

# A Bourdieusan CV from the Fringe of the Field

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### Introduction – the scene and the player

The author of this essay was born in 1944 in Sweden.\* He had his basic sociological training in Lund, Sweden, in the period 1965 – 1972 and he was the first in his extended family to receive a degree from university. His mother family was of farmers lineage, his father was a descendent of workers. In 1972 he moved to Norway. He had received a tenure as an associated professor at Rogaland distriktshøgskole, established a couple of years ahead in the town of Stavanger, to cater for higher education outside the main Norwegian universities. It was then the largest of its kind. Since 2004, though, this institution has been a full university, University of Stavanger, which now have some 12 000 students and 1500 staff. Since 2014 he holds the position here as a Professor Emeritus.

His main task there, was to be the local leader of the Norwegian part of a large Nordic research undertaking dealing with town cultures. In five Nordic towns research groups were established, each consisting of a handful of young social scientists. Together they developed a research project with similar studies carried out in all five towns. Among other sub-studies, an analysis of local cultural policies, a study of the economics of local cultural life, and a randomized survey of lifestyles and cultural participation, were undertaken in all five towns. His old professor from Lund Harald Swedner was the head of the whole scientific venture.

This was a time when cultural policies had entered the centre of attention in the public debates in the Nordic countries, in the general political awakening following the 1968 upheaval in the western world. Cultural policies were regarded as means for urban communities to rejuvenate

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\* *In response to the challenges of the editors I have chosen to use *illeism* as a device to write this essay. I write about the guy who is the writer in third person. Usually this is done to elevate such a person to the spheres of great heroes, such as Julius Caesar and Donald Trump did/does. The purpose here is the opposite. It is done to make it easier examining and understanding him and the social context (fields and spaces) in which he travels.*

democracy and better take care of its inhabitants. The project was roundly financed by a Nordic body of cultural cooperation.

The town the author had moved to, Stavanger, had a very contrasting cultural and political character compared to the one he left. In Lund and in its university, it was still possible to feel the political and intellectual tremors of the 1968 upheavals. Lund had been one of their hotspots, with its proximity to Denmark and the continent. When moving to Stavanger it was not only to move to another country, but it felt as moving back in time. Despite its relatively large population – it was the fourth largest urban area of Norway – it displayed clear marks of an over-ripe small town. This city was indeed situated remotely from the urban centres where “things happened” and it was even further away from any intellectual centres. Its economic base had been eroding for years. Stavanger was a poor community. The town’s cultural life was dominated by a petty-bourgeois laymen’s movement. There were indeed few places where one could have “a night out” or simply have a beer. Such venues were outnumbered many, many times by countless churches and praying houses.

However, the town was at the verge of entering a new era of development. At the time of the author’s arrival, the town had been appointed the oil capital of Norway. Since then Stavanger has undergone a profound process of social change, second to few communities. It transformed from being a stagnating small town to become the oil capital of Norway. Five decades ago, it was one of the poorest communities situated in the periphery of Norway economically, culturally and politically. In the period that followed the city became a hub in the global oil economy and became the richest communities in Norway. Now in 2020, though, it may have entered still a new phase of change: the post-petroleum era, with an uncertain future and possibly a decline, due to a dramatic fall in the prize of oil and a shift towards low-fossil energy.

The community the author has been living in, has been a veritable laboratory for the study of social change processes, which soon became a focus of his intellectual interest. Simultaneously, the community has been framing the social life that he has led. In various way, the profound social changes, with its twists and turns that the community has undergone, has framed, and structured the trajectory of his life.

#### **Positions in the field and the social space**

The choices the author made, placed him far away from the dominant positions both with regard to geography (in Stavanger one feels oneself dominated by Oslo) and with regard to an imagined field of social science. At the time Rogaland distriktshøgskole (Rogaland regional college) was not even counted as an academic institution, even if the working conditions, pay, obligation to research etc. of its staff were the same as the those working at the universities. Nowadays, this has changed somewhat, but still University of Stavanger holds a dominated position in the Norwegian academic field, despite all ambitions and declarations of the opposite from its management.

The author had chosen to place himself in this position and he stayed. Many times, he answered the question about way he moved to Norway. After a time, possibly after having been familiar with Bourdieu’s thinking, he realized that the main question to be answered is: why did he stay? He has contemplated Bourdieu’s ideas about the adaptation that occurs between a particular habitus and certain position in the social space and in fields. The position he had placed himself in was definitely a dominated one, at the fringes of that field. Consequently, he has a challenge: to examine the physiognomies of his own (dominated) habitus and what corollaries these may have had for the life he has led.

## The first taste of the tradition of Bourdieu

During his studies in Lund, the author read few of Bourdieu's own writings, although his name was known by reputation, which early raised the author's curiosity. Bourdieu was perceived as belonging to the progressive side of sociology, which was very important at the time. This curiosity was further boosted by having met Bourdieu's collaborator, Jean-Claude Passeron, when he was a visiting professor at his institution at University of Lund in 1971. Passeron awarded the author and his fellow-student Dag Ekholm, a couple of tutorials, when working with their master project. From these sessions the author remembers Passeron's objection towards thinking social action in terms of acting and calculating subjects. We were advised to avoid rational choice thinking.

### About choosing an analytic approach

Working within the theoretical universe of Bourdieu has led me to believe that we, as researchers, do not choose "freely and rationally" within the arsenal of methods and theories the social sciences offer when addressing a scientific problem. Both the readers of this essay and its author are socially positioned. We occupy different positions in the field (national or international) of social sciences, some of them in more central and important (influential) ones, others in more peripheral and less important. In addition, we are positioned in a (national) social space, as members of a social class and class fractions

The "game" that goes on in the field, transforms the agents to competitors, even if they may be very best friends. The theories and methods they have acquired are specific forms of cultural capital, in which they have invested, and it is the exchange rates, values (as capital) of these theories and methods, one fights over. The contenders play the game – they compete - in a way that best secure their investment. When writing sociology and lecturing for my students, the pleasure and motivation comes from the immediate reactions of understanding from the student. To say and claim that I am simultaneously trying to secure or improve the position of the Bourdieusan scientific approach in the field of the social sciences, is a sacrilege. But, looked at what is going on at a distance, with a Bourdieusan optic, discloses the secrets of the game.

The wrangling that simmers in the field, generates differentiation and hierarchisations. Some scientific approaches are growing more "popular" and have wrestled themselves positions where they appear more valid and powerful than others, which in turn seem to have lost value. In the contest over the value of ideas in this field of cultural production, their eventual merits and weaknesses are of much less importance than what we are educated to believe. Their relative positions in the scientific field change over time and are determined by forces and processes that reminds of those one finds within the literary field or even the field of haute couture.

The researchers, as social beings, are equipped with a habitus, in this instance a scientific one, that has been moulded by the positions he/she occupies and through the social trajectory he/she has followed to this position. It is our habitus that is "at work" when the researcher "take a stand" (prise de position); he/she chooses to construct the object of study in a certain way, chooses theory and method and simultaneously excluded alternatives. At each juncture of this trajectory, certain "options" have been available, but others have been chosen. The habitus contains certain dispositions and bearings that make certain approaches more "natural" than others. Some approaches fit well intellectually, while others fall flat on stoneground. The "choices" we make are in this sense pre-determined. They

are influenced by intellectual dispositions linked to our habitus, and our position in the scientific field (and the social space) and the “market values” of the scientific approaches and their positions in the scientific field.

During the project work in Stavanger, the author came across some articles from Bourdieu’s early work on reproduction and on culture. In many cases they were in the form of shorter articles, not very well translated. Our author was on a mission to find guidelines, points of references on which he could base his research efforts. He did not read French at the time. He was eagerly following the work undertaken at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham (Cultural Studies), which at the time, was very open to other perspectives, among others to the contribution of Bourdieu.

More and more, the work of Bourdieu became a kind of obsession that insisted to be taken more seriously. However, his work was still not known to the author in a way that could help him in the predicament he was in, dealing with the matters of participation in Nordic cultural life in towns, quantitatively.

Our author lived a kind of schizophrenic intellectual life during that period. On the one hand he had been brought up with the stringent school of Althusserian Marxism during the late 1960’s and in the beginning of the 1970’s in Lund. From that he adopted an understanding of the nature of social structures, of what scientific work is all about; of the scientific break with ideological pre-conditions, and of the necessity of constructing a scientific object, all thoughts that are present in *Distinction*. Althusser too, was a student of the historic epistemologists. On the other hand, the author now worked as an empirically oriented researcher, carrying out surveys of different kinds, all of them reflecting what people meant, did and thought. This research practice was undertaken in isolation from his basic, but, at the time, fading theoretical orientation. The two were impossible to unify. The Althusserian Marxism had no room for acting and thinking subjects, a “substance” his research practice was full of.

## The defining moment of reading *Distinction*

In 1985 he had received a sabbatical year, that he spent as a guest lecturer at Aberdeen University, accompanying his new wife, who was employed in the oil business! The university had a very good library. Most of his time there, however, was devoted to reading Bourdieu and related works. The main preoccupation that autumn was the *Distinction*, that had been translated to English the year before. He immersed himself in the book. All the bits and pieces of Bourdieu’s work previously collected from articles fell now into their proper places, in Bourdieu’s theoretical system that eventually emerged in reading the book. All Bourdieu’s main concepts were there, in practical action, analysing “the relationship between the universe of economic, social and cultural conditions of existence and the universe of lifestyles” shedding light to the social significance of the smallest diverse things. The intellectual impact was breath-taking.

The overwhelming encounter with the world of *Distinction* was multifaceted. One such, which probably is rare: its content became personal. Few, if any, sociological books have the potentials to come close to one’s personal life. The sociological concepts developed throughout the book may function as sharp tools to reflect on one’s own course of life, its prospects, and its social determinants (constraints and potentials). Bourdieu’s thoughts may function as tools to objectify oneself, in the social space and in a field; they may be instruments in a powerful socio-analysis.

The most important characteristic of the book, however, that made the author embrace it, was more scientific and instrumental. The book provided him with an escape from the schizophrenic intellectual dilemma mentioned above. Bourdieu develops a critique, which is both thorough and quite harsh, of the procedures and thought figures that permeates traditional quantitative sociology. This aspect of the book has probably influenced the reception of *Distinction*. A great variety of strands within the academic community have embraced it, while quantitatively oriented social scientists gave it luke-warm response, at least during the first ten years after its English translation. Bourdieu's critique resonated very well indeed with the author's struggle with a lot of mindless use of regression and factor analysis in traditional empirical sociological research. Furthermore, Bourdieu, by example, gave clues as to find a way to work quantitatively without having to subject oneself to positivistic figures of thought.

In *Distinction* Bourdieu for the first time makes use of multiple correspondence analysis in a widely circulated book on sociology in English. This is an approach to statistical data analysis developed in France in the 1960-70. It belongs to a family of methods, nowadays labelled GDA, Geometric Data Analysis. (for example, Leroux & Rouanet, 2004, 2010, see also Greenacre 1995). The method is founded on multidimensional geometric reasoning and calculations, and it can be applied to all kinds of data, including categorical data. The properties that are under scrutiny are transformed to points in a multidimensional space and the analysis proceeds by identifying the dimensions that optimally "catches" the spread (the variance) of the data points in a cloud of points (and, as it turns out the spread of the statistical units (the individuals in a survey)). As the name implies, it handles many variables and among its results it produces graphs, describing the simultaneous statistical relationships between all active variables. At one glance, the graph displays all the vital relationships and interactions.

One of the graphs in *Distinction* has become particularly famous (Otte et.al. 2019), and for our author, particularly challenging. (Bourdieu 1984, pp 128-129). This is a representation of the "space of social positions" or the social space, for short. This is a detailed two-dimensional map over the social landscape, in which the French have their particular, objective, social positions. This space also shows how relations of domination and subordination are socially structured. The building block for this construction are indicators of the amount and structure of socially valuable resources that the respondents have access to, economic and cultural capital.

On top of the graph of this basic social structure, Bourdieu has projected still another space, the accompanying space of lifestyles. This is attached to the social space, as if it were a transparent foil. So, at one glance, you may examine simultaneously, how the respondents' access to the various forms of capital, particularly economic and cultural capital, vary together with the presence or absence of different lifestyle components. When moving up the map, the *overall volume of capital* (the first and most important dimension of the social space) increases, and the prevalence of sophisticated, expensive, rare etc. elements of lifestyles increases in density, and when moving from the right to the left, *the composition of capital* (the second dimension of the social space) changes from being dominated by economic capital, over being symmetrical to become dominated by cultural capital. Simultaneously, the character of the lifestyle components changes from being expensive, luxurious, and opulent to being more and more ascetic, "cultural" or intellectual. The two dimensions are to be understood as two different and independently working principles of social differentiation. These two principles govern both spaces (both the social space and the space of lifestyles), which means that the two spaces are homologous. Bourdieu's theory includes a third dimension, that of the social trajectory. The two "objectivities" of social reality are changing over time, each according to a pace of its own.

The social space and the space of lifestyles represent the two aspects of the social reality that the social sciences always must account for, according to Bourdieu's epistemological assumption.

Bourdieu describe himself as a “constructivist structuralist”, or the other way around (Bourdieu 1990: 123). There is an objective invisible social structure in which each and everybody have a position. That position reflects the essential resources available to her/him. On the other hand, there is a symbolic realm in which we, as social beings are expressing ourselves, who we are, what we believe in, what we like and what we despise. These two aspects of social reality are connected to each other in Bourdieu’s theory, via the habitus concept. By residing in a certain position in the social space, we are incorporating the constraints and opportunities that are attached to that position. The experiences of these are transformed into certain cognitive principles of categorisations, evaluations, ways of thinking, and guidelines for behaviour. The external class conditions of existence become forces that structure our inner reality, our habitus.

**Structural causality of a network of factors versus linear causality between independent and dependent variables**

Bourdieu’s critique of traditional empirical methodology goes to the heart of “the sociology of the variable”- problematique (Blumer 1956). To simplify: he criticizes the tendency to think in terms of ordinal, causal relationships between so called “independent variables” and “dependent variables”, when doing sociological research. The goal of that methodology is to produce an estimate, a measure of the force by which the one variable causes/explain the other. This methodology promotes a substantialist mode of thinking according to Bourdieu. The variable gives a measure of the “substances” that the variable is referring to, for example number of years of education, household income or for that matter physical strength. Then the individuals may be ordered according to one of these independent variables and that could then be compared with another order based on the dependent variable. The degree of similarity between the two orders may be used as a measure of impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Then, it happens that this ordinal relationship between an independent and a dependent variable is disturbed; other independent variables may also cause change in the value of the dependent variable. Then it is commonplace to modify the measure of the strength of the first relationships, taking account of the amount that can be ascribed to the second independent variable. The analytic logic of this procedure strives to purify and isolate the effect from a certain variable from the simultaneous influence of other relevant variables. That way of thinking may be proper in old fashioned physics, but not in the social sciences. Here a relational mode of thinking should first be considered.

Bourdieu admonishes his reader indulging in activities of the type above. The methods used in research may smuggle in certain ways of thinking, that may distort the object of study. He is himself explicit on this matter: he constructs his object of study right from the beginning. It is a social field or the social space at a certain point in time (and place). The attributes (the variables) that have been used to construct the field/space are intertwined in all sorts of relationships, which are futile to dis-entangle, in the sense that one tries to measure the pure effect of each of them. Together they constitute a structure and should be treated as such. The reason is simply that the sociological effects of the various analysed variables are present in the total structure they all represent. So, instead of thinking sociological causation in the form of ordinal relationship between independent and dependent variables, Bourdieu proposes to think causality in sociology in terms of causations of social structures, a set of inter-related pertinent attributes that together relates to/influences another structure.

He says somewhere in *Distinction*, that it is as wrong to separate the effect of gender from that of social class, as it is to separate the yellowness of the lemon from its acid taste. The yellowness and the sour taste are both integral attributes of the lemon, in the same way as gender is integral part of social class. There are as many ways to realize femininity as there are social classes and fractions. (Bourdieu 1984:107)

From this follows how pointless it is, not uncommon, to “integrate” Bourdieu’s theories with existing ones, such as when including indicators of economic and cultural capital in regression models to get a Bourdieusan twist on a traditional approach in analysing, say for instance political affiliations. As we shall see below, the particular status of the capital composition principle gets wrecked, if put into a model of regression. The reason is simple: the amount of economic and cultural capital *together* determines the position of the social agents. On an individual level, the capital composition principle is a “two-component attribute”. Having a bachelor’s degree do not have a pure, unambiguous value of its own in all social contexts. The value of it depends on the value of his/her economic assets. Does she/he have access to a fortune in income and investment, then his/her position is definitely in the economic domain of the social space, with all that has to say with regard to how his/her lifestyle is constructed. Economic capital will influence it greatly. On the other hand, does his/her economic assets limit themselves to the very basics, then the corresponding social position will be in the cultural domain, because of the bachelor’s degree and will consequently develop a matching cultural lifestyle. Speaking about economic and cultural capital in terms of variables, interactions between the two forms of capital is the rule, not the exception.

## Entering the universe of Geometric Data Analysis, a new survey of lifestyles and producing a thesis

The *Distinction* encounter became an impetus for our author to enter the world of correspondence analysis. The position he had chosen for himself, at the fringes of the social science field at the University of Stavanger, was perfect for that project. He was an empirically oriented sociologist, and as such he did not have to justify why he was searching new ways outside the dominant paradigm, which swore to methodological individualism, rational choice theory, and Standard Causal Analysis (Hjellbrekke & Prieur 2018). This was also a time when interest in social classes and class division were fading and post-modernist narratives about vanishing social structures and traditions were becoming à la mode. Our author did not need to entertain the dominant paradigms, which he probably had had to at a position closer to the dominant pole of the field. He worked on that project to embrace correspondence analysis with little “doxatic distractions”, a work that produced two articles introducing correspondence analysis to the Norwegian social science community. Eventually, he teamed up and worked in tandem with a young sociologist, Johs. Hjellbrekke, who had developed similar interest, both in correspondence analysis and Bourdieu’s sociology generally.

In the middle of the 1990s our author re-joined forces with Hilmar Rommetvedt, a political scientist who had been engaged in the previous town culture project. Successfully they applied for a research grant for a new town project. The author was now better prepared than ever, once again, to scrutinize the character of Stavanger, now, having acquired a large chunk of Pierre Bourdieu’s analytic toolbox. His explicit objective was to test, in detail, Bourdieu’s claim that his model in *Distinction* may have relevance in a different “example of the socially possible”, in a city (not a

nation), thirty years after Bourdieu's data was collected, in the periphery of Norway far away geographically and culturally from France.

Together with his colleague Hilmar, as they did twenty years earlier, the author developed a questionnaire for the survey of lifestyles. Their starting point was a similar survey undertaken in the previous project. They hoped to be able to compare response patterns at that time with new ones, to be able to describe the social change process that had taken place in the meantime. Further, questions from the questionnaire used in *Distinction*, were used.

So, what did they find?

All the hallmarks of the Bourdieusan two-dimensional social space were detected very early in the process of analysis. Examining the resulting graph vertically, the dimension of *capital volume* emerged.<sup>†</sup> At the bottom the lowest indicators of family income, investment in car and boats, and lowest educational certificates, both of the respondents and of their parents, were found. Further, the non-skilled workers and other workers were also located here. When moving up, one encounters higher values on all indicators of capital and at the top of the graph, along the first dimension, the highest value of these indicator were placed, together with vocational categories such as managers and top managers etc.

*The composition of capital* dimension of the social space was disclosed by examining the elements of the graph horizontally. On the left-hand side indicators of high cultural capital (high level of education of respondents and of parents) were located together with indicators of low economic capital (low household income, low investments, in car, boat, second house). In the middle area the two forms of capital were balanced or symmetrical and on the right-hand side the occurrence of the two forms of capital were reversed, indicators of high economic capital were located together with indicators of low cultural capital. This graph did indeed represent the local social space, which have the same characteristics as the French social space in *Distinction*.

The accompanying space of lifestyles was the constructed by inserting lifestyle components, such as "going to the theatre at least once a year", "do not like Beethoven", "like reading classic literature", "do not read books", "very interested in politics" etc., etc., into the already constructed social space. The social space is, in this way, used as a "frame model" (Rouanet et.al. 2000). The lifestyles elements are inserted as supplementary points into the space; they are points "without weight"; they do not influence the characteristics of constructed space. The patterns that emerged from these exercises were following the same logic as those described in the *Distinction*. At the top of the graph there are elements that mirror high interest in, knowledge of and access to both forms of capital. These components of lifestyles are rare, sophisticated, opulent, advanced, cosmopolitan, etc. At the bottom their counterpart, vulgar, common, cheap, frequent, local etc. are found. To the left there are a lot of lifestyle elements that require investment in cultural capital and similarly, to the right they require access to economic capital.

The author experienced an "eureka", a period of true joy and exhilaration of discovery. Probably he was not very pleasant to be together with. He had just one thing in his head: the twin spaces of Bourdieu and their counterpart in Stavanger, far away from France, some thirty years after. There seemed to be few limits as to the range of his discovery. His data was rich. Whatever was thrown into the analysis, it came out patterned by the two dimensions of the space, it seemed. Such things as the neighbourhoods one live in, are socially patterned. And the respondents know where they "fit in". They prefer living in neighbourhoods where their equals (in terms of social positions and lifestyles) are numerous. Even such things which are intuitively being placed out of

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<sup>†</sup> I have chosen here to present the orientation of our construction in a way that corresponds to the one in *Distinction*. In reality our construction is rotated 90-degree counterclockwise, compared to that of Bourdieu.



reach from socially patterning, such as length of hair (both, men, and women), moustache versus beard (men), daily make-up (women) were structured by the capital composition principle. Not to talk about political opinions; left leaning goes together with being positioned in the cultural domain, right-wing correspondingly in the domain where economic capital dominates.

#### **Effects of a dominated habitus, or false modesty?**

The impact of the intellectual force of his discoveries, made him reconsider some very fundamental opinions about himself as an academic and an intellectual. He had received his tenure at a time before the value of a Ph.D. degree became deflated; it was not mandatory and, in his generation, it was, in fact, rather rare. He had been quite explicit: he was not going to go for a doctorate. He even got accomplices, colleagues who shared his opinion that such self-centred projects did not have any intellectual or political value; they were motivated by vanity: to brush one's academic feathers.

Many times, however, our author said to himself: This is too big for me! The sheer weight of his research results forced him to re-think his position about a possible doctorate. The possibility open to him was the old-fashioned Dr. Philos. degree, which presuppose an independently written thesis outside all facilitated and organized courses, and two trail lectures, one self-chosen and one proposed by the assessment committee, in addition to a very long defence of the thesis. Three years after the first deliberations on this matter, he had received a scholarship to be able to finish a thesis and he had to decide whether to accept the money or not. He decided to go for it. The weight of the research results demanded a doctorate, he felt.

## **A meeting with Bourdieu**

This was period of exhilaration, excitement, and joy over a discovery that no one it seemed, until then, had been able to demonstrate before on a representative sample of a given population. The social regularities of the *Distinction* were there with a punch! At this time, he received an invitation to a seminar where Bourdieu himself was the main attraction. Bourdieu was coming to Norway to receive the Wilhelm Aubert-award that year (1995). The participants to the seminar were quite numerous; Bourdieu had become popular at the time. During one of the pauses in the proceedings, our author approached Bourdieu and asked if he could send him a draft of an article he was working on. He was preparing a presentation based on his new analyses for a *Theory, Culture and Society*-conference in Berlin the same year. Bourdieu was very kind and promised to have a look at it. The meeting was very short; the queue of presumptive talkers with Bourdieu was long.

After having sent the article to Bourdieu, our author forgot about the whole thing. He had to prepare for the Berlin-conference. Then, some months after the conference, our author received a phone call from Finland. It was M'hamed Sabour, a former student of Bourdieu, who now was holding a position at a Finnish University. He was engaged in editing a special issue of *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, devoted to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. In pursuing that venture he had received a letter from Bourdieu, where he praised the draft article from Stavanger in all kinds of ways. He wanted it to be included in the special issue.

Our author was of course very happy with how things developed. He thought that getting a new article, in this way, into an international journal in sociology, was an easy prey. In his mind the article was already done, but how wrong he was! Very soon, he received detailed written

instructions from Bourdieu, as to how the article should be revised. After the initial, brief annoyance, our author realized that the instructions were indeed very valid. However, the editor, professor Sabour, made some remarks jokingly, as to Bourdieu's intervention in the editing process, saying that Bourdieu is not the editor of the journal. The final version of the article ended up in the special issue in a much, much better form than the original (Rosenlund 1996). Later, the article was also included in Derek Robbins' four-volume issue of *Bourdieu*, as a first replica of the *Distinction*, based on data from another country and time. (Rosenlund 2000b).

## The Cologne-conference

Having met and talked to Pierre Bourdieu personally, having read and heard Bourdieu's evaluation of his work, our author understood that he had hit an academic jackpot. The timing had been perfect. Ten years after the English translation of *Distinction*, he had managed to produce research based on data collected a fair distance from France, thirty years after Bourdieu made his research, and in all important aspects confirming Bourdieu's important claims in the *Distinction*. The Norwegian findings supported Bourdieu's claim that his model may have general validity. Bourdieu had been quite clear when talking about *Distinction*; hoped it would be read generatively, i.e. that other researchers would start researching their societies in order to see how they appeared through Bourdieusan optics (Bourdieu 1998). The responses from the social science community to the translation of *Distinction* had been overwhelming. It is still one of the world's most cited book in sociology. The responses had basically come from philosophically oriented sociologist, pedagogues, art historians, etc., but indeed few positive responses from quantitatively oriented sociologists were possible to find. Our author had made a lot of search after other research addressing the model in *Distinction*. He found one (Blasius & Winkler 1989).

Our author imagined that this was the background and the probable explanation for the enthusiastic attention he was subjected to from Bourdieu, during the following years. In 1998 he was invited to a conference in Cologne named "Investigating social space" organized by Jörg Blasius and Henry Rouanet in cooperation with Pierre Bourdieu. These three participated, and so did Brigitte LeRoux, Frédéric Lebaron and Gisèle Sapiro, all colleagues and students of Bourdieu. From Norway our author participated, and so did Johs. Hjellbrekke and Jan Fredrik Hovden, his juniors at the time, in addition to a number of German delegates.

The conference was indeed very interesting as a whole and it went well for our author. His presentation was well received by the participants, including Bourdieu, who made appreciative comments to it during a pause.

Further, the author and the Norwegian delegates established contacts with the French delegates, relations that was to last for more than two decades. Together, they later produced several articles as joint ventures and presented coordinate individual papers in various conferences. Eventually, they became a kind of inner circle of a wider European network of researcher devoted to quantitative empirical sociology in the spirit of Bourdieu. The last conference was held in 2018, organized by Centre Universitaire de Norvège à Paris (CUNP) in Paris.

## Writing a thesis

The next time, after the Cologne conference, our author met Bourdieu and his colleagues occurred two years after. During that period, he had finished writing his Dr. Philos. thesis. In that process of

writing, he corresponded with Bourdieu, sending him various drafts of the thesis for him to read. As he remembered that happened on Bourdieu's initiative. On one occasion he remembers having written himself out in a mess and found himself in a serious intellectual confusion. After long hesitation he sent the manuscript despite of that. In doing so he thought: "It was nice as long as it lasted". After that he did not expect any more encouraging letter from Bourdieu. He went for his summer holidays in Greece. To his astonishment, when returning, there was again an reassuring letter from Bourdieu, waiting for him.

The manuscript he had sent Bourdieu, was dealing with the process of social change, a matter where our author, so to say, was outside the safe shadow of the messages of *Distinction*. There is little about social change in the Bourdieu's book. Our author tried to demonstrate that the two dimensions of the social space as a representation of an "objective" social structure, probably has an astonishingly short structural history. It developed during the two decades 1970-90, when the town changed position among the urban communities of the nation, to become oil capital of Norway.

Structurally, the change process of the community of Stavanger was studied based on census data, describing the situation in 1970, 1980 and 1990. Both correspondence analysis and traditional table analysis were utilized. A two folded process was unveiled. First, the social hierarchy changes shape over the two-decade period. The dominant, and intermediate classes grew in relative size, while the lower segments became relatively smaller. Generally, the inhabitants became richer on average, both regarding economic and cultural capital. Secondly, the Bourdieusan capital composition principle emerges and grows in force. In the 1970-data this principle was not possible discern; the respondents of the dominant class who were rich in economic capital, were also rich in cultural capital, generally. In the 1980-data the capital composition principle is possible to discern, however, only in the younger echelon. The change comes with succession of generations as Inglehart (1977) has pointed out, it seems. In the 1990-data, finally, it is undeniably present. Here the dominant class is clearly differentiated between a cultural and an economic pole, and so are – to a lesser degree – the intermediate class and the popular class.

The change process appears as if a one-dimensional social hierarchy is cleaved, beginning in the 1970-ties, from top to bottom, into two hierarchies, the one founded on prevalence of cultural capital, the other on economic. This force of social differentiation is strongest at the top, less so in the popular class. The change that occurred is related to what Bourdieu refers to as conditions of the *reproductive instruments*, which may refer to the conditions of the labour market, laws regulating the transfer of privileges and heritage between generations, and the structure and functioning of the educational system (Bourdieu 1984: 125). Several of these conditions were being reshuffled profoundly, when the town entered the oil economy. (Rosenlund 2000a, 2009)

In later work, the author has pursued this analysis of social change, further. The capital composition principle continues to grow in force. In 2009, a new survey of lifestyles, like the one undertaken in 1995, was undertaken. When analysing the two surveys together, the author could empirically demonstrate that the process of change related to the capital composition principle is a social force that still is growing. This goes for it as differentiating force related to how economic and cultural capital are distributed. In 2009 the "distances" in the social space between the "cultural" fractions and the "economic" fractions have grown. Further, in 2009 the capital composition principle as a "explaining force" of lifestyles has grown in importance over the fifteen years between the two surveys (Rosenlund 2019).

## Paris and College de France

In 2000, two years after the Cologne-conference, our author received a phone call from Paris. It was Elina Almasy, then secretary for Centre Universitaire de Norvège à Paris (CUNP), who wanted to tell the author that he was to be invited to Paris for a week, in order to present his thesis work at a seminar with Bourdieu and his group of researchers interested in methodology. The visit was also to include a face to face meeting with Bourdieu himself. At the time our author had just finished writing the last sentences of his thesis. Again, it felt as like having won the top prize of an academic Lotto.

The week in Paris was naturally fantastic. It was spring and the seminar with Bourdieu's group on sociological methods went well. Our author was treated very politely, but he had to work hard for his opinions and statements at the seminar. The meeting with Bourdieu was of course extraordinary. It lasted for about an hour and was held in a very informal atmosphere in his office at College de France. Among other themes he talked about a conference he had attended, where he had felt being in a hostile environment. There, he had been supported and "saved" by a Swedish professor. That professor turned out to be one of the author's old tutors from Lund. Otherwise, Bourdieu was very interested in using the author as an interlocutor to Norwegian authors and members of trade unions. He was, at the time, preoccupied in his political project against neo-liberalism by bridging the gap between intellectuals and workers.

## The door had been opened

Two years after the meeting Bourdieu sadly died. To our author and many of his newly found colleagues and friends, this was a tragedy. However, before he died, he had inspired and initiated different veins of social research, now also one including a field of empirical, quantitatively oriented sociology inspired by *Distinction*, which was addressing the classical sociological problem of social classes and class division. At the time of his departure, there was a new breed of young ambitious and knowledgeable researcher taking up the challenges of this legacy.

Our author had, with his thesis found himself a position in this growing international group of researchers and could develop his work further. Worth mentioning is his privileged cooperation with Annick Prieur, Stine Thideman Faber, Jakob Skjøtt-Larsen in the framework of the project COMPAS (Contemporary Patterns of Social Differentiation) (<https://www.compas.aau.dk/>). In the Danish city of Aalborg, similar studies to those in the Stavanger, were carried out. The results from both studies conformed with the basic social regularities of the *Distinction* (see e.g. Prieur et. al. 2008). The COMPAS-study was in one respect the richer one; the representative survey of lifestyles was supplemented with qualitative data. A subset of the interviewees was interviewed face to face a second time. The COMPAS-undertaking was indeed very instrumental in transforming the international group of researcher into a more formalized network SCUD (*Network for the studies of social and cultural differentiation* (<https://www.scud.aau.dk/>)). The Danish Research Council financed the activities for several years. Dedicated scholars of different generations and from a range of European countries were brought together for vivid exchanges, even for more long-term cooperation.

Lately, our author has been co-opted into a very inspiring and productive small group of young Norwegian researchers, Magne Flemmen and Vegard Jarness (e.g. Magne Flemmen et.al 2018, 2019), which continues the investigating of the nooks and crannies of the Norwegian Social Space.

## Epilogue: The elusiveness and importance of the capital composition principle of social differentiation

This essay is closing in towards its end, and so is the career of its writer. In so doing, I put on my naked habitus the suited armour, in order to make a move in the game of the present academic field of research. I'll make a statement about the contemporary state of this vein of empirical research. Now in 2020, almost twenty years after the sad departure of Bourdieu, the small seeds that was possible to identify at the time, have grown further at an astounding pace. Now, it is a tangible and strong vein of empirical research. And people are utilizing GDA, which is a progress.

In 2010, a large conference was held in Paris to commemorate the publication of *La Distinction* thirty years earlier (one year too late!). Several hundreds of researchers and scholars participated and as many papers were presented. Many of these documented projects trying to engage Bourdieu's model, based on data from various countries, or communities. However, when comparing them to Bourdieu's model they differ. The contributions basically fell into two groups. They either presented research findings that was clearly conforming to Bourdieu's basic model, or they were to a varying degree very unlike or disparate. (Otte et. al. 2019).

One issue that seemed to be an important dividing line between them, was whether one had been able to reproduce the capital composition principle, the second most important principle of the social space. The paper that I presented confirmed the existence of it. The paper was titled "Working with Distinction: Scandinavian Experiences" (Rosenlund 2014) based on many constructions with different geographical origins, including one emanating from the COMPAS-project. Several other contributions did the same. However, many others did not<sup>‡</sup>.

In my paper, I challenged those of my colleagues who, in vain, had tried to reveal fully the traces of the Bourdieusan social space. My basic advice to them was to reconsider the data and analytic design. Does the data contain indicators of economic capital (four to five), cultural capital (three to four) and some variables related to work, then, try to construct a version of the social space! This can then be utilised by way of "visualized regression" (Lebart et. al. 1984) to create a space of lifestyles, by inserting lifestyle components into it. The constructed social space can also be used as a referential structure to compare with independently constructed spaces of lifestyle. Then, it is possible to demonstrate the extraordinary relation of homology that exists between the two spaces; both spaces are structured by volume and composition of capital. (e.g. Flemmen et. al. 2018, 2019, Rosenlund 2019)

If these capital indicators are missing in your data, do your lifestyle analysis again and apply Bourdieu's approach on subsamples of your data, consisting of respondents with approximately similar class positions! That was one of the analytic strategies Bourdieu applied in *Distinction*. The two best documented studies in the *Distinction* are one, that displays lifestyles differentiation in the dominant class (Bourdieu 1984; 262), the other that displays lifestyles differentiation in the intermediate class (Bourdieu 1984; 340). In both analyses the capital composition principle comes out as the first dimension, since volume of capital has been "controlled for"; the analysed respondents have similar class positions (similar positions along the volume dimension).

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<sup>‡</sup> Most notably is Bennett et.al, 2009, which is regarded as a British counterpart to the *Distinction* which presents findings that is indeed clear in refuting Bourdieu's model. It does not apply to modern day Britain. The capital composition principle is not there. Atkinson & Rosenlund have shown, however, that this conclusion is not correct (Atkinson & Rosenlund 2016). By a re-analysis of the British data, they show that Bourdieu's model fits very well, if the proper methods had been utilized.

All in all, this has been written in the hope that my experiences and those of my colleagues may help to re-establish the research front where Bourdieu left it; that the model he proposes in *Distinction* is not an end result of research, but may function as a fruitful starting point, a stepping stone for future research. It is about the possibility and potential to say something important about the society we live in and what the future may have in store for us. The research I have undertaken over the years, shows that the capital composition principle of differentiation, this seemingly elusive and slippery entity, is a social force that grows in power and in reach. In Stavanger it emerged in a timespan of two decades. In the following fifteen-year period, it grew further in force. Now, it has penetrated the whole social hierarchy, from top to bottom. Compared to the wider Norwegian society (and other societies), this change is probably compressed in time.

My hypothesis is that this Bourdieusan principle of social differentiation, may subsume the effects of “other” social developments that is not immediately seen as related to the forces of different forms of capital, also in other societies. This goes for the ongoing division of gender particularly in the lower areas of the social space; women are predominantly positioned in the cultural domain of the social space, and men in the economic domain. Further, it also goes for the penetration of New Public Management (NPM) into the institutions of the welfare system. Its workers are mainly positioned in the cultural sphere of the social space. This system has more or less transformed into a new and profitable domain for private enterprises (financialization) and thereby created new lines of domination and control across the social space along the capital composition principle of social differentiation. In this transformation process the professional knowledges – different forms of cultural capital – of nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, have been undermined. The social value of their capital risks being further devalued in this process.

These tendencies come in addition to the “traditional” contradictions that exist between the dominant and the dominated social classes (along the capital volume dimension). Even if we label our society post-industrial or postmodern, there is still a proletariat that is exploited and there is a growing segment of what is called a precariat positioned at the bottom of the social space, who lives at the borders of ordinary working life and the welfare system. The use of the Bourdieusan space of social positions may be developed further to make it helpful in understanding the dynamics and multidimensionality of social conflicts and contradiction in contemporary society and in the ones that develop.

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