



## INTRODUCTION



# Toward a European social topography: the contemporary relevance of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'social space'

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To investigate the totality of a social field does not mean to study each individual process within it. It means first of all to discover the basic structures which give all the individual processes within this field their direction and their specific stamp. (N. Elias 1939: 288, *The Civilizing Process (Volume II)*)

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Spatial metaphors have always been an integral part of the vocabulary that both lay and professional sociologists use to discuss the basic architecture of the social world. Such discussions invariably identify an 'upper' and a 'lower' region, separated by a 'middle' or 'intermediate' zone that can – according to theoretical proclivity or practical necessity – itself be further sub-divided into an 'upper'- and 'lower middle'. Similarly, both lay and scientific discussions of social status tend to view groups and individuals as situated 'above' or 'below' one another, describe status changes in such terms as 'rising' or 'falling', 'downwardly' or 'upwardly' mobile or even revert to the more vivid terminology of 'climbers' and 'strainers' or 'skidders' and 'sliders' (Wilensky and Edwards 1959; Porterfield and Gibbs 1960). However, while spatial terms have always been part and parcel of the sociological lexicon, the past decades have witnessed a steadily increasing use of such terminology (see Silber 1995). One of the most

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prominent examples of such ‘spatial theorizing’ is the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, few authors have pushed the spatial or ‘relational’ conception of social structure further than the author of the seminal ‘Distinction’.

Bourdieu’s own contribution to a properly ‘relational sociology’ (Emirbayer 1997) has traditionally been linked to his concept of ‘field’; a concept he originally crafted to elucidate the social logic that underpins the production of ‘symbolic goods’ in art, literature, science, and so on (see Bourdieu 1993, 1996; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 94 ff.). Indeed, while initial interest in Bourdieu’s oeuvre, especially among Anglophone sociologists, has largely centered on the concepts of ‘capital’ and ‘habitus’ (see Sallaz and Zavisca 2007: 28), it is the *field*-theoretical aspect of his oeuvre that has gained increasing prominence over the past decades and this on both sides of the Atlantic (see Martin 2003, 2011; Fligstein and McAdam 2012 and the recent volume by Hilgers and Mangez 2014).

However, long before Bourdieu developed his most systematic account of the structure and functioning of ‘fields’ (i.e. ‘The Rules of Art’, 1996), he already deployed a very similar concept. One that was not so much aimed at elucidating the social logic behind processes of cultural *production*, but instead served to uncover the principles that subtend everyday acts of *consumption*. This concept was that of ‘social space’ with which Bourdieu proposed a novel approach to the study of class and social structure. An approach that aimed to break with both the narrow *economism* of Marxian conceptions of class, but also with the *substantialism* that subtended Weberian models of ‘stratification’ which tended to focus on classes as clearly defined ‘groups’ rather than on the set of antagonistic ‘relations’ that mutually defined them. As such, the notion of ‘social space’ would come to occupy a quite central position in Bourdieu’s conceptual toolkit. It would not only form the analytical backbone of two of his most influential and data-laden studies (i.e. *Distinction*, 1984 [1979]) and *The State Nobility*, 1998b [1989]), provide the conceptual key to understanding his views on the distribution of ‘capital’ (in its various guises) and the formation of social *classes*, but it also contains – in embryonic form – the basic principles that would re-emerge in his account of the structure and functioning of various social ‘fields’ (literary, scientific, political, etc.).

However, despite being such an integral element of Bourdieu’s relational ontology, the macro-level concept of ‘social space’ has received considerably less attention than its meso-level cousin ‘field’. It is the goal of the papers that have been brought together in this issue to demonstrate

that such neglect is hardly warranted. By applying the concept of social space – and the field-theoretical philosophy that animates it – to a wide variety of empirical objects in a diversity of national contexts, these papers aim to demonstrate that Bourdieu’s spatial conception of social structure is neither outdated nor a ‘peculiarity of the French’, but can indeed help elucidate contemporary dynamics of class well outside of France. In this introductory paper, I will briefly sketch out the intellectual origins and analytical contours of the concept (§2), discuss its rather marginalized reception among contemporary scholars of class and lifestyle (§3) and introduce the different contributions to this issue (§4).

## 2. Social space: outline of a concept

More than a decade and a half after his passing, the work of Pierre Bourdieu continues to exert an impressive gravitational pull on the twin universes of social theory *and* empirical research. Indeed, his extensive oeuvre has by now become the center of a veritable intellectual industry which churns out a steady stream of publications focused on buttressing, disproving, expanding, modifying or moving ‘beyond’ the insights of the French master. However, despite the fact that his conceptual tools are finding increased application outside of their native context, several commentators have drawn attention to the often highly selective, truncated and piecemeal character of Bourdieu’s international reception (see Wacquant 1993; Simeoni 2000; Sallaz and Zavisca 2007; Lizardo 2012). Indeed, foreign applications of his work often remain centered on key ideas (‘social reproduction’), isolated concepts (‘cultural capital’) or even individual books (‘Distinction’). In doing so, they often ignore the more overarching conceptual framework and the general set of organizing principles that animate Bourdieu’s particular brand of sociology (see Wacquant 1993). Bourdieu’s original conception of society as a multi-dimensional ‘social space’ itself forms a particular case in point.

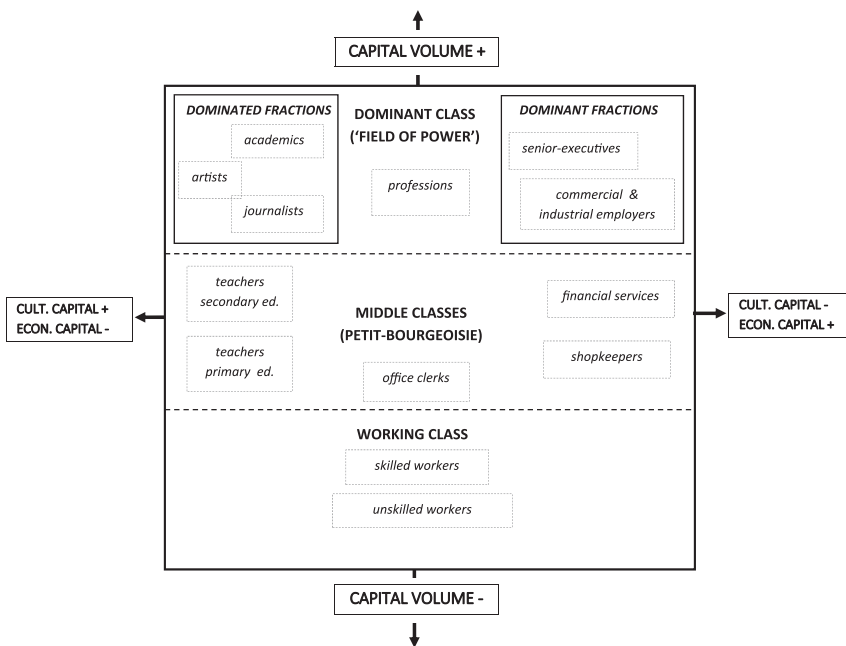
The concept of ‘social space’ made its first appearance in ‘Anatomie du goût’ (Bourdieu and de Saint-Martin 1976), the hefty research paper that presented the results of the large-scale survey that would provide much of the empirical material for ‘La Distinction’, Bourdieu’s seminal analytic of class and consumption.<sup>2</sup> It was the English translation of the latter, in 1984, which first introduced the concept to an Anglophone audience. ‘Distinction’

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<sup>2</sup>For a quite different theoretical use of the term ‘social space’, see the work of Donald Black (2014). For a ‘non-Euclidean’-conception of social spaces, see Andrew Abbott’s work on ‘linked ecologies’ (2005).

itself was followed by a set of papers that aimed to further clarify the theoretical rationale behind its spatial conception of social structure and argued for its transnational validity (see Bourdieu 1985, 1987, 1989, 1998a [1989]). While the model outlined in both ‘Anatomie’ and ‘La Distinction’ seems to be partly inspired by a close reading of the available survey data – most notably through the extensive use of *correspondence analysis* – it is quite clear that Bourdieu’s final conceptualization of the ‘field of social classes’ involved a good deal of trial and error and did come about in a much more ‘deductive’ manner (see de Saint Martin 2015 for an insightful genealogy). Indeed, those familiar with Bourdieu’s formative intellectual influence will recognize a number of the theoretical strands that went into forging the model: the fusion of Marx and Weber in the concept of ‘capital’, the proclivity for thinking in terms of binary oppositions so dear to the structuralism of Levi-Strauss or the Bachelardian insistence on the primacy of the theoretically *constructed* ‘relation’ over the directly observable ‘substance’.

So what exactly does it mean to conceptualize society as a ‘social space’? Rather than construing class status in terms of a one-dimensional *scale* (the common-sense image of the ‘social ladder’), Bourdieu proposes to analyze it in terms of a three-dimensional *space* (see Figure 1). The first



**Figure 1.** Diagram of social space.

and most important dimension of this space discriminates between social agents on the basis of their overall ‘capital-volume’ or the totality of resources that determine their relative degree of power *in* and *over* the space. On the basis of such differences in total volume, Bourdieu distinguishes among three ‘major classes of conditions of existence’ (1984: 114). Those who are situated at the top of the space, the *dominant class* (or the ‘field of power’), are most well endowed with the different types of profitable resources and are as such furthest removed – objectively *and* subjectively – from those who occupy positions at the bottom of the space, the *working* or *popular classes*, who tend to be most deprived in this respect. Between these two extremes, Bourdieu situates an intermediate social category, the middle class or *petit-bourgeoisie*, who derive a considerable number of their characteristics precisely from this ‘halfway’ position in social space. In fact, their practices and representations find a dual point of reference in the lifestyle of the working classes, *against* which their own lifestyle is defined and *from* whom they try to distinguish themselves, and in the dominant lifestyle *toward* which they tend to aspire.

This division of the social hierarchy into a ‘high–middle–low’ is in itself not particularly original and can be found, in form or another, in most conventional taxonomies of ‘socioeconomic status’. Bourdieu’s particular contribution lies in the fact that he identifies a *second* classificatory principle that he deems crucial to adequately grasping contemporary differences in social practice and lifestyle:

The differences stemming from the total volume of capital almost always conceal, both from common awareness and also from ‘scientific’ knowledge, the *secondary differences* which, within each of the classes defined by overall volume of capital, separate *class fractions*, defined by different asset structures, i.e. *different distributions of their total capital among the different types of capital*. (Bourdieu 1984: 114, *my emphasis*)

These differences in capital *composition* help to position agents along a second dimension according to the particular *type* of capital that dominates in their complete structure of assets. More specifically, it opposes groups of agents or *class-fractions* on the basis of the relative weight of *economic* vs. *cultural* capital within this structure. According to Bourdieu, this opposition reflects the fundamental structure of the French dominant class which, far from forming a unified, homogenous group (often implied in terms like ‘elite’ or ‘upper class’) is itself organized as a fairly autonomous space or field. This ‘field of power’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 229) opposes fractions that are strongly engaged in fields of *cultural*

production (artists, writers, academics, etc.) and are therefore richest cultural capital (while being, relatively speaking, least endowed with economic capital) to those who are positioned within the economic field (senior executives, commercial employers, industrialists, etc.) and hence have an inverse capital structure, where economic capital dominates vis-à-vis cultural capital.<sup>3,4</sup> Situated between these *dominated* and *dominant* fractions of the dominant class is a group that has a fairly 'symmetrical' capital structure which combines high volumes of cultural capital with high incomes and which Bourdieu identifies with the members of the professions. This same opposition is also found at the level of the middle class or *petit-bourgeoisie*, where it similarly opposes fractions that are *culturally* dominant (teachers in primary and secondary education, for instance) from those who are most well endowed with *economic* capital (shop- and small business-owners or, more recently, the providers of financial services such as those working in insurance or real estate).

Together, these two dimensions define the fundamental structure of the social world as 'the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances for success of practices' (Bourdieu 1986: 242). A world which is, moreover, far from static, but allows for change and displacement. This is the equally important *third* dimension of social space which Bourdieu conceptualizes as 'the evolution in time of the volume and composition of [...] capital' (Bourdieu 1987: 4) and which takes the form of individual or collective *movements* throughout this space. Movements which are analogous to displacements in physical space in that they 'are paid for in work, in efforts and above all in time' (Bourdieu 1985: 725), the time that is necessary to either increase the overall volume of one's capital structure (i.e. *vertical* movements, as when the daughter of a primary school teacher becomes a university lecturer), to alter the composition of this structure by converting economic into cultural capital and vice versa (i.e. *horizontal* movements, as when the son of a high school teacher starts his own business) or to change both the volume *and* composition of this structure (i.e. *diagonal* movements, as when the daughter of a primary school teacher becomes a senior executive in a large private firm).

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<sup>3</sup>Social capital proves curiously and conspicuously absent from the model and while Bourdieu devoted several theoretical pieces to the concept (for instance, Bourdieu 1980, 1986), it never seems to have risen to the analytical status of the other two forms of capital.

<sup>4</sup>The work of Leibniz, whose '*Animadversiones*' Bourdieu would translate as part of his graduate training at the *École Normale Supérieure*, would play a central role in both the development of the concept of 'social space' and Bourdieu's more overarching brand of field theory (see Pinto 2015).

Using these three dimensions, it is then possible to construct social space as a particular ‘order of coexistence’ in Leibniz’ (2006 [1716]) phrase. A ‘coexistence’ that is, furthermore, far from peaceful, but forms the basis for the differential and antagonistic ‘points-of-view’ on the social world. In fact, their protracted exposure to a particular class of experiences – linked to a given social position and trajectory – equips social agents with durable ways of perceiving, judging and acting in the social world, in short with a ‘class habitus’. It is this habitus which translates *objective* propinquity in social space into the ‘subjective’ states of affinity, affection and attraction (of which class *endogamy* is a particularly salient indicator), while transforming distance in this space into feelings of dislike, distaste and even disgust. Superimposed on the *objective space of class positions* is hence a second *space of class habitus*, that is to say, of differentiated agents that engage in differentiated practices and are attracted to different properties (and persons). In accordance with the formula ‘positions → dispositions → practices’, these class habitus hence link the (first) *social space of class positions* to the (third) *symbolic space of lifestyles*.

Just as individual and groups are positioned and ranked vis-à-vis each other on the basis of the extent and type of their valuable resources (*capital*) so are the products, properties and practices they surround themselves with distinguished and graded in ways that elude a simple one-dimensional hierarchy. What is in fact obscured by homogenizing handles such as ‘elite’, ‘upper-class’ or ‘highbrow’ is that the central opposition between cultural authority and temporal power, *art* and *argent*, engenders differences in preferences and practices that Bourdieu viewed as ‘comparable to the gap between two “cultures” in the anthropological sense’ and produces tastes that are ‘so different in their style and object and sometimes so antagonistic (those of “artists” and “bourgeois”) that it is easy to forget that they are variants of the same fundamental relationship to necessity’ (Bourdieu 1984: 283, 176). Indeed, the tastes of intellectuals only become fully intelligible when they are seen as *simultaneously* opposed to the ‘crude vulgarity’ of working-class tastes *and* the ‘conspicuous vulgarity’ of the economic elite, to the corporate conformism of the ‘business suit’ and the vulgar conformity of the ‘track-suit’ and as such form the basis for a lifestyle that is ‘as remote from concupiscence as it is from conspicuous consumption’ (1984: 497). The particular symbolic *form* that these (sets of) social oppositions will take will of course vary in terms of regional context and historical period, but the important

thing is that they *will* express themselves whenever economic and cultural capital appear as independent sources of power.

### 3. A blank space

Indeed, it is interesting to note that while Bourdieu initially proved quite hesitant about the transnational validity of the model presented in ‘Anatomie du goût’ (see de Saint-Martin 2015: 24), by the end of the 1980s, he already appears rather confident that economic and cultural capital were indeed ‘the *two principles of differentiation*, which, in the most advanced societies, such as the United States, Japan or France, are *undoubtedly the most efficient*’ (Bourdieu 1998a [1989]: 6, *my emphasis*). Such theoretical self-assurance did not, however, appear to be backed by an extensive body of comparative research. In fact, outside of France, where the concept could not only rely on a growing theoretical school, but was also intimately tied to a *methodological* tradition – i.e. the development of ‘geometric data analysis’ (GDA) by Jean-Paul Benzécri – the concept of ‘social space’ has gained remarkably little analytical traction (see Desrosières 1990: 209). Instead, it is quite common to find Bourdieu’s spatial conception of social structure reduced to the very *one-dimensional* schemes of social and symbolic stratification – compressed in such binary alternatives as ‘elite vs. popular’ or ‘highbrow vs. lowbrow’ – it specifically aimed to transcend (on this point, also see Bennett *et al.* 2009: 11 ff.).

A good example is Michele Lamont’s (1992) seminal comparative study of the culture and morals of the French and American upper middle classes. While claiming sympathy for Bourdieu’s views, she nevertheless makes little mention of the internal divisions that structure these classes. In fact, she even explicitly rejects Bourdieu’s notion of ‘power field’ (*sic*) on the grounds that it ‘requires defining the limits of groups which is most often an arbitrary decision because few groups have absolute natural boundaries’ (1992: 276, n. 49), a somewhat curious observation, since it is precisely one of the functions of the concept of ‘social space’ to highlight both the *constructed* and *contended* nature of class boundaries. Ironically enough, her own analyses suggest ‘that the boundary-drawing activities of the members of the upper middle class varies with the degree to which their occupation is instrumental to, and dependent on, profit-making’ (Lamont, 1992: 152) with those who are engaged in sectors of cultural production and transmission (artists, teachers, scientists, etc.) ‘placing more value on cultural or moral



standards of evaluation' (Lamont 1992), while those who are employed in the private, for-profit sectors (accountants, bankers, senior executives) are 'more likely to value socioeconomic standards of evaluation' (Ibid.), observations that all seem perfectly compatible with Bourdieu's spatial conception of class.

Critical engagements with the concept of social space are often equally absent from the numerous studies that have cropped up around the concept of the 'cultural omnivore' as originally coined by Richard Peterson (see Peterson and Simkus 1992). While quick to criticize Bourdieu's views on (upper) class taste as overly static and homogenizing, their detractors curiously fail to address the one principle that helps to account for both the *variations* within 'highbrow' or 'elite' tastes as well as the logic of their *transformation*, namely the classification struggles between cultural avant-garde and economic bourgeoisie. Thus far, the large majority of studies on cultural 'omnivorousness' remain wedded to one-dimensional measures of 'SES' (also see Lizardo 2006: 8 ff.).

Similarly, Bennet *et al.*'s (2009) otherwise impressive attempt to apply some of Bourdieu's key insights to the study of taste and lifestyle in contemporary Britain engaged very little with *Distinction*'s spatial conception of social structure and proved more concerned with providing a Bourdieu-inspired alternative to Goldthorpean models of social stratification. Curiously, a more recent attempt by some of its authors to use the distribution of the various types of 'capital' to conceptualize the British class structure (Savage *et al.* 2013) has traded in a relational understanding of class altogether and instead reverts back to a 'substantialist' line of inquiry that foregrounds the question of the exact 'size' and 'number' of social classes which Bourdieu's conceptual model explicitly aimed to circumvent.

None of the above is in any way meant as a call for conceptual orthodoxy, nor is it inspired by the typically hermeneutic desire to define the 'correct' or 'legitimate' uses of an author and her works. The ultimate test of Bourdieu's theoretical pudding must lie in its empirical eating. Whether or not the opposition between culture and economy, intellectuals and executives, *art* and *argent* is indeed a 'peculiarity of the French' or can instead be generalized – within the limits imposed by national history – to *all* social formations that have advanced market economies and strongly developed systems of higher education, is ultimately a matter of systematic comparative *research*. In this respect, it is quite promising to see that whenever empirical analyses use indicators of social position that *explicitly* take into account the combined effects of both capital volume *and*

composition, significant differences in practices and attitudes do emerge. This is the case for Lizardo's (2006) work on gendered occupational identities in the US, Prieur *et al.*'s (2008) study of class tastes in contemporary Denmark, Flemmen's (2012) study of the internal divisions within the Norwegian elite, Jarness' work on middle-class lifestyles (2017), Atkinson's (2017) work on the structure of the British social space or my own research on the physical embodiment of class differences (Vandebroeck 2015, 2016). By applying the concept of 'social space' in different national contexts, to different topics of study and with the use of different research methods, the papers in this issue aim to further this line of research.

#### 4. About this issue

The various contributions to this issue all originated in the workshop 'Charting Social Space' organized in Brussels in September of 2014 by the *Network for the Study of Cultural Distinctions and Social Differentiation* (SCUD). The central purpose of this workshop (and the network) was to bring together sociologists from across Europe whose research is animated by Bourdieusian or field-theoretical conceptions of class to present, compare and discuss their work. By applying the same conceptual toolkit in a wide variety of national contexts and to a range of different empirical objects, the papers in this issue not only aim to demonstrate the analytical validity of the concept of 'social space', but also try to push this concept beyond the traditional Bourdieusian proving grounds of 'culture' and 'lifestyle'.

This is definitely the case for the first two papers by De Keere and Flemmen & Haakestad, both of which take the concept of social space into the domain of political sociology, a field where – some exceptions aside (Gaxie 1978; Wacquant 2005; Swartz 2013) – Bourdieu's concepts have yet to make serious inroads. By deploying a multi-dimensional conception of social class, both papers show – the former for Belgium (Flanders), the latter for Norway – how traditional measures of 'SES' tend to obfuscate what are often quite profound differences in (party-)political orientation and argue that Bourdieu can help solve some of the puzzles that continue to plague mainstream political sociology.

The contributions by Melldahl and by Bühlmann, Davoine and Ravasi also move us into a region of social space that, up until fairly recently, has been left remarkably unexplored, namely the 'dominant fraction of the dominant class'. In fact, compared to studies that have applied field-

theoretical principles to the study of cultural production (Anheier *et al.* 1995; Van Rees and Dorleijn 2001; Sapiro 2002), attempts to chart the structure of *dominant* positions within the field of power – the *locus originarius* of one of the largest societal crises of the past decade – remain few and far between (but, see Hjellbrekke *et al.* 2007; Denord *et al.* 2011; Ellersgaard *et al.* 2013). The paper by Melldahl skillfully dissects the structure of the Swedish elite and shows how this seemingly homogenous ‘one percent’ is in fact differentiated by principles that are quite similar to those that structure social space as a whole. Not only is there a clear opposition between established elite members and newcomers, but the ‘wealthy’ are also divided in terms of the particular *composition* of their economic resources, which separates those with high levels of inherited wealth from those who draw high wages. Grasping these internal differences is crucial to understanding the different strategies of social reproduction, and especially the educational strategies, that these various segments of the Swedish elite deploy to maintain their position within the ‘dominant fraction of the dominant class’.

Bühlmann, Davoine and Ravasi approach the question of economic elites through an explicitly *comparative* lens. Adopting a slightly more general ‘field-theoretical’ approach, they tackle the question of whether or not *national* social spaces continue to exert an influence on the career patterns of top managers in four different European countries, namely France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK. Against facile accounts of ‘internationalization’ or ‘globalization’, their analysis uncovers the persistence of national career models, but at the same time problematizes the overly monolithic character of a ‘national career model’. Instead, they demonstrate how by conceptualizing top-level management as a distinct ‘field’, one gains a more fine-grained understanding of managers as differentiated agents who themselves navigate the top reaches of the economic field with differing endowments of educational, social and ‘cosmopolitan’ capital.

The paper by Atkinson focuses on an issue that should be absolutely central to future explorations of the validity of ‘social space’, namely its much *under*-conceptualized relation to gender. While Bourdieu was by no means blind to the question of gender differences, it remains a fact that his original conceptualization of ‘social space’ did not exactly lend it epistemic priority (as attested to by some of his close collaborators at the time, see Boltanski 2008; de Saint-Martin 2015). Drawing on a recent British survey, Atkinson shows how some of the central oppositions that define the British social space are themselves homologous to the

opposition between the masculine and the feminine and opens up a way of theorizing the relationship between class and gender beyond traditional conceptions of 'intersectionality'. In doing so, he elaborates on some of my own work on how both the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' axes of social space are fundamentally inflected by the logic of sexual differences and how the everyday operation of 'practical' logic effectively merges the language and imagery of social and sexual domination (see Vandebroeck 2016: 27 ff.).

These contributions all make extensive use of a research technique that shares more than one 'elective affinity' with Bourdieu's relational conception of social structure, namely *multiple correspondence analysis* or MCA (see Bourdieu *et al.* 1991: 254; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96 ff.; Le Roux and Rouanet 2010). However, while MCA undoubtedly has its heuristic virtues, the increased availability of more user-friendly statistical software also brings with it the altogether real danger of an empiricist proliferation of statistical biplots that are, in turn, all too easily adumbrated with the title 'field' or 'space'. More importantly, it should not lead us to forget that Bourdieu's own brand of 'social praxeology' – and indeed, a *field-theoretical* approach in general (see Fligstein and McAdam 2012) – is quite averse to methodological monotheism. Rather than treating 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' or 'objectivist' and 'interpretive' methods as self-subsistent and antithetical, Bourdieu proposes to deploy them in different *moments* of the research process (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 10 ff.). This is skillfully demonstrated in the paper by Jarness who, in the initial phase of his research, uses MCA to situate his interviewees in the local social space of Stavanger (Norway) on the basis of their particular endowment of capital(s). Having determined their particular 'viewpoint', he is then better able to grasp the particular logic behind the different 'points of view' – i.e. their cultural, political and moral stances – his respondents express throughout the in-depth interviews he conducted.

The final paper by Muriel Darmon aptly demonstrates, however, that Bourdieu's spatial conception of class need not automatically translate in statistical modelling and can also be used to inform ethnographic research. Like Melldahl, Darmon also focuses on the topic of elite education, but takes her readers *inside* the institutions that form the entry point into the highest echelons of French higher education, namely the infamous 'classes préparatoires'. Her study focuses on an often-overlooked aspect of educational reproduction, namely the particular *temporal* dispositions that are required by high-level academic training. She shows

how differences in the volume and type of capital acquired by students – both through family socialization and previous schooling – are constitutive of distinct temporal dispositions that engender different ‘timestyles’, that is, ways of perceiving and experiencing time and, above all, different ways of coping with the temporal urgency that pervades life in this elite prep schools. Together, these different papers can hopefully demonstrate the analytical value of thinking about class and social structure in fundamentally *spatial* terms. At a time when numerous researchers, on both sides of the Atlantic, are converging on ‘field theory’ as a potentially fruitful way forward, the concept of ‘social space’ can maybe help to build much-needed conceptual bridges.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Notes on contributor

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