

Araştırma Makalesi

Transnational Social Fields: A Bourdieusian Perspective against Territorial Trap^{1,2}

Ayçe İdil Ataoğlu³

Abstract

Transnational phenomena, like the movement of people, goods, and information, have arisen from the global shift and led to intense mobility across national and territorial borders. The social capital and resources gained through social interactions and social networks like family, friends, and occupational associations bridge physical boundaries and link people from different regions. This study focuses on how different types of capital, with a specific focus on social capital and networks, shape transnational social fields and investigates how the territorial trap can be overcome when analyzing transnational social fields. The main objective is to demonstrate how social capital influences transnational communities by criticizing traditional ideas based solely on regional proximity. The study focuses on a theoretical examination of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus in the axis of transnational social fields. In conclusion, it is argued that incorporating Bourdieu's concepts into the conceptualization of transnational social fields could help transcend the limitations of the territorial trap.

Keywords: Territorial trap, transnational social field, capital, habitus

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³ Research Assistant at Baskent University, Graduate Student at Middle East Technical University, aidilataoglu@baskent.edu.tr, ORCID NO: 0000-0003-1025-7195

*Research Article***Teritoryal Tuzağa Karşı Bourdieu Sosyolojisi Çerçevesinde Ulusötesi Toplumsal Alanlar****Öz**

İnsanların, metaların ve bilginin hareketi gibi ulus ötesi olgular, küresel değişimle birlikte ortaya çıkmış ve ulusal ve bölgesel sınırlar arasında yoğun bir hareketliliğe yolaçmıştır. Sosyal etkileşimler ve aile, arkadaşlar ve mesleki birlikler gibi sosyal ağlar aracılığıyla kazanılan sosyal sermaye ve kaynaklar, fiziksel sınırlar arasında köprü kurmakta ve farklı bölgelerden insanları birbirine bağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, özellikle sosyal sermaye ve ağlara odaklanarak farklı sermaye türlerinin ulusötesi sosyal alanları nasıl şekillendirdiğine odaklanmakta ve ulusötesi sosyal alanları analiz ederken bölgesel tuzağın nasıl aşılabileceğini araştırmaktadır. Temel amaç, bölgesel yakınlığa dayalı geleneksel fikirlerin ötesine geçerek sosyal sermayenin ulusötesi toplulukları nasıl etkilediğini göstermektir. Çalışma, ulusötesi sosyal alanların Pierre Bourdieu'nün alan, sermaye ve habitus kavramları ekseninde teorik bir incelemesine odaklanmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Bourdieu'nün kavramlarının ulusötesi sosyal alanların kavramsallaştırılmasına dahil edilmesinin bölgesel tuzağın sınırlamalarını aşmaya yardımcı olabileceği savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Teritoryal tuzak, ulusötesi toplumsal alan, sermaye, habitus

1. Introduction

Ulrich Beck (2015) defines globalization as the increasing interconnectivity between regions, causing a significant global shift. The transnational phenomena, like the movement of people, goods, and information, have arisen from this shift and led to intense mobility across national and territorial borders. The tendency to take the nation-state as the natural setting in which to conceptualize and investigate social phenomena has been challenged and migration studies have taken a position against methodological nationalism (Lubbers et al., 2020, p. 177). In contrast to methodological nationalism, the transnational perspective focuses on how migrants, who participate in various places, possess a dual frame of reference (Guarnizo, 1997, p. 310) or bifocality (Rouse, 1992, p. 41). This means that they constantly remain aware of and responsive to events taking place in multiple locations, where they have been and are, and possess the ability to interpret those events using different cultural models. In the transnational arena, the complex exchange and interaction networks have occurred as a result of the mobility of both human and non-human elements across borders, and the social capital that has arisen from social networks and resources plays a vital role in fostering all this interconnectivity (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). The social capital, resources gained through social interactions, and social networks like family, friends, and occupational associations, bridges physical boundaries and links people from different regions. Such connections lead to personal interactions and create opportunities for developing transnational social fields, which are the communicational spaces that bond individuals across borders (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1003). These fields refer not only to physical locations but also to active social spaces that are influenced by social connections and resource movements. So, the current study focuses on how different kinds of social capital and networks shape these fields and lead them to overcome the trap of the territory. The main aim is to show how social capital facilitates the creation of transnational communities that question conventional ideas based solely on territorial proximity (Cohen, 2016, p. 181). With its different types -bonding, bridging, and linking- social capital can influence the fabric of the relations within these fields. In this study, the transnational fields are also problematized according to Bourdieu's concept of the *field* regarding its actors, limits, and *game rules*. The impact of the involvement in transnational fields on identity formation and identification processes encourages the growth of mixed or hybrid identities that merge aspects of diverse cultures and national identities (Bauböck, 2000, pp. 13-15).

Overall, the territorial trap, the limitations imposed by the understanding of the nation-state as given and the national borders as fixed (Agnew, 1994, p. 71), may be overcome by integrating the concepts of field and social capital into transnational social fields. The present study begins by elucidating the theory of the territorial trap, which is subsequently subjected to critical evaluation. Following this, the field theory posited by Bourdieu is closely examined. Finally, the power dynamics that are intertwined with this theory are analyzed in detail, and

social capital, with its different kinds, is proposed as an emancipatory element that may transcend the trap of the territory within transnational social fields.

2. Territorial Trap

The social sciences were captured by the apparent naturalness and givenness of a world divided into societies along the lines of nation-states (Berlin, 1998).

Recognizing the limitations imposed by national and territorial borders and policies is essential to understand how transnational social fields work. John Agnew's 1994 book, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," criticizes the dominant focus on territorial states in International Relations (IR) theory. IR theory often considers the state's territoriality as a given, overlooking the complexities of social interactions and resource flows surpassing national borders. The territorial trap results from reliance on three geographical assumptions: states as fixed units of sovereign space, the domestic/foreign polarity, and states as "containers" of societies within conventional historical thinking. These assumptions refer to the inclination to view social processes, identities, and interactions through the prism of fixed territorial boundaries and reify state territorial spaces as fixed units of secure sovereign space, while the neo-liberal viewpoint promotes this perspective by separating the domestic and the foreign. As being the container of society, the state plays a crucial role in society by providing a territorial unit and maintaining social order. Without the state's permission, any social change or growth is not possible. However, social, economic, and political aspects of life cannot be limited to the territorial boundaries of states because of various factors such as population movements, capital mobility, ecological interdependence, information economy, and the "chronopolitics" of military technologies (Agnew, 1994, p. 72). Accordingly, if social scientists and the social sciences investigate any issue based on the assumptions above, they get stuck in the territory because such a perspective can lead to oversimplification and misinterpretations of any social phenomenon. This perspective also causes methodological nationalism, which is "the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences" (Wimmer, & Schiller, 2003, p. 576).

So, the territorial trap refers to the limitations imposed by national borders and state-centric policies on transnational activities. At some point, such limitations result from taking the state as the container of the society and as a given entity, which is the boundaries of that society's territory. However, Bourdieu (1990, p. 123) claims that the state must be viewed as any other actor within a field, just as operating at a superior level, like in the international arena. Thus, the means of analyzing any situation or phenomenon cannot be the distinction between inside and outside the state. Such a distinction may only serve as a justification for various other

distinctions made by state bureaucrats, including public-private, state-societal, citizen-foreigner, friend-enemy, and chaos-order (Bigo, 2020, p. 205).

In contrast with the idea of the state as one given entity, the state exists beyond its geographical borders and its public agents. According to the vision of the transnational, the field of the state is, therefore, not “internalized” into a territory and the reflexive move makes it possible to produce an alternative narrative or a different script in which the nation-state is not one nation, or one homogeneous entity (Bigo, 2020, p. 246). Rather, the nation-state exists in the transnational arena where constant mobility across national borders and territories is at play. Even though such borders and state-centric policies can impose certain limitations, they are far from being absolute. They are formed and constantly transformed according to relations in the transnational arena. So, actors within transnational social fields are not passive subjects. Instead, they can strategically leverage their various capital and resources to navigate borders and facilitate cross-border relations. So, studying such relations and migration requires a perspective that can fit with these fields’ dynamic and evolving nature, shaped by the interaction of different kinds of capital, power structures, and the habitus and agency of actors navigating these fields. Therefore, the territorial trap can be challenged and transcended by conceptualizing transnational social fields with respect to Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus, and capital, as transnational social fields refer to interconnected networks that go beyond the political and geographical boundaries of a single nation. These networks serve as the relevant field of action and reference for migrants in their country of origin and abroad (Çağlar, 2016, p. 65).

3. A Bourdieusian Perspective on Transnational Social Fields

The field, according to Pierre Bourdieu, refers to a relatively autonomous social space characterized by specific stakes, rules of the game, and forms of *capital* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 17-19). The actors within any field compete for these stakes, such as social status, cultural recognition, or economic resources, by deploying various forms of capital. These different kinds of capital all confer advantages within distinct fields. How individuals perceive, navigate, and act within fields is shaped by their habitus, a system of dispositions internalized through socialization (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). However, habitus is also shaped by the existing structure, the conditions of a given field. The unequal distribution of any resource within fields is linked with the habitus, especially in transnational social fields, where actors from diverse backgrounds might possess varying forms of capital (Schiller, 2010, p. 127). The capital, “is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). It takes many forms

like social, cultural, economic, and symbolic. Each form of capital has its significance in distinct fields – like cultural capital in education or economic capital in the global market.

Using the field as an analytical framework requires to focus on the identification processes. In a highly segmented world social, economic, and cultural connectivity has become quite an inevitable fact, and the regular movement of people, goods, and ideas has increasingly become part of everyday reality (Golob, 2014 p. 125). In general, more than traditional understandings of identities are needed in the era of global mass communications, mediation, and migration. The traditional understanding of individuals as members of distinct and stable societies has been eroded by the forces of globalization. These same forces have also lessened the significance of traditional conceptions of societies as fixed and separate entities. Rapport and Dawson (1998, p. 27) have suggested that the process of forming one's identity should be understood in terms of the fluidities of time and space. This involves acknowledging the impact of the simultaneous connections between people from diverse geographic locations, which encompasses a range of activities, ideas, and identifications. Identities have been constructed reflexively to recognize them within this particular setting, making them more fluid than ever before. Considering the current social landscape characterized by worldwide interconnections and heightened uncertainties surrounding identities, there is potential for the development of hybrid identities that may enhance our sense of self and introduce new layers of meaning to our lives. Yet, it's important to note that the process is not straightforward. One issue that's up for discussion is whether hybridity is limited to individuals in privileged social circles (Bagnoli, 2007, p. 41). The ability to make cultural choices is the sole factor that allows for continuity in personal narratives and biographies, while one's position remains a significant factor in the social setting (Delanty, 2000, p. 53).

Having capital is essential for self-definition and self-identification. Lash and colleagues have proposed a concept of winners and losers in reflexivity to explain how structural conditions affect the reflexive agency. Accordingly, individuals engaged in transnational social fields are all successful (albeit to varying degrees) as they possess a wide variety of resources that they can utilize to attain their objectives (Lash & Urry, 1993, p. 298). When agents actively engage with the field, they are able to gain a deeper understanding of the industry and the specific positions within it. Through this engagement, they can identify which skills, knowledge, and expertise are highly valued for different roles. This can include staying up to date with the latest trends and developments in the field, networking with other professionals, participating in industry events and conferences, and seeking out mentorship and guidance from experienced individuals. By taking these steps, agents can better position themselves for success and advance their careers in the field (Joy et al., 2020, p. 2543). Using transnational networks, an individual can allocate social, economic, symbolic, and cultural resources based on

multiple countries' resources. Transnational networks also facilitate the transfer of all types of capital, which can lead to reflexivity. So, the success achieved by individuals is dependent on their possession of diverse forms of capital and social skills. These factors also impact their ability to negotiate their identities, which can be a strategic advantage in gaining the power to control their own lives. Economic resources can be used to establish dominant positions within a field, such as multinational corporations influencing research agendas within global health (Cox, 2000, p. 1560). Possessing valued cultural knowledge and skills can confer power; for example, artists recognized within prestigious international art galleries shape the aesthetics of the contemporary art field. The agents with transnationally recognized cultural capital face fewer barriers to migration, which enables them to move more freely in the global labor market. This is due to the high demand for their cultural expertise and knowledge across national borders. As a result, they are able to benefit from new opportunities and expand their reach beyond their immediate geographical location (Weiss, 2005, p. 716). Strong networks and connections to influential individuals or institutions can provide access to resources and opportunities within the field. Diasporic communities with established social networks as their social capital can use them to influence political debates in their home countries (Schiller, 2010, p. 127). Defining and imposing meaning within the field is also a powerful tool. Dominant actors can leverage their symbolic capital to legitimize their positions and potentially marginalize others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119).

Different power dynamics and results can be observed when individuals from diverse social and cultural backgrounds meet, as recognized by the transnational social fields framework (Gargano, 2009, p. 335). The significance of various types of capital is specific to a particular field and is dependent on others acknowledging its worth (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 17-19). The "transnational habitus" (Guarnizo, 1997, p. 310), which arises from the different types of capital that exist in transnational form, involves the spread of practices and social positions across borders, which produces both conscious and unconscious dispositions to act in specific ways in specific situations. Thus, a transnational habitus includes dispositions emerging both from different local and national environments (Golob, 2014, pp. 131-32). It reflects a different context of a structured framework of evaluations and expectations, which leads to the conscious or intuitive prioritizing of certain dispositions and practices (Kelly & Lusic, 2006, p. 833). Therefore, it is essential to understand how individuals in transnational social fields can negotiate their identities and adjust to new cultural contexts. As individuals operating within transnational social fields employ types of capital to exert power, the transnational habitus forms and is formed by the rules and regulations of the given field. Especially, the social capital, "to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246), exerts a distinct influence on

transnational social fields, operating at both structural and agency levels. The actors in these fields leverage their social networks to access information, resources, and opportunities across borders, shaping the structure and reach of these fields (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1013). As the habitus implies, the actors within a field are not simply passive participants; their dispositions can influence how they navigate the field through the social capital they have, potentially challenging or adapting to its rules (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 980). Therefore, individuals within transnational social fields can negotiate their identities and adjust to new cultural contexts via their social capital.

Transnational social fields can be characterized according to the type of social capital they are dominated by, which can significantly influence their structure, reach, and the opportunities available to actors within the field. These types of social capital are critical in creating opportunities, generating new ideas, and promoting the exchange of resources and information. Moreover, they facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and coordination among people, leading to stronger relationships and more robust communities. Bridging capital can broaden actors' horizons and help them develop a more nuanced understanding of the world around them. According to Granovetter's (1983, p. 208) theory of social networks, having weaker connections with diverse groups of people from different countries can benefit individuals. This is because weaker ties are more likely to expose individuals to new ideas and cultural practices they may have yet to encounter. In turn, this could facilitate the development of hybrid identities by allowing individuals to draw on the diverse experiences and perspectives they have encountered through their weaker ties. On the other hand, having strong ties to individuals with the same ethnic or cultural background can provide a deep sense of belonging and support within the transnational field. This can be particularly important for individuals who have migrated to a new country or culture, as it allows them to maintain connections to their home cultures and potentially develop a dual identity. According to scholars such as Bauböck (2000, p. 15) and Portes (2001, pp. 189-190), these ties can help immigrants navigate the challenges of adapting to a new environment. They can provide a source of social, emotional, and practical support. By cultivating a strong sense of community and shared identity, bonding capital serves as a powerful force that enables individuals to uphold their sense of belonging across borders while embracing new cultures and communities. As the last form of social capital, linking capital can be a critical resource in achieving success and advancement in the transnational field. Having connections to influential individuals or institutions in the transnational field can be a crucial factor in gaining access to exclusive resources and opportunities. This can also significantly impact an individual's career trajectory and social mobility. Wendy Stone (2001, p. 16) states that linking capital, or the ability to establish and leverage connections with powerful entities, can be particularly advantageous in the transnational field.

Upon entering these fields, actors carry a pre-existing habitus shaped by their experiences and socializations within their home countries. Nonetheless, when they encounter new cultures, norms, and social structures within the transnational field, it can lead to tension. Individuals must navigate this tension through different processes. Adaptation involves adjusting one's habits to fit in with a new environment and maintain a sense of belonging. This may entail adopting new cultural practices or communication styles (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1027). On the other hand, hybridization refers to blending elements of one's original habits with those of the new environment, creating a hybrid identity (Hall, 1992, p. 262). Actors may also adopt reflexivity, a critical examination of their habits and the norms of the environment, potentially challenging established structures and promoting social change within the field (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 992). This process is emphasized by the movement between different places, which enables a more profound reflexivity of an individual's actions within structured positions. Taking account of various processes, it is obvious that the influence of social networks on identity formation cannot always be straightforward. Social networks can act as forces of social reproduction and reinforce existing inequalities, potentially hindering social mobility, so they can perpetuate societal power structures (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 139). Access to social capital within transnational fields can also be unevenly distributed, with dominant groups potentially possessing more resources and connections than those who are less privileged. Schiller (2010, p. 18) suggests that those with a dominant position within transnational fields can have a significant advantage in accessing social capital, leading to further advantages regarding social mobility. For example, social class and gender can significantly influence the nature and effectiveness of social capital (Anthias, 2008, p. 5). It is, therefore, essential to recognize the complex nature of social capital and the potential ways it can impact one's identity formation. Besides, habitus, the internalized dispositions of actors, interacts with the field's structure to reproduce power dynamics. Dominant actors can use their existing cultural capital and social networks to maintain their positions within the field (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 1007). So, transnational social fields appear as distinct and autonomous spheres liberalized from the territorial boundaries of nation-states.

4. Conclusion

Developing an understanding of transnational processes requires the exploration of the ways in which texts, discourses, and representations are produced by, organized by, and experienced by people within structures of social relationships (Schiller, 1997, p. 156). This study has tried to move beyond the static view of transnational social fields and embrace them as dynamic spaces where habitus, social capital, and networks interact to influence identity formation, resource mobilization, and, ultimately, the changing social landscape of the segmented world. The production and circulation of ideas, goods, and identities move and spread across borders and vary based on the positioning and power of the social actors involved. While specific depictions of transnational identity have been promoted, others may have been discouraged. The linkages between transnational processes

and the situated inequalities of power exist within the frameworks of gender, nations, international institutions, and the management and utilization of capital (Schiller, 1997, p. 164). However, transnational agents are not passive subjects during all these processes. They can use the capital – especially the social capital they have for empowerment and to navigate multiple identities across borders.

The number of cross-border relationships among migrants tends to remain high regardless of their time of residence, making them significant players in transnational social fields. They have reported interactions that span across their primary and secondary networks, with individuals or entities located in different countries (Bilecen & Faist, 2015; Herz, 2015; Kornienko et al., 2018; Lubbers et al., 2010). The significant differences among individuals and migrant flows in cross-border relationships suggest that individual and contextual factors influence network transnationality (Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015; Cachia & Jariago, 2018; Vacca et al., 2018). The degree to which migrants establish connections with their local and cross-border contacts can exhibit variations. Their cross-border contacts tend to remain strongly interlinked with one another. However, the extent to which migrants establish relationships with their local and cross-border contacts may differ. During emergencies, weak ties to local contacts are relied upon, as transnational ties offer ongoing social support but are not easily mobilized (Bojarczuk & Mühlau, 2018, p. 109). This illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of having either bonding or bridging social capital in transnational fields.

The ways in which actors struggle to impose their views of the “common principles of vision and division of a specific set of practices in the social world” are structured by relational practices of power (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 8). However, each field has its “autonomy” and “originality,” owing to the specificity of the stakes. Fields are composed of sets of relations and processes and are not owned by any particular group or institution. They intersect, interweave, and interconnect. These practices and their justification regimes run parallel to the local, national, and international levels on the same plane (Bigo, 2020, p. 213). This understanding of transnational social fields offers a perspective that conceptualization of them above the territorial boundaries. Accordingly, the national boundaries are not necessarily contiguous with the limits of social fields, and transnational social fields connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders (Golob, 2014, p. 130). The power struggle among agents within these fields is still related to the existing structural inequalities and international dynamics, but they can negotiate their resources and identities via distinct processes such as adaptation, hybridization, and reflexive movements. As their habitus forms and is formed through the capital – especially the social capital they have, and by the rules and regulations of the field, the transnational arena is also transforming accordingly.

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