapse of Communism. While all of the world's cities are currently undergoing significant economic, cultural and technological change, in those cities where the political and symbolic markers of the Soviet-era regimes suddenly collapsed, combined with the shift to a new economic and political system, the issues of material and aesthetic texturality were even more pertinent: "Time has accelerated in post-socialist Budapest. City dwellers are losing their reference points; the city's secure signposts are disappearing at a speed not experienced before" (Bodnár, 2000, p. 1).

Indeed, the collapse of Communism was as much architectural, infrastructural and aesthetic as it was political, ideological and economic. Another fascinating study of Hungary, during the same period, takes the meanings and materialities associated with 'colour' as a way to think about the traditional sociological topic of change. Entitled *Politics in Colour and Concrete*, Krisztina Fehervary's (2013, p. 8) book about the transition from State Socialism to capitalist consumerism focuses on one central question: how is it that "the relationship between state socialism and greyness or capitalism and colour" both came into being and then subsequently came unstuck? Her argument is Soviet era furnishings, monumental buildings, apartment towers, cars and clothing, were seen by residents of the former Eastern Europe as lacking the vibrancy, joy and colour – in short, the cosmopolitan qualities – of their Western material cultural counterparts. Thus, as suggested above, during the socialist era, greyness became a shorthand for a "life behind a dark Iron Curtain, of enforced poverty and the fatigue of daily provisioning, of unsmiling desks clerks, scarce goods, and the

lack of colourful advertising and commerce" (Fehervary, 2013, p. 1). But these associations failed to be permanent. Within a decade of the collapse of Communism, grey was starting to turn up in post-Socialist consumer culture in images of minimalist urbanity. Such changes in aesthetic value are possible from the fact that, as the living context surrounding artefacts and their aesthetic properties shift, our attention shifts to "different qualia and this forces a re-evaluation of the object" (Fehervary, 2013, p. 9). It is the "stitching" together of qualia and context, with full attention being given to the processual nature of both, that is the task of the socio-cultural analyst.

In a mediated consumer culture (which is all consumer cultures on the planet), one of the central mechanisms through which textures command attention is the allure and aesthetics of "glamour" (Gundle, 2008). The geographer and cultural theorist Nigel Thrift (2008b, p. 8) suggests glamour involves "a series of 'magical' technologies of public intimacy, most of them with long historical genealogies". He notes how glamour can be constructed from the sensory "building blocks" of sound, light, smells, haptic association and even kinetic movement; but in his own reflections he emphasizes the role of "colourful materials" in "constructing worlds" through the "unconscious poetry of substance" associated with mass-produced and mass-circulated synthetic colour (Thrift, 2008b, p. 16). In her analysis of magazines, Mehita Iqani (2012, p. 82) suggests "the material elements of full-colour printing, smooth shiny paper and airbrushing combine to produce a core material dynamic of consumerist discourses which can be summarized as glossiness". Celebrities are an important aspect of such a magazine culture but the materiality and textures of the medium cannot be underestimated The materialities of glossiness can become attached to objects and situations as well as people. Thus, one of the characteristics of contemporary architecture – which for the last decade or so has been dominated by

"starchitects" such as Frank Gehry, Norman Forster and Zaha Hadid, and unusual designs like London's so-called "Gherkin" – is that one of the functions of architecture has become to embody "brand qualities" through the "immersive, sensory nature of architectural space" (Dyckoff, 2017, p. 171). Such a development is arguably unthinkable without the confluence of new architectural surfaces (e.g., Gehry's famous use of titanium) and the accompanying media infrastructure (e.g., how well such buildings photograph not only in traditional media such as print media and television but also on social media like Instagram).

We start to see why a *both-and*, textural logic is required in the sociology of architecture and art/cultural production more generally. We are discussing architecture but, before we know it, we are also discussing material culture, branding, the "star system" in architecture, media technologies, glossiness and glamour, the qualities and sensory engagements of surfaces, and so on. It is this complicated, tentative yet mutually reinforcing set of interwoven factors that lends importance to the notion of a "textural sociological approach" (de la Fuente, 2019); as does also the symbiotic relationship between symbolic and material factors in the social, economic and everyday existences lived by buildings and other cultural-cum-aesthetic artefacts.

It was recently reported that the editor of one the many new books (itself an interesting socio-cultural and architectural-marketing phenomenon) on Brutalist architecture was of the belief that Instagram may be responsible for the revival of interest in this architectural form (Rose, 2018). Apparently, imposing monolithic structures and "raw concrete" photograph very well and Instagram's quasi-retro, glossy but not too colourful tones tend to be just perfect (on concrete architecture and its photographic qualities see Forty, (2012). We may end up deciding that such commentators are clutching at straws when they claim social media or the architecture's "photogenic" traits helped to make Brutalism popular again (or, is that popular for the first time?). But, in keeping with Latour's recommendation that we multiply the "affluences", and "go with the flow", it is not just Instagram or the architecture's visual qualities that are likely to be responsible but also: Hipsters and members of the "creative class" becoming interested in this architectural style; enough time passing between the historical period in question and the present for negative associations/stigmas to dissipate; the growing archaeological-cum-retro sensibility that both museums and consumer culture cultivate towards the recent past; the fact that such buildings and styles circulate in a variety of media (including televisual programs and coffeetable books about the period); and the insatiable curiosity of contemporary culture towards all matter of materials and their qualities. We would also have to take into account that such buildings have left the cultural economy of public programs, the welfare state, and state bureaucracy (and the material aesthetics thereof); and now Brutalist buildings and iconography freely circulates in the realm of glamour magazines such as *Wallpaper** and new definitions of urban luxury. Even old council buildings, that had been dubbed such prosaic names as the "Champagne Cork" and the "Wedding Cake", can shed their Brutalist "nicknames" and be magically transformed into luxury hotels (Editorial Desk Architecture Australia, 2018).

No doubt, in outlining these multiple possible threads, our narrative has drifted from the realm of facts into the realm of mythology. From the functional into the aesthetic, from the disenchanted into the re-enchanted. And back again! But, how can we not? Any consideration of the aesthetics, temporalities, intensities, affordances, and affectivities, and moods, surrounding the built environment, needs to look at the multiple interwoven threads underpinning the success or failure of buildings and their designs-cum-symbolism. Everyday factors also have quite a bit to do with the ontological status of buildings and how they cir-

culate through time and space (on buildings as unstable objects that move see Latour; Yaneva, 2008). Thus, connecting architecture to processes of everyday "socio-technical" mediation makes more sense than, for example, suggesting Brutalism failed because it was linked to Totalitarianism (after all, even stark, imposing Communist architecture is now being re-assessed for its "transcendental" themes: see Chaubin, 2012); or, because, as Charles Jencks (1977, p. 9) would have us believe, all "Modern Architecture died in St Louis Missouri on July 15, 1972, at 3:32pm" with the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Estate (i.e., a prime example of Brutalist social housing).

Socio-cultural and aesthetic-historical realities are much messier than such formulations presume. In the textural universe, things don't suddenly die; nor are they born into a vacuum. Furthermore, to the extent contextualists remain curious about how one strand of social reality leads to another, there may be another message embedded in textural thinking for the sociology of art. Perhaps, it's also time – as suggested by the above example of the "complexities" surrounding the "Brutalist revival" - to stop separating the sociology of architecture from, for example, the sociology of digital media, visual sociology, the sociology of infrastructure, the sociology of recent change in Eastern European cities, organizational sociology or the sociology of marketing. We need all these tool-sets at our disposal. An interesting irony: the message in Brutalist concrete architecture's revived status might just be that we should give up our intellectual *silos*, where silos just happen to be, the quintessential concrete, self-contained, mass industrial form. Understanding a phenomenon such as "Brutalism *redux*" involves moving beyond the sociology of art, defined as a "narrow *specialization*". As I have been saying all along: *both-and* rather than *either-or*.

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TANTO... QUANTO: sobre a necessidade de uma sociologia *textural* da arte

Eduardo de la Fuente

Um dos dilemas recorrentes na sociologia da arte tem sido como balancear abordagens *internalistas* e *externalistas* dos fenômenos estéticos (isto é, explicações estéticas e sociais); ou o que este artigo caracteriza como a necessidade de sair de um modelo *"ou arte ou sociedade"* para um modelo de lógica *"tanto arte quanto sociedade"*. Nos últimos anos, os dilemas conceituais foram intensificados por uma tendência de o capitalismo se tornar um fenômeno mais explicitamente cultural. Ao mesmo tempo, os conhecimentos sobre arte e estética saíram da esfera da *grandiosidade* e da alta cultura para o mundo prosaico do dia a dia. Este artigo propõe que a solução para os dilemas em curso da sociologia da arte, e para o atual desafio das bases da arte e do conhecimento estético é adotar um paradigma textural, ao invés de um modo de pensar textual. O paradigma textural foi desenvolvido primeiramente no pensamento sobre lugar e é adequado para pensar os problemas da sociologia da arquitetura e do urbanismo – incluindo o problema de como o tecido urbano, às vezes, começa a desemaranhar; ou porque alguns estilos arquitetônicos improváveis voltam à moda (como, por exemplo, o brutalismo pós-guerra).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Texturas. Sociologia da arte. Ingold. Lefebvre. Arquitetura e Urbanismo.

TELLEMENT ... COMBIEN: sur la necessite d'une sociologie de la texture de l'art

Eduardo de la Fuente

L'un des dilemmes le plus récurrent dans la sociologie de l'art c'est de savoir comment équilibrer les approches "internalistes" et "externalistes" des phénomènes esthétiques (c'est-à-dire des explications esthétiques et sociales); ou ce que cet article définit comme la nécessité de sortir d'un modèle "d'un art ou d'une société" pour un modèle logique "à la fois l'art et société". Au cours des dernières années, les dilemmes conceptuels ont été aggravés par la tendance du capitalisme à devenir un phénomène plus explicitement culturel; au même temps, la connaissance de l'art et de l'esthétique est passée de la sphère de la grandeur et de la haute culture au monde prosaïque de la vie quotidienne. Cet article propose que la solution aux dilemmes actuels de la sociologie de l'art et au défi actuel des fondements de la connaissance de l'art et de l'esthétique consiste à adopter un paradigme textural plutôt qu'un mode de pensée textuel. Le paradigme de la texture a été développé pour la première fois en pensant sur le lieu et convient aux problèmes sociologiques de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme, y compris comment, le tissu urbain commence parfois à se démêler; ou comme certains styles architecturaux improbables sont revenus à la mode (comme le brutalisme d'après-guerre).

MOTS-CLÉS: Textures. Sociologie de l'art. Ingold. Lefebvre. Architecture et Urbanisme.

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