
The material cannot be used for any other purpose without further permission of the publisher and is for private use only.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher’s version if you wish to cite from it.

https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/243081/

Deposited on 01 July 2021
Introduction: Taking Bourdieu further into studies of Organizations and Management

Sarah Robinson, Jette Ernst, Ole Jacob Thomassen, Kristian Larsen

Why this book?

There is increasing academic interest in how Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology can be applied to studies of organizations, work and management. To take one example, the idea for this book was conceived at a seminar held in Copenhagen in early 2018 with the aim of exploring what approaches informed by Bourdieu’s sociology might further add to the field of Management and Organization Studies (MOS). More specifically, we feel there is still untapped potential to apply Bourdieu’s relational sociology, widely cited in a broad range of subject areas from anthropology, ethnography, education, cultural studies to sociology, to the increasingly complex and challenging environment facing organizations and those who work in them. Such challenges include issues resulting from globalization, neoliberalism, austerity and financial crisis, ecological crisis, populism and developing technologies, to name but a few; and now, added to those, a global pandemic.

We argue that due to Bourdieu’s focus on the social interweaving of humans, institutions, organizations, sectorial fields and society, his *relational sociology* is particularly well suited to explore the above challenges and complexities in order to arrive at greater understandings of how change, transition and crisis shape present day organizations, workplaces and practices of work and management. Bourdieu’s work has the potential to overcome dualisms of agency and structure and of micro and macro levels, and to provide explanations of how complex relations of dominance are embedded within not only social, but also, we argue, organisational fields. This book therefore presents a diverse range of organizational
challenges and developments, having their roots in neoliberalism, globalization, policy change, new modes of public sector governance and climate action. The eleven chapters show a concern with the challenges and opportunities such developments offer to MOS scholars studying these and related phenomena, and to managers and employees in public and private sector organizations. The chapters all lend themselves to Bourdieu’s relational analysis as they involve an understanding of positioning and domination within organizations and within and between fields, particularly in relation to transnational neoliberalism.

In his later career, Bourdieu publicly engaged in political actions against the dominance of the neoliberal market (Bourdieu, 1998a), while he and his colleagues paid more attention to the genesis of the state as a meta-field or a bureaucratic field that dominates other fields by regulation on a political level, in terms, for example, of the value and distribution of capital (Bourdieu & Champagne, 2014; Bourdieu, Loic, & Farage, 1994). This further suggests that institutions such as the United Nations (UN) or European Union (EU) or global social movements cannot be understood within national field concepts. Bourdieu’s work thus gave inspiration to a growing number of studies that put forward the concept of transnational fields (Go & Krause, 2016; Sapiro, 2018) and studies showing how, for example, the European Parliament needs to be understood as part of transnational field (Kauppi, 2018). There are similarities here to education (Grek, 2020), where if, for example, we look at educational systems worldwide they are to a large degree structured, governed or at least inspired by positions outside their national contexts. Applying this logic to MOS, professional fields (Spence et al., 2016; Spence, Voulgaris, & Maclean, 2017) would be an example of such transnational fields that are not (fully) reducible to institutional or organizational structures (Kauppi, 2018).
The transnational theme is addressed in this book, with authors asking, for example, why and how the electricity sector has changed in Norway; how alternative wedding practices emerge and gain traction across national boundaries; and how protest movements occupy space in climate activism. We argue that such questions of interest to MOS scholars, (and many others), can be addressed through the application of Bourdieu’s relational sociology. In this book, therefore, Bourdieu’s work is used to focus on the development of relations within and between fields as well as within and between organizations, including the structure of power positions and how such internal constellations of positions depend on the structure of power positions in the fields in which they are embedded. Furthermore, organizational phenomena may be traced to relations between fields as well as to ‘fields within fields’ in order to foreground issues of power, domination, ideology, competition and struggle. The book’s empirical contributions demonstrate the explanatory potential of Bourdieu’s intellectual concepts such as social space, field, habitus, forms of capital, symbolic power, symbolic violence, hysteresis, doxa, and illusio, as applied to current, concrete practices and challenges for a variety of organizations and professional fields. Through such applications of Bourdieu’s relational focus, the book intends to move the research field of MOS forward and to respond to some of its current methodological and theoretical challenges which we discuss below.

The epistemological foundations of Bourdieu’s work

Bourdieu was keenly interested in questions of daily life, and the development of his comprehensive theory had its roots in two ethnographies he conducted in the 1950s and 60s: first, with the Kabyle tribe in colonial Algeria (Bourdieu, 1958) and, second, with the farmers in his home region in southwest France (Bourdieu, 1972). Both ethnographies were concerned
with the way everyday life becomes intelligible to individuals immersed within a given
core argument of Bourdieu’s work that ‘practice has a logic which is not that of
a logician’, practice is fuzzy, irregular and even inconsistent (Bourdieu & Nice, 1990, p. 86)
To understand practice and its intelligibility, the researcher must move analytically between
the environment and the experiences embedded in an environment in order to capture how
the subjective experience of agents, immersed in day-to-day activities, are interlaced with the
conditions and history pertaining to the particular context of these day-to-day activities
(Wacquant, 2004). Bourdieu (1973, p. 63) explains it further as ‘the dialectic of internality
and externality, that is, of the internalization of externality and of the externalization of
internality’ that characterizes all social life. By ‘internality’ Bourdieu refers to the habitus to
which we will return shortly. ‘Structural constructivism’ and ‘social praxeology’ were the
terms chosen by Bourdieu to explicate his belief in the significance of this dialectic and his
attempts at bridging structuralism and constructivism.

In this way, Bourdieu wanted to settle the antagonism between subjectivist and objectivist
modes of knowledge by overcoming ‘the windmills of structuralism, phenomenology, and
Marxism’ (Wacquant, 2004, p. 391). This led to a rejection of the dichotomies of ‘structure
and agency’ and ‘micro and macro’, because social and cognitive structures are recursively
and structurally linked, and so are constituents of the same story in Bourdieu’s
conceptualization. His work in continuously developing key concepts such as field, habitus
and capital reflects Bourdieu’s thinking at different stages of his long career as he moved
from class structure to social space, from class consciousness to habitus, from ideology to
symbolic violence and from the ruling class to the field of power (Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu &
Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 2013). Bourdieu’s approach was synthetic. His sociology
emerged from a creative unification of earlier sociologists and especially the thinking and
concepts of Karl Marx (1984), Max Weber (1978) and Emile Durkheim (2013). Thus, having in mind his basic epistemological principles, the actual craft of sociology has other more explicit roots relating to methodology, relations between the researcher and the researched, and the relation between theory, methods and empirical data. According to Broady (1990), Bourdieu’s central epistemological foundation was historical epistemology, drawing on the work of Gaston Bachelard (1968) and George Canguilhem (1988, 1991) and for his relational thinking, the work of German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1950). Bourdieu’s conception of social life was thus ‘relentlessly relational’ (Wacquant, 2013, p. 275) in that social life consists of relations between groups and individuals rather than substances, and such orientations are built into Bourdieu’s pillar concepts of field, habitus and capital that gain their meaning in their relation to each other, where habitus is the socialised experience in a field, capitals are specific to fields and, conversely, fields are relations of power confined through the distributions of capital.

Inspired by historical epistemology, Bourdieu argues that the most important or fundamental act in research is constructing the object (Bachelard, 1968). The basic idea is that research constructs and, most importantly, everyday definitions of sociological problems including preconstructed data material in public statistics, need reflection and theorisation (Bourdieu 1991a). The researcher constructs a problematic rather than picking up those circulating in fields or in popular parlance (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The concept of field is an important Bourdieusian tool for this purpose. It involves ‘the construction of an ideal-typical model of the space of structural relations among the phenomenal relations’ (Bourdieu & Zanotti-Karp, 1968; Vandenberghhe, 1999, p. 45). The researcher seeks to identify the forces that structure the field, the capitals at stake and the properties of groups and individuals that point to their positions in the field and the interrelations of all these elements (Bourdieu &
Wacquant, 1992). This should be done by performing a break with the immediate experience of agents, that is, with a watchful eye on the common sensical of everyday experiences through the principal of objectification. Applying the principle of objectification to the studied object means for the researcher to ‘radically doubt’ its pre-established and naturalized state (Bourdieu, 1991b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 235) that is, a ‘conquest of the scientific fact against the spontaneous and preconstructed’, performed as an epistemological rupture between doxa and episteme or between the realm of ‘mere opinion’ and knowledge (Vandenberghe, 1999, pp. 42-43). The concepts of field, capital and habitus were developed to make this epistemological break with the apparent and seemingly natural and to effect a move from substance to relations, which is to connect the experiences of everyday life with their structuring forces. For Bourdieu, the social does not consist of individuals or groups but of ‘webs of material and symbolic ties that constitute the proper object of social analysis’ (Wacquant, 2013, p. 275). Today’s pandemic highlights how individual or organisational experiences are deeply interrelated not only to other organisations, but to a global reconfiguration of fields and meta-fields.

**Putting Bourdieu to work in Management and Organisation Studies**

The building of foundations for a systematic application of Bourdieu’s work in MOS began in 2008 when the journal *Theory and Society* published an issue with a ‘symposium’ of four papers on Bourdieu and organizations. In this issue, Emirbayer and Johnson’s article “Bourdieu & Organizational analysis” (2008) was one of the first to provide a thorough examination of how Bourdieu’s field analysis can be used in intra- and inter-organizational studies, arguing that such analysis can overcome the problem of dualism, present in much organizational studies, by bridging macro and micro-levels. In the same issue Vaughan (2008) shows how field analysis can be conducted empirically by using a qualitative approach, and
Dobbin’s (2008) article “The poverty of organizational theory: Comment on “Bourdieu and Organizational Analysis” discusses how a Bourdieusian application might fill a research gap in organizational theory. In reviewing Emirbayer and Johnson’s article, Swartz reinforces the importance of incorporating ‘all three Bourdieu's master concepts - habitus, capital, and field’ into (any) single study, something that, he argues had not been consistently done in American sociology. He also welcomes the application of a relational perspective to the empirical study of organisations (Swartz, 2008, p. 45).

The following year the journal Organization published a Special Issue on ‘Bourdieu and domination within and between organizations’. The editorial calls for more engagement by organizational scholars with Bourdieu’s work, particularly in developing cumulative research on domination within and between organisations. In so doing, they claim that we can ‘acquire a panoramic vision of Bourdieusian concepts that have otherwise been tackled separately’ (Golsorkhi, Leca, Lounsbury, & Ramirez, 2009, p. 779). Following Bourdieu, they also emphasise the importance for organisational researchers to ‘have a moral responsibility to be reflective about our practice’ and to use research knowledge to ‘inform and direct social change’ (ibid). The special issue included examples of Bourdieusian-inspired organizational empirical studies on, for example, the cricket industry (Wright, 2009) and a British cultural affairs organization in post-Soviet Ukraine (Kerr & Robinson, 2009).

In 2015, Tatli, Özbilgin, & Karatas-Özkan (2015b) published their anthology ‘Pierre Bourdieu, Organization & Management’, which presented empirically based research from a cross-section of organization studies. In this volume, a distinct critical orientation towards the contemporary field of MOS is taken: ‘For us, scholars of management and organization studies, scholarship with commitment requires battling the neo-liberal, individualistic and
depoliticizing tendencies in our disciplines’ (Tatli, Özbilgin, & Karatas-Özkan, 2015a, p. 1).

As such, it includes rich empirical contributions dealing with a wide range of different aspects of organisations and work, including careers as sites of power; migrant workers’ subjectivities; power and struggles with organisational fields; representation in pension scheme boards; gender equality in universities; the field of cultural and creative industries; and women managers in sporting organisations.

In his citation analysis of the use of Bourdieu in nine leading management and organization studies journals, Sieweke (2014) investigated how citations of Bourdieu’s work have developed over time, in terms of what is being cited and how comprehensively. Looking forward, he discusses how more continued engagement with Bourdieu's habitus concept can help lay a microfoundation for new institutional theory and the development of reflection on academic practice in MOS. His review however focuses on more generalist management and organization journals and so perhaps does not capture a growing presence of Bourdieu-inspired research within some subfields of the wider MOS field, for example leadership or entrepreneurship (see below). Finally, and more recently, in their chapter on ‘Bourdieu and Organizations’ in The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu, Hallet and Gougherty (2018), besides providing a thorough introduction to how Bourdieu can be applied to organizational studies, suggest that ‘The promise of Bourdieu’s work rests in how his concept of habitus and embodied cultural capital help us to think about action in organizations without reverting to methodological individualism and overly utilitarian, rationalistic, actors’ (Hallett & Gougherty, 2018, p. 293).

Perhaps inspired by these foundational contributions, a growing number of more empirically oriented, and sometimes historically focused, articles and book chapters have been written
applying Bourdieu to MOS in a wide sense. Some examples from MOS subfields include:

A common assumption in many of the above contributions advocating for more comprehensive usage of Bourdieu’s sociology within the field of MOS research, is that this can provide a more ‘integrated’ approach to organizations, which is required for a better understanding of the complexity of today’s organizations. As the ‘world of organizations’ is
becoming both more standardized due to transnational transformation, but also more complex
due to varieties in implementation and adjustments to national and local politics and
responses to the many growing crises of this new decade, there is a growing need to
understand how organizations both affect and are affected by people, society and culture. The
question then is how we put Bourdieu to use in our field of study?

When reading Bourdieu’s own texts and his outline of the relational approach, one could get
the impression that the foundational ‘pillars’, the concepts of field, habitus and capital, should
be applied together in order to reach a full and integrated analysis of the phenomenon under
investigation. This view is also promoted by authors in the MOS field, for example by
view of ‘correct theorization’ in saying that Bourdieu’s concepts should be ‘decoupled from
each other to ensure that there is a real payoff of their individual usage before they are
eventually recombined’ and that ‘the most fruitful works inspired by Bourdieu have turned
out to be those deploying elements of that framework’.

For (Bourdieu, 1999), the researcher’s stance in and towards research is pivotal to the quality
of the research performed. Overall, he gave clear warnings against dogmatism within the
scientific field and welcomed a generative interpretation of his own theoretical framework.
He argued that theory is always temporary and theoretical concepts, rather than being seen as
‘intellectual totems’, should develop and be evaluated in dialogue with empirical data to test
and try out their usefulness. In his view, theories should be recognized for what they are,
namely constructs put to use by the researcher to enable an understanding of the social world
(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu (1991b, 2003) is thus keen to underscore the
imperative for a constant researcher reflexivity in order to be aware that science is itself a
field of interests, positions, relations of power and unchallenged assumptions. Moreover, he argues against rigid application of theoretical and methodological principles and he urges us to break with the pre-constructed and taken-for-granted and to perform historicized analyses by tracing the phenomena we study backwards in time to understand the emergence of the orientations and ideas that have produced the foundations of the logics and forces that structure fields.

**Explaining the core concepts**

In the following section we give a brief outline of how Bourdieu understood his core concepts. We do this in order to reduce repetition of the concept definitions within the forthcoming book chapters so as to provide the contributors with space to elaborate their particular empirical case and its uses and developments of Bourdieu’s concepts.

**Field**

The concept of field was constructed by Bourdieu as a central tool for understanding the social by carrying out dialectical analysis as laid out in structural constructivism. We may use the concept of field to better understand activity within an organization and how this activity is tied to groups, persons, institutions, politics, and so on, both inside and outside the organization. To make sense of what happens in a field the researcher must thus move between multiple levels of reality – between structuring forces and subjective experiences. The concept of field therefore responds to the argument that ‘the immediately visible relationships between agents’ do not reveal the ways in which agents are informed by something beyond the immediately visible (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 17).
Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 215) defines a field as ‘a kind of arena in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space’. Fields are characterized by specific stakes and interests that are irreducible to the stakes and interests found in other fields. For a field to exist and to function, ‘there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 72). Those who are involved in a field, Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 73) argues, ‘share a certain number of fundamental interests, namely everything that is linked to the very existence of the field’. The boundaries of fields are dynamic since they are defined by the stake of struggles within the field or, as Bourdieu puts it, ‘an agent or an institution belongs to a field inasmuch as he or it produces an effect on it or suffers effects in it’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 232). This emphasises that the delimitation of a field is part of the researcher’s construction of the object and not something naturally given. Fields work as ‘magnetic’ structured spaces of activity through forces of attraction and differentiation, underscoring the relational principle so important for Bourdieu.

Elsewhere, the concept of field has been defined as ‘a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 16). Fields are thus competitive spaces, where agents engage in games of positioning themselves in relation to each other, guided by what is at stake in the field and by the form and amount of valued resources they hold (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Robbins, 2000). These forms of capital create the parameters that regulate the ways individuals behave and interact within a particular field (Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 215). Investments in the game as the accumulation of capital and activities of positioning are related to power and domination, which are central to the work of Bourdieu. Again, it is worth noticing that Bourdieu’s conception of power is non-essentialist. Power and domination in a field are embedded in the
relations of the field. The ‘rules of the game’ are neither explicit nor codified but are learnt through socialization into the field and the process of acquisition of the right forms of capital (see below).

Fields are dynamic and static at the same time as they are structured by both internal and external developments and will through time develop varying degrees of autonomy from other fields (Bourdieu & Emanuel, 1996) and from what (Bourdieu, 1998b) terms the field of power, which is more or less equivalent with the state, or more precisely, the capital held by the state that works as a form of meta-capital. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) also argues that fields can have different degrees of self-regulation and thus be more or less autonomous or heteronomous. Heteronomy understood as the extent to which a field’s structure and logic is influenced by other fields (Gorski, 2013). Autonomous fields have strong entry requirements and clear rules, whereas in a more heteronomous field rules are less clear and thus arguably give more room for interpretation, where rules should be understood as ‘rules of the game’ and thus they are embodied by the players of the game. In more autonomous fields established field-specific forms of capital are required, whereas in more a heteronomous field, forms of capital valued in other neighbouring fields may become preferred: as Gorski (2013, p. 340) suggests, ‘a bit like a weak currency regime, in which strong foreign currencies are the preferred medium of exchange’.

Finally, fields can also be seen as fields-within-fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This approach, which can be combined with seeing fields as either autonomous or heteronomous, is based on the assumption that dynamics between capitals, habitus and power within a specific or empirical field, are instances or exemplifications of capitals, habitus and power at a more aggregate level. Bourdieu use the metaphor of a ‘Russian doll’ to illustrate this, where
the empirical field in question represents one layer or section of the field, with potential subfields or meta-fields associated with it.

Bourdieu argued that within fields interpersonal modes of domination operate through two forms of violence: economic or overt violence (Bourdieu, 1980, pp. 217-218) and symbolic violence. Economic/overt violence involves ‘direct, daily, personal work’ of domination, enforcing power relations in an overt way, through physical threat or the threat of economic ruin (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 190). Overt violence is also practiced via repressive state apparatus for example, example via the police or military. However, in terms of establishing domination, this overt form of violence is less ‘efficient’ for the dominant than the ‘softer’, more seductive strategies of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 191; Robinson & Kerr, 2009). The latter can be understood as the imposition and misrecognition of arbitrary power relations as natural and legitimate (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 122).

As previously stated, a field can be compared to a game, which has stakes that are the product of the competition between players who invest in the game – Bourdieu terms this investment illusio (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). By playing the game, players tacitly agree that the game is worth playing. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Emanuel, 1996, p. 382) focusing on field crisis, he points out that agents themselves may or may not experience their activity as a game:

It is only exceptionally, especially in moments of crisis, that certain agents may develop a conscious and explicit representation of the game as a game, one which destroys the investment in the game, the illusio, by making it appear what it always objectively is (to an observer foreign to the game, indifferent to it) – that is, a historical fiction or, in Durkheim’s terms, a ‘well-founded illusion’.
The game metaphor and the connected concept of illusio have been used by management and organisation scholars in the study of higher education (Kalfa & Taksa, 2015), and of a professional occupation (accountancy) (Lupu & Empson, 2015).

**Habitus**

Habitus is a system of embodied dispositions and a scheme of perception. As a system of dispositions, it accounts for the stability and of social practices: ‘the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it’ (Bourdieu & Nice, 1990, p. 54). It is a product of history and of the past experiences deposited in individuals. As a scheme of perception, thought and action, it tends to guarantee the adequacy of practices and their constancy over time. The habitus is stable but malleable to an extent, bounded by the limits initially set on its invention. It implies a view of human development as a constant dialectic between external determinations and internal representations, rather than as a simple accumulation of experiences (Bronckart & Schurmans, 1999). Habitus allowed Bourdieu to depart simultaneously from structuralism and individualistic and subjective approaches to studying the social because habitus concerns not only the individual agent, but the whole context or milieu in which that habitus was formed. Habitus is, in other words, social through and through. For Bourdieu (1985, p. 13) a focus on habitus was ‘a matter of recalling “the primacy of practical reason”’.

Bourdieu’s concepts of hexis (Bourdieu, 1977, 2000) and doxa (Bourdieu, 1977) are also closely connected with the concept of habitus. Hexis is the embodied part of the habitus where individuals naturally (again through socialisation) fit into the mores and conventions of the field through how they talk, walk, dress and so on (Bourdieu, 1977, 2000), while doxa
refers to the assumption that practices in a given field are normal and truths taken for granted due to the socialisation of the habitus so that the social world appears as self-evident (Bourdieu, 1977).

However, as Bourdieu demonstrated in his early ethnographies, fields are not static sometimes a disjuncture starts to appear between an individual’s habitus and hexis and their perceptions of doxa, as the field evolves and changes. Bourdieu refers to this phenomenon as hysteresis. As individuals generally succeed in making sense of the world around them, the habitus is normally protected from crisis and challenges. However, the capacity of the habitus to defend or to adapt itself is not always guaranteed. When a field starts to change, the ability of a person’s or a group’s habitus to keep up with or adapt to the demands of the changing field is brought into question. Bourdieu’s concept of the hysteresis effect describes this disjuncture between the field and the habitus – a maladju-stment between the practical schemes underpinning action and the new conditions.

In Pascalian Meditations (2000), Bourdieu suggests that the concept of hysteresis could be applied more widely to situations of change, and stresses the importance of reflexivity of social actors when ‘the coincidence between structure and habitus is increasingly disrupted’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 263). That is, in a changing field, there is a dissonance or disjuncture between the demands of the new, emergent rules of the game and the habitus. During a period of hysteresis, social actors may continue to rely on past behaviours, which effectively ‘help to plunge them deeper into failure’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 161). However, some actors in the field are able to survive the hysteresis effect by adopting reflective behaviours to identify and acquire the new forms of capital deemed valuable within the changing field, such as knowledge, qualifications and social networks. The concept of hysteresis has been used by
organisation and management scholars to understand the strategies of ‘dominated’ actors in a specific period of social and organisational transition (Kerr & Robinson, 2009) and in understanding public sector workers’ reactions to change e.g. (McDonough & Polzer, 2012) or relatives reactions to change of health care institutions (Roenn-Smidt, Shim, Larsen, & Hindhede, 2020). Ernst and Jensen Schleiter (2019) showed how practitioners employed ‘strategizing moves’ in anticipating what could be expected from the future, informed by their experiences of the past in major organizational change.

*Capital*

Capital enables social differentiation and the establishment of social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1991a). Each field defines its own field-specific capital that is recognized as a resource for daily practice. By discovering the nature of the capital that is efficient in a field, we will also have discovered the structuring principles for the groupings of the field since ‘the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represent the immanent structure of the social world’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 15). While each field in this way has its own capitals, (Bourdieu, 1986) distinguishes between generic forms of capital. He identifies four distinct forms of capital: economic (e.g. money, material possessions), cultural (e.g. knowledge, skills, educational qualifications) and social (e.g. the networks a person can draw on as a resource). Symbolic capital is the accumulated prestige or honour one derives from the accumulation of the three primary forms and is significant in distinguishing one’s self within a given field. Symbolic capital is distinctive in the struggles of the field, but the field’s agents fail to appreciate its importance (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, symbolic capital, as part of the symbolic systems of fields, is constructed in relations of recognition and misrecognition because the social conditions of its ‘acquisition and transmission’ are concealed (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 18).
Agents use their feel for the game and their time and labour for accumulating various forms of capital in order to maintain or improve their positions in fields, and capital is convertible into power and positions in an ‘economy of practices’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 16). While capital conversion may happen in its ‘crude’ form when economic capital is converted into money and buildings etc., it is not recognised by the field’s agents that economic capital lies at the roots of all other capital forms and conversions. Hence, social exchanges between agents thrive on their ambiguity, ensuring that the accumulation and the conversions of capital generated in these exchanges become effective through the misrecognition that economic capital is the foundation for the effects of all other form of capital. Bourdieu, for example, explains that the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital happens through ‘an expenditure of time’, which is only possible if one has the economic means to invest in the acquisition of cultural capital because cultural capital is characterised by the time it takes to build, its long term pay off and the fact that it in large part ‘escapes observation and control’ (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 24-25).

The Structure of the book

The chapters we present in this book study a great variety and range of organizational phenomena. We have therefore divided the book’s contributions into three thematic sections. The first is termed ‘Neoliberalism, fields and hysteresis’. The chapters in this section concern pressures imposed on managers and staff resulting from the ideological purchase of neoliberal ideas by nation states. Two of the chapters (Koll & Ernst and Thomassen & Ødegaard) use a Bourdieusian conceptualization of temporality and the concept of hysteresis to explain why managers and staff have difficulties adapting to performance pressures and new ideas of quality standards and speed of service delivery. The last chapter in this section (Larsen &
Harsløf) compares new institutions and Bourdieu’s field theory. It focuses on the emerging health promotion strategies within work organisations, related to developments in the wider field, which can be associated with improved working conditions and welfare, yet it may also result in bodily performance pressures imposed on staff.

The second section is termed ‘Transnational and national movements as sites for competition and symbolic domination’. Two of these chapters (Yang et al. & Robinson & Kerr) analyse how the social and seemingly spontaneous movements of philanthropy and environmental activism are deeply shaped by a struggle over appropriation of capital in these fields, and that, respectively, the establishment of a network of elite actors and struggle over physical space are vital in such struggles. The third chapter (Sayce et al.) analyses the importance of social capital in the form of ‘wasta’ in the context of the insurance sector in Jordan, as a resource for employment and career advancement. The last chapter (Ydesen) analyses how the field of education is becoming increasingly globalized and standardized, due to influence from supra-national institutions (the OECD). This chapter uses Bourdieu’s perspective on state-crafting as the lens to analyse how local, national and international fields interact. Although the phenomena analysed in this section are situated in (very) different contexts, they are interlinked in the way they demonstrate how spontaneous and formal organizations are shaped and formed by the fields they are embedded in. Indeed, they demonstrate how symbolic power is at stake in each field and how powerful agents, through their acquisition of specific forms of capital, seek to gain dominance in their respective fields.

The third section, ‘The emergence and transformation of professional fields’, presents contributions that in different ways, analyse the emergence, transformation and stability of fields in which professions and professionalism is at play. The two first chapters (Nairz-Wirth
& Feldman and Hindhede & Andersen) deal with how professional fields, in change and transition, have become contested due to ongoing struggles over legitimate forms of capital, and the consequences this might have on the habitus of individuals/professionals within the field. The next chapter (Lasalle & Shaw) analyses how a specific professional field (the emerging wedding field as part of the wider entrepreneurial field) develops through different phases and how key agents in the field seek to establish symbolic dominance within it. The last chapter (Schneidhofer et al.), taking the case of midwifery as an example, discusses how a gendered habitus can explain selective recruitment into professional bodies.

In the concluding chapter of the book using Covid-19 as an extreme case of field transformation, we summarise the contribution this book makes to MOS and draw out a future research agenda for the continued application of Bourdieu’s work to MOS in our continued complex and challenging times.

References


doi:10.1177/0263276417715071


doi:10.1177/1742715017710592


