Wartime Sociology

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Abstract

How can sociologists observe a war "in the making"? In issuing an "instant call for papers," the editors of *Sociologica* suggest three lines of research: the semantics and the symbolic representation of war (of any war, but especially of this war); how political, military, economic, and social options and alternatives enter and exit the realm of the possible in connection with shifts in war semantics; how our understanding of "the day after," that is of the future after the war is over, binds and even determines decisions in the present.

Keywords: War; sociological imagination; semantics; future; belief/disbelief.

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In the Spring of 2020, several weeks after the outbreak of the coronavirus, the Editors of *Sociologica* sent round and then published an announcement calling for "the attention of sociology to the immediate and pressing present of the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of understanding the potentially long-term consequences of this extraordinary moment." Our call for papers yielded 15 articles and 2 commentaries (see vol 14, nos 1, 2, & 3 as well as vol 15, no. 3).

Two years later, in the Spring of 2022, several weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the outbreak of war in Europe, we at *Sociologica* are calling for papers on the topic of sociology in a time of war.

Is there a way to observe an ongoing war from a sociological point of view? While reporters and photographers can cover war as an object of journalistic observation, the representation and semantics of war can be an object of sociological observation.

Not as an exhaustive set, we propose several topics for a wartime sociology.

A first focus is on regimes of justification. How do different actors justify the decisions taken during the war? And how do the content and the structure of discourses about the war, its motivations, and likely development change in relation to various societal variables?

How is the war compared and connected to other historical or contemporary events that have been constructed as "obviously impactful" (such as the pandemic, other wars, or natural disasters)?

A second point could be to examine strategies of belief and disbelief — "suspension of disbelief," if you like. How do alternatives gain (or lose) credibility during a war? How and when is common sense constructed that some options simply exit the picture and become non-thinkable?

A third line of reflection concerns societal perspective on the future: how does the future get stretched or reduced during a war? How do different kinds of actors imagine "the day after"? How does this affect the present and the decisions that are taken "now"?

We offer *Sociologica* as an open forum to host contributions on these topics or on other research questions connected with the current war in Europe. As an international online journal for sociological debate, with neither pay-walled access nor pay-for-publication policy, *Sociologica* can provide rapid dissemination and open discussion. We commit ourselves to peer review any contribution at the highest standards and publish rapidly all accepted papers.

We welcome proposals by scholars or teams of scholars for: (1) symposia on strategic topics for wartime sociology, organized through open calls for papers or as groups of papers already commissioned by symposia editors (or a mix of open and commissioned papers); (2) papers reflecting on the most important challenges, in the standard format of scientific articles or in shorter form; (3) flashback and focus papers discussing the war in Ukraine in the light of social history or using sociological tools to consider its challenges; (4) accounts and reconstructions of wartime events in unconventional formats.

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