

## **SOCIAL TOPOGRAPHY AND CLASS ANALYSIS: THE RELATIONAL SOCIOLOGY OF PIERRE BOURDIEU\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

With the increasing fragmentation and proliferation of different social lives, class analysis has more daunting tasks and challenges to overcome. This diversity and fragmentation in social hierarchy has brought new discussions that are paving the way for a sociological outlook that can grasp the complex nature of late capitalist societies. Bourdieu's theory of capital and social hierarchy occupies a central place within the contemporary discussions. His conception of capital, social field and power provides a wealthy set of tools to utilize. At the same time, those theoretical designs have led to methodological debates on Bourdieu's intentions and lineage with other sociological traditions such as Marxist, Weberian and Phenomenological theories. Among the discussions, the central role must be given to the notion of relationality, a crucial attempt in Bourdieu's conception of class hierarchy as social space. Without the stress on relationality, Bourdieu's complex terminology cannot be organized sufficiently to answer the questions; "what is social hierarchy and how it operates?". The article aims to discuss the linkage between the key concepts on class analysis to portrait the relational character of social space and its relevance with the class hierarchy in modern societies.

**Keywords:** Bourdieu, Social Space, Relationality, Habitus, Social Class

### **TOPLUMSAL TOPOGRAFYA VE SINIF ANALİZİ: PIERRE BOURDIEU'NUN İLİŞKİSEL SOSYOLOJİSİ**

#### **ÖZ**

Toplumsal hayattaki artan fragmentasyon ve çeşitlenme sınıf analizinin karşısına yeni zorluk ve mücadeleler çıkarmaktadır. Toplumsal hiyerarşide gözlenen bu çeşitlenme ve parçalanma yeni sosyolojik bakış açıları konusunda tartışmalara yol açmış; bu tartışmalarla geç kapitalist toplumların karmaşık yapısını kavrayabilecek bakış açılarının geliştirilmesi hedeflenmiştir. Bourdieu'nun sermaye ve toplumsal hiyerarşi kuramı bu güncel tartışmalarda merkezi bir yer işgal etmektedir. Sermaye, toplumsal alan ve iktidar kavrayışıyla Bourdieu zengin yöntembilimsel araçlar sağlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, bu teorik tasarımlar Bourdieu'nun genel hedeflerini ve Marksist, Weberyen yâda Fenomenolojik teorilerle ilişkisini öne çıkaran tartışmalara yol açmıştır. Bu tartışmalarda, merkezi rol Bourdieu'nun toplumsal sınıf ve alan kavrayışında hayati bir öneme sahip olan ilişkisellik kavramına verilmelidir. İlişkisellik kavramına vurgu yapmadan Bourdieu'nun karmaşık terminolojisinin "toplumsal hiyerarşi nedir ve nasıl işler?" sorularına yeterli yanıt verebilecek şekilde bir araya getirilmesi güç gözükmektedir. Makale bu noktada, sınıf analizinin anahtar kavramlarını tartışmaya açarak modern toplumlarda toplumsal alan ve sınıf hiyerarşisinin anlaşılmasında ilişkisellik kavramının oynadığı rolü göstermeyi hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bourdieu, Toplumsal Alan, İlişkisellik, Habitus, Toplumsal Sınıf

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## INTRODUCTION

Studying on a specific class' social character or its relation with other classes requires a set of conceptual justifications and the proper description of the object of inquiry. This need dramatically increases when the object of analysis is middle class or a fraction of middle class. The concept of middle class is found ever compassing and analytically inefficient by several social scientists since it embraces a wide scope of social groups; and especially if the analysis is on the class structure around financial corporations a conceptual clarification is crucial since the executive managers, management trainees and secretaries are members of the "middle class". These occupational groups have their specific class character, lifestyles and fault lines with the neighboring social groups. Although popularly all white-collars are considered middle class, sociological investigation requires the differentiation of layers within white-collars. As John H. Goldthorpe (Goldthorpe, 1980) separates the service sectors' different social layers the senior managers and professionals are different from the subaltern service class of teachers, junior managers, routine non-manual workers or secretaries. Pierre Bourdieu follows the same differentiation while defining the life-style assets of the middle and upper-middle class in French society (Bourdieu, 1996: 262-264). Although the approaches dealing with classes from the angle of the ownership of certain objective economic properties or labor conditions tends to argue that the notion of middle-class is obsolete since many white-collar workers are employed in conditions equal or inferior to the blue-collar (Braverman, 1974) such an analysis ignores the position takings and symbolic struggles (on the basis of consumption, education heritage, moral self representation) within the class hierarchy. A corporate manager in a multinational organization may be seen a none-capital owner working for wage; however apart from being in a significantly high economic and cultural status (especially when compared with the secretary) he/she behaves as a capital owner since he/she is the representative and the administrator of a specific employer. Apart from being in the service sector and falling in the widening social group between the classical formula of capital owners and none-owners the cohesion of middle-class as a reasonable object of analysis is in doubt. However the complex inner strata and the relations among them make the relevant social groups as key actors in the social and political struggles in ever changing society.

The social struggle between the social groups within the middle class and the symbols of social mobility among classes are increasingly becoming cultural and moral in character. As Featherstone (Featherstone, 1988) points out this transformation makes the consumption

matters (not in a narrow sense as meta-money exchange but as a system of expressions ones capability of behaving, talking or living in a certain way apart from or similar with the others) as a suitable area for defining and analyzing the ontological character of the social positioning of social agents. Therefore apart from a mere economic exchange, class hierarchy stems from a social interaction instrumental in creating a sphere of lifestyle, self-actualization and self-expression, which in turn constructs a “symbolic market of physical consumption” (Douglas, Isherwood, 1980: 10). Therefore consumption should be held and analyzed not as a matter of meta-exchange, but means of acquiring and expressing competence in a certain context of a lifestyle. In the recent studies, analyzing the social structure and mobility within the middle class, the interclass and intra-class boundaries are increasingly defined by the modes by which agents investing in acquiring competences. The adoption and expression of these competences on the one hand serves as a self-actualization and a sense of belonging to a social group, on the other hand a producer of social boundaries with the other groups in social hierarchy (Preteceille, Terrail, 1985:11-12).

The analysis of lifestyle or the consumption patterns, which can be observed in several ways- from the institutionalized forms like education to the most routine means of behaving like *gourmet* or the symbols of high competency on art and decoration- requires an analysis which can handle the complex character of these routines; and apart from the theoretical ready made concepts, this analysis should be capable of deciphering the most subtle and misrecognized ways of social struggle empirically. Therefore we need a sociological methodology, which can assess the ontological character of the cultural differences in class relations; a process, which cannot be understood by mere allocation of economic assets but is achieved by a continuous cultural cultivation (Bourdieu, 1996: 1-5). At this point the social theory proposed by Pierre Bourdieu offers a great debt and scope for a scholar studying on those social practices since Bourdieu’s ethnomethodological understanding of culture is capable for the in debt analysis of social practice; secondly his conceptualization of the social agent practicing an positioning in a certain system of fields can assess the relative autonomous character of different social spaces (with their distinct capital compositions) in multi-class society; furthermore the notion of habitus is a key concept useful in understanding the regulating mechanisms of several mode of internalized competences.

### **The Social Space and the Types of Capital**

In his article “the Social Space and the Genesis of Groups” Bourdieu proposes an analysis of social space to understand the notion of class and avoid the understanding of class as a substantial notion; class as the total of statically calculated population of economic property owners (Bourdieu, 1985: 723) . For Bourdieu, in order to escape the substantialist perception of class, one has to look at the system of relationships among social agents and certain combinations of power assets (later defined capital) and a general autonomous framework (a framework which is elaborated under the concept of “field”) of the structural distribution of these assets. Bourdieu argues that the social world can be represented “as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within social universe” (Bourdieu, 1985: 724), therefore the spatial analogy, in Bourdieu’s methodology, constructs a picture of relationships between the social agents (as agents practicing in a certain framework of aims and potentialities), their social positioning (the properties taken or inherited) and the emergence of an inertia (of similar practices) which can be presented as the dynamics of social groupings. The importance of the notion of social space is that it is based on the logic of the differentiated character of types of capital. Here a certain type of capital is defined as the active assets of a certain social space, which are taken or expressed as rare properties either related to the structural logic of the context or the participating social agents. The differentiated sets of capital and their articulation have a pivotal role in Bourdieu’s theory of class. However, aside from being a capital articulation process, their importance in the perception of social space lies in the dimensionality of the class groupings in a certain society. In order to identify a class structure in a given society the constructed social space based on three coordinates: global volume of capital, composition of capital and social trajectory. Those categories are “obtained by cutting up sets characterized by the similarity of their occupational conditions within a three dimensional space” (Bourdieu, 1987: 6); in such a way Bourdieu aims to identify the active set of properties or types of capital for social agents who share similar occupational positions (Bourdieu, 1985: 724). However this does not mean that Bourdieu reduces class to occupational groupings, but rather he tries to identify the different set of properties and strategies obtained and used by the social agents and, find the regularities existing or none-existing within certain occupational fault lines.

In a way the notion of social space in Bourdieu can be seen as a “market” which is based on a kind of interest oriented action. Agents acting in social space orient their practices

through the positions containing the more profitable properties and, suitable means for transforming the capital into more effective or valuable forms. This system indicates a market of relations, which is far from the mere utilitarian logic of economism. In David Swartz words Bourdieu “extends the logic of economic calculation to all goods, material as symbolic, that presents themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation” (Swartz, 1997: 67); and this argument indicates that the notion of capital contains the struggle for classification and legitimation, apart from the utilitarian and transhistorical logic of economic calculation. A capital is a capital as far as a certain power relation among social groups makes it a “good” of rarity and thus value, therefore the scope of study should be the position takings within this classificatory struggle rather than the taken for granted pursuit through capital. Social agents and their respective social groupings invest in particular assets and represent those assets as worthy of being held, thus transforming them into active properties, the ownership of such properties is as significant as the transformative power of the property owners<sup>1</sup>.

... The fact remains that socially known and recognized differences only exists for a subject capable not only perceiving differences but of recognizing them as significant, interesting i.e. only for a subject endowed with the capacity and inclination to make the distinctions that are regarded as significant in the social universe in question. (Bourdieu, 1985: 730)

Such a social space of so called “political economy of symbolic power” (Swartz, 1997: 67) inserts the conflictual and complex character of capital structure and the various form of strategies and practices held by social agents into the class analysis. Here capital exists as a form of power, individual and groups draw upon a variety of cultural, social or

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<sup>1</sup> The term of “investment” or “interest” which are frequently used by Bourdieu for social space caused some criticisms of utilitarianism and economic reductionism arguing that Bourdieu’s conception of social space and market of different capital types is a modified version of the classical utilitarian and functionalist theory, if not one of them. See, Richard Jenkins, “Pierre Bourdieu and the Reproduction of Determinism” *Sociology*. 23 (4); Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, (London, Routledge, 1992); or Alain Caillé, “La Sociologie de l’intérêt est-elle intéressante?” *Sociologie du Travail* 23 (3). However Bourdieu argues that the term of interest or being interested signifies the will and the ability to participate the “game” of position takings in a particular social formation, therefore the invested individual indeed a social agent practicing in social space who has the ability and will to obtain and transform the configuration of power assets in the respective market. Therefore investing in an active property never intends to explain the power maximization of the *homo economicus*, but rather points out the emergence a social agent with competence of obtaining and internalizing the temporary rules of the field. See Bourdieu, “The Social,” .

symbolic resources in order to maintain and enhance their positions in the social order. Following Swartz's interpretation we can argue that, a source becomes capital when it functions as a "social relation to power", The analysis of social space can be described as a general science of the various forms of capital and laws of their convertibility (Swartz, 1997: 73-78).

In social space the global volume of capital is the total capital of certain type, which is obtained or aimed by the social agents; the composition of capital is the relative percentage of types of capital characterized a certain social agents' position in social groupings (Joppke, 1986: 57). Main types of capital generally used by Bourdieu in order to identify the class structure are economic and cultural capital. Here cultural capital refers to cultural knowledge "as a resource of power used by individuals and social groups to improve their positions within the social class structure" and exists in two forms; as the institutionalized form legitimated and registered type of capital like the educational titles, and the internalized or incorporated form which functions in bodily routines like speaking, walking, dressing or eating.

On the one side there is a predominantly economic capital (property, assets, titles to property, high income) which is also endowed with symbolic properties this economic capital can be invested (*in the realm of culture*)... on the other side there is capital of the cultural kind which can be empirically measured by the possession of educational credentials, the ownership of "high" cultural goods and titles to cultural nobility. (Wacquant, 1993: 23)

Therefore the notion of capital refers to a potential power asset achieved, preserved and transformed in order to maximize a social agent or group's position in social space. Bourdieu calls capital "active property" to underline its spatio-temporal character. For instance, while the investment of art does not occupy a central place in the symbolic struggle between the manual labor and the petit-bourgeoisie, it is one of the most crucial properties defining the symbolic struggle between the upper class (i.e. the employers and the capital owners of corporations) and the upper-middle class (i.e. the executives, artists, or academics) in French society (Bourdieu, 1996: 260-317). Therefore capital, for Bourdieu, is not an ever-compassing theoretically ready-made notion. Contrary it makes sense in a specific logic of certain social space, a notion only achieved by ontological investigation:

The active properties that are selected, as principles of construction of the social space are the different kinds of power or capital that are current in the different fields... The

position of a given agent within the social space can thus be defined by the positions he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers that are active within each of them. (Bourdieu, 1985: 724)

One's place in a social space contains agent's intrinsic properties (their condition in Weberian sense) and the relational properties (their position) interacting with other positions. This understanding of social struggle correspondences with Max Weber's perception of class struggle as an entirely "competitive effort by social groups to appropriate as many means for the realization of life-chances" (Joppke, 1986: 56), and the inertia of the realized life-chances in a social space signifies the status groups which turn out to be "social classes" as the division of labor is highly integrated with the lifestyles, and behavioral patterns. Like Max Weber's notions of *Klasse* and *Stand* Bourdieu analyzes the social space as a zone intermediating between the objective conditions (the distribution of active properties) and their subjective appreciation (means of acquiring and expressing competence), therefore dialectically constructing class inertia without explicit conscious aims. In such a way as Joppke (1986:54) argues the "classes are internally connected to *classifications*" like symbolic patterns<sup>2</sup>. Here the notion of classification of life chances does not necessarily refer to institutionally legitimizing mechanisms like educational system or museums but a continuous internalization of certain cultural codes guiding agents' behaviors in social space. For Bourdieu, concerning a certain social field, it is possible to observe a regularity of those internalization (in the sense of acquiring knowledge and competences) and externalization (in the sense of communicating classification mechanisms) processes among the social agents occupying the similar objective conditionings. If there is a strong correlation between the systematization of life styles and the proximity in social space; for Bourdieu, we can talk about the existence of a class. This class is no more the same concept as the class economic power or the statistical aggregation of properties or as class on paper but a constructed class,

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<sup>2</sup> Concerning the different forms of cultural properties Paul Di Maggio distinguishes cultural goods from cultural capital in order to emphasize the process of legitimation and registration of certain properties as capital. Thus, cultural goods are "goods and services that are predominantly symbolic and aesthetic in character"; Di Maggio distinguishes cultural resources, which include any form of symbolic mastery from a special form of resource, cultural capital, which is "proficiency in the consumption and the credibility in a certain prestigious goods and services. Thus a cultural good can be registered and obtained as a capital by a specific class, before this it represents potency within the social space. Paul Di Maggio "Social Structure, Institutions, and Cultural Goods: The Case of the United States" In *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, eds. Pierre Bourdieu and J.S. Coleman (New York: Westview Press, 1991)

which is based on the ontologically validated relations within a social space (Bourdieu, 1985: 725). In order to challenge the theoretical apriori which, the Marxist tradition has a tendency to rely upon<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu's agenda is to connect the interaction between the conditions of existence (the inherited distribution of power assets) and the position takings of the social agents (cultural excellence, moral self-presentation, self improvement or refinement of the body etc.), while doing this to investigate the active properties or the stakes in a given social space- the so called types of capital:

Classes, in the logical sense of the word, i.e., sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances. (Bourdieu, 1985: 725)

As we mentioned before, concept of social space requires differentiation of capital types. Although, related to the field in which they are taken as active properties, there are several types of capital like educational<sup>4</sup> or informational, the main classification is economic, cultural and social (or socioeconomic) capital. Here social or socioeconomic capital refers to the "membership in social groups and the profits that can be appropriated by the strategic use of social relations" (Joppke, 1986: 60) improving one's position. To summarize, the upper class employers' high level of income is a key for the access to the circles that are validated as the "places with high prestige" like golf or yachting clubs. Here the relationship or transformation from the pure economic welfare to social capital overshadows the existence of the cultural capital since the social positioning of the upper class agent relies more on the economic resources; however class fractions which are relatively lower in income (like academics, artists or high level white collars) tend to invest significantly on cultural properties (intellectual improvement, artistic innovations etc.) therefore changing the relative composition of capital for their social positioning. (Bourdieu, 1996: 260-267)

Bourdieu generally draws upon four generic types of capital. Those generic types contain more specific ones, i.e. cultural capital includes the educational registration and

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<sup>3</sup> Such a problem can be observed in the long debate between the objective conditions, the so called structure and the subjective factors or motives which paves the way to a duality of total determinism or voluntarism.

<sup>4</sup> In Pierre Bourdieu, *State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996) Bourdieu analyzes the educational system of reproduction of class hierarchy in France and shows how the dominant classes' inheritance mechanisms are associated with the institutional credentials.



inheritance mechanism thus it is transformed into educational capital in relevant fields. Those generic types of capital are:

- i. Economic capital (money, property)
- ii. Cultural capital (cultural goods and services, educational credentials, cultural competences and classificatory systems)
- iii. Social capital (acquaintances and networks)
- iv. Symbolic capital (legitimation)<sup>5</sup>

Cultural capital as the central concept for the construction of a life-style for a certain social group refers to a wide variety of goods and competences like verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, information about school system, educational credentials (Swartz, 1997: 78). By the mechanisms of achieving and incorporating elements of cultural capital, a social class or class fraction constructs a vision of world justified by the moral excellence and the sense of honor apart from the naked hierarchy of owners of economic resources; a life style as a second nature generally corresponding with Weber's conception of *stande*. Thus, legitimate manner's "owe their value to the fact that they manifest the rarest conditions of acquisition, that is a social power over the which is tacitly recognized as the supreme excellence" (Bourdieu, 1996: 71). Following Swartz's (1997: 78) classification, we can argue that cultural capital exists in three states:

- i. Institutionalized form (like the educational credential system certain elements of cultural competency is registered and preserved in a general system of juries and formal authorities)
- ii. Objectified form (i.e. books, works of art, scientific instruments that require special cultural abilities to use)
- iii. Embodied state (with the ensemble of cultivated dispositions social agents unconsciously or semi-consciously construct a perception of word, a system of patterns of behaving)

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<sup>5</sup> Although symbolic capital is named among the main generic types of capital it is useful to differentiate it from the other ones since other types of capital have more or less resources or highly valued assets which have a considerable objectified dimension, symbolic capital is the legitimizing mechanism or the means by which a certain cultural code or good is recognized and legitimized either by the institutionalization or bodily incorporation. Therefore it will be described in more detail in the following section.

The embodied state of capital is one of the most significant contributions of Bourdieu under the term of *habitus*. Since for Bourdieu the incorporated forms of cultural goods are the most routine and subtle ways of drawing fault lines with another classes, the analysis of a certain class cannot be done without the proper clarification of the system of dispositions corresponding that classes' objective conditions. Against the theories of “shared beliefs and value systems”, for Bourdieu culture is not inculcated as so much cognitive information (knowledge, values, beliefs) but rather, “it is learned with the body and is incorporated into ways of doing things (standing, speaking and eating)” (Codd, 1990: 208). In order to analyze the ontological validity of a certain class' existence in respect to other class – since the social space is relational its existence can only be assessed by its strategies and struggle with the other classes, one has to understand the modes of acquisition, incorporation and reconversion of social agents' power assets and, clarify the connection between the most so called subjective level bodily and mental schemata and the inertia of life-style signifying the existence of the sense of a certain class or class fraction:

The aim of “Distinction” is to determine how the cultivated disposition and cultural competence that are revealed in the nature of the cultural goods consumed, and in the way they are consumed, vary accordingly to the category of agents and the area to which they are applied. (Bourdieu 1996: 19)

The analysis of the of the interplay between the objective conditions and agent position takings and the transformation capital types the differentiation of the composition and volume of capital, for Bourdieu, helps to avoid three shortcomings generally observed in the social theory:

- i. Tendency to privilege substances at the expense of relationships, “with the intellectualist illusion that leads one to consider the theoretical class, constructed by the sociologist, as a real class, an effectively mobilized group”. (1996: 723)
- ii. Economism, which reduce the multi-dimensional character of the social space solely on the economic field.
- iii. Objectivism, which leads to ignore “the symbolic struggles” in different fields.

Rather than a notion of class seeking the characteristics of a certain social grouping in the existence of substances like the economic power or the amount of private properties, Bourdieu's social class relies on the proximity (of relevant social agents) in social space, the

configuration of the relationship between social agents practicing in a certain field (Bourdieu, 1987: 6).

One of Bourdieu's key concepts is symbolic capital, which is referred in order to explain the power mechanisms of certain capital acquisition and transformation processes. Although symbolic capital sounds to be an other type of active property, a close investigation reveals that the concept intends a completely different explanation apart from being just another type of capital. Symbolic capital is central in defining the legitimating mechanisms of a certain class' (generally dominant class) schemes of cultural, moral or social competence, thus securing the dominant appreciation and classification mechanisms in the general social level against other classes. However before describing the notion of capital we have to discuss the notion of field, another central term in the conceptualization of social space in Bourdieu, since the emergence of symbolic capital or the legitimizing processes of certain capital types cannot be understood without the logic of relevant fields.

#### **The Notion of Field and the Relational Understanding of Class**

As discussed above, for Bourdieu's generative structuralism the analysis of a social group or the boundaries between groups is a matter of the spatial configuration of different position and the respective assets of power relevant to the obtaining or reproduction of a social position, therefore a power relation or a class' existence cannot be traced with an investigation aiming substances (economic, political or even cultural) a concrete, reproductive resource or starting point, but rather it can be grasped by the presentation of a network of relations between the objective conditions and the subjective inspirations. However, without the notion of field the social space is an ontologically vague, abstract medium without a context and the relevant dynamics. In order to escape the functionalist picture of the Parsonian social spheres, yet still preserving the network of conflictual relations in a structured network of powers and potentials, the notion of field is critical. Thus against the substantialist understanding of a class one has to deal with a set of social positions which is bound by a relation of homology to a set of activities (Bourdieu, 1998: 5), those sets of activities requires a differentiation of different networks, games or fields by the researcher since the social space is not a monolithic entity:

Sociology is the art of thinking phenomenally different things as similar in their structure and functioning and of transferring that which has been established about a constructed object, say the religious field, to a whole series of new objects, the artistic or political field and so on. (Bourdieu, 1990: 40-41)

With the given distribution of resources and the agents' improvisations, field exists both as space of forces on a specific context, which are imposed on agents who are engaged, and as field of struggles within which social agents encounter with each other, Therefore the objective or the structured side of the field is represented by the uneven distribution of the resources; the subjective side or the dimension of social practice is represented by the social agents aspirations and improvisations. Beyond the antinomy of objectivism and individualistic phenomenology, the notion of field presupposes a double structure in a relatively autonomous space; Bourdieu describes those components of double structure as first and second orders. The first order of a specific field is constituted by the distribution of "material resources and means of appropriation of socially scarce goods and values" and the second order is based on the system of classifications; "the mental and bodily schemata that function as symbolic templates for the practical activities of social agents" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1992: 8). Therefore the double reading required for the analysis of a field investigates the homology between the objective conditionings and subjective or phenomenological experiences of the agents. Fields emerges as a methodological tool for relationalism, it is a "gravity center" of objects and agents encountering and interacting within a contexts of aims and stakes: "Field is a patterned system of objective forces, a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity with it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter it" (1992: 17-18). This social space is shaped on a continuous competition over the stakes or kinds of capital significant for that field. For Bourdieu field should not be understood as the mere statistical aggregate of mechanical practices of social agents, It refers to the autonomous context of struggles which have their own internal logic and components, through which the participants improvise their practices, it is the structure of the game with the internally (implicitly or explicitly) accepted rules and the semi-structured patterns for the behaviors of the players. The structured aspect (the first order or the distribution of resources) signifies the limitation imposed by the game, whereas the improvised moves of the agents and the struggle over the resources represents the fuzzy and conflictual character of the social life: "Any field presents itself as structure of probabilities of rewards, gains, profits or sanctions with a degree of indeterminacy" (1992: 18). In order to explain the limitations and improvisations of participating in a field Bourdieu refers to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analogy of soccer player. The analogy of soccer player points out both the subjective apprehension of the player and the objective configuration of the game played. The soccer player acts within a series of limitation or the structured space; the field with some drawings and borders as well as other agents like referees and other players. The player however improvises and orients his

moves through comparison of the past effects and the projections of the future. The player does not mechanically acts out the already written roles as the classical structuralism supposes, he has an appropriated or patterned schemata within certain boundaries<sup>6</sup>.

Swartz (1997: 117) provides three parallel definitions for the notion of field. Those definitions grasps the interconnected features of a field; its structured space, distributive mechanisms, the conflictual character between positions:

- i. A field is a network of configuration of objective relations between positions; it is not an aggregate of rational choices and independently calculated aims pursued by individuals (that's why Bourdieu frequently refers to social agent mobilized for a certain field in order to avoid the universal perception of individual).
- ii. A field is a structured space that is organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital. Specie of capital pursued in a certain field is not necessarily as valuable or profitable as in another field. Thus capital types owe their potentialities to the structure of distribution and struggle for dominance within the specific logic of a field.
- iii. Fields are arenas of production, circulation and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge or status, positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize the different kinds of capital.

The dynamics of struggle for the positions and capital relies on the relational character of the fields, that is “a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their mutual exteriority and their relations of proximity” (Bourdieu, 1998: 6), therefore the notion of class apart from the objectivist understanding, is perceived as a kind of relationship, the fault lines between the

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<sup>6</sup> This mutual possession of the rules and means of the game is elaborated with the notion intrinsic corporeality by Merleau-Ponty, though criticized by Bourdieu for focusing only to the agents' point of apprehension of the field thus ignoring the externality of the objective conditions of the game: “The relation between the social agent and the world is not that between the social agent and an object, but a relation of ‘ontological complicity’ ... sociology must subsume phenomenology not by pushing it aside, but by grounding intersubjectivity in historical objective structures via the generic analysis of the condition of habitus. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London and New York, Routledge Press, 1998); Pierre Bourdieu, *State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996); Pierre Bourdieu, Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, (Cambridge and Oxford, Polity Press, 1992).

position takings and the inertia of same preferences and classifications. In order to understand this break one has to go beyond the duality of objectivism and voluntarism. A class can only be understood as a relation of proximity among different fields:

... Differences exist and persist. But does this mean that we must accept or affirm the existence of classes? No. Social classes do not exist... what exists is a social space, a space of differences, in which classes exist in some sense in a state of virtuality, not as something given but as something to be done.

[Social class is defined] in a relation of cause and effect, conditioner and conditioned, but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effect they exert on practices. (Bourdieu, 1996: 106)

Bourdieu's perception of class rejects "single-dimensional scales and cumulative indices" (Swartz, 1997: 129) seeking the existence of groups in the existence of individuals belonging to certain layers of a social structure, and proposes a multi-dimensional analysis as a way of recognizing the conflictual character of social life and different autonomous –in terms of internal logic- fields in the totality of social space.

### **Habitus and the Systematization of Life-Styles**

Through his entire scientific agenda Bourdieu attempts to overcome the gap between the improvisations and limitations within a structure by going beyond the classical dualism of objectivism –or the structuralist arguments- and the subjective or voluntarist assumptions – "phenomenological knowledge" as Bourdieu refers. However going beyond of this duality does not exclude both notions, but explains the dialectical interconnectedness between them. For Bourdieu, phenomenological theories, on the one hand focuses on the place of individuals in various social environments by looking at the perception, appreciation and orientation schemas of the particular agents it completely ignores the "question of the conditions of possibility" of these experiences and excludes "the coincidence of the objective structures and the internalized structures"; thus cannot explain the connection between experience and its own conditions of possibility (Bourdieu, 1990: 25). On the other extreme, objectivism trying to find objective regularities, establish a radical discontinuity between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge or the practical experiences of social agents by subordinating the latter to structures, laws or value systems, thus "rejecting the more explicit representations with which the latter arms itself as 'rationalizations', 'prenotions' or 'ideologies'" (1990: 26).

Therefore the need for constructing an appropriate conceptual tool to understand the specific logic of practical knowledge is the basis of Bourdieu's theory of social action. To overcome the deficiencies of phenomenological approaches refusing the durable characteristics of dispositions and the regulatory mechanisms, Bourdieu proposes an analysis of the system of structured and structuring dispositions, by introducing his central concept, *habitus* "which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions" (1990: 52). For Bourdieu, the dialectical relationship between the objective potentialities, the resources, the semi-structured procedures, and the aspirations, subjective appreciations of the agents in a certain field require an economy of practices- that is a pattern of social actions and their outcomes- thus regulating the so called subjective experiences of the participants in that particular field. Those patterns of practical knowledge stems from the structural and functional necessities of that field but are actualized by improvisations and competences of living social agents, different from the agent of structuralism who merely acts out the already written roles. Thus the notion of habitus is closely related to the conditions of existence in a particular field:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery... (1990: 53)

This definition implies two dimension for habitus; it is first an outcome of the adaptation of the objective conditions within a field, second it is a generative formula, a set of principles or references for the future actions of agent, therefore it is both a structured pattern –in the sense of relying on the structural assets of the field- and a structuring principle – representing a reference point or schemata guiding the future acts and preferences. Therefore the structures constituting a type of social environment, or the material conditions corresponding to a class condition produce habitus that is a regulatory scheme for the objective orchestration to the conditions and the regulating mechanism for the social actions and preferences of the social agents who share the similar social conditionings; the potentials and limitations, thus creating an inertia of appreciations, behaviors and preferences for those agents without an explicit or conscious adaptation of aims and procedures. So habitus for Bourdieu, is an intermediary zone between the objective structures and the phenomenological

experiences of social agents, it is both regulated and regulating, with its capacity to produce orchestrated practices habitus creates its own system of preferences for the pursuing agents but still is bound to the objective conditions of the relevant social actor whether or not it is explicitly pointed out: “(Habitus) transforms objectively classified practices in which a class condition signifies itself into classifying practices ... into a symbolic expression of class position ... in terms of social classificatory schemes” (Bourdieu, 1996: 175). Thus we can clarify the two fold character of the notion; on the one hand habitus is understood as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations etc., while on the other hand it is an objective event which exerts its action of conditional stimulation calling for or demanding a determinate response (Bourdieu, 1979: 83).

In the light of those definition we can argue that habitus contains several dispositions of the agents interacting with their social environment, it orchestrates the diverse character of dispositions into a system of preferences, guaranteeing the connection between different practices (eating, entertaining, working or the basic gestures) of the same agent or the group of agents sharing the same potentials and aims. It is accompanied by a strategic calculation since its existence and credibility is closely associated with the field it emerges; however the dimension of strategic calculation should not misguide us to the “rational action theory”, because the strategy in the sense Bourdieu uses it a kind of regulated motivations by the dynamics of a particular field, it is real for the investor but the competition for the accumulation of certain capital types and the symbolic expression of them are based on a unconscious consensus on the stakes of that field, therefore guiding the diverse practices and aspirations of the agent through the characteristics of the game, thus limiting them:

The practical world that is constituted in the relationship with the habitus, acting as a system of cognitive and motivating structures, is a world of already realized ends – procedures to follow, paths to take- and objects endowed with a “permanent teleological character” in Husserl’s phrase, tools or institutions... If a very close correlation is regularly observed between the scientifically constructed objective probabilities (for example, the chances of access to a particular good) and agents’ subjective aspirations (motivation and needs), this is not because agents consciously adjust their aspirations to an exact evaluation of their chances of success... in reality, the dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions... generate dispositions actively



compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands. (Bourdieu, 1990: 54)

The preferences for the biological, cultural or symbolic mastery of a certain context becomes the main reference point for the comparison of the other agents actions, such an anticipation generated by habitus tends to disguise the restrictions to which “the validity of calculation of probabilities is subordinated”. At this point field emerges as a medium of potentialities and positions in which habitus is actualized; it is a “world of already realized ends” (1990: 55).

The habitus is the generative principle of objectively classified practices, but at the same time it is a system of classification for practices, therefore habitus is based on two related capacities; the capacity to produce classifiable practices and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (Bourdieu, 1996: 171), the second capacity reflects the association of habitus with the notion of *taste*. Both capacities of habitus establishes a set of preferences, a sense of probabilities, the knowledge of the “adequate” and “inadequate” in a certain social context thus creating a system of both classified and classifying practices providing distinctive signs for the relevant social agent, in such a way contributing to the sense of ones “place” in society<sup>7</sup>. This system of classification and appreciation is called *lifestyle* in Bourdieu’s terminology and occupies the central role in differentiating the sense of belonging to a particular social group (class or class fractions), and the mechanisms of separating oneself from other groups, which is called the sense of distinction. Lifestyles are thus “the systematic products of habitus which perceived in their mutual relations through the schemes of the habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified” (1996: 172). With the generation of life-style preferences, “habitus” transforms the limitations and the objective necessities of conditions in a certain field to the subjective (not individual, subjective in the sense of being participated in a certain field with the intention and knowledge of the stakes) dispositions, ways of appreciation and behavior; therefore contributing to the emergence of a sense of honor or sense of distinction. The habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions. This kind of double functioning represents habitus’ main character as a generative scheme intermediating the structural limitations and phenomenological improvisations, a character; one must go beyond the exclusionary duality between them in order to comprehend.

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<sup>7</sup> For the elaboration of the concept of taste and lifestyle see figure 8 in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, (London, Routledge, 1996).

Bourdieu argues that in order to understand the existence of a particular class the researcher must focus on the classificatory schemes of the groups, and present the main characteristics of the habitus of the members of that specific social group. Thus, one must construct the class, the groupings of agents who are located in homogenous conditions imposing homogenous conditionings and therefore generating homogenous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices (1996: 101). As Bourdieu previously argued this is not a “real class”, understood as a statistical aggregate of properties, but an achieved commonsense of the world perception, the stylistic proximity among the social agents, in short the common habitus of social agents sharing the similar positions in social space: “One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning (*sens*) of practices” (Bourdieu, 1979: 80). Utilizing the reflexive insight Bourdieu provides, the analysis of a class or a fraction of class should be taken as an analysis of the particular habitus, or the comparison of the different habitus; an analysis pursuing the classificatory schemas and the sense of ones place in the broader configuration of social space:

Social class understood as a system of objective determinations, must be brought into relation not with the individual or with the “class” as a population, i.e. as an aggregate of enumerable, measurable biological individuals, but with class habitus, the system of dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structures. (1979: 85)

### **Field Homologies**

The notion of field indicates a configuration of certain types of capital, the network of objective potentialities and a semi-structured procedures for the participating social agents. The unique contribution of the concept is that it guides the researcher through different contexts of social spaces, taking the distinctive potentials and stakes for struggle in a particular market (of art or entertainment etc.), thus recognizing the conflictual, multidimensional character of social life. The key notions of Bourdieu’s sociology, species of capital, practical knowledge and habitus achieve an ontological status only with the analysis of a certain field, indeed a capital asset and the procedures to attain it is generally valid within a logic of a specific field.

However, the relative autonomy of the field dynamics and the distinct character of markets of certain fields do not intend to argue that there is no interconnectedness among fields, and social space is mere aggregate of independent fields in a society. The social space is not a topography of distinct islands of fields, but rather there is a symbolic interaction

among the fields, that is a classificatory scheme for a certain field can trespass to another social domain and effect that specific domain's classificatory schemes. Bourdieu argues that a "symbolic isomorphism parallels the structured isomorphism among fields" (Bourdieu 1996: 131), a system of semantic oppositions emerged in a certain field can effect the classifications, the semantic dualities in another field. There is interplay between the cultural producers (experts, artists, and guidelines in media etc.) and the social agents utilizing certain patterns of preferences in a particular field. This interplay, on the one hand, establishes a market of valued commodities and means of appreciation; on the other hand it transfers the semantic schemata to the other domains of cultural production and thus creating a dominant taste (if there is one dominant taste) beyond the singular markets of fields:

The logic of objective competition at the core of the field of cultural production leads each of the categories of producers to offer, without any conscious search for adjustment, products that are adjusted to the preferences of the consumers who occupy homologous positions within the field of power.

The correlation between fields, like the oppositions within fields, stem from structural factors not from the intention of the actors... When cultural producers pursue their own specific interest in fields, they unwittingly produce homologous effects in the social class structure. (1996: 134)

Bourdieu uses the language of homology in order to explain the effects of class relations in various cultural domains. Media and other cultural experts are important actors for transporting the preferences and classifications from one field to another (for instance from work place to cultural commodities, thus integrating the semantic preferences of them), but this does not mean that the transportation is actualized on the level of institutions or institutionalized cultural intermediaries; Bourdieu's homologies between fields are structural and functional but they are not intended to suggest objective properties independent of the practices of social agents. Here the concept of habitus appears as the unifying principle of practices in different domains. In this context for Swartz habitus has two important dimensions, which are central in the regulatory mechanisms within singular practices; "since habitus involves an unconscious calculation of what is possible, impossible, and probable for individual in their specific location in a stratified order" it creates a sense of limits for the social agent who is "in the game"; and that sense of limits connects habitus to the notion of power, since the sense of limits is analogous with misrecognizing limits: "the relation to what is possible is a relation to power" (Swartz, 1997: 107). The second dimension of habitus for

Swartz is its capacity to transfer generative schemes among different fields through analogical transfers (1997: 110-111). Therefore habitus appears as the regulatory mechanism not in a specific field but among the fields as well:

The social sense is guided by the system of mutually reinforcing and infinitely redundant signs of which each body is the bearer –clothing, pronunciation, bearing, posture, manners- and, which unconsciously registered, are the basis of antipathies or sympathies... Taste is what brings together things and people that go together. (Bourdieu, 1996: 243)

As the Bourdieu implies, “taste” running by the schemata of habitus creates a sense of social compatibilities and incompatibilities, thus providing someone’s place in the social world, however since the compatibility is a compatibility acquired in a certain field or configuration of fields it has limitations, it is achieved through a more or less structured procedures with the given stakes of that particular field, so an agent likes what he has that is “the properties actually given to him in the distributions and legitimately assigned to him in the classifications” (1996: 175). The misrecognition of the possibilities behind the creation of stylistic probabilities is central to the legitimizing mechanisms of lifestyle preferences, therefore the sense of the game or the practical knowledge of the social agent in particular social environment turns out to be the misrecognition of the possibilities and limitations of the game. This creates a symbolic domination, “produces to the benefit of the one who accomplishes acts of euphemization, transfiguration, or imposition of form, a capital of recognition which permits him to exert symbolic effects... what Max Weber’s design noted with the term of charisma” (Bourdieu, 1998: 102). This structure of recognition or the objective possibilities (power relations behind a social relation i.e. economic power) transformed and represented as a stylistic preference -i.e. the elegance or refinement of upper bourgeois lifestyle with the emphasis on the gap between naked economic domination and the argument of moral and aesthetic superiority- is indeed symbolic capital as it appears in Bourdieu’s works. Symbolic capital or the symbolic violence rests on the adjustment between the structures constitutive of the habitus of the dominated and the structures of the relation of domination to which they apply (1998: 121). Thus symbolic capital is not a type of capital as the cultural or social capital but it is a form of capital transformed into another one and thus masking the unequal distribution of objective potentialities or properties within the social hierarchy. That is the reason symbolic capital is frequently referred as the “recognized capital” or the “disguised capital”. It contains of the symbolic effects of transforming a

property (economic power) into another one (charm and elegance), thus securing the legitimacy of the symbolic effects of the appreciation or preferences of the dominant class. Those symbolic effects pave the way to the charismatic submission between classes, that is a recognition of hierarchy<sup>8</sup>:

One of the effects of symbolic violence is the transfiguration of relations of domination and submission into affective relations, the transformation of power into charisma or into the charm suited to evoke affective enchantment (for example, in relations between bosses and secretaries). The acknowledgment of debt becomes recognition, a durable feeling toward the author of the generous act... the economy of symbolic goods rests on the repression or the censorship of economic interests... As a consequence, economic truth, that is, the price, must be actively or passively hidden or left vague...it is based on a taboo of making things explicit. (Bourdieu, 1998: 102,120)

## CONCLUSION

As the summary suggests the Bourdieu's inquiry into the class is on a three dimensional basis; the objective conditions, properties distributed in a social space; social agents improvisations, adaptive capacity and strategic moves; and the transformative process and mechanism through one type of power asset to another one. An adequate social analysis aiming the existence and characteristics of a class or class relation have to explain and connect those three dimensions. Aims of a sociological analysis, thus, initially must relate the particular field of practices to the broader field of power; secondly research should identify the structure of objective relations between opposing positions occupied by individuals or groups; and thirdly research must analyze the respective class habitus of the particular social formation (Bourdieu, 1996: 142).

The conceptual tool Bourdieu provides can be misleading since it tries to grasp both the objective and subjective parts of the struggle, since the mainstream sociological traditions (conflictual, functionalist or social actionist approaches) tend to rely upon absolute, exclusionary binaries, researchers are generally forced to choose one of the extremities in

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<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu proposes the notion of symbolic violence or symbolic power as the in order to replace the concept of "ideology". For Bourdieu what matters in talk, in discourse, is not some power inherent in language itself, but the kind of authority or legitimacy with which it is backed. Pierre Bourdieu, Terry Eagleton, "Doxa and Common Life" *New Left Review*, 191 (1992).

objectivity & subjectivity duality. There are several criticisms directed to Bourdieu's approach, accusing Bourdieu of being a determinist, functionalist, but at the same time individualist or rational action theorist (Jenkins, 1992) . The wide range of criticisms, indicate the influence of thinking in dualities in social sciences and most of the critiques apply their own terminology (as Bourdieu's wide range of concepts reminds them) into his works, and generally ignores the logic behind the whole intellectual project; the relational understanding of components in social topography.

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